

# Galician Cultural Identity in the Works of Ramón Otero Pedrayo (1888-1976)

Craig Patterson, The Queen's College, Oxford

D.Phil. Thesis, Hilary Term 2002

## Shorter Abstract

In the 1920's, the grouping of Galician intellectuals known as the *Xeración Nós* began, through their wide-ranging literary output and more specifically political activities, to articulate and reinterpret essential notions of Galician cultural identity after several centuries of cultural repression and centralisation. This thesis examines both the nexus of inherited positions informing this cultural recovery, and its original reformulation, through the works of the most prominent intellectual of the *Xeración Nós*, Ramón Otero Pedrayo (1888–1976). Otero was an important figure in Galician intellectual and cultural life over the larger part of the twentieth century, especially when expression of Galician distinctiveness, whether political or cultural, was severely limited and largely discouraged by the Franco regime. He is particularly deserving of an in-depth study, especially since this theme so intrinsically associated with him has not yet been written upon from a perspective of cultural history.

In order to provide as accurate an analysis as possible of Otero's conception of Galician reality and the developmental nature of his ideas, I have consulted a large number of texts, ranging from brief journalistic sketches to dense biographical tomes. In particular, I focus on the large body of essays written by Otero such as the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* (1932) and the more imaginative configuration of

Galician identity contained in the trilogy of novels *Os camiños da vida* (1928), *Arredor de si* (1930) and *Devalar* (1935). This allows for an analysis of the writer's perspective on the essential bases of Galician culture via the recuperation through literature (most notably the influence of the broad cultural revival initiated in the 1860's, or *Rexurdimento*, and the influence of historical and cultural co-ordinates ultimately derived from Romantic thought). Crucial in shaping Otero's definitive vision is an eclectic array of references from cultural history both ancient and modern, ideological import through the Celtic ideal, and contemporary social issues (such as the political climate of the Second Republic).

To be seen firmly within the parameters of an intellectual history, this thesis has as its objective an explanation how these intrinsic and extrinsic sources of influence condition Otero's evaluation of Galician distinctiveness, and what that quality actually embodies, within the context of the cultural activity prevalent in Galicia from 1918 to 1936 and beyond.

Galician Cultural Identity in the Works of Ramón Otero Pedrayo (1888-1976)

Craig Patterson, The Queen's College, Oxford

D.Phil. Thesis, Hilary Term 2002

Longer Abstract

In the 1920's, the grouping of Galician intellectuals known as the *Xeración Nós* began, through their wide-ranging literary output and political activities, to articulate and reinterpret essential notions of Galician cultural identity, after several centuries of cultural repression and centralisation. The purpose of this work is to examine both the nexus of inherited positions informing this cultural recovery, and its original reformulation, through the works of the most prominent intellectual of the *Xeración Nós*, Ramón Otero Pedrayo (1888–1976). Otero is particularly deserving of an in-depth study, especially since this theme so intrinsically associated with him has not yet been written upon from a perspective of cultural history, and also given his sheer intellectual versatility and position as the leading cultural anthropologist of that generation of Galician intelligentsia.

Otero never produced a systematic philosophy, treatise or monograph on a distinct Galician identity, although this was the core thematic strand that unites all of his vast and mostly disordered production together. In the course of this study, I will take into account all of those works by Otero in which there is a discernible analysis, commentary or subtext concerning Galician cultural identity. There are several works in which this is especially evident: the large body of essays such as the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* (1932), and the more imaginative configuration of

Galician identity contained in the trilogy of novels *Os camiños da vida* (1928), *Arredor de si* (1930) and *Devalar* (1935). This allows for an analysis of the writer's perspective on the essential bases of Galician culture via the recuperation through literature (most notably the influence of the broad cultural revival initiated in the 1860's, or *Rexurdimento*, and the influence of historical and cultural co-ordinates ultimately derived from Romantic thought). Crucial in shaping Otero's definitive vision is an eclectic array of references from cultural history both ancient and modern, ideological import through the Celtic ideal, and contemporary social issues (such as the political climate of the Second Republic).

All of the factors on which Otero's cultural and ideological outlook is based are to be assessed within the parameters of an intellectual history. Furthermore, this study will be structured around ideas rather than individual thinkers or writers; its analysis relies on references or allusions made by Otero to a particular writer or philosopher. Otero's work is characterised by a considerable degree of referentiality, and as a result directs us to his sources. This is not a device employed deliberately by Otero to make the task of his readers or critics task easier; rather, it is an integral part of his written style. Although his erudite allusions and responses to ideas and writers are often cursory or elliptical, the connections are normally substantial enough for the critic to deduce what Otero is seeking to imply or effect, and what this signifies for the wider account of Galician distinctiveness that we find in his works. In the opening chapter, I will summarise Otero's principal sources, and assess to what degree and in what circumstances he refers to them, whether his allusions and references are consistent over a prolonged period, or confined to a certain segment of his career.

Chapter One will act as an introduction to the thesis by presenting a portrait of Otero in context, examining relevant biographical details and evaluating the

polymath's intellectual formation. This is crucial for the reader's understanding of Otero's rigorously intellectual and nationalist selection process for ideas and motifs taken from an extraordinarily broad knowledge of mainly European cultural history. A biographical narrative provides the opportunity to examine Otero's intellectual formation since early childhood, and to portray Otero the reader in greater depth. As well as summarising existing criticism that is not limited in scope by nationalist sympathies, I will assess the cultural and political panorama of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spain and Galicia, taking into account the ideas and events that I believe to be decisive in the formation of Otero's world view and pivotal in the development of his ideological universe. These include the legacy of German historicist thought and Romanticism, the reception in Galicia of the European Celtic revival, and the role played by the *Xeración Nós* in adapting this to the ideological programme of *atlantismo*.

As well as assessing the significance of any change in Otero's depiction of Galicia over the fifty-year period of his artistic plenitude, I will also evaluate the idiosyncratic style of his writing and intellectual enquiry, highlighting the implications of this for the study and interpretation of his works. In particular, I will draw attention to how Otero combines and interweaves concepts and ideas to suit his own intellectual and political agenda, bringing together aspects of cultural history that are themselves complicated by their many levels of connotation and implication. The main task of this introductory chapter is therefore to detail and elucidate such concepts in order to avoid repetitive explanation across several chapters, to facilitate my task of isolating an idea or concept in order to analyse its relationship with others, and to act as a guide for decoding and interpreting the context and intentions of Otero's commentaries and texts for the reader.

The second chapter of my thesis is by far the most extensive and ambitious, and deals with the related themes of landscape and Nature in terms of their place within Otero's outline of Galician identity. I begin with an initial survey of Oteran affirmations as to the general affinity between man and land in Galicia, and its origins in an alleged Celtic outlook and essential representation by the peasantry. I examine how this relationship is depicted as a consequence of rural labour, and trace Otero's relationship with those works and thinkers who are associated with the change in sensibility towards Nature and the emergence of the Romantic temperament.

The philosophy and thought of Henri Bergson (1859 – 1941) is of crucial significance to Otero's approach to landscape and Nature as essential components of Galician identity. I provide an original analysis of the precise nature of the Galician writer's interaction with the philosophy of Bergson. I intend to show how Bergsonian thought (amongst other aspects of cultural history) influences Otero's concept of *devalar*, or constant, organic change and development in the landscape's forms, and how Otero associates further cultural characteristics that he regards as peculiar to a unique identity in Galicia with this. By contesting Tarrío's and Herrero's view that Bergsonian philosophy was not so much an influence on Otero as rather a parallel system, I will argue that *durée* is the original underlying philosophy behind Otero's representation of the landscape as a religious and cultural entity where the past survives as part of an accumulative present. After examining this idea of landscape as a repository of collective memory and history, I then consider the influences of the poetry of Alphonse Marie Louis de Lamartine (1790 – 1869) and Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin (1770 – 1843), the writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832) and the philosophy of Novalis (Freiherr von Hardenburg, 1772 – 1801) on Otero's representation of religiosity in Nature. Spinozan philosophy is also crucial

in Otero's allocation of a religious quality to Nature, and I will analyse in some depth the theological problems posed for Otero the practising Catholic in adapting this controversial aspect of cultural history to his intellectual and ideological programme. Of especial importance here is the debatable influence of Krausist philosophy and its associated tenet of panentheism on Otero's attempts to identify a religious dialogue between Nature and the Galicians without subscribing to immanentism.

Subsequently, the humanisation of the land in Galicia is considered as a representation of historical epochs in relief; I attempt to elucidate the significance of this representation for Otero's construction of cultural nationhood. This is followed by the most complex topic in all of Otero's writings concerning Galician distinctiveness: the philosophical sources informing his account of Galician perception regarding landscape and reality and the projection of identity onto the cultural canvas of the outer world. I highlight the underlying presence of Idealist philosophy in some of Otero's depictions of landscape as a projection, or an imaginative perception of Galician identity. I intend to show how Rousseauian subjectivism and the presence of Idealist thought in Otero's writings indicate his subscription to the more diffused Romantic conception of Nature as the projection of human imagination, of landscape as the external image of inner space. Also of interest here are Novalis' ideas on creative autonomy, or 'Magic Idealism'. Having established the link between these ideas and Otero's notion of the Galician landscape as a cultural projection, I focus on a typical aspect of his treatment of the history of ideas, the association of the local and the abstract from cultural history, and show how his depiction of the Galician imaginative awareness of a cultural relationship with landscape is predicated on the *Rexurdimento* poetry of Rosalía de Castro (1837 – 1885) and Eduardo Pondal (1835 – 1917).

The idea of affinity between Galician man and his environment as depicted in the works of Otero draws on a large number and variety of works that this chapter will discuss, such as those characteristic of the Romantic movement, MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian* (1762) and Virgil's *Georgics* (30 B.C.). Moreover, I look closely at James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) as a model for an ideological reworking of Virgil's poetry that Otero employs in his own portrayal of the intimate bonds between land and people in Galicia. One of the main concerns of this chapter, and of the thesis as a whole, is to provide a preliminary reading of the underestimated influence of Oswald Spengler (1880 – 1936) on Otero. By tracing the discernible links between *The Decline of the West* (1918 – 1922) and several Oteran texts, I attempt to show how Spengler's 'Faustism' and reliance on the binary opposition of 'North and South' are appropriated by Otero in order to associate Galicia ideologically, through the motif of landscape, with wider European tradition and culture.

Chapter Three will look at Otero's depiction of language as an intimate and essential feature of Galician identity and nationhood. Firstly, I consider the legacy of the eighteenth-century Galician Benedictine monk and scholar, Martín Sarmiento (1695 – 1772), and his isolated but industrious defence of Galician. I focus on Sarmiento's proto-historicist leanings, and relate Otero's references to him as evidence of a significant influence. I proceed to assess the debt owed by Otero to the chief ideologues of German historicism and promoters of language as a fundamental component of cultural nationhood, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Of particular interest are Herder's *Ueber den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772), and Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807- 08), works of seminal importance for the study of the development of linguistic nationalism.

This chapter addresses the manner in which the various elements of Herder's ideas on language surface in Otero's writings as an indication of the direct nature of this influence. Historicist ideas on language saturate works like the *Ensaio histórico...*, and form the basis of Otero's vision of language as the link that unites cultures formed by a wide range of diverse factors, as a sign of identity that is the unique expression of a collective underlying national spirit. I will show how, as with the original historicist position, Otero presents language and its developmental nature as the tool that creates and consolidates a people and its sense of self, and supports human interaction within community. I also intend to highlight how Herder's promotion of the preservation of language as an equivalent to the defence of identity acquires political significance for Otero, emerging as part of his proselytising emphasis on the right to linguistic self-realisation as a metaphor for wider political demands. I attempt to show the connection therefore between Herder's portrayal of language as a fundamental necessity for the survival of a given national consciousness and Otero's pre-Civil war political commentary and later writings on language and society.

I also address the theme of the necessity to create in language as an imperative for national creative expression, a core essential of Romantic historicism. Throughout this introductory section and the entire chapter, I refer to important sources for the foundations of linguistic nationalism, such as Fichte, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 – 1835), with special regard to their elaborations upon themes ultimately derived from Herderian positions. I dedicate particular attention to the contemporary affirmation of Romantic and historicist ideas made by the German thinker, Oswald Spengler, given his importance to Otero's overall representation of Galician identity in a European context.

Also of intrinsic interest to this chapter are the ideological imperatives of Celticism and *atlantismo*. The former is reflected through Otero's interest in the views of Eamonn De Valera (1882 – 1975) on native language, and the commentary on the Irish language to be found in *The Aran Islands* (1907), by J.M Synge (1871 – 1909). Irish cultural and political models are taken into account by an examination of contemporary ideological import, specifically through the connection made between language and national regeneration by Eamonn de Valera, plus the wider, more diffused context of the 'Celtic Renaissance'. Part of Otero's subscription to *atlantismo* is to be found in his own exploration of the linguistic affinity between Galicia and Portugal as indicative of supposed deeper cultural ties and affiliations. Finally, Otero's linguistic history of Galicia adds to our understanding of his subjective treatment as a whole.

The fourth chapter of my thesis will explore the role afforded to religion in Otero's scholarly outline of Galician identity, and opens with an examination of the place of polytheism and superstition in Otero's work. I begin by considering religion's place at the heart of Otero's envisaged Galician society, a faith rooted in Galician peasant culture with its popular religious affinities to Nature and origins in an earlier, supposedly Celtic heritage that is never fully eclipsed by Catholicism. I evaluate the importance of popular religious belief in Galician culture according to Otero, with particular reference to *Galicia* (1888) by Manuel Murguía (1833 – 1923), and to the pivotal importance of the Romantics' sympathy for a supposed Celtic religious identification with Nature and the incorporation of this into their aesthetic programme. This aspect of my thesis will dovetail with parts of the chapter on landscape and Nature, allowing for a complete exposition of this intricate aspect of Otero's thought. Also of interest in this area are the philosophical writings of Benedict

Spinoza (1632 – 77) and Novalis, as well as the poetry of Hölderlin. Once more, the ideological and cultural inheritance of *celtismo* must be examined, given that Otero, in his portrayal of a palimpsestic Galician religiosity, attributes its pantheism to the supposed Celtic presence in Galicia's ethnic past. Regarding Otero's original approach to pantheism as the most personal of his projections for Galician identity, I will pay careful attention to his appropriation and distortion of this theologically polemical term. Otero's cultural formation in Madrid during the first decade of this century point inevitably to the possible presence of Krausism in his intellectual outlook. The issue of whether the influence of Krausism can be identified in Otero's thesis (in the form of 'pantheism') will be addressed therefore, and I will speculate upon its possible effect on his radical variation on the pantheist theme.

The full extent of Otero's study of Galician religious history and its implications for cultural identity can only be fully accounted for by looking into his treatment of religious figures in Galicia's history, such as Priscillian (c. 340 – 385 A.D.). I intend to show how Otero's treatment of historical sources pertaining to this issue is affected by ideological and imaginative considerations, and assess the veracity of his historiographical approach through comparisons with contemporary and later studies of Priscillianism. By contrasting Otero's approach with that of other members of the *Xeración Nós* (notably Castelao), the intellectual and ideological criteria followed by Otero can be seen in greater perspective, with specific reference to the debt of Otero's apologetic defence of Priscillian to Murguía's *Historia de Galicia* (1865 – 1911).

Following this analysis of the writer's portrayal of pre-Christian religious history and its significance for the cultural personality of Galicia, I will detail his account of Galicia's transition to Christianity and the establishment of the early

church. Otero's outline of a historical trajectory for Galician religious identity and the consolidation of Christianity as the outward national religion are viewed through the writer's depiction of major religious figures such as St. Martin of Braga (c.520-580) and Diego Xelmírez (c. 1065 – 1140). Otero's conception of the vital role played by religion (and specifically Catholicism) in the evolution of Galician culture as expounded in his *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* stems directly from the defence of Christianity as the 'light of history' in the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (1849 - 50) and *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802) of Chateaubriand (François-René, Vicomte de, 1768 – 1848). This will allow for an analysis of the place of Catholicism in Otero's theory. Chateaubriand, like the ubiquitous Herder, has considerable impact on almost every aspect of Otero's explanation of Galician spirituality and religious conception of history. Indeed, Pérez Prieto - with whose assessment I largely concur - details brilliantly much of the common ground between Otero and Chateaubriand. In some instances, however, I have felt it necessary to expand upon specific issues with additional detail and comparison, in order to highlight even further the reliance by Otero on this writer of seminal importance for European cultural history.

I once again take into account affirmations of historicist ideas by thinkers such as Nikolai Berdyaev (1874 – 1948) and Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856 – 1912) in a European and local context respectively, focusing on the common ground between the latter and Otero, mainly regarding their use of binary oppositions to characterise a given nation's religious identity. Schleiermacher's (1768-1834) expression of nascent Romantic values as a philosophy of religion and the evangelical Christianity of Leo Tolstoy (1828 – 1910) are also identified as contributing ideas to the notion of 'human' Catholicism as Galicia's national faith. My analysis ends with

an examination of Otero's unparalleled poetic and idealistic portrait of the religious capital of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela.

The main task undertaken in the fifth and final chapter is to present an account of the manner by which the long-term historicist influence on Otero interacts with subsequent conceptions of nationhood (predominantly those of Murguía and the *Xeración Nós*) and diverse ideologies and philosophies, such as those of Oswald Spengler, Giambattista Vico (1668 – 1744), Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) and Spanish politics prior to 1936. I supplement my overall analysis with references to wider scholarship regarding nationalism, such as Gellner, Bauer, Hobsbawm, Smith and Hutchinson, in order to place Otero within a wider context. After an initial assessment of Otero's discourse concerning an inexorable Celtic 'national spirit' or *Volksgeist* within Galician culture and the debt of this idea to Herder and Romantic historicism, I proceed to compare and contrast his depiction of the Galician people as a united grouping with that of other members of the *Xeración Nós*, and sift through the cultural nuances of the notions of *pobo*, race and *Volk* that stem from Herder's organic conception, racialist theory and other political use. Special attention is given to the influence of Murguía here, and by comparison and contrast with Otero's position I establish the precise trajectory and extent of Herder's contribution.

I subsequently assess the proposed political and national dynamic of Galicia and Spain put forward by Otero, paying close attention to the interplay between fiction, political writing and wider political trends. I seek to define further Otero's position by examining his ideas on the future cultural and political composition of Europe, and his interpretation of the national significance of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. These are important referential co-ordinates for Otero when mapping out the varied features of the Galician nation past, present and imaginatively

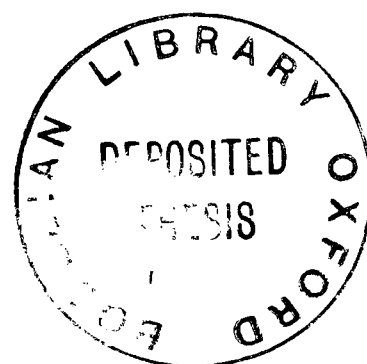
projected into the future; by charting them I seek to highlight Otero's reliance on the nexus of influence spanning Herder and Romantic nationalism.

The final sections of this chapter dwell upon Otero's propositions for an intellectual patronage of Galician affairs and, with greater importance, the locus of the village as principal representation of national values. I focus particularly on Otero's reaction to the effect upon these of historical and social superstructure in the form of modernity and change. Criticism has sometimes tended to present a static vision of Otero's worldview as unswervingly conservative and traditionalist, as if his ideas did not significantly evolve or alter during a long lifetime and career. By examining the topic of the village on a chronological basis, I seek to distinguish slight but important adaptations in his intellectual character over the span of a long and active life, that present us with a thinker who was subject to intellectual evolution, however restricted, rather than ideological immutability. Furthermore, Otero's portrayal of the village links inextricably with his interpretation of modernity in many of its forms, such as technological advancement or changing economic patterns. These portraits in miniature of his chosen model of Galician reality, found in his short articles and important essays, allow us to assess his thoughts on Galician society's shifting composition over a forty-year period. Moreover, Otero's fiction - with its even greater potential for 'imagining' - provides another vantage point from which we can assess the precise nature of his complex standpoint. I bring the final chapter of my thesis to an end by formulating wide-ranging conclusions from the assessment of Otero's incorporation of further aspects of Oswald Spengler's thought, and elements of Vico's philosophy, into his cultural and ideological construction of Galician national identity as an indestructible reality in ascent.

Galician Cultural Identity in the Works of Ramón Otero Pedrayo (1888-1976)

Craig Patterson, The Queen's College, Oxford

D.Phil. Thesis, Hilary Term 2002



This thesis is dedicated to:

My parents, Kenneth and Mary Patterson, and the values they have given to me.

The warm and vital memory of Xoán González Millán (1951 – 2002).

*A gaita non chora, que canta...*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgements                       | i   |
| List of abbreviations                  | iii |
| Preface                                | x   |
| Chapter One – Otero Pedrayo In Context | 1   |
| Chapter Two – Landscape and Nature     | 44  |
| Chapter Three – Language               | 140 |
| Chapter Four – Religion                | 177 |
| Chapter Five – Nationhood              | 258 |
| Conclusion                             | 342 |
| Bibliography                           | 348 |

*'Unless a people are certain of their identity and its values, they are fatally inhibited from exercising that degree of creativity which is necessary to reaffirm civilised values in the corner of the globe that they inhabit.'*

**Emyr Humphreys, *The Taliesin Tradition***

*'Ideas of the imagination transfigure the world and make it habitable. They are the creators of human communities as much as the creatures of them. And those who live by these ideas see everything – themselves included – in another way.'*

**Roger Scruton, *England: An Elegy***

*'A necesidade de que triunfe a variedade sobre as máis intelixentes unificacións.'*

**Ramón Otero Pedrayo, 'Marx e a balalaika'**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The composition of this thesis would not have been possible without the support and understanding of my family and friends in the United Kingdom, Galicia and elsewhere. My greatest thanks must go to my parents whose unending, tireless and unconditional support has enabled me to persist in my research in spite of the occasional hardship and low moment.

Shortly after the viva for this thesis we learnt of the tragic and untimely death of its external examiner: our friend and colleague, Professor Xoán González Millán. From Birmingham to New York via Oxford and Galicia, Xoán served and always will serve as a guiding light to me across the spectrum of Galician studies. I will never forget your kindness, my friend.

To them I dedicate the sum of the scholarship bound here.

In addition, I should like to thank several people especially for their particular contribution to the writing of this thesis, my developing knowledge of Ramón Otero Pedrayo and the times in which he lived. I am grateful to Xosé Luís Méndez Ferrín for declaring his candid subjectivity when recollecting Don Ramón from 1950's Compostela and beyond. Francisco Fernández del Riego for our conversations in the *Instituto Penzol*. Professor David MacKenzie and his obsession with a misty, rainy place in the northwest of Spain, and who understands *retranca* like no other Englishman I know. Dr. Ronald Truman and Professor Ian Michael for their guidance and intellectual rigour without which the completion of this thesis would not have been viable. Dr. Gabriel Rei-Doval Grela for his inspiration and friendship (“¡Viva la República! e que nos faga xusticia a todos...”). We *will* win, meu amigo. To Kerry McKeivitt, a shining light of infinite patience, support and proof reading during the

difficult periods of thesis writing. Finally, my supervisors who have patiently observed the fulfilment of the Herculean task of sifting through Otero's innumerable notes for an imagined Galicia. My thanks to Dr. John Rutherford for his stewardship of my intellectual concerns in Oxford, without which I might have chosen a different path. My warm thanks to Dr. Derek Flitter, whose intellectual mentorship and steadfast faith have stood me in good stead on the long road about myself to Santiago.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

These refer to all works by Otero. Citations from *Grial*, *Nós* and *A Nosa Terra* refer to the facsimile editions:

*Grial* - Galaxia: Vigo, 1988.

*Nós* - A Coruña: Xunta editorial, 1991.

*A Nosa Terra* - A Coruña: Xuntanza Editorial, 1989.

- ACP** 'A cultura dos paisanos', *A Nosa Terra*, 01/05/1929, 2-3.
- ADT** 'Os amigos de Tubinga', *Céltiga* 161, 1931. In *Prosa miúda. Artigos non coleccionados (1927-1934)* (A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1988), 242.
- ADTL** 'Arredor do tema labrego', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 14/09/1930.
- AI** (As Luis Alba) 'Las alas de la inmortalidad', *Misión*, 15/04/1938.
- ALDEA** 'A aldea galega no seu decorrer histórico', *Grial* 8 (1965), 133-150.
- ARTE** 'Arte da nova Europa', *A Nosa Terra*, 30/06/1934, 1.
- AS** *Arredor de si* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1995).
- CAS** 'Castelao, a concencia de todos feitos home', in *Galicia desde Londres. Galicia, Gran Bretaña e Irlanda nos programas galegos da BBC (1947-1956)*, ed. Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos, 206-211.
- CASTRO** 'O Castro', from "Temas viventes", in *Obras selectas. Parladoiro* (Vigo: Galaxia), 99-100.
- CDO** *Galicia. Una Cultura de occidente* (León: Editorial Everest, 1985, 5<sup>th</sup> edition).
- CDV** *Os camiños da vida* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1995).
- CHV** 'Coordenadas históricas de la vida del P. Feijóo', in *Ocho ensayos en torno a feijóo* (Santander: Ateneo de Santander, 1965), 199-213
- COM** 'Compostela, 1845', *A Nosa Terra*, 6/12/1935, 4.

- COMP** 'Comparanzas', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 24/08/1930. In *Prosa miúda*, 74-75.
- CORSI** 'Corsi e ricorsi', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 10/08/1930. In *Prosa miúda*, 67-68.
- DDNC** 'Dous diareos: Novalis e Constant,' *El Pueblo Gallego*, 10/07/1930. In *Prosa miúda*, 63-64
- DEC** 'Ao decorre-los días', *A Nosa Terra* 250, 01/07/1928, 1.
- DES** 'Desvelamento en Santiago', *Grial* 19 (1968), 77-83.
- DEV** *Devalar* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1992).
- DFC** 'Do farrapo ó cheque', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 26/08/1927.
- DGS** Letter to Domingo García Sabell, Ourense 8/06/1973, in *Grial* 52, 1976 (XIV), 218.
- DIA** 'No día de Santiago', *A Nosa Terra*, 25/07/1925, 3.
- DP** 'Discursos parlamentarios', in Ricardo Carvalho Calero, *Letras Galegas* (A Coruña: Asociación Galega da Lingua, 1984), 83.
- AC** 'Esparta, Alexandria, Compostela', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 25/02/1934. In *Prosa miúda*, 169-170.
- EAP** 'Encol do elemento animal na paisaxe', *Nós* 105 (1932), 158-162.
- EB** 'O espello brigantiño', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 17/01/1934. In *Prosa miúda*, 162-163.
- ECON** 'Economía e Cultura', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 26/06/1936.
- EDA** 'A emoción do agro', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 06/06/1931. In *Prosa miúda*, 110-111.
- EDF** 'As obras de ferrocarril', *Céltiga* 144 (1930). In *Prosa miúda*, 233-234.
- EE** 'Un eixe ético', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 21/04/1929.
- EH** *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1982).
- ELEM** 'Esquemas e lembranzas', *Céltiga* 127 (1930). In *Prosa miúda*, 216-218.
- EMA** 'Encol dos estudos modernos de Antropoxeografía', *Nós* 27 (1926), 3-4

- ENCOL** 'Encol da aldeia', *Nós* 14, (1922), 1-7
- ES** 'Espranza', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 13/III/1932, 133.
- ESDPG** *Ensaio sobor da paisaxe galega*, in *Paisaxe e cultura* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1955), 11-58.
- ESQUEMAS** 'Esquemas', *A Nosa Terra*, 01/09/1926, 2-3.
- ETL** 'O ensoñar do torrón labrego', *Entre a vendima e a castañeira* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1990), 125-129.
- FDC** 'Filosofía do camiño', in *Parladoiro*, 149-151
- FIN** 'O final da inquietude', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 09/06/1931.
- FITO** 'O fito d'un camiñar', *Heraldo de Galicia*, Ourense, 23/XII/1930. Also published in *A Nosa Terra* 279, 01/01/1931, 3-4.
- FV** *Fra Vernerero* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1987).
- GAL** 'Galeusca', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 20/08/1933. In *Prosa miúda*, 158-159.
- GDE** *Geografía de España: presencia y potencia del suelo y del pueblo español*, 4 vols. (Barcelona: Instituto Gallach), 1955-56.
- GDG** *Guía de Galicia* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1980).
- GEG** 'Prólogo', *Gran Enciclopedia Gallega*, I (Gijón: Silverio Cañada, 1974), 9-16.
- GS** *Guía de Santiago de Compostela* (Santiago, 1943).
- GSC** Introduction, *Guía de Santiago de Compostela* (Barcelona, 1958).
- HDN** *A historia de un neno* (Ourense: Edición do Patronato Otero Pedrayo, 1979).
- HDG** 'Xeografía', *Historia de Galiza* (Madrid: Akal editor, 1979).
- HOMES** 'Os homes, os feitos, as verbas Letras de afora', *Nós* 109 (1933), 13-14.
- IDL** 'A ilusión da libertade', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 26/01/1930.
- IGSVIII** 'Unha impresión da Galiza do sul no derradeiro ano do século XVIII (A Coruña: Nós, 1929).
- IRL** 'Irlanda políteca no século XIX', *Nós* 8 (1921), 13-17.

- KOKORO** ‘Kokoro’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 27/04/1932. In *Prosa miúda*, 138-139.
- LAB** ‘Laboremus’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 17/07/1931.
- LAT** ‘O latín i a paisaxe’, *El Pueblo Gallego* (06/04/1927). In *Parladoiro*, 171-173
- LC** ‘A loita das culturas’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 27/06/1936.
- LETRAS** ‘Letras d’afora: Un Nouveau Moyen Age’, *Nós* 38 (1927), 17-18.
- LG** *Lembranza de Goethe* (Santiago: Nós, 1932).
- LGH** *Lecciones de Geografía e Historia* (Ourense: La Industrial, 1936).
- LGRA** ‘Lembranza de Goethe: A ronda dos amigos’, *Nós* 100 (1932), 54-56.
- LPS** ‘Lembranza do P. Sarmiento’, *A Nosa Terra* 283, 01/05/1931, 3-4.
- LUAR** ‘Co luar escornado do San Martiño’, *Entre a vendima e a castañeira* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1990), 51-58.
- MAC** *A miña amizade con Castelao*, (Sada, A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1986). Speech given on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1971, at Museo Carlos Madide, Sada, A Coruña.
- MARX** ‘Marx e a balalaika’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 17/03/1929.
- MED** ‘Meditación da Catedral. Galeguismo. Ecumenidade’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 25/07/1929.
- MNE** ‘A masa neutra e indiferente’, *Céltiga*, 25/XI/1930.
- MR** ‘Morte e Resurrección’, in *Día das letras galegas* 1988 (A Coruña: Gráfico Galaico), 85-115 (107). This essay was written in Madrid in the autumn of 1931, and published in Ourense, 1932. It can also be found in *Obras selectas, II*, (Vigo: Galaxia, 1983).
- MSY** ‘Meditación de Sant-Yago’, *Nós* 31 (1926), 2-6.
- NAZON** ‘Nazionalismo e federalismo’, *Céltiga* 160 (1931). In *Prosa miúda*, 240-241
- NB** ‘Duas opinións de Nicolás Berdiaeff’, *A Nosa Terra*, 01/11/1926, 54-55.
- NEPR** ‘Notas encol da paisaxe romántica’, *Nós* 38 (1927), 8-10.
- NES** ‘Notas encol do sentimento da paisaxe n’antiga epopeya irlandesa’, *Nós* 81 (1930), 176-178.

- NLDO** 'Na lama dos orixes', *A Nosa Terra* 242 (01/09/1927), 3-4.
- NLI** 'A nosa loita das investiduras', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 30/01/1932.
- OA** 'Occitania e Atlántida. Motivos', *Nós* 128-129 (1934), 128.
- OLMOS** 'Os vellos olmos', *Céltiga*, 10/09/1930.
- OUT** 'Outono', *Vida Gallega*, 1929, 430. In *Prosa miúda*, 249-250.
- P** 'Pensamentos', *A Nosa Terra*, 14/07/1934, 4.
- PAVONI** 'A "Pavoni", o libro ruso e a "Scienza Nuova"', *A Nosa Terra* 306, 18/08/1933, 1.
- PBC** 'Pol' o baixo cantando', *La República*, 25/08/1930. See also 'A siñificación espiritual do Día de Galicia', *Nós* 80 (1930).
- PDA** 'O pesadelo do alem', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 06/06/1930. In *Prosa miúda*, 61.
- PDC** *Las palmas del convento: biografía novelada de Rodríguez del Padrón. La fiesta del conde Bernstein* (A Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrie de la Maza Conde de Fenosa, 1988). *Las palmas del convento* was originally published by Colección Hórreo, 1941.
- PDE** 'A presenza de Europa', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 19/03/1929.
- PDP** 'Poesía das pátrias', *A Nosa Terra* 321, 28/01/1934, 4.
- PEL** *Pelerinaxes* (Coruña, 1929).
- PER** 'Perigos e perspectivas', *A Nosa Terra*, 22/11/1935, 4.
- PF** *El Padre Feijóo. Su vida, doctrina e influencias* (Ourense: Instituto de Estudios Orensanos, 1972).
- PG** 'Políteca galega II', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 07/01/1931.
- PHL** 'Pantelas, home libre', in *Narrativa breve* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1993), 63-92.
- PONTE** 'A ponte', in *Obras selectas. Parladoiro (Artículos)* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1973), 101.
- PORT** 'Meditacións do Pórtico', *O espello na serán (entre o Pedroso e o Viso)* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1966), 235-237 (237)
- PORVIR** 'Olladas sobr' o porvir', *A Nosa Terra* 288, 01/10/1931, 4. Also published in *El Pueblo Gallego*, Vigo, 04/10/1931.

- PROGRESO** ‘Ollando pr’o Progreso’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 11/08/1927.
- PROL** ‘Prólogo’, in *Historia de Galiza* (Madrid: Akal editor, 1979), v-xxiii.
- PROV** ‘Provincialismo galego’, *Céltiga*, 10/11/1931.
- PUPG** ‘Pra unha políteca galega’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 01/09/1933. In *Prosa miúda*, 160-161.
- PVS** *Polos vieiros da saudade* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1952). In *Parladoiro*, 352-359.
- PZG** ‘Un poema de A. Zapata García’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 11/09/1930. In *Prosa miúda*, 83-84.
- RES** ‘Resposta’, in Xosé Filgueira Valverde, *Da épica na Galicia medieval. Discurso de ingreso na Real Academia Gallega (1941)* (Vigo: Artes gráficas Galicia, 1973), 27-34.
- ROM** *Romantismo, saudade, sentimento da raza e da terra en Pastor Díaz, Rosalía de Castro e Eduardo Pondal* (Nós: Santiago, 1931).
- ROS** *Rosalía* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1985).
- SAN** ‘San Andrés de Teixido’, *Pelerinaxes*, I, 194-208. In *Parladoiro*, 342-348.
- SE** ‘A siñificación espiritoal no día da Galiza’, *Nós* 80 (1930), 152-154.
- SEN** ‘O sentido da historia’, *La República*, 28/06/1930.
- SER** ‘O ser inmorredoiro da Galicia’, *A Nosa Terra*, 15/XI/1935, 29.
- SETE** ‘Os sete traballos’, *Céltiga* 139 (1930). In *Prosa miúda*, 227-228.
- SHD** *Síntesis histórica do século XVIII en Galicia* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1969).
- SP** ‘Sobor de unha “Preocupación” e de moitas “despreocupacións”’, *A Nosa Terra*, 17/04/1936.
- SUL** ‘A chamada do Sul’. *Céltiga* 159 (1931). In *Prosa miúda*, 238-239.
- TC** ‘Temas Compostelanos’, *Nós* 19 (1925), 16-18.
- TDP** ‘O tempo dos piñeiros’, *Lar* (Buenos Aires), XXIV (1957-58), 27-28. In *Parladoiro*, 326-328.
- TM** ‘O tempo maino das campías’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 11/10/1934. In *Prosa miúda*, 185-186.

- TP** 'A Terra Prometida', *A Nosa Terra* 259 (01/04/1929), 2-3. In *Parladoiro*, 75-76.
- TTL** *Treinta y Tres Lecciones de Geografía General* (Santiago: Nós, 1929)
- UN** Untitled article, *La Región* 2386, 13/01/1918.
- UNTITLED** *A Nosa Terra*, 03/IV/1936, 3.
- VA** 'Vellas amizades', *Vida Gallega* 424 (1929). In *Prosa miúda*, 247-248.
- VALS** 'Vals e tango', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 13/05/1932. In *Prosa miúda*, 140-141.
- VELLO** 'O vello e mais o río', *Contos de santos e nadal* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1988), 61-67.
- VIDAS** 'Vidas non paralelas', *Narrativa Breve* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1993), 163-209.
- VIEIROS** 'Pol'os vieiros da serra', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 29/03/1933.
- VNF** (As Santiago Amaral) 'Variacións no "Fontán"', *Grial* 50 (1975), 528-530.
- VTG** 'Resposta', in Victoriano Taijbo García, Rosalía de Castro. Precursora da fala. Discurso de ingreso na Real Academia Gallega (1948) (Vigo: Artes Gráficas Galicia, 1972), 45-61.
- VVG** '«Vagalumes» Versos galegos por Cabada Vázquez', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 26/II/1931. In *Prosa miúda*, 93-94.
- XDC** 'A xeología do carácter', *Céltiga* 132 (1930). In *Prosa miúda*, 221-222.
- XE** 'Xeografía, Economía', *El Pueblo Gallego*, 01/IV/1929.
- XEL** *A Romaría de Xelmírez* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1991).
- XS** 'Xoves Santo', *Logos* 28-29 (1933) 56-57. In *Parladoiro*, 324-325.
- 15/08/1973** Letter to Domingo García Sabell, in *Grial* 52 (1976), 220.

## PREFACE

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr John Rutherford and Dr Derek Flitter, for their excellent guidance during four years of doctoral research. Furthermore, I must express my sincere gratitude to the decisive role played by my advisor, Dr Ronald Truman, who on more than one occasion transformed completely and for the better the direction and priorities of my doctoral research. In Oxford, I must thank the staff of the Bodleian library, the Taylor Institute and The Queen's College Library where I undertook most of the reading needed to complete this project. In Galicia, I am indebted above all to the staff of the Instituto Penzol in Vigo for their kind attentiveness and also to the library of the Facultade de Filoloxía of the University of Santiago de Compostela.

I would like to express my thanks to the Arts and Humanities Research Board of Great Britain for their award of a scholarship, without which this project would not have been realised. I would also like to thank the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their funding of a year of preliminary research in Galicia from 1996 to 1997.

In preparing this text, I have chosen to dispense with footnotes where the works of Otero Pedrayo are concerned; instead, I have employed parenthetical notes within the text itself. This facilitates the reader's task. Given that the bulk of cultural history referred to in this study hails from France and Germany, I have mostly employed and quoted from translations of the works consulted, with the occasional exception where the quotation is brief and easily understandable to both myself and the reader. With reference to the actual texts of Otero Pedrayo, I have generally quoted with the original orthography - as it appears in the given source text - in mind,

generally avoiding modern, corrected versions of articles, novels or essays. My feeling is that the grammatical revision of pre-normative texts in Galicia is detracting not only from our comprehension of previous attempts to create a standard and literary Galician, but also from the value of the norms – however contentious they may be – that were established in the 1980's. Furthermore, reading Otero's words written in his singular style and spelling gives the reader an epistolary sense of the personality of the writer, a parallel perhaps with reading a handwritten document, whereas 'polished' versions homogenise – and in that sense dilute – the expression of one of Galicia's foremost imaginative creators.

## Chapter One - Otero Pedrayo in Context

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide the reader who is unfamiliar with Otero or the associated period of Galician literature with a contextual framework concerning those ideas that condition the writer's ideological universe. A biographical narrative provides the opportunity to examine Otero's intellectual formation since early childhood, and to portray Otero the reader in greater depth. Following this, I shall move on to assess broader ideas and events that I believe to be decisive in the formation and development of Otero's world-view. These include the legacy of German historicist thought and Romanticism, the reception in Galicia of the European Celtic revival, and the role played by the *Xeración Nós* in adapting this to the ideological programme of *atlantismo*.

Otero combines and interweaves concepts and ideas to suit his own intellectual and political agenda, bringing together aspects of cultural history that are themselves complicated by their many levels of connotation and implication. The main task of this introduction is therefore to detail and elucidate the motivation behind Otero's employment of ideas, and to facilitate my subsequent task of isolating these concepts in order to analyse their relationship with others: to act as a guide to decoding and interpreting the context and intentions of Otero's commentaries and texts for the reader.

\*

Ramón Vicente Otero Pedrayo was born on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1888, in Ourense, then a small provincial town with a population of less than 15,000 inhabitants who largely

worked in commerce and local agriculture. During the latter half of the nineteenth century communications had gradually improved, leading to an increasing number of merchants and businessmen arriving from outside Galicia, notably from Castile and Catalonia. The growing town, 'pequeneiro, ledo, falangueiro, fantástico' (HDN, 29), was liberal in spirit, and boasted a strong local press and a long cultural and artistic tradition; its civic life revolved around lawyers, clerks and the political strife between the Conservative and Liberal parties who constituted the *turno pacífico*, the system of local and national government in which parties alternated in power.

Ramón was the only child of Eladia Pedrayo Ansoar and Enrique Otero Sotelo. His father was a doctor, a progressive and a Liberal. As a *diputado provincial*, he had defended Curros Enríquez during court actions against this radical, anti-clerical poet. Otero's parents hailed from the minor nobility, and it was the social class of the Galician squirearchy with which the mature Otero would nostalgically identify, as well as severely criticise, in life as much as in fiction. As a small child, he received an oral family history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Galicia from his father and grandmother. The decadence of the *fidalgos*, the decline of the long-standing feudal patterns of Galician society and the rapid encroachment of a non-Galician bourgeoisie were all subjects that would later become recurring themes in the majority of his novels and short stories.

Dissatisfaction with the circumstances of his education dogged Otero from an early age, and was perhaps the first sign of the independent and intuitive approach that he would later adopt in all aspects of his intellectual career. This had its foundation in his love of books. Staple childhood reading included the 'vella revista europeizante *El Museo de las familias*',<sup>1</sup> and 'libros de aventuras, moito Xulio Verne, libros de

---

<sup>1</sup> See the prologue to *Fra Venero* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1988).

fantasmas e castelos, de historia e as *Memorias de Ultratumba* do seu para sempre benamado vizconde de Chateaubriand'.<sup>2</sup> Otero's lifelong literary appreciation of Chateaubriand is a strong indication in itself of his closely aligned Romantic sensibility and Catholic taste. Looking back on his childhood, Otero recalls that 'formábase en un a idea de ser a derradeira pánstama do Romanticismo' (DES, 79).<sup>3</sup>

In 1898, at the age of ten, he began a more gregarious phase of his education at the Centro Provincial de Instrucción de Posío. His preferred subjects were literature, geology and chemistry, rather than grammar or arithmetic; during the final years of his *bachillerato* ('o clásico bachilerato dos cinco anos regulado pola Lei Moyano'),<sup>4</sup> he came into contact with the poetry of Eduardo Pondal and Curros Enríquez. Other seemingly insignificant events and conditions of Otero's childhood have some bearing on his later reflections on Galician distinctiveness. In 1901 he was chosen with fellow pupil Florentino Cuevillas (later a key member of the *Xeración Nós*) to dine with Emilia Pardo Bazán. Furthermore, in addition to early journeys in Galicia, he visited San Sebastián, Biarritz and Bayonne. The modern, European, cosmopolitan air of San Sebastián and the distinct language of the Basque country heard on its streets made a long-lasting impression on the young Otero. Similarly, a North Sea voyage made in 1905 following the death of his father, and taking in Southampton, Brest and Rotterdam, finds its literary echo in *Arredor de si*. Of equal relevance to an understanding of Otero's writings on Galicia is the time spent at his family's *pazo* in Trasalba, near Ourense. It was here that Otero would have become familiar with rural Galicia and the distinctive landscape just to the north of the river

---

<sup>2</sup> X.R. Quintana and M. Valcárcel, *Ramón Otero Pedrayo. Vida, obra e pensamento* (Vigo: Ir Indo, 1988), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Otero reads the world in terms of the binary opposition Romantic/Neo-Classical; one example arises when he discusses the accounts of travellers in eighteenth-century southern Galicia: 'os viaxeiros eran demasiado neocrásicos pra apreciar os cantos populares, as eirexas medioevás, e os ceos da chuvia' (IGSVIII, 14).

<sup>4</sup> Carlos Casares, *Ramón Otero Pedrayo* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1981), 31.

Miño that was to become a frequent protagonist in his work, and which gave him an early thirst for geography.

Otero's first attempt at a university degree was a complete failure. Although he had enjoyed some courses in literature as part of the preparatory *Curso de Ampliación*, he abandoned the degree of *Filosofía y Letras* at the University of Santiago, bemoaning an institution that was 'vellote y poeirento' (DES, 80). In 1905 he matriculated once again, in *Filosofía y Letras* and Law, at the University of Madrid. Both Otero's mother, the daughter of a prominent Ourense lawyer, and Eduardo Moreno López, a geography teacher at the *Instituto* that Otero had attended as a child, hoped that he would follow this prestigious career.<sup>5</sup> Arriving in the capital at the age of seventeen, he once again found himself with no sense of vocation and was soon disillusioned by the antiquated university system that Pío Baroja had encountered a generation earlier. As Casares observes: 'estudou Otero as carreiras de Letras e Dereito no vello Noviciado da Rúa de San Bernardo, aquel caseirón que albergaba á primeira universidade do país, onde según Raymond Carr mestres e discípulos se aburrían'.<sup>6</sup>

The following six years of largely independent study in Madrid were made easier by the carefree bohemian atmosphere that characterised the city at the time, and by the library of the Ateneo. Although he enjoyed classes in theory of art and literature, the classics and history of law, it was the Ateneo that was to prove the focal point of Otero's considerable intellectual expansion in Madrid from 1905-1911, and is as crucial for an understanding of Otero's formation as the Pontevedra library of Jesús Muruais is for that of Valle-Inclán. During the final year of his life, Otero was modest in recollecting the extent of his studies in Madrid:

---

<sup>5</sup> An elderly Otero recalls that 'a miña nai, ca idea pra min de unha carreira política e social, quixo sempre Madrid' (DES, 83).

<sup>6</sup> Casares, *op. cit.*, 40.

marchéi a estudar á capital de España e metínme nos libros e na miña carreira como calquer outro rapaz do meu tempo. Lía filosofía, teoloxía, ética, estudéi os clásicos españois da Edade Media e do Século de Ouro, fartéime de leituras francesas e alemás, ateiguéime de doutrinas, correntes intelectuais moi de moda na Europa daquelas datas...<sup>7</sup>

However, as is clear from the high degree of referentiality and scholarship that underpins his style and work, Otero's reading was much more extensive at this time than that of 'calquer outro rapaz'. By supplementing his education with reading in the Ateneo, and enjoying *tertulias* in the Café Universal, Otero acquired the vast erudition that would finally find an outlet in the vibrant *galeguismo* of the 1920's and 1930's. The extent and range of his intellectual tastes are considerable, and range from the classics to contemporary fiction and poetry, from Romanticism and realism to *modernismo* and surrealism. Whilst he is especially familiar with Spanish and French writers, he also demonstrates a sound knowledge of the principal American, Russian, English, Italian and German writers.

Although Otero's primary intellectual and literary tastes are derived from Romanticism, the symbolists also formed a highly important part of his cultural outlook, providing him with what would have been considered a 'modern' education at the time.<sup>8</sup> He was familiar, for example, with Eduardo Marquina's translation of *Les fleurs du mal*.<sup>9</sup> His production would therefore draw from the dual intellectual preferences of 'un romanticismo vivencial de fondo sentimental, no que el se autoidentificaba, e un vangardismo estético de raíz intelectual'.<sup>10</sup> He studied history, philosophy and geography, on which last he was already an expert. The four volumes of Suess' *La Face de la Terre*, which took Otero a year to read, influenced not only

---

<sup>7</sup> Víctor Fernández Freixanes, *Unha ducia de galegos* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1976), 22.

<sup>8</sup> C. Casares, *op. cit.*, 45-46.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Anxo Tarrío Varela, *Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica* (Vigo: Xerais, 1998), 221.

his career as a geographer: Suess' metaphorical approach to geographical description undoubtedly contributed to Otero's lyrical and poetic accounts of geographical patterns.<sup>11</sup> As for the cultural reviews with which Otero would have been in contact, he comments that 'lembramos algunha mañán moitos marelos do *Mercure*, e blancos da *Nouvelle Revue*, e verdes de Alcán' (PVS, 86).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Otero was aware of the Generation of 1898's writings as they were being produced. This is vital for our understanding of the many motives that led to the *Xeración Nós*' re-assessment of Galician identity and its promotion through art and politics, and was an aspect of Otero's experience in Madrid that was of fundamental importance. The response to this reception would lie dormant until being awakened by ideological commitment in 1917. Indeed, one of the wider aims of this thesis is to invite readers to consider Otero as occupying a similar place in recent Iberian cultural history to that of the Generation of 1898, of contemplating the modern condition of humanity from a firmly European, but nevertheless fully universal perspective through the preoccupation with a given corner of Spain.

After eventually obtaining a doctorate in Madrid, Otero returned to Ourense in July 1911, by which time his childhood friends Vicente Risco and Florentino Cuevillas had become regular participants in the cultural activities of the Ourense Ateneo. The *tertulia* in the Café Royalti centred on Risco, its literary preferences being the Romantics and French symbolists. This group was known as the *Cenáculo*

---

<sup>11</sup> Of this work and author, Otero points out: 'lín moitos libros: "La face de la terre" de Sues [sic], catro tomos de Morfoloxía terrestre. Levóume un ano enteiro lélo. Era una maravilla. Foi un dos libros que mais influíu en min': in Maribel Outeiriño, 'Conversación con un "Fantasma do século dazanove', *La Región*, 13/12/75. Otero's geographical discourse is never entirely geographical in nature. It is anthropological, and in it we find the same allusions, reflections and quotations from cultural history with which we are familiar in other works.

<sup>12</sup> Founded by Félix Alcán in 1883, *Alcan* became one of the most important cultural publications in France for its volume and quality of production, in which philosophy texts and university textbooks stand out. *Le Mercure de France* published works by Kipling, Nietzsche, and Gide, amongst others. This magazine features in the library of Adrián Solovio, the protagonist of the spiritual biography of the *Xeración Nós*, *Arredor de si*: 'No despacho pequeniño, fresqueiro, cunha fiestra enreixada están as obras do P. Feixoo e tamén moitas ringleiras de libros novos. Uns din Alcán outros *Mercure*' (AS, 36).

*ourensán*, and was characterised by its literary and cultural modernism, as well as its rejection of all types of local commitment or participation in the political process. Quintana and Valcárcel have observed how the attitudes and ideas of its members are not an isolated phenomenon, but attest to identifiable trends in the ideological and cultural ambit of Spain at that time.<sup>13</sup> The group was caught in a socio-political impasse, an ideological void palliated by escapism and exotic literary tastes. In his much-quoted account of the emergence of the *Xeración Nós*, ‘Nós, os inadaptados,’ Vicente Risco portrays the cultural and political panorama of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spain, and its implications for the intellectual personality of the *Cenáculo ourensán*:

A ideoloxía da fin do século foi, sendo todo un movemento de reitificación e de volta, a derradeira frolecencia do humanismo. Descende do romantismo, que foi, no pensamento, no sentimento, ata na intención, antihumanista; mais así e todo, o pulo central da fin do século, com’o do romantismo, era humanista. Históricamente continúa tanto coma contradiz ao humanismo. E nós vivimos coma quen dí, c’un pé na fin do século, ou sexa no humanismo derradeiro, e outro na noite da nova Edade Meia. Adentro dos descendentes da fin de século, continuamol-a corrente mística do romantismo (Schleiermaches [sic], Schelling, Schlegel, Novalis) e da mesma fin de século (Wagner, Verlaine, Maeterlinck) corrente que ja eisen no Renacemento.<sup>14</sup>

This Janus-like approach to cultural history, with its wide scope stretching back to and beyond the Middle Ages, and looking forward to the vanguard of European literature, was to characterise the regenerative impulse of the *Xeración Nós* and especially that of Otero. Whilst still a member of the *Cenáculo ourensán*, however, Otero was also one of the self-styled socio-cultural renegades, ‘vencidos da vida por inadaptados’.<sup>15</sup> This grouping’s nonconformity had its roots not only in art-for-art’s sake and the fin-de-siècle cult of the aesthetic, but also in the deeper dissatisfaction with a political system dogged by *caciquismo* and the *turno pacífico*. This inability and unwillingness

---

<sup>13</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 44.

<sup>14</sup> V. Risco, ‘Nós, os inadaptados’, *Nós* 115 (1933), 115-123 (121).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

to adapt could only have been exacerbated by their real or imagined status as *fidalgos* or middle-class civil servants. Indeed the diminished role of the squirearchy in Galician society merely intensified their socio-cultural elitism and sense of ivory-towered detachment. Such an estrangement had deeper philosophical bases, as Risco underlines: ‘nós reaccionabamos, non somentes contra do ambiente real, senón tamén contra do ambiente ideal, contra dos ideás todos da sociedade moderna’.<sup>16</sup> This nonconformist stance has its sources in the individualist ethic of Maurice Barrès (‘eramos singelamente individualistas’)<sup>17</sup> and the irrationalist philosophy of Nietzsche with its rejection of positivism (‘levabamos o pathos da distancia, que dicía Nietzsche’).<sup>18</sup> However, Bobillo judiciously draws attention to how their aesthetic radicalism did not tally with their ‘practical’ radicalism.<sup>19</sup> Rather than fully live out the anti-role they imagined for themselves, the members of the *Cénaculo* ultimately preferred the stability and comfort of their long-standing surroundings and circumstances: family life and a regular if not large state salary.<sup>20</sup> ‘A súa ruptura co entorno nunca chegou ser total nin violenta’, Bobillo concludes, adding that ‘eran, no fondo, un luxo da pequena burguesía provinciana, a cal podía presumir e exhibir os seus raros’.<sup>21</sup>

Risco’s long inventory of the *Cénaculo*’s literary and intellectual tastes covers Romanticism, *modernismo*, French symbolism and orientalism. However, it is important to see their preferences in context; as Joaquim Ventura underlines, many of their declared ‘modern’ influences and tastes had been around for thirty years: ‘para os homes de *La Centuria*, a máxima novidade, en 1918, ¡eran Rimbaud e

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> F. Bobillo, *Nacionalismo gallego. La ideología de Vicente Risco* (Madrid: Akal, 1981), 28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

Mallarmé!'.<sup>22</sup> The many sources listed by Risco are all indicators of the group's escapist disposition, and of the eclecticism that would later be directly channelled into political commitment.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in spite of the exotic trappings, Risco also evaluates the group's sense of indifference with respect to Spanish national identity: 'non sintiamos hespañol, e se respeito da Europa eramos orientalistas, respeito da Hespaña eramos europeístas'.<sup>24</sup> Although Risco is speaking more for himself than anyone else, this again demonstrates to what extent the collective *Weltanschauung* of the *Xeración Nós* had been forged during the existence of the *Cenáculo ourensán*: 'non embargante, tiñamos já d'aquela, e temos, unha filosofía, un verdadeiro sistema orgánico e vivente, unha conceición di munds [sic] e da vida tan valedeira com'a de calquera filósofo sistemático'.<sup>25</sup>

*Galeguismo* was the catalyst that would allow that protean philosophy to fully materialise. In the *Cenáculo*, Otero's role had been more passive than active, 'máis receptivo que creativo'.<sup>26</sup> He contributed in total two articles and two translations of symbolist poets to *La Centuria*, the group's self-styled 'revista neosófica',<sup>27</sup> a Castilian-language publication devoid of nationalist sentiment, characterised by aestheticism and a distant, apolitical air and also voicing at times a critique of *galeguismo* and the Galician language as nothing more than a peasant dialect. These scarce writings in Castilian reveal a strong dose of worldly cynicism, almost sarcasm, 'un desacougo existencial pola súa inadaptación ó mundo circundante'.<sup>28</sup> The artistic

---

<sup>22</sup> Joaquim Ventura, *O nacionalismo kármico de Vicente Risco* (Santiago de Compostela: Liovento, 2000), 75.

<sup>23</sup> V. Risco, *op. cit.*, 116. Given that exoticism and Orientalism, as well as 'a práctica teosófica', seldom appear or resonate in Otero's work, their appeal would have been minimal to him.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> These were: 'Cartas espontáneas', *La Centuria* 3 (1917), 6; 'Mallarmé', *La Centuria* 3 (1917), 2-5; a translation of two poems by Rimbaud, in 'Rimbaud', *La Centuria* 2 (1917), 1-2; and 'La confesión del hombre culto', *La Centuria* 2, 1917, 6-8.

<sup>28</sup> Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 45.

and political commitment made by the members of the *Cenáculo ourensán* to what was to prove the first phase of Galician nationalism (1916–1936) never ceases to fascinate because of its *apparent* improbability – I draw attention to the adjective because of the many hagiographical, pro-nationalist accounts of this development that seek to explain it in terms of a purely euphoric, redemptive epiphany that forgoes the need for historical and social contextualisation. Why, during November and December of 1917, did Otero and his peers join the *Irmandades da Fala*,<sup>29</sup> the first nationalist group in Galician history? Historians such as X.G. Beramendi have amply documented the reasons for this seemingly unlikely *prise de conscience*. The causes, both ideological and practical, are clearly identifiable. The metamorphosis of the *Cenáculo ourensán* into the *Xeración Nós* was indicative of a specific historical, political and cultural context and confluence: fin-de-siècle Romanticism and the awakenings of nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century, amidst the long-term fall-out of the crisis of values in Spain that was triggered by the events of 1898. The foundation for Otero's ideological and cultural defence of a distinct identity in Galicia takes place 'nunha encrucillada intelectual de revolta modernista contra o positivismo e afirmación pola paixón do romantismo orixinario', and is accentuated by the nostalgia for a pre-bourgeois society.<sup>30</sup> This 'modernism' or 'neo-Romanticism' rallied against mechanism and determinism in philosophy, utilitarianism in ethics, optimistic confidence in progress, naturalism and the didactic spirit in literature, and collectivism in political ideologies. Its advocates and proponents placed 'life' over reason and any notion of a monopoly of the analytical

---

<sup>29</sup> This was an organization founded in A Coruña in 1916. Its intention was to strengthen the use of the Galician language and to promote the study of the economic problems of Galicia.

<sup>30</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 55.

spirit, which was seen as just another organ of life rather than the ultimate benchmark by which to judge hard reality against imagination.<sup>31</sup>

The unlikely proselytisation of these previously apathetic young men, and their increasing involvement during subsequent years in the Galician nationalist movement, seems much more probable when contemporary historical and cultural factors are taken into account; the kind of critical representation that accounts for their move to nationalism as an epiphany *ex nihilo* is a gross distortion of a simple evolution and much needed adaptation by young intellectuals within a very specific set of determinants. Coupled with the abhorrence felt towards the bloody events that were taking place in Europe and Russia was a growing awareness of the rise of totalitarianism and the effect on traditional values and distinctions of uniform egalitarianism. Furthermore, the treaty of Versailles would alter the map of Europe and give hope to nationalities that had been absorbed by larger states in former empires or carved up into buffer zones during and after the Napoleonic era. After linking deeper notions of cultural nationhood with the social injustice and cultural backwardness that surrounded them in their now 'native' Galicia, Otero and his colleagues' later awareness of the significance of President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' led to logical assumptions concerning the need for their intervention in all aspects of Galician society.

Moreover, since 1898 proponents of *regionalismo* had campaigned for a new structure for the Spanish state based on Spain's geo-political and historical reality. There were other factors that contributed to the formation of this new grouping, such as growing class conscience and the aforementioned ineptitude of the prevailing political system. Not to be underestimated is the decisive and proselytising influence

---

<sup>31</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, *Bergson* (OUP, 1985), 9.

of the Carlist professor, Losada Diéguez, on the whole group. ‘Eu non escribía nada ata os trinta e tantos anos’, Otero summarised in 1975, ‘ademais do sentimento que eu tiña, entrei no galeguismo por influencia de Losada Diéguez que era meu amigo’.<sup>32</sup> Of this instigatory figure, Otero recalls that

A el débolle os meus primeiros achádegos, el foi quen venceu teimudamente o meu escepticismo, o meu dilectantismo de lector de Chateaubriand, a filosofía moderna e a Historia de España, a miña casca de *home culto*. (...). Era catedrático de Filosofía, e o que máis me ten chamado sempre da súa personalidade foi a súa capacidade pra despertar vocaciós. Eso foi o que máis influíu en nós. Lémbrome que chegou eiquí moi impresionado por unha estancia no País Vasco: alí descubrira o amor e o interés dos intelectuais e as xentes sabidas daquela terra pola súa cultura e o seu idioma, e foi a quen primeiro lle escoitei decir que Galicia era unha *idea*, algo que estaba agardando tamén a voz que a guiara polo seu camiño. Un bo día chamóume e díxome: “Otero, xa tes trinta anos, xa está ben, xa vai sendo hora de tomar unha postura e porse a traballar.”<sup>33</sup>

There is also an important practical explanation as to why young men previously divorced from the political and social process became involved over a very short period of time. The *Irmandades* was still a young organization, yet to be given substantial ideological content and direction. For previous nonconformists, this was an attractive option, which did not demand such a radical compromise of previous values, and as Beramendi observes, the new grouping was paradoxically the most exotic amidst the political panorama of early twentieth-century Galicia, and the *galeguistas* the most ‘inadaptados’ to prevailing political conventions: to join them would have been the most original action amongst those options available.<sup>34</sup> Membership of the *Irmandades* was ideologically diverse, and would always allow Otero to occupy his place on the conservative wing of the group. These diverse factors led to Otero and his colleagues meeting Cambó and other visiting Catalan politicians of the Lliga on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1917 during their visit to Galicia in preparation for

---

<sup>32</sup> Outeiriño, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Fernández Freixanes, *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> X. G. Beramendi, *Vicente Risco no nacionalismo galego, Vol. I. Das orixes á afirmación plena* (Santiago de Compostela Col. Minor. Ed. do Cerne, 1981), 129.

forthcoming elections: this marked the beginning of a political career that would be truncated by the outbreak of war in 1936. Otero went on to assist in the general election campaign of 1918; ironically, his first published article after conversion criticises those individualists who do not participate in the political process.<sup>35</sup>

Although some critics tend to put a disproportionate amount of emphasis on the year 1917 and the conversion to Galician nationalism as some kind of epiphanic watershed for Otero, correspondence between other members of the *Xeración Nós* suggests that the several years following 1917 were in fact a lengthy period of adaptation for him; in fact, his presence in the *Irmandades* was not crucial until the end of the 1920s. In 1921, for example, Risco complains that Otero has yet to show his true *galeguista* colours.<sup>36</sup> However, part of the reason for Otero's lack of initial involvement after his entry into the *Irmandades da Fala* was his employment as a teacher in Santander and Burgos. He applied for and was given a transfer to Ourense in October 1921, and in 1923 married Josefina Bustamante Muñoz, whom he had met in Santander. Following his return to Galicia, Otero began to assume the role within the recuperative programme of Galician culture that is today associated with him, and to demonstrate in his work the acquisition and promotion of those ideological constants that correspond to his particular interpretation of *galeguismo*: Catholicism, traditional and religious sentiment, the idealisation of rural Galicia, a championing of *européismo*, *atlantismo* and *celtismo* (which will be discussed later on in this chapter). Joaquim Ventura's claims that Otero dedicated his entire life to the nationalist cause on realisation that he would never be able to have children offer a fascinating and highly plausible human insight into what motivated the Galician writer to enter – sooner or later – the ranks of *galeguismo* in such an intense fashion, but they remain

---

<sup>35</sup> 'Acción regionalista', *La Región* (Ourense, 13/01/1918).

<sup>36</sup> X. G. Beramendi, 'O nacionalismo de Otero Pedrayo', in *A sombra imensa de Otero Pedrayo* (Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 1987), extra no.8, 57-63 (57).

just that – claims – until more biographical light can be shed on the matter by himself or other critics.<sup>37</sup>

In 1930 Otero became President of the Galician Writers Association and published his best-known novel, *Arredor de si*. He was now recognised in intellectual circles as Galicia's leading writer. Earlier in 1923, he had become head of the Geography section of the recently formed Seminario de Estudos Galegos, an interdisciplinary institution created as a response to the lack of Galician-orientated curricula at the University of Santiago. As its last president, it was he who decided to dissolve the Seminario in 1940, rather than see its loss of autonomy on being incorporated into the University of Santiago for obvious political motives on the part of the Francoist regime. Otero was professor of Geography at the University of Santiago from 1950 until his retirement in 1958. He published several works in the field as well as innumerable articles on Galician geography, all of which attest to his proficiency in reading, interpreting and translating foreign texts.

Of the members of the *Xeración Nós*, it was Castelao and Otero in particular who led the initiative to construct Galician theatre; the *Centro Dramático Galego* performs some of Otero's plays, such as *A lagarada*, today. Only in recent years has the much abandoned area of Otero's poetical production been examined, the long delay in criticism not helped perhaps by Otero himself. Underplaying his status as a poet, this being reflected in the scarce number of poems that he submitted for publication. Oratory, like most other activities connected with the use of Galician, was still an embryonic discipline in which Otero excelled; as a public speaker he was greatly in demand, especially during the post-War period and the final years of his life.

---

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Joaquim Ventura, 'Modelos femininos nas "novelas de formación" de preguerra de Ramón Otero Pedrayo', presented at the AJEG Conference, Havana, April 2000.

\*

The *Xeración Nós* was instrumental in the growth of political nationalism in Galicia, but its greatest success was the consolidation of a collective notion of cultural nationalism, particularly in the field of literature. Under the auspices of the *Nós* group, the Galician language was vindicated as one capable of sustaining modern prose narrative, and all aspects of Galician culture enjoyed what was essentially the second phase of an ongoing *rexurdimento*. The men of *Nós* created the infrastructure necessary for such cultural activities to develop and proliferate, such as research centres, regular publications and publishing houses. It was those genres that had never enjoyed any considerable degree of artistic practice in Galicia, and which had the greatest social relevance, that blossomed during this period of remarkable fecundity: the theatre, the novel and the essay. The *Xeración Nós* and Otero in particular created the Galician essay and brought the Galician novel to new heights of maturity. The sheer volume of his work attests to a major contribution to the development of Galician as a language capable of expression in all spheres of human engagement and activities, as does his practice in several other genres, most of which had no substantial precedent in Galician letters.

As a consolidated grouping, the achievements of the *Xeración Nós* encompass 'catorce anos de labor firme e rigoroso que serviron para sentar as bases de moitos aspectos da cultura e da ciencia da Galicia moderna'.<sup>38</sup> Its enterprise consisted of nothing less than the creation of a national literature firmly linked to European tradition and the artistic avant-garde, which attempted to avoid mediation through

---

<sup>38</sup> Tarrío Varela, *Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica*, 203.

Madrid, the centralist broker of imported culture. This was part of the task of re-defining the distinctiveness and legitimacy of Galician culture as an expression of nationhood: 'they produced a new definition for Galician specificity based not on folklore or race but on a whole definition of what Galician culture was. For them, a People, a nation cannot exist, and are empty concepts, without a culture'.<sup>39</sup>

Otero's involvement in all spheres of *galeguismo* was correlative to the growing increase in activity by *Nós* and other intellectuals. He began writing fiction at a relatively late stage in his life (at the age of thirty-six), but was to become the most prolific writer of his generation, and the most prodigious that Galicia has produced to date. During the period of 1926–1936, Otero published an average of two books a year, and over the fifty-year period of his artistic plenitude dispatched an average of one article every two to three days. In *A Nosa Terra*, for example, Otero would sometimes publish two or three articles in a single edition; to the *Nós* magazine alone he contributed approximately ninety pieces, ranging from chapters of novels, translations, brief essays, book reviews and short stories. He was intellectually active until his death at the age of eighty-eight in 1976, submitting the article 'O pazo navegante' to *La Región* two days before passing away.

One of the reasons that help to explain Otero's intense productivity especially before the Civil War is the embryonic and uncommercial nature of the market for Galician literature. Apart from a lack of a Galician-literate readership (some of the output of the *Nós* publishing house, supposedly the purveyor of high nationalist culture, included texts in Castilian) that *Nós* was precisely trying to shape and encourage, the magazine constantly struggled to increase the number of subscribers in order to offset financial difficulties. Commercial reality was such that

---

<sup>39</sup> Carlos Baliñas, 'From provincialism to nationalism: Galician political and cultural movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,' *The Blue Papers* 1 (Oxford: Centre for Galician Studies Publications, May 1997), 37-50 (44).

books produced by smaller publishers in the Galician language were always going to be more expensive. There were also few editorial restrictions placed on publications, given that ‘nun ambiente como o galego dos anos vinte e trinta non había un mercado potente para as obras escritas no idioma propio’; as a result, Otero Pedrayo ‘deixaba flui-la súa vea creativa dun xeito non mediatizado; daí que case nunca correxira o que saía da súa polifacética pluma’.<sup>40</sup>

There are also other factors that explain the abundance of Otero’s writing: the ideological requisites of Galician cultural nationalism and Otero’s own personal style of expression and erudition. In two interviews carried out shortly before his death, he refers directly to how political commitment conditioned the quantity and quality of his intellectual pursuits: ‘había que ser de todo; como non había nada feito, había que ensina-la filosofía, a política, a economía, todo, (...), eu puider ser un bo novelista. Pero non podía ser, porque había que dedicarse á outras cousas’.<sup>41</sup> He also assesses the consequences of political and ideological commitment on his narrative production:

Eu debía de ser narrador, nada máis que narrador, un bo narrador..., pero naquel intre, cando tan poucas cousas tiñamos, había que facelo todo: viaxar, botar discursos, escribir nos xornais, estudar xeografía, etnoloxía, historia da nosa terra, que estaba sen escribir. O que de ningunha maneira se podía era estar calados e quedos porque o tempo, xa daquela, loitaba contra de nós.<sup>42</sup>

The strong ideological and political subtext in Otero’s writings frequently prejudiced the literary quality of his works. Otero dispatched material generously but too hastily, seldom revising what he wrote. However, Otero’s vocation as a practising writer and active intellectual was mostly contingent on his adherence to Galician nationalism. If we recall the scarcity of his work before 1917, as well as its evident lack of any commitment or enthusiasm, it is indeed hard to imagine Otero producing

---

<sup>40</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 193.

<sup>41</sup> Outeiriño, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Fernández Freixanes, *op. cit.*, 25.

anything of genuine literary significance without the ideological stimulus that Galician nationalism provided. *Galeguismo* opened the floodgates of the vast erudition that Otero had accumulated during the first thirty years of his life, and provided a thematic core that dominated most of his work if not his entire motivation to produce. This is closely linked to the nature of Otero's style. Written in a Galician that was yet to be standardised, his work rests upon a base of historical and literary allusions that seem to have no limit in scope or depth.

\*

Otero Pedrayo's intellectual interests cannot be separated from the political and ideological commitment expressed by his substantial contribution to the formation of a cohesive nationalist movement during the beginning of the Second Republic. He founded and presided over the *Partido Nazonalista Republicano de Ourense* in 1931, as the monarchical system was in decline. With the unification of the different nationalist groups in December 1931, the PNRO was incorporated into the *Partido Galeguista*. Otero was a member of the executive committee of this new alliance of Galician nationalist groups, and the party's principal goal was to secure a statute of autonomy for Galicia, an ardent political aspiration since the first nationalist assembly of the *Irmandades da Fala*. Autonomy signified the opportunity to recover the authentic characteristics of his idealised Galicia. His popularity as a writer and position as one of Ourense's leading nationalists led to his candidacy for the elections of June 1931. As the first nationalist member of parliament for the province of Ourense, Otero represented the *Partido Galeguista* in the Spanish Cortes with Castelao and Suárez Picallo until November 1933. Although belonging essentially to

the Liberal tradition in wider Spanish politics, he was the candidate chosen by the party to attract the Conservative, traditionalist vote. This was not always successful as a political ploy, as was the case in the 1933 elections when he lost his seat. Otero intervened brilliantly in the debate on the 'Ley de Bases de la Reforma Agraria' in May 1932, displaying Herderian and pluralist tendencies in his defence of the singularity of not just Galician agriculture; what was needed was not 'una ley agraria única para toda España', argued Otero, but 'un conjunto de leyes que una experiencia y un espíritu progresista hagan factible dentro de la variedad que encierra España'.<sup>43</sup>

In the political spectrum of the Second Republic, Otero the Liberal, Catholic and nationalist intellectual opposed Spanish (centralist) Conservatism as much as Marxism, political and ideological tendencies which he believed to be contrary to the essence of Galician personality. 'Eu non penso nas dereitas hespañolizantes nin penso no marxismo, como non sexa para combatir a entrambas alleiras invasións', Otero underlines, arguing that 'como a doutrina filosófica, ética, económica, e nacionalista, o marxismo e as súas derivacións provisionais e estratéxicas do momento, significa o contrario do ser inmorredoiro da Galicia' (SP). In spite of the fact that Otero had supported the Republican Cortes' decision to separate Church and State in 1931, he had defended his belief in the religious character of Spain. Pérez Prieto remarks that Otero's contribution to the debate displayed his 'fondas conviccións cristiás (...), mesmo o seu cristianismo aberto e liberal';<sup>44</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel concur that, based on its discourse, the speech 'ten pouco de nacionalista galego (...) e moito de acérrimo valedor, por riba de dicotomías ideolóxicas que como nacionalista tamén debía contemplar, da tradición católica española sen máis'.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios (1931-1933)*, ed. X.L. García (A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1978), 124.

<sup>44</sup> Victorino Pérez Prieto, *A Xeración "Nós": Galeguismo e relixión* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1988), 69.

<sup>45</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 104.

During this debate on the religious article of the Republican constitution, Otero called into question and asked for the revision of Articles Three, Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven. Article Three stipulated that the Spanish state had no official religion. This, he maintained, was 'ociosa e inútil'. Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven stated that all Religious Orders were to be prevented from engaging in business or teaching and were no longer to receive state benefits; civil jurisdiction was also authorised over cemeteries. Otero's anti-positivism does not translate as opposition to the separation of church and state; rather, he seeks to maintain the freedom of religious bodies to play their part in public life through education, for example, and the dissemination of beliefs. Quintana and Valcárcel summarise this as 'en teoría, separación; na práctica, primacia da Igrexa por riba do Estado'.<sup>46</sup>

However, we should not deduce from this crucial episode in Spanish legislative history that Otero's Catholicism was ultramontane or reactionary; he was in favour of religious freedom within Spain, as was demonstrated by his political support for the opening of a synagogue in Andalusia. Unamuno, with whom Otero had crossed swords during a debate on the status of non-official languages within the Spanish State, declared that Otero was a true Catholic, his assessment referring to the humanist, evangelical tone of the Galician scholar's Catholicism. Defining himself as 'un católico suelto', Otero campaigns for the religious freedom that the Second Republic has promised: 'yo me atrevería a consignar que dentro de la Iglesia española cupiera aquel poderoso heterodoxo que ardorosamente viniera a despertar la Teología española de un sueño un poco pesado que duerme desde hace siglos'.<sup>47</sup> He bases this assessment on the assumption that 'en España y en todos los países latinos, el

---

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>47</sup> *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes – 1931* (Madrid, Rivadeneira, 1933), III, 1533-1534.

catolicismo es algo más que una religión, una psicología’,<sup>48</sup> lamenting how ‘el alma española tiene que llorar con dolor y sentirse profundamente lastimada al verse herida y acometida en la esencia de sus principios’.<sup>49</sup> Otero seems genuinely liberal in these appeals to the Spanish Cortes; he denies that there has to be a necessary union between Church, monarchy and capitalism, and even favours a ‘comunismo cristiano’ over absolute laicism.<sup>50</sup> Pérez Prieto reminds us of the imprecise nature of many ideas advanced by Otero in one of the most revealing public speeches of his career, identifying instead in Otero’s sentiments ‘un certo “talante”, no senso de “amante da liberdade”’.<sup>51</sup> This certainly relates to the overall vision put forward by Otero regarding the religious component of Galician history and identity.

For Otero, Christianity was the nucleus of Galician and European tradition and of Galician identity, the catalyst in awakening national awareness: ‘non tendes pensado de que xeito o cristianismo, por orixen e fin, universal, foi o grande despertador de nacionalidás’ (OA, 128). At the forefront of Otero’s promotion of his own vision of Galician identity throughout all spheres of his work, and of the hope that this vision would be adopted as the norm of cultural self-awareness, is religion. The principal tenet of the Galicians’ collective identity was the bond between national consciousness and the Catholic tradition. As will be shown in chapter four, Catholicism was central to Otero’s world-view, permeating ‘ata os lugares máis recónditos da súa visión do mundo, cunha presenza hexemónica no conxunto da súa ideoloxía’.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 69.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 48.

One month after his intervention, Otero signed the ‘Manifiesto de afirmación católica e nacionalista’ in reaction to what he considered to be sectarian left-wing politics:

Algúns nacionalistas galegos, fondamente feridos nas súas conviccións de católicos... declaran que na loita que se está rifando no curazón mesmo da Cristianidade entre a conceición católica do mundo e a sociedade, e a conceición materialista, Galiza, ponla outrora frorida do tronco céltigo e a filla da Eirexa, ten que coller por forza o posto que lle corresponde. E non pode desertar...

A Galiza católica e enxebre erguerase contra o espírito antirrelixioso e intolerante que ven atentar as nosas tradicións nunha forma nova. E ten que ter en conta que endexamais ten pesado tanto enriba de nós o centralismo español como a pesar cando, entroques dunha autonomía cativa, non veña impor, por meio do laicismo e escravitude da concencia...

Nós afirmamos o propósito de loitar... : pola autonomía... polo trunfo da conceición católica do mundo... pola libertade da Eirexa... pola libertade de profesión relixiosa... pola libertade de ensino.<sup>53</sup>

This manifesto reveals the first of two parts of a movement by Otero towards a more radical, outspoken position on the Catholic wing of *galeguismo*. Although Otero seems to have been speaking as a Catholic (and, exceptionally, not as a Galician nationalist) in the Cortes prior to this, he now adopts the binary discourse of nationalism, where the ‘we’ is defined in contradistinction to an ‘other’. I also wish to draw attention to Otero’s attribution of the problem wholly to ‘centralismo’, a tendency to which I allude at several different points in this thesis. His vigour renewed for the campaign for autonomy, Otero presumes that devolved political power will guarantee Galician sovereignty over its religious affairs. Autonomy is enshrined with a dimension of religious imperative, the holy grail of Galician nationalist pursuit.

His Catholicism was the ethical compass of his public actions. After failing to retake his seat in 1933, Otero continued to participate at the highest level of the nationalists’ political programme, expressing his disapproval of any pacts made with

---

<sup>53</sup> *La Región*, Ourense, 03/11/1931.

left-wing Republican groups. 'Co trunfo electoral', he warns, 'medra outra nova invasion na Galiza. E dende logo contra Galiza. Denantes o monarquismo borbónico e o liberalismo oficinesco... Agora o ezquerdismo ibérico.'<sup>54</sup> He continued to maintain this line until the fourth assembly of the *Partido Galeguista*, where he reiterated his position on the incompatibility of Conservatism or Marxism with Galician society. Catholicism was the rationale behind his rejection of many modern patterns of society and economy. Other *galeguistas*, such as Vicente Risco, had even deeper misgivings about this alliance, and left the party altogether to launch *Dereita Galeguista* (markedly more conservative and Catholic). Otero, however, never abandoned the discipline of the *Partido Galeguista*, even when his own ideological position did not follow the party line on religion when a coalition was formed with the *Frente Popular*, in anticipation of the 1936 elections.<sup>55</sup>

However, the latter development marks a more radical tone to Otero's discourse in political debates and articles concerning Catholicism, tradition and Galician identity, which characterised his political writings until the silence imposed by events in July. He clearly distinguished his own position from the official Catholic sectors of the political arena and the non-regional, centralist right-wing groups, or those who, he claimed, 'fan do catolicismo un epifenómeno do imperialismo hespañol, e conforme van os tempos demudando e o ensono imperial esborallándose en xigantomaquias de opera, negándose con terca forza ó chamamento do espírito, fan lexión arredor do muro do Escorial e queiman incenso no sepulcro do Cid' (P). This is hauntingly prophetic in its imagery.

With the outbreak of Civil War, it was not possible to bring the long-sought Statute of Autonomy which had been chosen by an overwhelming democratic

---

<sup>54</sup> Untitled, *A Nosa Terra*, 03/IV/1936.

<sup>55</sup> Otero's decision owes much to his personal friendship with Castelao.

plebiscite and approved by the Cortes into effect. If not executed, many of Otero's colleagues were incarcerated or exiled. Castelao would die in exile, whilst Risco, the great theoretician and ideologue of Galician nationalism, was both appeasing and terrified of the new regime. In the summer of 1937 Otero was 'relieved' of his post as a teacher of geography and history at the Instituto de Ourense. He was listed on the authorities' files and fined 10,000 pesetas; this penalty was later annulled. Although he had been one of the most prominent Galician nationalists of the twenties and thirties, he escaped further reprisals owing to his moderate position, his defence of Spanish Catholicism, and his friendly public relationships with priests.

Otero was never a fascist sympathiser or apologist,<sup>56</sup> and later incurred the displeasure of the regime on several occasions, most notably owing to his insistence on delivering speeches in Galician, and his inclusion within these of thinly-veiled allusions to his colleague and exiled icon of Galician nationalism, Castelao. Otero's public standing, his symbolic image and role within post-war Galicia owe much to the ethical and uncompromising position adopted by him during and after the Civil War. He spent the period after July 1936 in Ourense and the *pazo* in Trasalba, far away from the frenetic public activity that had characterised the preceding years of the *Nós* generation. Gradually, however, Otero's articles began to appear once more in various newspapers and magazines, both in Galicia and Latin America. Within Spain, he wrote under several pseudonyms and, where the subject matter of the piece was not politically sensitive, employed Galician as a written medium. Together with Ramón Piñeiro, he was to be a guiding figure for the outlawed *galeguismo* of the post-Civil war years.

---

<sup>56</sup> As Vara attests, Otero did not keep such a low profile in the period after the outbreak of war as has often been suggested: 'cómo só el era capaz de facer, coa súa representación dentro do P.G. corría un perigo tremendo, e, que pese a iso, ía á cadea tódolos días de visita a ver tódolos amigos que estaban alí. Cando entraba non sabía se podería saír'. A. Vara, 'Conversas con Xaquín Lourenzo', *La Voz de Galicia* (edición de Ourense), 8/XI and 13/XII/1987.

In 1947 Otero undertook forty-nine days of conferences and cultural activities in South America, including a symbolic and emotional reunion with Castelao in Buenos Aires. He would return there in 1959, nine years after the death of Castelao had conferred upon him the role of principal symbol and embodiment of *galeguismo*, both in exile and in dictatorship. It was not until the end of the 1940's that Otero was able to take up teaching once more, and in 1950 he became professor of Geography at the University of Santiago. In Compostela, through lectures and *tertulias*, Otero came into contact with a new generation of Galicians, young intellectuals such as Xosé Luís Méndez Ferrín and Xosé Manuel Beiras who were turning to nationalism as an expression of their identity and opposition to the Franco regime. Otero also contributed to the launching of Galaxia, today one of Galicia's leading publishing houses, as part of the difficult drive for cultural preservation and recovery as a substitute for prohibited political activity. In 1958, at the age of seventy, he retired from University teaching and continued to study and write. He died in 1976, after saying goodbye to friends, making his confession and requesting that he be buried shrouded in the Galician flag. In his hands was a book that had exerted an immense influence over him since childhood: Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*.

\*

Having considered his life and intellectual development, we can now examine aspects of Otero's intellectual and literary temperament more closely, and consider his endeavours to formulate a re-evaluated sense of cultural nationhood in light of the ideological currents of thought, ideas and intellectual trends that condition the cultural parameters of his ideological universe.

The tracing of influences in literary and cultural history is always complex, especially when one is concerned with a figure possessing the astonishing erudition and vast artistic production of Otero, who offers an intricate cultural construction of Galician identity that does not dwell on commonplace clichés or immediately recognisable traits and symbols of identity such as *morriña*, *saudade* or *hórreos*. These are factors that have deterred rather than encouraged the research needed to widen the understanding and accessibility of his works. In addition, we have also seen how the critic who approaches Otero's work must constantly take into account the writer's particular reading and selection of ideas through the prism of Galician cultural and political nationalism: the catalyst for his vocation as a writer. However, there is one advantage that allows the reader to overcome these potential stumbling-blocks when approaching Otero's texts: although the high degree of intellectual references and meandering textual footnotes that characterised all aspects of Otero's writings during his long lifetime was to an extent detrimental to his prose fiction and the wider accessibility of his work, it does afford the cultural historian an index which greatly facilitates the identification and analysis of source ideas behind Otero's world-view. By naming so many names and making these an integral part of his style, Otero directs us to his sources and therefore to his primordial intellectual debts.<sup>57</sup>

By far the greatest of these is Romanticism and its precursors, and the Romantics in general are those artists most frequently mentioned by Otero, throughout his career. In the novel *Fra Venero*, which recreates the life and times of

---

<sup>57</sup> Otero was at the very least moderately familiar with the concepts, writers and works he mentions in his own writings, although it must be pointed out that his reading was not thorough as a general rule. As Fernández del Riego was able to observe as a result of periods spent with the writer at his *pazo*, 'Lía tódalas obras das que falaba. Aínda que, claro está, non necesitara apurar moitas delas integramente. A súa pericia de rastreador, mesmo o propio don adiviñatorio, encamiñábano por vieiros de seu. Inducían a intuir, desde as primeiras páxinas o esencial en cada libro'. Francisco Fernández del Riego, *O señor da casa grande de cima da vila* (Edición do Patronato Otero Pedrayo, 1988), 11. Tarrío Varela is more objective in his analysis: 'moitas das lecturas que facía eran polo demais vertixinosas ou incompletas'. *Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica*, 221.

Zacarias Werther (1768-1823), Otero demonstrates more than a sound familiarity with the wide parameters of modern European cultural history. The novel is more a musing on the period in which it is set than the story of its eponymous protagonist. The characters and knowledgeable allusions include Herder, Goethe, Novalis, Heine, Hölderlin, Schelling, Hegel, Kant, Hoffmann, Fichte, the Schlegels, Mozart, Voltaire, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Mme. de Staël and Stendhal. The Classical writers, the French symbolists and Henri Bergson are also frequently alluded to or mentioned by Otero over the broad span of his artistic production. Others, however, seem only to be referred to during a finite period. Two excellent examples of this are Oswald Spengler and Nicholas Berdyaev, thinkers whose works on the state and future of Western civilisation and the defence of Christianity against Marxism and modernity respectively - were highly popular during the twenties and thirties and had considerable influence on Otero. Spengler's influence, however, should not be underestimated on the basis of a restricted pattern of reference that Otero makes to him during a given period. In each chapter, I will analyse Otero's debt to specific thinkers and ideas, supplementing this analysis with the references and commentaries which Otero himself supplies, in order to present logical and justifiable deductions that can be made concerning his hypothesis of Galician identity. When there is a lack of evidence, I clearly state where speculations or hypotheses are offered.

By the sheer complexity of its content derived from a broad spectrum of the history of ideas, Otero's work demands intellectual investment on the part of the student and reader. His style is generally elegiac and evocative, exuding melancholy and driven by improvisation and spontaneity, 'a escribir máis por un prurito de ritmo mental ca de verdadeira urxencia de transmitir un contido intelectual'.<sup>58</sup> In an

---

<sup>58</sup> Tarrío Varela, *Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica*, 221.

unpublished letter, Otero exclaims: '¡Cámo mais ceibe e fermoso o traballo literario! Abonda co lembrar e o maxinar'.<sup>59</sup> Recollection and imagination define his literary temperament. This confirms the roots of his outlook as Romantic, especially given his reliance on intuition. Cardinal describes how the Romantic cannot accept the explanations of rationalism, for they seem to censor authenticity and amputate feeling, reducing man and the world to a mechanism;<sup>60</sup> intuition becomes one of the most important modes of discovery, functioning as a sophisticated receptivity to signals that spring forth from the instinctual depth of the mind.<sup>61</sup> In the context of Otero's production, Anxo Tarrío states how intuition 'leva a que moitos párrafos da prosa oteriana a penas sexan outra cousa que puras secuencias fónicas, musicais, encadeadas unhas nas outras, que levan engastados, aquí e alá, conceptos profundos sobre do ser da realidade'.<sup>62</sup> His fiction and articles reflect how his mind works: a fluidity of imagery abounds, and an intuitive association of ideas and concepts stands side by side with subjective reflection and a penchant for evocation and description. Otero believes that 'en tódalas cousas, debemos fuxir da rixidez das clasificacións' (EH, 208). Baliñas relates how Otero did not edit in a standard manner; authenticity was spontaneity rather than abstract propositions or arguments guided by logical rigour. Persuasion and sentiment are interchangeable, and adorned with as many metaphors as occur to him in the act of composition.<sup>63</sup>

Otero rarely develops a viewpoint fully. Instead, the critic must expand, analyse and evaluate metaphor, periphrasis and brief allusions woven together in an impressionist style. There is also a blurring of genres to be found in most of Otero's

---

<sup>59</sup> To Manuel García Barros.

<sup>60</sup> R. Cardinal, *German Romantics in Context* (London, 1975), 28.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Tarrío Varela, *Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica*, 229.

<sup>63</sup> C. Baliñas, 'Otero Pedrayo, intelectual', *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos* XXXI (1978-80), 25-94 (27).

work: a lack of authorial concern for perfection of form. The essay writer shares the novel with the writer of fiction and the cultural historian; the poet shares the essay with the politician and nationalist. This has led to a critical consensus that regards Otero as

autor dunha única obra (na que se integraría tamén a dramaturxia), fóra de clasificacións xenéricas ou de etiquetas literarias, onde é a linguaxe quen dita a súa elaboración: vitalizando vocábulos, valendo-se da metáfora (e mesmo da alegoría) como instrumento fundamental de expresión e coñecemento para aprender a realidade metafóricamente (quer dicir, en termos doutra cousa) e establecendo relacións que crian un manancial practicamente inesgotábel de significacións e asociacións.<sup>64</sup>

Strong characterisation, a blend of realism and Romanticism, and an unstable narrative discipline that allows plot to meander and narrative pace to be encumbered by secondary story-lines are the salient features of Otero's novels. Quintana and Valcárcel have identified several reasons why Otero a figure today widely remembered and known in Galician society as the patriarchal custodian of Galician letters during Franco's dictatorship has not enjoyed as large a readership as other writers. These include the combination of his intense rate of work and its general complexity (a highly erudite, often prolix style), with publications in a wide range of periodicals and newspapers, many of which only enjoyed a short existence and are no longer extant, as well as the eclipsing of Otero the writer by Otero the public figure and beacon of post-Civil war *galeguismo*. Other factors that contribute to Otero Pedrayo's status as often little more than 'unha invocación puramente superficial', are 'a perda da memoria histórica colectiva motivada por demasiados anos de anemia cultural', and 'o seu esquecemento por algunhas "vangardas" máis loubadoras doutros autores máis directamente utilizables na acción política pre e posdemocrática'.<sup>65</sup> It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Otero is a difficult writer for most readers, unlike

---

<sup>64</sup> C.P. Martínez Pereiro, 'Introducción ao teatro de Otero', *Cadernos da escola dramática galega* 72 (A Coruña, May 1988), IV.

<sup>65</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 11.

Castelao who employed a clearer and more accessible style and prose, edited his works and who, on a purely political level, is much more of a populist figure. Although Otero has not enjoyed such success with a modern Galician reading public, and some of his appeal is lost on the strictly literary reader, those motivated by cultural history or the relationship between extrinsic ideological determinants and intrinsic literary tastes are rewarded by his work. Instead of well-edited and polished literary finesse, we find an irrepressible intellectual personality, projecting itself through evocative and expressive literature that rests exclusively on concepts and ideas: the comparison with Goethe has been justifiably employed.

An edition of his complete works was published in the early seventies, in volumes of selected novels and essays. Apart from this, there have been relatively few attempts to gather together his works, especially his innumerable articles, many of which are now irretrievably lost. Nevertheless, Galaxia still keeps his best known works in print, which have remained available thanks to the generous amounts of money afforded during the 1980's and 90's to cultural projects by the Galician autonomous government. Otero's most significant and well-known works are the trilogy of novels *Os camiños da vida* (1928), *Arredor de si* (1930) and *Devalar* (1934). These encapsulate an imaginative portrayal of Galician identity, and describe the gradual recovery of identity by Galicia through the figure of single protagonists in the first two novels, and multiple protagonists in the final part of the trilogy. These works are of particular importance for the study of Otero in that they show a writer quite capable of expression in different literary and narrative formats. *Os camiños da vida* is a historical novel in the realist vein, spanning two centuries of Galician history. The narrative structure and style of *Arredor de si*, meanwhile, is in touch with the latest contemporary currents of European literary practice. The influence of Joyce,

evident in the novel's reliance on interior monologue, stream of consciousness and short, clipped sentences, is paramount here. *Arredor de si* is widely recognised as the spiritual biography of the *Xeración Nós*, and as such is an invaluable literary artefact especially when we consider the relationship between Galician nationalism and the recovery of Galician artistic practice. *Devalar*, meanwhile, is a cultural novel whose reliance on multiple protagonists owes an obvious debt to John Dos Passos and anticipates Cela's *La Colmena*. It is the idealised portrait of a possible Galicia, a plural community fully in touch with what Otero considered to be the essential bases of its own cultural identity. *Contos do camiño e da rúa* (1932) and *Entre a vendima e a castiñeira* (1957) are two of the most important collections of short stories in the Galician language, particularly the latter, given the sensitive time of its publication. The themes and settings are mostly rural, with characters drawn from the squirearchy and peasantry. Also of intrinsic interest and importance are the key essays in which the theme of Galician cultural identity is paramount. *Romantismo, saudade, sentimento da raza e da terra...* (1931) was Otero's induction speech for the Real Academia Galega, delivered in 1931.<sup>66</sup> It is a homage to three nineteenth-century Galician writers: Nicomedes Pastor Díaz, Rosalía de Castro and Eduardo Pondal. The *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* (1932) is Otero's personal vision of Galician cultural history and identity framed within a loosely historical discourse and narrative format, whilst the *Ensaio sobor da paisaxe galega* (1955) is perhaps his most succinct and accomplished synthesis of his vision of the Galician landscape as a cultural entity, and involves the disciplines of anthropology, geography and history.

\*

---

<sup>66</sup> Written between *Os camiños da vida* and *Arredor de si*.

The interest that Otero took in the subject of Galician distinctiveness can be traced back in particular to the style of intellectual enquiry we associate with Herder, although Otero made this intellectually his own. This was partly a matter of his wide-ranging literary interests and partly a matter of his intellectual activity in the fields of geography, philology and cultural history.

Romantic thinkers such as Herder and Fichte had delivered a dynamic and imaginative vision of cultural nationhood in response to Enlightenment aesthetics and the restrictive uniformity of Neo-classicism. Otero's conception and defence of a unique identity present in Galicia, distinct from those of the rest of Spain, as well as his very Romantic brand of nationalism, stems indirectly and directly from Herder's decisive formulation of cultural nationhood. Indirectly, for example, in that the principal medium for the promotion of Herderian thought in Europe and foundation for the wider dissemination of German historicism, A.W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, features in Otero's library.<sup>67</sup> However, although Herder's ideas permeated to such an extent into European cultural history and thought that their fundamental role in the rise of Galician culture and nationalism is unquestionable, there is ample evidence that Otero did not depend on any mediatory source for his reception of historicism. It was Herder, he opines, 'quen ensinou a Goethe a paixón polo concreto' (LGRA, 54). 'Il sabe aduviñar a vida de froresta dos pobos e istromenta temas da sinfonía da Historia universal' (LGRA, 54) comments Otero, 'traballa Herder os novos e vidales sistemas de historia' (LG, 10). Otero's concept of Galician history rests on the notion of an organic process: 'a

---

<sup>67</sup> A.W. Schlegel, *Cours de littérature dramatique*, 2 vols, translated from German by Mme. de Staël (Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhonen et Cie, Ed. Libraire Internationale, 1865). In 'Notas encol da paisaxe romántica', Otero comments that 'o romantismo na verba e no senso (...) é mais vello que Rousseau. Ispiraba as literaturas xérmánicas, coma mostrou Mad. de Staël na Alemaigne traducindo o pensamento de Schlegel no seu *Curso de Literatura*': 9.

historia de Galiza é unha grande historia vivente' (SE, 152), he declares on the emotive occasion of the Día de Galicia in 1930. During the same period, he widens his allusions to Herder's theories of historiography by stating that 'cada pátria ten o seu modo de interpretar ou seguir a leición do pasado' (OA, 129). In 1974, Otero still continues to reveal the enormous debt of his ideological outlook to historicism: 'nós temos fe no xenio e espírito dos pobos; aínda alentamos na fermosa teoría do *Volksgeist* do romantismo alemán... e de tódolos romantismos' (GEG, 15). These are just some of many examples of the crucial influence of German historicism in general and Herder in particular on the work and world-view of Otero.

The terminology that Otero employs recurrently in his articles and essays, with its references to Galicia's 'alma colectiva' or 'espírito inmorredoiro' and to 'o pobo' is indicative of the overriding influence of historicist discourse. Otero's nationalism is fundamentally cultural and literary, idealistic and humane in nature, confirming its essentially direct source in the inception of Romantic nationalism in Europe: Herder's belief in the peaceful multiplicity and diversity of national forms of life. The principal tenets of Herderian thought are the pillars on which nationalism rested, and from which the greater part of the outlook of the *Xeración Nós* is derived: the defence of the uniqueness and incommensurability of national cultures; the belief in the need to belong to a grouping based on a shared history, culture and language; and the organic connections between past and present.<sup>68</sup>

Romanticism was to consolidate historicism's emphasis on the recovery of language, customs, legends, traditions and ways of life, and the remembrance and idealisation the past. Linking this to Galicia, Otero comments that: 'por algo os poetas e historiadores do tempo romántico espertaron a conciencia do verdadeiro ser de

---

<sup>68</sup> See Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1992).

Galiza' (ROM, 26). Moreover, Romantic nationalism is seen as the stimulus for the cultural reawakening that took place in various sectors of Galician society: 'os despertares nacionais do XIX alumbraron os diferentes manatiais de vitalidade galega: a lingua e o estilo, o sentido filosófico e o esforzo ledo do traballo, do agro e da mar' (MR, 107). Both of these statements highlight the debt of Otero's traditionalist notion of Galician identity to historicism and Romanticism, and its mediation through the *Rexurdimento* writers, or what Flitter has termed 'transferencia histórica' when describing how Otero formulates 'un diálogo transferencial cos seus antecesores, pois describe un espertar, un mencer, ocasionado neles que eles ían logo ocasionar nel'.<sup>69</sup>

Otero acknowledges this transference throughout the whole of *Romantismo, saudade e sentimento da Terra...*, especially when he describes an organic relationship between European Romanticism, the writers of the *Rexurdimento*, and the defence of the local and specific that was part and product of the Romantic influx: 'o Romantismo extranxeiro fíxolles atopar un sentido galego do vivir. Hoxe as ciencias millor artelladas, confirman o xenial sentir dos Precursores' (ROM, 26). Like his peers, Otero celebrated the *enxebrismo*, or authenticity, of Galician culture just as the Generation of 1898 had championed *casticismo*. Tradition, Otero believed, 'expresa la forma esencial de nuestra cultura cristiana en el lenguaje humilde de un interior aldeano. Lo que la tradición recoge, piensa y crea es inmortal. Nació en reposos palpitantes de oraciones, con fe en las promesas que no pueden mentir, y a nosotros toca escuchar en el silencio de nuestro corazón la voz de la tradición para obedecerla y exaltarla' (AI). It also had its roots in 'familia, parroquia, organizacións social e económica agraria, e, abranguendo todo, a relixiosidade'.<sup>70</sup> However, Otero's traditionalism, although nostalgic for the vanished Galicia of the previous four

---

<sup>69</sup> Derek Flitter, 'Ramón Otero Pedrayo e a "transferencia histórica" do rexurdimento galego', *Donaire* 3 (October 1994), 22-26 (22).

<sup>70</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 58.

centuries, was not dogmatic or reactionary. Unlike Alfredo Brañas (1859-1900), one of the leaders of nineteenth-century traditionalist regionalism in Galicia, Otero had not inherited anti-Liberal tendencies or Carlist sympathies,<sup>71</sup> yet his dream of a rural Galician idyll shares much with that of the author of *El Regionalismo Gallego*. The vision of an Arcadian Galicia of happy small landholders untouched by sinful contemporary industrial society characterises Brañas' work; the anti-industrial tone of certain sectors of Galician nationalism and its notion of Galicia as a peasant society based on rural values, content in the benign and paternalistic governorship of the intellectual and upper classes from the small Galician cities, has its local origins in the economic programme of this writer.<sup>72</sup>

However, Otero's defence of an idealised rural Galician society was not hermetically sealed from the capitalist system. His Catholic and traditional position did allow for adaptability and dialogue with modern structures and tendencies in society, notably towards the end of his life. In one of his finest essays, 'A aldea galega no seu decorrer histórico', published in 1965, Otero recognises and accepts the now definitive disappearance of the squirearchy, whilst clearly reiterating his own preferences and standpoint on the social strata of the Galician village: 'a parroquia pode vivir sen o señorío. Mais o consorcio das raíces das dúas estaxes na terra daba a millor versión do esquema da aldea' (ALDEA, 142). Similarly, he is aware of the decline of the long-standing agricultural work-patterns in Galicia, but does not adopt a fatalist approach to the future so often found in traditionalists whose cherished model

---

<sup>71</sup> Otero makes his rejection of Carlism, on the premise that it failed to ally itself closer with the distinct personality of Galicia, abundantly clear: 'Os carlistas galegos sufriron a equivocación inicial de non defender unha personalidade histórica' (EH, 227); 'na Galiza o calrismo [sic] non sostíña unha individualidade anterga coma nas Provincias Vascas. A verdadeira causa galega era demasiado fonda pra se fiar das loitas dinásticas. Aquila causa pechada nas entranas do pobo tivo que ser procrumada pol-as beizos dos poetas, no dezanove coma no tempo dos Druídas únecos sacerdotes no fogar da Pátrea' (ROM, 50).

<sup>72</sup> Baliñas, 'From provincialism to nationalism: Galician political and cultural movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,' 41-42.

of society is rendered impractical, unwanted or obsolete by the pace of historical change: ‘no fondo temos o abandoo crecedeiro do traballo do campo (...) inda temos a esperanza de que dinantes a Galiza sexa un moderno e verdadeiro fogar dos galegos’ (ALDEA, 148).

Hence we find in Otero’s brand of cultural re-evaluation a degree of Romantic harmony between tradition and progress; ‘estar nas orixes é estar no futuro’ (EE) declares Otero, and *galeguismo*, he maintains, ‘sufíncase na tradición, na historia e sabe enxerga-lo futuro’ (MNE). His rejection of positivist values and lifelong love of quintessential Romanticism designate tradition as the continuity of those constants he saw as embodying the authentic Galician national personality, above all religion. It is anti-socialist as much as anti-capitalist, and his dialogue with modernity, underpinned by idealism rather than realism, has as its criterion a minimum of changes, ultimately governed by his sense of tradition and Catholicism that lay at the spiritual heart of a Galician culture and society he sought to realise. I concur with Francisco Elías de Tejada’s comparison of Otero with Menéndez y Pelayo: whilst the former is ‘el adalid por autonomasia de la cultura gallega’, the latter ‘es el campeón por autonomasia de la grandeza cultural hispánica’.<sup>73</sup> Menéndez y Pelayo ‘fue auténtico tradicionalista’, whilst Otero ‘nace en tiempos en los que el positivismo había quedado superado y contempla a Galicia con miradas de tradicionalista’.<sup>74</sup>

Otero’s intimate identification with Christian Romanticism owes as much to his lifelong appreciation of Chateaubriand as it does to German historicism. Carballo Calero sums up the weight of critical opinion concerning the importance afforded to Chateaubriand and his works by Otero, as well as contrasting their styles:

---

<sup>73</sup> Francisco Elías de Tejada, ‘Ramón Otero Pedrayo y el tradicionalismo cultural gallego’, *Homaxe a Otero Pedrayo no LXX aniversario do seu nacemento* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1958), 173-181 (175).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

Chateaubriand é chave fundamental pra a espicación de Otero. Non é que crea que a prosa de Otero está formada sobre a de Chateaubriand. Ista ten un fluir máis maxestoso, máis lento, máis eclesiástico. A de Otero seméllame máis feudal, máis rápida, máis cabaleiresca. Pero Otero ama, como Chateaubriand, a cima indeterminada dos bosques. O romantismo cristián é denominador común aos dous.<sup>75</sup>

Chateaubriand, Otero remarks, was a Celt who ‘definiu o dezanove’ (TM, 186). The appeal of this particular strand of Romanticism to Otero, rather than that of the satanic, the sublime or the introspection that led to proto-existentialism and religious and moral scepticism, has its Peninsular antecedent in earlier advocates of Schlegelian theory. For Otero, as for earlier Spanish writers, the literature of Romanticism was ‘a spiritual literature which was the product of Christian belief and which was directly opposed to rationalism and materialism’.<sup>76</sup> In his political and social life, this would manifest itself as a brand of Christian paternalism. Otero saw religion as an indispensable and inherent part of human civilization: ‘o home búscase no que ten de eterno’ (HDN, 2). This was his principal objection to Marxism - its denial of the hope of an after-life, and of the value of individuality in human society. Galicia’s cultural identity in its plenitude was predicated upon this, as was Galician history: ‘momento decisivo y culminante de la Historia gallega, la Redención por el Evangelio’ (GDG, 133). Catholicism was therefore part of ‘[o] ser íntimo e tradicional da nosa Terra’<sup>77</sup> that allowed Otero the revisionist historian to portray Galicia as a microcosm of universality, and as an equal member of a wider cultural and spiritual community.

Another evident sign of Otero’s Romanticism, and that of the aforementioned historical transferral of Romantic values and ideas, is his depiction of the Celtic traits supposedly inherent in Galician identity. The Romantic and Celtic revival in the later nineteenth century was exemplified in Galicia through the works of Rosalía de Castro, Manuel Murguía, Eduardo Pondal and Curros Enríquez. In Galicia, *Celtismo* was first

---

<sup>75</sup> Carballo Calero, ‘Ramón, príncipe de Aquitania,’ 28-29.

<sup>76</sup> D.W. Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Literary Theory and Criticism* (CUP, 1992), 129.

<sup>77</sup> Various authors, ‘Afirmación católica dun grupo de nacionalistas’, *Logos*, 1931.

introduced and promoted by the regionalist ideologue Verea y Aguiar, but was developed to a greater extent through the theories of Manuel Murguía, who had posited the first of many conceptions of Galician peculiarity based on ethnic specificity, which drew on the philosophy and historicism of Bismarck's newly formed German nation. The historian and leading intellectual of nineteenth-century Galicia also promoted cultural dialogue with Brittany, predominantly through his friendship with the Breton Celticist, Hersart de La Villemarqué.

On the poetic front, Pondal created a new contemporary myth that was to prove highly influential and informative for the historical and political discourse of the *Xeración Nós*, and his poetry provided a 'civic message' for subsequent Galician nationalists.<sup>78</sup> As Flitter observes, '[a] calculated primitivism also determines the choice of heroic virtues attributed to the Celts, heroic virtues which, according to Pondal, would motivate the struggle of Galicians in the late nineteenth century'.<sup>79</sup> In the work of Otero, *celtismo* signified an 'aesthetic enabling process of almost mystic dimensions';<sup>80</sup> his homage to Pondal and adoption of these ideological tenets forms the final lengthy section of his induction speech for the *Real Academia*, given in 1931. Murguía and Pondal were the two most important predecessors of Otero's approach to the cultural phenomenon of Celticism as a seal of nationality, psychology and ethnic identity. Drawing on the Romantic assumption – largely founded on the ubiquitous influence of Ossianism – that the Celts were characterised by their dialogue and identification with nature, Otero was able to select appealing aspects of collective Galician identity that were to be the cornerstone of his attempt at imaginative cultural

---

<sup>78</sup> D.W. Flitter, 'The Poetic Image in Pondal: Recollection and Premonition', *1st Oxford Conference on Galician Studies. Oxford 1991* (Xunta de Galicia), 191.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Derek Flitter, 'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2000), xxxvi, 3, 296-309 (301).

reconstruction.<sup>81</sup> Hence in his portrayal of Galician outlook and personality we find cultural attributes that are largely associated with the Romantic: the stereotypical Celtic trait of melancholy; a longing or nostalgia;<sup>82</sup> a love of freedom; a penchant for imagination; individualism; an undogmatic outlook ('non hai marcos precisos pras realidás no cerne do espírito céltigo', ROM 143), and a close, spiritual relationship with Nature.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, a peripatetic Celtic past characterised the Galicians as 'pobo en camiño', a coded term taken from an idiosyncratic definition of peoples and their cultural outlooks: 'un bo criterio diferenciador de psicoloxías: os pobos gardadores do sentido do camiñar, e os pobos esquecidos do mesmo' (MR, 91).

From Otero's perspective of revisionism, Celticism was the ethnic and psychological base of the Galician nation: 'na zona íntima, intraducible e libre do pobo galego, latexa a conciencia celta, prerromana, a que corre desde as orixes baixo tódalas formas externas e seguirá correndo no futuro' (EH, 20). *Celtismo* signified much more to two generations of Galician intellectuals than a simple historical root, however questionable its historical veracity may have been. It served the ideological purpose that any attempt at nationalist revival tends to adopt: it was a means of revisionist history, which allowed the Galician intelligentsia to reinterpret the past on more favourable terms and to redefine Galician cultural identity by endowing it with

---

<sup>81</sup> The identification of the Romantic with the Celtic was an intellectual trend to which Otero fully subscribed. In *Romantismo, saudade, sentimento da raza e da terra...*, he comments that 'Vicente Risco e tamé Euxenio Montes teñen pensado o Romantismo como un fenómeno céltigo. (...) ¿quen sería dono de resistir a súa fonda suxestión?': 25. He also plays on supposed distant historical links in order to promote the role of Celtic-kind in the Romantic movement: 'son os creadores e filósofos celtas e xermánicos (pobos irmáns, de orixe común) os que poñerán as bases ideolóxicas da revolución romántica': 90.

<sup>82</sup> 'Os Celtas son saudosos. Eu non entendo a un celta protestante. A Saudade obriga ao «libero arbitrio»' (OA, 130).

<sup>83</sup> Otero defines the Galician-Celtic psychology as '[a] ausencia dunha dogmática rixida, na tendencia ó soño, e a fantasear vidas que nunca poderá vivir, nunha enorme ironía, na sucesión arbitraria dun tonus de exaltado e deprimido baixo a aparente solidez dunha vida disciplinada. É dicir, no desexo vago doutra cousa, manifestado en entusiasmos imaxinativos ou en contraria e paralela ironía e acerba crítica. Todo o que non sexa nel obra da cultura – desde o humanismo clásico ó reflexo e aceptación do moderno – será o galego' (EH, 23-24).

meaningful origins and dignified quiddity in the present.<sup>84</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, it provided the nationalists with an index and range of symbols to denote common unity that could transcend class differences and consolidate political support. For Otero, as for the whole of the *Xeración Nós*, the Galician model of the wider Celtic revival in Europe came to signify not just an ethnic sense of continuity, but also a spiritual continuum on which further cultural and political achievement could be based.

The members of the *Xeración Nós* moved from cosmopolitan Europeanism towards Atlantic Europeanism, a process that was correlative to their proselytisation and renewed sense of national identity. The *celtismo* of the nineteenth century was adapted by *Nós* in the 1920s into the more disciplined and intellectually rigorous *atlantismo*, which was also an ideological adaptation of wider European tendencies shown in previous decades by Spanish intellectuals. *Atlantismo* was predicated upon the belief that the Mediterranean basis of European civilization was reaching its end and that Atlantic culture was reaching new heights of greatness. It also envisaged the cultural, moral and spiritual regeneration of Europe through the initiative and leadership of the so-called Celtic nations: Scotland, the Isle of Man, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany and Galicia. Like Catholicism, Europeanism offered Otero and other Galician thinkers another perceived grouping to which Galicia rightfully belonged ('somos Europea, traballamos no cerne europeo', MR, 109) and on which it depended: 'Galicia non pode vivir sen Europa; precisa alentarse directamente na atmósfera occidental, nas súas formas superiores e inmorrentes' (PDE). As its name

---

<sup>84</sup> There are occasions when Otero approaches something resembling objectivity where Galicians' Celtic roots are concerned. He comments that is necessary to define the Galician as Celtic, 'mentres non se descubra unha conciencia histórica anterior. Non sera o céltico de hoxe da Bretaña, ou Irlanda, non precisamente o céltico que pola historia poidamos transpoñer á cultura galega prerromana, pero estaría máis preto daqueles dous celtismos ca do clásico, ibérico ou europeo' (EH, 23-24). Decades later, he mentions 'os pobos céltigos' before adding 'digamos millor, de orixen, de caracterización céltiga' (HDG, 7).

suggests, *atlantismo* promoted the concept of a wider confraternity, not based solely on supposedly Celtic origins but also on questionable notions of geographical and historical isolation as well as Europeanism, allowing the *Xeración Nós* to incorporate Portugal, France and Belgium into this somewhat contentious spiritual federation. Such unity was seen as a way of 'saving' European culture, perceived to be in crisis by *Nós*.

It also distanced Galicia from Spain's Moorish legacy and from Mediterranean culture, whose supposed decadence was associated with declining Castilian hegemony and imperialism. Galicia, Otero maintains, 'non foi ibérica nin árabe. O carácter diferencial español e o mudexarismo non poden aplicarse a Galicia. De estirpe aria, atlántica e occidental, a entraña histórica galega pode clasificarse de insular, e tanto pola súa forza de conservación como polo seu poder expansivo' (EH, 16). In creating a new specificity based on what was essentially an interpretation of historical and cultural Iberian ethnicity, the *Xeración Nós* were rejecting an old one: the nation was not Moorish, but Celtic; not Castilian, but Galician. The Europeanism of Otero, and to a large extent of the whole *Nós* generation, was Herderian in essence - it coupled the specific with the notion of universality. As Otero wrote of 'os mozos galegos' in 1932, 'saben ser europeos por seren esencialmente galegos. Teñen unha pátreia e por tela sítense cibdadaos do mundo' (ES). Otero's fictionalised model of Galician regeneration, Adrián Solovio, is a prime example and embodiment of this sentiment. The historicist recipe of tradition and universality fitted the nationalist intellectual agenda perfectly, and *atlantismo* became synonymous with Galician regeneration, a supposed pan-Celtic plan for political and cultural rebirth. The *atlantista* imperative is also the reason behind the *Xeración Nós*' particular interest in Irish and other Celtic literatures. As Dulin Bondue has observed of Otero's library, 'en el apartado

nacionalista... predominan los libros sobre Irlanda, tanto la gesta irlandesa como la literatura irlandesa contemporánea'.<sup>85</sup> In several articles Otero shows himself to be familiar with Irish and other Celtic literatures. In 'Notas encol do sentimento da paisaxe n'antiga epopeya irlandesa', for example, he acknowledges Ireland as a paradigm for Galicia and her attempts at cultural and political regeneration, and 'transfers' the pro-Celtic sentiment inherited from previous generations of Galician intellectuals to the readers of *Nós* magazine:

O renacemento da Galiza ispirose dend'os primeiros días no exempro irlandés. Compre seguir e sosteñer e ampriar aquí pulo. Os pobos da nova cultura precisan d'outras humanidás. E na Galiza é urxente o coñecimento de literaturas como a irlandesa e a lírica medieval galego-portuguesa, simpáticas á i-alma, que na cultura xeneral equilibren polo menos o impreio do clasicismo grego e romano e do clasicismo castelán. (NES, 176)

Otero had contact with Celtic literature through 'as publicacións d'Arbois de Jubainsille, Thurneysen («Sagen») e O'Curry («Atlantis»)' (NES, 178) and the numerous translations of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge that appeared frequently in *Nós*. The writings and translations of Henri Arbois de Jubainville span all the Irish myths, and his work *Les Celtes* (1935) can be found in Otero's library. According to X.L. Méndez Ferrín, Otero was also the anonymous translator of fragments of the Irish epic, the *Leabhar Gabhala*, which appeared in serial form in *Nós*.<sup>86</sup> However, the familiarity of Otero and the whole of the *Xeración Nós* with Irish affairs was not confined to the cultural. In 'Irlanda políteca no século XIX' published, incidentally, as part of a commemorative edition of *Nós* on the death of Terence MacSwiney in Brixton jail - Otero displays a characteristically detailed knowledge of recent Irish

---

<sup>85</sup> Nicole Dulin Bondue, *El granito y las luces*, 2 vols. (Vigo: Galaxia, 1987), II, 285.

<sup>86</sup> See: X.M. Salgado and X. Casado, *X.L. Méndez Ferrín* (Santiago: Sotelo Blanco, 1989).

history.<sup>87</sup> As Otero himself summarises on behalf of his generation, Ireland was ‘lección e guía para nós’ (MR, 51).

Finally, a great deal of the *Xeración Nós*’ activity was a Galician response to the Castilian-based resurgence of literary and cultural activity led by *modernistas* and the Generation of 1898. The members of the group had been in Madrid or had imbibed the work of the *noventayochistas* as that work was being produced, writing centred firmly on the notion of Castile and its landscape as a microcosm or universal benchmark for Spain and its vast entirety. The *Xeración Nós* were part of the subsequent generation of Spanish intellectuals, and many of its members had had their intellectual formation largely in Madrid. They not only drew upon the same sources and historico-cultural co-ordinates as the Generation of 1898, but were also responding to the Generation of 1898’s work as it appeared in newspapers, novels, reviews and in poetry. This would in effect indicate a detectable Galician response to the legacy of 1898, or to Madrid-based reflections on a shift in national self-perception, which constitutes the greater part of an immediate motivation behind their activities. By far the most literary aspect of this response was that of the portrayal of Nature and landscape as an indivisible and differentiating element of Galician cultural identity, which is to be found most extensively in the works of Otero Pedrayo.

---

<sup>87</sup> ‘Irlanda políteca no século XIX’, *Nós* 8 (1921), 13-17.

## Chapter Two - Nature and Landscape

Like the Generation of 1898, Otero believes landscape to be intimately related to national and cultural identity. This idealised relationship is a subject to which Otero dedicates a considerable number of works and commentaries, both of a literary and of a specialist, geographical nature. In addition to shorter articles such as 'Notas encol do sentimento da paisaxe na antiga epopeia irlandesa' (1930), 'Encol do elemento animal na paisaxe' (1932), 'Ensaio encol do estilo da paisaxe' (1932) and 'Notas encol da paisaxe romántica' (1927), there are the three extended essays: 'Ensaio sobor da paisaxe galega' (1955), 'Morte e resurrección' (1932) and 'Romantismo, saudade, sentimento da raza e da terra...' (1931), his induction speech for the *Real Academia Galega*.<sup>1</sup> This subject matter and the intense activity dedicated to it are unsurprising given the *Xeración Nós*' fundamental objective: to re-create and define a time-resistant notion of Galician identity and culture. Landscape is intimately linked to cultural identity or, as this sentiment is condensed in *Arredor de si*: 'pois o que é Galicia... Paisaxe' (AS, 87).

Otero's literary bent and his background as an accomplished geographer contribute to a composite, vast and unequalled investigation of the Galician landscape.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the relevance of landscape to his own conceptions of Galician cultural identity has been recognised accordingly, if not yet given the degree

---

<sup>1</sup> Other works dealing with this theme include the *Guía de Galicia* (1926), *Síntese Xeográfica de Galicia* (1926), *Problemas de xeografía galega*, (1927), *Problemas y paisajes geográficos de Galicia* (1928) and the section on geography from *Historia de Galiza* (1962).

<sup>2</sup> He possessed 'as facultades de creador literario', 'a preparación técnica do especialista' and 'unha filosofía moi elaborada sobre a paisaxe'. Ríos Panisse, 'A visión da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', 87.

of research needed to produce an adequate analysis.<sup>3</sup> There are only two studies written upon the subject of landscape and Nature in the works of Otero Pedrayo that approach the issue of identity. These are 'A visión da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', by María do Carme Ríos Panisse, and 'A galicidade da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', by X.L. Franco Grande. Ríos Panisse's extensive and informative article offers a broad look at Otero's treatment of landscape in several of his works. However, its commentary on the connection between landscape and identity is tentative and allusive given its thematic parameters. Franco Grande's article is an interesting yet brief investigation of the complex relationship between landscape and Galician identity, although it lacks the engagement with cultural history that I believe to be necessary for an adequate examination of the topic.

After an initial survey of Oteran affirmations as to the general affinity between man and land in Galicia, and its origins in an alleged Celtic outlook strongly preserved in the peasantry, I examine how this relationship is depicted as a consequence of rural labour. I then proceed to elucidate the concept of *devalar* and its bearing on this aspect of Otero's writings concerning cultural identity in Galicia, attempting to provide an original analysis of the precise nature of the Galician writer's interaction with the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Subsequently, the humanisation of the land in Galicia is considered, as are the palimpsestic qualities attributed to the

---

<sup>3</sup> For Nicole Dulin Bondue, he is 'el excelso intérprete moderno del paisaje de Galicia' N. Dulin Bondue, *op. cit.*, II, 37. 'Il foi, todos o saben,' says the anonymous author of the introduction to the volume of essays *Paisaxe e cultura*, 'o gran descubridor i o primeiro definidor da nosa paisaxe entendida como plena e profunda realidade espiritoal, como verdadeiro horizonte anímico no que a personalidade do home galego se desenvolve e modela. A imaxe de Galicia descuberta por Otero, basada mesmamente en tal interpretación da paisaxe, constitúe unha das grandes e definitivas aportacións que a cultura galega ten recibido do noso tempo' 'Limiar', *Paisaxe e cultura* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1955), 9-10 (10). And in his 'Panorámica da nosa paisaxe literaria', Salvador Lorenzana (Fernández del Riego) evaluates Otero's interest in landscape, drawing particular attention to the intensely subjective nature of Otero's perspective: 'quizaves ninguén coma Otero Pedrayo acertóu, entre nós, a pintar a paisaxe de Galicia con un grado máis fondo de espritoalidade. Non hai emoción máis sentida que a súa cando se pon en contacto coa natureza do seu país. As páxinas, innumerabres, que Otero ten adicado ó tema, atinguen unha outa espresividade difícil de superar' 'Panorámica da nosa paisaxe literaria', in *Paisaxe e cultura*, 149-174 (167).

landscape in order to represent historical epochs in relief and to highlight their meaning for cultural nationhood. This is followed by the most complex topic in all of Otero's writings concerning Galician distinctiveness: the philosophical sources informing his account of Galician perception regarding landscape and reality and the projection of identity onto the cultural canvas of the outer world. I conclude my enquiry with an assessment of the immense influence of the ideas of Oswald Spengler as expounded in *The Decline of the West*, and the ideological connotations that Otero seeks to effect by their adoption.

### ***The Galician love of the land***

Perhaps the greatest constant in Otero's entire body of work is the stress he places upon the intimate connection between the Galicians and the land they inhabit, the landscape they contemplate and the natural world around them. Otero classifies this as 'un amore que coidamos esenzal no noso pobo e cultura' (EH, 57). '¿Que sería capaz de afastar entre nós a cultura da terra da do espírito?' (MR, 86) Otero enquires; 'en calquer aldea', he claims, ' (...) o grande curazón da Terra que en tódolos galegos latexa ó ritmo do noso propio curazón' (VA, 248). He cites 'á cósmica e tenra asociación do home e a natureza' (SHD, 26) and 'a comprensiva comunión ca natureza' (EAP, 160) as qualities especially applicable to the Galician condition. Furthermore, for Otero, landscape and race are 'dúas palabras que na Galiza sempre camiñan xuntas' (PZG, 83), and he also claims that 'é propiamente noso o sentimento da paisaxe' (GEG, 9).

To intensify the expression of this bond, the writer depicts the very origins of the Galicians as lying in the supposed close identification between the Celts and the

very matter of Nature itself ('por sere nós galegos criados da materia dos celtas, dos penedos, da mar, do carne e do sangue da Galiza', ROM, 109). 'Dend'os lonxanos orixes,' Otero writes, 'a roca entrou na alma e a alma na roca' (ROM, 129). In Galicia there exists 'a máis completa fusión posible da raza do chán' (TP, 75-76). The awareness of the attributes and features of Nature is linked to sensibility and thinking patterns: 'a natureza, os arbres, i os bosques i as augas, i o devagar do ceo ten algo que ver co noso corazón e ca nosa intelixencia' (MAC, 17). In addition, the unintellectualised expression of love of the land is an instinctive, intuitive trait at the very heart of the Galician worldview: 'o chan, o roquedo, sinxelamente a terra. Enxérgase e fálase a cotío de ela de un xeito máis abstracto do que a vida ou a historia. É máis intuición, máis como o corpo noso' (EH, 20). Furthermore, Otero reinforces publicly his conviction in Galicia's claim to be the western European country where the affinity between the people and the land(scape) is at its strongest: 'de todos los pueblos del Occidente europeo, en donde el alma humana se acompasa, de manera más definitiva y completa, al espíritu del paisaje, Galicia es el primero'.<sup>4</sup>

Galician land worship and its importance for cultural identity are recurring features of Otero's fiction, whether regarding medieval lyrical poets or fictionalised accounts of his own life. Juan Rodríguez del Padrón retains his love of the Galician landscape during his travels: 'el poeta amó siempre, primero con amor de artista por decreto de la Providencia trocado en afecto divino las violetas y las rosas, los pinos y toronjiles, los robles adustos y los conmovidos sauces de sus paisajes de Galicia' (PDC, 171). In discovering the land or landscape as a repository of history and a touchstone of cultural belonging, the protagonist of *Arredor de si* recovers Galician identity. Adrián Solovio's epiphanic rediscovery of himself is fully identified with

---

<sup>4</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 107-108.

that of Galicia as a whole: as a nation. The sense that is conveyed here is not the resignation or *ataraxia* that is found in the Bildungsroman of the Generation of 1898, but rather confidence in Galicia's place in the world and its future in which he will play an active role; this is enabled 'pola amorosa descuberta da Terra' (AS, 185). The land, its associated traditions and cultural significance contribute to the affirmation of Galician personality. As Flitter observes in his incisive analysis of Otero's *Romantismo, saudade e sentimento da raza e da terra...*, 'a loita íntima entre cosmopolitismo e galeguidade ('pecado' e 'sentimento da raza e da Terra' no discurso), exprésase sempre de xeito visual, mediante a paisaxe coma entidade cultural'.<sup>5</sup> *Arredor de si* is not a response to the outlook of the Generation of 1898, but rather to their legacy. It challenges their implications that Castile and the Castilian landscape alone should mediate definitions of national identity, national unity, regeneration and Europeanisation. It also questions the pessimistic denouements of their Bildungsroman in which self-regeneration (as a mirror of national regeneration) induced by the contemplation of landscape should end in failure.

Otero's formation as a geographer conditions his treatment of a ubiquitous theme in Galician art. This is particularly evident in his use of geological allusions to describe the intimate Galician relationship with land; he underlines the importance of geology as another analogy through which to contemplate Galicians and their habitat: 'gráceas á Xeoloxía un paisaxe é pra nós algo máis que un fondo pictórico. Representa un momento do drama cósmico paralelo con diferente medida ó drama humán. Formacións xeolóxicas, formacións psicolóxicas' (XDC, 221). Galicians are therefore portrayed as a geological layer, an anthropological stratum on the earth's surface of cultures and *natural*, organic nations: 'o noso [chan] cuberto dun *humus*

---

<sup>5</sup> Derek Flitter, 'Ramón Otero Pedrayo e a "transferencia histórica" do rexurdimento galego', 24.

humán non deixa afrorar un soio anaco de roca extraño á raza. Estamos os galegos na Galiza tan fortemente dibuxados no planeta da humanidade como unha insua no mapa físico, unha insua emerxida e criada desde os primeiros tempos xeolóxicos' (TP, 75-76). Similarly, as in every sphere of Otero's portrayal of the Galicians, it is the peasantry, rather than the intelligentsia, that typifies this: 'os labregos apegados â terra son coma unha capa de roca étneca que recobrando a faciana xeolóxica seguen o ritmo interior escoitan frases que os homes da cultura soilo ouvimos algunhas ocasiós na nosa vida' (ROM, 111).

In addition to geographical discourse and allusions, Otero also makes use of literary devices to underline the Galician identification with Nature. The character Dorindo, for example, is described thus: 'cos brazos de molladas de palla, (...) con aire repicón da serra e bruares na follateira dos carballos' (LUAR, 52). The use of natural imagery to describe human protagonists, though a staple and perennial literary recourse in no manner dependent on one single cultural source, may for Otero have some Ossianic root (via Pondal), particularly given the Romantic appeal of the landscape depicted in Macpherson's poems, and the emphasis on a notion of source Celtic ethnicity supposedly discernible in the cultural tapestry of the landscape. The Ossianic world centres on the blurring of man and Nature, where Nature is a poetic protagonist ever present as the mythical drama unfolds. The inanimate objects are personified and fully integrated into the human drama. Furthermore, in the *Poems of Ossian* there are no pseudo-classical settings or exotic animals, but rather a milieu totally in accordance with the poetry's natural setting within a verdant (Northern) landscape. The wider cultural significance of such a landscape is of vital importance to Otero's presentation of Galician distinctiveness, a theme to which I return in the latter part of this chapter.

Any perusal of the *Nós* magazine yields bountiful references to the Portuguese poet, Joaquim Teixeira de Pascoaes (1877-1952), a contemporary and contact of Otero's generation. Otero refers to the poet as 'el máximo poeta portugués moderno' (CDO, 145), 'o grande Teixeira de Pascoaes' (ROM, 197) and also to 'el prestigio y la promesa de un grande y genial poeta, J. Teixeira de Pascoaes' (CDO, 41). Otero shows an interest in the treatment of landscape in the Portuguese writer, 'a concencia eterna e saudosa da natureza cantada por Teixeira de Pascoaes' (OUT, 249). The poet, Otero writes, 'dedicó al Támeiga, a su paisaje, poemas de larga evocación del misterio y simbólica de las cosas y los procesos unidos al vivir y destino de los hombres' (CDO, 41). In the poetry of Teixeira de Pascoaes, the human spirit is represented as 'o corpo da paisagem, / Chora, na minha sombra, o genesis da treva'.<sup>6</sup> There is every identification with Nature and the natural course of life; the poet centres narrative attention on the tree, 'quase que a sinto, em mim, dar sombra e florescer, / e lembro-me do tempo em que fui névoa e terra'.<sup>7</sup> Otero's awareness of the manner in which Teixeira de Pascoaes approaches landscape and Nature and the human relationship with these factors, and the Galician writer's identical approach in at least one instance, confirms an influence of substantial importance.

Much more than simple habitat or environment, land, Nature and landscape in Galicia are stressed by Otero to be objects of devotion and love for the Galician that transcend any material value: 'o galego – o grupo, as xeneracións, a tradición – ama súa terra como espallamento necesario que enteira personalidade do home e da caste. Non soio é o avencellamento económico' (HDG, 18). Moreover, a Galician without land or the prospect of it is deprived of a fundamental part of his identity: 'o galego sin terra, ou sin lembranza ou esperanza dela, considérase amingado como na lei

---

<sup>6</sup> Joaquim Teixeira de Pascoaes, 'Pensamentos', *Obras Completas* (Lisboa: Livraria Bertrand, 1967), I, 211-215 (214).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

latina e na política clásica o desterrado' (HDG, 18). What is more, the peasant's innate, spiritual identification with Nature is classified as the key reference point for Galician culture: 'en su alma y en su cultura instintiva, en ese profundo consorcio que existe en él entre la naturaleza y el espíritu, es donde nuestra cultura puede hallar la única fuente, verdadera y vital, de su porvenir'.<sup>8</sup>

The influence of Chateaubriand is detectable throughout the entire sensibility of Otero's cultural expression. In his memoirs, Chateaubriand uses the maternal metaphor (recalling the Galician nationalist shibboleth, 'Terra Nai') in his praise of earth and Nature as an all-providing entity through the ages of man:

The earth is a charming mother; we come forth from her womb; in childhood, she holds us to her breasts, which are swollen with milk and honey; in youth and manhood, she lavishes upon us her cool waters, her harvests and her fruits; she offers us, wherever we may go, shade, a bath, a table and a bed; when we die, she opens her bosom to us again and throws a coverlet of grass and flowers over our remains while she secretly transforms us into her own substance, to be reproduced in some new and graceful shape.<sup>9</sup>

Quite apart from innumerable Romantic influences whose thorough consideration is beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis, some other sources known to have formed part of Otero's reading can be commented upon. Firstly, Virgil's *Georgics* are of prime importance as source material for the presentation of Galician empathy with Nature. The profile of Otero's university education alone imparts specific details of Otero's recollection of contact with Classical literature, as well as the place of this in the wider gamut of literary culture that appealed to Otero.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 119.

<sup>9</sup> Chateaubriand., *The Memoirs of Chateaubriand*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), 153.

<sup>10</sup> 'Da universidade madrileña lembrará con especial afecto as clases de (...) Literatura Latina de Antonio González Garbin, "sabio e fervente humanista, corazón de neno", que se entusiasmaba declamando escenas enteiras das comedias de Plauto' Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 18. 'O interese literario e cultural do noso autor é amplísimo, abrangendo desde os clásicos greco-latinos, que coñecía á perfección, ata os escritores e obras máis contemporáneas; desde Homero, Platón ou Virxilio deica Dóblin ou Falkner, pasando polos autores do romantismo, realismo, simbolismo, modernismo, e mesmo surrealismo'. *Ibid.*, 160.

This is confirmed by the many references we find in his work to Classical authors, themes and motifs. Of these, Virgil stands out as the classical author preferred by Otero for whom the depiction of rural patterns contained in the *Georgics* is strongly reminiscent of *enxebre* Galician life. The seasonal order of the rural world captured in the literary space is part of a wider cultural expression of the Galician affinity with Nature found in Otero's works. References to Virgil abound in Otero's work. The classical poet is 'hombre del agro, formado en fecundas tierras cubiertas y floridas por el doble sentido mitológico de los colonos y de las estirpes célticas, un poco nórdico, sabe igualmente el arte de cuidar los ganados que el de consultar un arúspice' (PF, 494). On many occasions Otero refers to Virgil as a Celt, 'o casto celta soñador' (LAT, 171), indicating an attempt to sublimate, to render them more favourable to the reader of the time on ideological grounds.<sup>11</sup> If Virgil is Celtic, he is worthy of reading and appreciation, not least in terms of his work's importance in Otero's view for an understanding of Galicia and being Galician. Although Otero directs us towards many of his sources by clear citation or allusion, in the case of Virgil he explicitly encourages the reader to interpret Galician rural life through the cultural prism of the *Georgics*: 'a xeórxica galega pide millor o saudoso saber de Virxilio' (HDG, 18). The Galician peasant, Otero suggests, 'trabaja con verdadera ilusión, con aquella ilusión que hace vibrar de emoción y de belleza los versos de las Geórgicas'.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the lyrical descriptions in Otero's work of agricultural activity and labour can be read in the knowledge that the direct influence is Virgil. In *Os camiños da vida*, the old *fidalga* contemplates another repetition of the fixed pattern of work inseparable from Galician rural life:

---

<sup>11</sup> 'Cada día esculcan e descubren millor os glosadores a raíz céltica da poesía de Virxilio. Seus ritmos gardan, cecáis non arroinada, a mensura e lei das ondas do mar de Oicidente e o senso e arelanza do misterio pousado nas cousas' (ESDPG, 23).

<sup>12</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 119-120.

Cando a velliña chega á eira xa están en roda as grandes carradas das nabeiras. Os bois marelos de fino beizo, mírana con ollos mollados e fondos como os lameiros co sol do outono e verdecer de salgueiros tremorosos ao vento. Colle dos carros sen encetar as primeiras espigas. Afastando a caricia da camisa do cosco fica núa a carne de ouro vexetal. E váisellela dando a comer, mainamente, cumprindo un rito de moitos anos. No ollar garimoso dos bois loce o rendimento agradecido da campía. Tamén lles dá espigas ás probes vacolas dos caseiros que andan pola eira espaventadas de tanta grandeza.

Deseguida descargan os carros. Arredor das serras de millo fan roda as mozas, as mulleres, os mozos que chegan polo portón a escasular. (CDV, 86-87)

Otero describes the ritual, seasonal nature of country labour and tradition, and its significance for the Galician personality, in *Ensaio sobor da paisaxe galega*:

Cada outonía cas labouras ou cada sementeira co cuco facendo a crítica e bulra do suco mal guiado, da priguiza do labrador, ou o eloxio cando enche e quenta súa nota de chirimía da basílica e festa do equinocio, ca gabanza do petrucio madrugador, co luceiro na orella, e dos bois, percorridos de impacenzas, como o marelo das toxearas de nordesía, os homes pensan, co relixioso respecto, comezaren a historia e piden perdón ó ermo, ise ermo ditoso, sen traballo, da idade do ouro, inzada de froitos de lus, que todos levamos máis fondo ou máis lixeiro dentro de nós. (ESDPG, 57)

This quality is not eroded by life in towns and cities; the rural and the traditional are defined as the ideal matrix of identity, over the urban and the modern:

Por meirande que sexa o inzado estilo cidadán na alma do galego, sempre o espertarán os abrentes espranzados de San Xoán, os severos cantos de seitura de pan, a emoción anterga e autoniza das vendimas, o intimismo das primeiras noites longas e os traballos invermizos da aldea, como a decota do carballos ou a matanza do porco. (GEG, 9)

*The Georgics* therefore lend themselves well to Otero's eulogy for the goodness of the Galician *labrego* and family, where Virgil describes the land as the farmer's annual labour that keeps his native country. Across a seasonal span, images of 'little grandsons' are juxtaposed with 'herds of cattle and trusty bullocks', 'orchard fruit', 'sheaves of corn', 'olives crushed in the press', 'varied fruits' and livestock of all description.<sup>13</sup> These all the necessary ingredients that we associate with an Oteran

---

<sup>13</sup> Virgil, *op. cit.*, 52-53.

portrait of Galician life: tradition, continuity, family, omnipresent Nature, and of course *amor patriæ*. This elevation of landscape to cultural and nationalistic entity, whilst drawing on the original poem by Virgil, also depends on a mediatory text that conditions the appropriation of the classical model.

Otero's portrayal of Nature and landscape as essential factors of Galician cultural identity owes an obvious debt to James Thomson's descriptive blank verse poem *The Seasons* (1726-30), in terms of this work's mediation of the *Georgics* as source text. Otero shows the same kind of philological knowledge of Thomson's work as he possesses of MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian*. Similarly, he applies the same *atlantista* agenda to the writer. Thomson the Scot is a 'Celt' in Otero's view, an idealistic categorisation that links both him and his work to Autumn, the season with which the Romantics most intensely identified,<sup>14</sup> and an unmistakably northern, Ossianic landscape:

A verba romantismo, aparece por primeira vez n'un celta, apricada â Escocia e ô outono, n'as Estazóns de Thompson publicadas do 1726 ô 1730. Fillo d'un eclesiástico probe, sempre soñou c'un vivir tranquiío i-ensonodor na verde paisaxe; aprecia os xogos da bretema nos cumes, as ondas d'aire no bosque, o lonxano ecoar das torrenteiras. (ROM, 34)

Otero is familiar enough with Thomson's poem to provide brief analytical snippets that show a clear admiration for pre-Romantic portrayals of Nature as a proactive protagonist rather than static adornment: 'nas Estaciós de Thompson... choulan as cachoeiras, galga o mar car'os cons, baixa o ceo neboento sobr'os bosques saloucantes. O sensualismo inglés tiña descuberto a natureza n-un senso aitivo. Xa

---

<sup>14</sup> Autumn is associated by Otero with Romanticism, renewal and Celtic spirituality. In *Devalar*, in autumn, Martiño Dumbría buys a work of Goethe, 'como quen merca unha caixa de inxeccións para se fortalecer'. This is juxtaposed with the image of a rain (water, life) and the statement that 'No outono as vidas volven a facer un movemento de marcha' (DEV, 114). Autumn is a time of introspection and contemplation in Otero's world-view: 'O vivir labrego do outono figura trasposto á fuxida cupular dos ceos' (DEV, 124). As Ríos Panisse notes, the identification of Otero of an honourable life; such a relationship is therefore not eminent in materialist people or, similarly, those who live according to modern materialist sensibility. María do Carme Ríos Panisse, Introduction, in *Devalar*, 128, fn.22.

non era unha decoración, senón unha chea de personaxes' (NEPR, 9). This suggests that Otero modelled his own adaptation of the *Georgics* on the existing and highly appealing example already set by Thomson. This appeal has two facets: the pre-Romantic character of Thomson's work and its evident ideological reworking of the Virgilian source text, given that the poem is Thomson's acknowledged classical model.<sup>15</sup> They furnish the Galician nationalist writer with a prime example of how the *Georgics* were adapted to suit a culturally and ideologically specific model. In Thomson's case, this is, of course, Great Britain. According to Sambrook, Virgil's most noticeable influence on Thomson echoes in the patriotic rhapsodies that rise expansively out of rural descriptions.<sup>16</sup> Otero does seize upon the imagery and thematic strands of Virgil's poem, and does so in a manner compatible with the intellectual precepts of the nationalist movement in Galicia of the time. On reading Sambrook's assessment of how Thomson moves from familiar rural imagery and settings to implicit ideological message, via the influence of Virgilian imagery and narrative technique, we recall similar aspects of an Oteran adaptation of the *Georgics*.

One example occurs where the cyclical pattern of agriculture and Nature are evoked, allowing Thomson to portray a rural ambit where man, beast and soil exist in harmony.<sup>17</sup> Thomson, who penned the lyrics for 'Rule Britannia', then adapts this image of bucolic bliss, using one aspect of Virgil's *Georgics* in order to highlight another – patriotism. The plough becomes a symbol and the ploughman's labour leads to generalisations about autumn's treasures and the blessings of England's export trade; the passage implies that the local harmony between the husbandman, his team, and his land is the foundation of the larger harmony of a wide mercantile empire

---

<sup>15</sup> James Sambrook, 'Introduction', in James Thomson, *The Seasons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), xxiv.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

which has cultural links with ancient Rome.<sup>18</sup> Just as Thomson sought to eulogise the commercial and the cultural, and its relationship with national identity and prosperity based on the model of Virgil, Otero also takes the universally known precedent of the *Georgics*, and adapts them to his own representation of the cultural nationalist agenda.

Echoes of Virgilian topoi resonate through other works known to have appealed to Otero. Chateaubriand defines as ‘happy the man whose toils result in a useful harvest! Whose heart is humbly bowed down by virtue, as the stock is bent by the weight of the grain that surmounts it!’<sup>19</sup> The Virgilian influence also leaves its mark on the poetry of Teixeira de Pascoaes. In the appropriately titled ‘Vida do Campo’, the Portuguese poet mentions the ‘égloga que fala de Virgílio’,<sup>20</sup> and in ‘A minha aldeia’ the imagery and scenes of the poem’s action are taken from the seasonal calendar of village life: peasants till the earth with oxen, ‘almas presas à terra pelo amor!’<sup>21</sup> This results, through labour on the land, in a complete identification of man with nature: ‘homems, que trabalhais na minha aldeia, / Como as árvores, vós sois da Natureza’.<sup>22</sup>

The German geographer, Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), whom Bobillo identifies as a major influence on Otero, Risco and other *galeguistas*,<sup>23</sup> is also of importance here. Ratzel, one of the founders of the anthropological school of diffusionism, addressed the influence of environment on human society and the geographical distribution of cultures.<sup>24</sup> According to Bobillo, ‘las nociones de

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv-xxvi.

<sup>19</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion*, trans. Charles I. White, (London: Charles Dolman, 1857), 498.

<sup>20</sup> Joaquim Teixeira de Pascoaes, ‘Vida do Campo’, in *op. cit.* (Lisboa: Livraria Bertrand, 1967) II, 83-89 (83).

<sup>21</sup> Teixeira de Pascoaes, ‘A minha aldeia’, *op. cit.*, I, 134-146 (137-138).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>23</sup> Francisco Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 174.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 176. Otero is aware of this: ‘O falar de Antropoxeografía pensamos no problema central e xa crasico d’esta ciencia: a determinación e graduación das influencias do medio natural sobre das sociedades humanas’ (EMA, 3).

situación y espacio, junto con la exageración geográfica, pasaron a formar parte del nódulo argumental de la versión orgánica del nacionalismo y a través de ella llegaron a Risco'.<sup>25</sup> If this is the impact of Ratzel's thought on Risco, then the effect on Otero a geographer familiar with Ratzel's texts in the original German is at least commensurable. Indeed, Otero shows a full awareness of Ratzel and his writings; even in non-geographical texts, he employs expressions of the German thinker in an allusion to the panpsychism of Romanticism and metaphorical interpretations associated with it.<sup>26</sup> Otero also quotes directly from one of Ratzel's major works, *Anthropogeographie* (1882-91), hinting at his knowledge not only of Ratzel's philosophy, but also of its influence in Spain.<sup>27</sup> His considerable knowledge of Ratzel is confirmed in an article published in *Nós* in 1926, entitled 'Encol dos estudos modernos de Antropogeografía',<sup>28</sup> in which the influence of Ratzel on the subsequent generation of geographers is assessed.

J.M. Hunter's study on Ratzel's political geography throws further light on the extent of this influence. At the root of Otero's sympathy for Ratzel lies the latter's recognition of geography as part of the whole of knowledge; a part, like all other parts, interconnected by extensions or relationships to the remaining parts and the

---

<sup>25</sup> Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 177

<sup>26</sup> 'Actualmente el hombre cultivado distingue o cree distinguir sin obstáculo apreciable la diferencia entre el tapiz de vida, para usar de una expresión de Federico Ratzel, de la esfera mineral sobre la que se adapta y la atmosférica que lo cubre. El campesino, en sus íntimas reacciones, aún concede vida a las piedras. Es un sentimiento en el que influye el sentido metafórico en la interpretación de las cosas. La metáfora no es tampoco desdeñable en Filosofía. En todo tiempo ha jugado mucho. Recuérdese la extensión del concepto de vida en el Romanticismo' (PF, 555).

<sup>27</sup> 'Fr. Ratzel, "Anthropogeographie". Stuttgart, 1891. No es la citada la primera pero sí de las primeras de aquel libro que en la ruta de Ritter, y descendiendo de su concepción filosófica, logró extensa influencia por su método y riqueza de observación y conexión. Creemos haber sido una conferencia de E. Moreno López, de principios de siglo, la primera mención razonada de Ratzel en España' (PF, 567, fn. 12).

<sup>28</sup> 'O Natzel [sic] segue inspirando os traballos dos especialistas. A sua grande obra baixo o título de Antropogeografía comprendendo duas partes: Fundamentos da aplicacón da Xeografía à Hestoria e A distribución xeográfica dos Homes' (EMA, 3)

whole.<sup>29</sup> According to Hunter, Ratzel's concept projects a theme of unity, expressing the organic harmony of man and land that includes all perceptible objects, material and non-material.<sup>30</sup> These are ideas predicated on German historicism and, as Hunter points out, on the concepts of the scholars of the panpsychic school of philosophy.<sup>31</sup> In his *Politische Geographie*, Ratzel maintains that states are pieces of humanity and soil, and that neither man or state can be conceived of without soil; in veiled Herderian terms, Ratzel suggests that a state is associated with one element of humanity (i.e. a single people) or one human work and simultaneously one part of the earth. States must live from the soil.<sup>32</sup> Otero correctly identifies this as the central tenet of Ratzel's thought, 'a cuasque escrusiva dependencia do Estado respeito do medio físico' (EMA, 3). This has obvious nationalist overtones that echo Herder and clearly register in Otero's field of preferences: 'vese craramente que a crecente intensidade dos estudos xeográficos, no senso moderno, ten un valor fundamental na creación d'un novo mundo politico sobre as indiscutibres bases naturaes i eternas. Soilo co seu trunfo compreto pode aspirar a Humanidade a un ciclo de vida superior' (EMA, 3). Hence the importance of geographical sources for Otero during the *Nós* epoch – they offer sustenance and substance to nationalist affirmations in a political climate in which a significant alteration of the political structure, on the basis of the recognition of 'natural' nations, seemed imminently attainable. The influence of Ratzel therefore spans several areas of Otero's interpretation of Galician identity.

This love of land is also apparent through the Galician's agricultural toil that accentuates a sense of property:

---

<sup>29</sup> J.M. Hunter, *Perspective on Ratzel's Political Geography* (London: University Press of America, 1983), 220.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

O eido! É todo pra il; si hai tromenta, pensa n'il antes que nos fillos. (...) Nin vello cangado e desfeito quere desprender dos eidos pra qu'os traballen os fillos, os xenros, os herdeiros. É de ver cando un labrego: -«é meu», Como esalta a sua cerdeira, a resistencia da lumieira da sua porta, a larganza do seu curral, e o axe dos seus ácios de caíño, ou a barbadela da sua becerra. (ENCOL, 5)

If in this example Otero places land above offspring in the Galician peasant's priority of values, in others he juxtaposes the land with images of the family and employs a filial comparison:

Na alborada verde co derradeiro salaiar malicioso ou saudoso das fontes, sae ao mundo o home de trinta e tantos anos. A muller e o neno, pantasma envurulladas no veo dos sonos. El bebe a primeira pipa do día, podente augardente que lle fortalece o corpo. Vai mirar a nabeira nova. Quere mirala e tocala denantes de ninguén. Denantes dos ollos doutros homes, da curiosidade arrouxada do sol, do tocar da eirexa. ¿Será tamén un soño? A farpa negra de noite púidolle roubar, como un rapiñeiro aquel ben... Toca coas mans as cercas de pedra que el arrincou traballando illado e tesoneiro todo o inverno dende aquela noite de luceiros e vendima. Apaña aos mangados a terra escura, a terra mol, ulinte, agradecida, que el fixo, esnaquizado as laxes bravas, guiando a auga con amor e sentido... Aquela nabeira é súa filla. Ela fala agradecida coa vociña verde do millo. (DEV, 214)

This bond is such that 'o home de trinta e tantos anos (...) sente que as raíces da súa personalidade afondan no chan labrego coma as raíces dunha valente carballa' (DEV, 214-215). Otero repeats these descriptive recourses of filial approximation and the humanisation of the land in order to describe the man-Nature-land relationship that is founded on labour:

Un amor da terra criada polas súas mans, da pobre terra súa filla, que alí quedaba fóra toda a noite para tremer co frío e co medo do resbar dos mortos, retíñao. El houbera velado o durmir daquel novo eido. El arrancaría os seixos con dentes e unllas onde fora para cinguilo de muradellas ben dispostas... Como unha Magdalena, a terra moza envolvíalle os pés cos cabelos, apreixáballos coas manciñas tenras. Era unha crueldade camiñar. E foi saíndo a modo, teimando non crebar os doces vencellos. (LUAR, 54)

Land is therefore an expression of personality, such is the strength of the bond based on the daily work associated with the field. Rural toil is also a barometer of the Galician's disposition: 'o galego ama, sinte a terra. Disfroita e sofre coela' (HDG,

17). The affection for local milieu and its additional features that arise from the interaction between man and Nature are some of the themes of Rosalía de Castro's *Cantares gallegos*, where emigration accentuates this sentiment. In 'Adiós, ríos; adiós, fontes', an impassioned farewell is said to the subject's homeland, distilled into recognizable features of the surrounding natural world: 'regatos pequenos', 'hortiña que quero tanto, / figueriñas que prantéi', 'prados, ríos, arboredos', 'pinares', 'paxariños piadores, / casiña do meu contento'.<sup>33</sup> Rosalía de Castro also evokes images of peasant life based around the work of the fields and the attachment to the homely hearth: 'pasiño a paso a traballada xente / dos campos ás chousiñas se volvía, / mentras no lar o pote sarpuente / cas ricas berzas a cachón fervía'.<sup>34</sup>

The ties that bind the Galician to Nature and the land are fortified through death, as well as through work: 'ollamos a un labrego rompendo un monte esgrevio pra facer unha leira: pouco despois ise home apodrecerá no adral da eirexa; entre a leira e a coba queda fundada unha irmandade inmorrente. Diste xeito, Galiza, traballando o seu mundo espiritual, chegará a convertilo todo en terra de labranza' (TP, 75). In *Devalar*, a *fidalg* aware of his impending death ruminates on the land's significance for him: 'agora mesmo toda a paisaxe usada, interpretada polos meus ollos perante dezoito anos, olla para min agardando outra vida da miña morte, pois en canto eu sexa unha morea de terra no adral, as veigas e os lameiros recobrarán outro pulo de vida' (DEV, 177). The knowledge that the body merges with the earth after death intensifies the love of the land; furthermore, Otero conveys the inexorability of death and the promise of new life by natural images of motion:

O fidalgo sentía unha beleza no seu destino. Doíase non ser dono da arte para preixala na forma belida dun poema. Mais: «Mellor é» pensaba «esta ledicia de morrer, folla

---

<sup>33</sup> Rosalía De Castro, , *Cantares gallegos* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), xv, 92-93.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv, 130.

murcha na canle, regueiro no río, fontela no mar, e a confianza que na seguinte primavera os eidos e as árbores disfrutarán doutro vivir conforme coa campía». O fidalgo quizais non dixera tales verbas. Escuramente sentía a súa razón atopándose no peirao da eternidade. (DEV, 177)

A final example comes from a short story in *Entre a vendima e a castañeira*, where Trocado muses on death and how land-love conditions attitudes to mortality: ‘-Xa ben pouco me falta. Vou ás Searas da eternidade. Non me mancarán rellas de arado. Deumo a entender a terra. Ben longo vou ser ensoñar da terra, soño fondo e sen feitura, ou ensoño lixeiro. E non quererei deixala. Hei ser ditoso sendo dela un livián ensoñar’ (ETL, 129). Shelley’s ‘Adonais. An elegy on the death of John Keats’, serves my study as a convenient summary of particular Romantic notions of the relationship between Nature, humankind and death. Alluding to the biblical motif of ‘ashes to ashes’, Shelley foreshadows Adonais’ ‘resurrection’ in Nature after death in verses XVI, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, and XLI with natural imagery to convey the cultural significance of the changing of the seasons, a theme often taken up by Otero in his descriptions of rural Galician patterns. Verse XLII, describing the aftermath of Adonais’ death, is the most significant in terms of being representative of the intensely Romantic influence on Otero’s portrait:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
His voice in all her music, from the moan  
Of thunder, to the song of night’s sweet bird;  
He is a presence to be felt and known  
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
Spreading itself where’er that Power may move  
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;  
Which wields the world with never wearied love,  
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Shelley, *Adonais. An Elegy on the Death of John Keats* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1994), 428.

As is the case with Shelley, Nature plays a predominant role as a link between man and absolute values in Otero's work, and this also bears upon the religious identity of the Galicians, a theme addressed with greater attention in Chapter Four.

### ***Devalar – a codified approach to landscape as cultural entity***

Any explanatory discussion of Otero's establishment in his works of a cultural relationship between man and Nature must encompass the concept of *devalar* (also expressed as 'decorrer' or 'devenir'), Otero's adoption of certain aspects of Romantic philosophy into a personalised interpretation of the cultural significance of landscape in Galicia. In order to fully grasp what Otero means by *devalar*, we first must take into account his geographical evaluation of the land and landscape as cultural entity:

El paisaje es siempre un proceso. Nunca la inmovilidad de un cuadro o de una decoración teatral. Lo actual es sólo un momento - de siglos en la génesis de un valle o de una cultura - de días, de casi horas en el florecer primaveral. Y quien no acostumbre a captar en ese estilo de suceder el paisaje no entenderá nunca el gozo profundo que produce, sus estadios hacia la perfección o la decadencia. (CDO, 8-9)

The landscape is in permanent, constant flux, composed of unique and instantaneous forms that are a product of both previous and impending forms:

Non hai unha paisaxe feita, definitiva e formada. Cada unha componse de elementos das anteriores e das que veñen despois, combinados un instante apenas nunha forma deseguida desfeita, gardada na lembranza como un esquema de seísmo iniciado. (PEL, 149)

Otero domesticates this vision of the landscape by selecting a Galician verb as a metaphorical device to span several meanings and connotations; his explanation of the term is aided by his favoured use of binary opposition, where Atlantic (Romantic, Galician) differs from Mediterranean (Classical, Castilian):

Hai no galego un fermoso verbo cheo de sentido, de beleza e de saudade: a saudade que contén as outras excelencias; o verbo devalar. Úsase na mariña pra certos maiños e potentes movementos das ondas. E non hai mellor imaxen pra a fuxida do tempo, pra o senso dos ritmos do mundo e a vida como os movementos do mar. Do noso mar. O Mediterráneo non devala; por iso é clásico. (TDP, 327)

In addition to defining *devalar* through the analogy of time and landscape, Otero applies the same notion to history in terms that reveal culture's inclusion in this relationship:

Ten devalar o seu significado. (...) Devalan os vales pro mar como devalan as foulas cobrindo a larganza dos areals, como devalan co seu ritmo maino as penedías ou a maneira da historia destouzando ermos e creando herdades. A historia, un devalar. E na paisaxe, en calquera paisaxe, con podentes ritmos e apenas como ecoares e lembranzas, todo o devalar conxunto, único, cheo de paixón da Nosa Terra. A paisaxe non ten de ser enxergada en aitotalidade. Podíase escribir en arestoridade ou nestoridade. A historia da paisaxe non pode ser feita sin as precisas recriacións, as veces dificultosas, de arestoridades decorridas pro sempre xurdindo dunha roína, lembranza, ritmo crebado, ou outro faitor de sombra e pretérito da arestoridade nosa, a de hoxe, a soia que podemos vivire e como paisaxe espreitare, e condición de todas a constroicións que chamamos históricas. (ESDPG, 13-14)

Otero equates the dynamics of the landscape – forms ever in the act of occurring – with those of history and links them to the national personality. Like history, landscape and culture are accumulations of past events and processes that shape the uniqueness of the fleeting present: ‘cada sazón está inzada de sombras e lembranzas das outras, como tamén da futuridade das vindeiras’ (ESDPG, 33). The quality of relating to this concept to which Otero alludes in the final section of this segment is attributed directly to the Galicians, given that they are of supposed Celtic stock, a ‘pobo en camiño’. Furthermore, Otero identifies the traits ‘ceibe’, ‘imaxinativo’ and ‘sentimental’ with the Celts, and therefore the Galicians:

Sentir o decorrer, o devenir, o “elan”, os grados de perfección, etc., é propio das filosofías ceibes, imaxinativas, sentimentales. Nelas, a fixeza somentes representa un caso fuxidío nun instante do tempo. Camiñando rexurden a todos os momentos horizontes novos. Unha serra vibra como un ser vivente na súa pel; sentimos pasar un río como unha forza, non como unha cousa que corre. (PEL, 149)

Cultural echoes resound within these above examples. Existence – whether natural, historical or cultural – is Heraclitic, a perpetual becoming. As Ríos Panisse summarises, ‘Otero quere presentarnos unha concepción do mundo en movemento, no transcorrer ou devalar do pasado ó presente e deste ó futuro.’<sup>36</sup> Although the origins of this sense of movement as an idea are to be found in Heraclitus,<sup>37</sup> more recent manifestations derive from Romanticism and modern philosophy. The Galician outlook is attuned to this sense of movement since it draws from a Celtic heritage, and all that is Celtic for Otero is read through the filter of Romanticism, with its emphasis on the dynamic. Furthermore, Otero’s emphasis on intuition and memory and his reference to ‘élan’ point unequivocally to Bergson. The precise nature of the relationship between Bergson’s philosophy and Otero’s work will be examined presently; firstly, those earlier sources from the history of the idea that lead in part to a fuller understanding of Otero’s concept of *devalar* must be considered.

There are obvious sources in Romanticism for the idea of constant flux and movement, since, as Otero himself comments, ‘o Romantismo significa, xa ó primeiro ollar, o triunfo dos valores de movemento sobre os valores de estabilidade, segundo escribe certamente Albert Thibaudet falando do Romantismo filosófico’ (ROM, 14). Rousseau’s commentaries in the *Rêveries...* refer to such values of movement; he states that ‘everything is in constant flux on this earth. Nothing keeps the same unchanging shape,’<sup>38</sup> and that in life ‘there must be neither a total calm nor too much movement, but a steady and moderate motion, with no jolts or breaks. Without any

---

<sup>36</sup> Ríos Panisse, ‘Introducción’, in *Devalar*, 89, fn. 30.

<sup>37</sup> In an article that relies heavily on the motif of Bergsonian philosophy for its source material, Otero can be seen to link these two philosophies himself: ‘figura natural que camiñando as ideas adquiren unha tendencia heraclitana ou bergsoniana’ (FDC, 149).

<sup>38</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Reveries Of The Solitary Walker*, trans. by Peter France (Penguin: 1979), 88. Otero is more than familiar with Rousseau and his significance for Romanticism in its entirety: ‘Rousseau a fonte de Romantismo. Sobre todo do Rousseau da «Nouvelle Héloïse» das «Confessions» e das «Promenades». En moitos aspectos tod’o Romantismo garda o ronsel da morbidez espiritual e da íntima traxedia rousseauiana’ (ROM, 24).

movement life is mere lethargy.’<sup>39</sup> The idea finds further expression in the works of Nietzsche and Herder. It is, as David Lee explains, ‘the central notion which the nineteenth century, according to idiom, would term ‘devenir’, ‘fieri’, ‘becoming’, ‘werden’ – the vision of everything, human nature included, in a state of relativist flux’.<sup>40</sup> Otero shows an awareness in his writings of the idea’s pan-cultural resonance: ‘o devenir, traducción do *Werden* alemán, o máis fermoso i emociante verbo filosófico, digno dos gregos. *Werden, devalar*’ (TDP, 327). The concept of *devalar* is a high cultural manner in which Otero can express the links between landscape, history and the Galician people that express a Galician distinctiveness that consists in part of man’s proximity to Nature. The tapestry of the landscape therefore becomes an emblematic and metaphorical representation of national reality. In Ríos Panisse’s assessment, the long-term significance of *devalar* is a message that advocates the positive aspects of change in Galician society, whilst preserving ‘unha continuidade que manteña o noso ser, continuidade que Otero identifica co amor e integración ó entorno, á paisaxe, entendendo como paisaxe este decorrer de procesos e formas tanto naturais como humanas’.<sup>41</sup>

The Galician observer detects the notions of time, metaphysical reality and culture contained within the landscape and Nature. Musing over the title of one of his most important essays, Otero comments: ‘este título «Morte e Resurrección», outra réplica máis do vello Mito, de íntima realidade, tiña que remanecer naturalmente da meditación da paisaxe vexetal’ (MR, 85). And of Galician psychology, he ventures that

poderíamos literariamente explicala pola imaxe da paisaxe. Sería a penas unha verdade que andivera arredor da verdadeira verdade. Pois nós arelamos explicar a

<sup>39</sup> Rousseau, *Reveries Of The Solitary Walker*, 89.

<sup>40</sup> David C.J. Lee, *Ernest Renan: In The Shadow of Faith* (London: Duckworth, 1996), 23.

<sup>41</sup> Ríos Panisse, ‘Introducción’, in *Devalar*, 33.

paisaxe pola raza, non a raza pola paisaxe, porque a outura e a beleza do problema non consente as saídas doadas dun determinismo calquera. (MR, 89)

Once again sublimating an aspect of Galician specificity, Otero points towards other means of elucidating the relationship between the Galician world-view and landscape.

His reference to '[un] determinismo calquera', and wish to assess landscape by people by the Galicians' intuitive response to landscape rather than people by landscape suggests a rejection of evolutionary science, of cause and effect and formation of the human being by environment. The impact here of the philosophy of Henri Bergson is clearly acknowledged:

Morte. Resurrección. Queren dicir cortes feitos na realidade, seguindo a fraseoloxía expresiva amada por Bergson. ¿E por que non botar diante esta afirmación do bergsonismo da alma e da paisaxe galega? Será polo menos, unha maneira de achegármonos á verdade, un dos moitos, dos variados camiños, que nos leven ao coto florecido da nosa psicoloxía. Igual que no arco sosegado do pensamento de Bergson loce o quieto e seguro esplendor da intelixencia sistemática e austera, cientificamente, a carón da vaporosa luz da intuición, a psicoloxía galega, mostra, nos mestres e no pobo, a rexa metódica de pensar e a fuxida da saudade criadora. (MR, 89)

Otero therefore advocates the application of Bergsonian thought to the Galician landscape as a method for understanding how both this and temporality relate to the Galician personality, and for identifying that personality itself. Only through the faculty of intuition do Galicians think methodically in a way that includes 'a fuxida da saudade criadora', a reference to the supposed ethnic and psychological legacy of the Celts. The appeal to Otero is transparent. Intuition implies sympathetic engagement of the subject with object, of the observer with landscape; analysis entails the apprehension of the object by the subject according to pre-existing categories and a definition of the object based on similarities with others. To paraphrase Kolakowski's synopsis of the faculty's importance in Bergson's system, intuition permits us to discern the divine impulse in evolution and it is through this very understanding that

we realize the function of intuition in the life of the cosmos.<sup>42</sup> If we apply this to the framework of Otero's presentation of Galician psychology and nature, intuition allows a closer relationship with Nature through the metaphysical interpretation of the landscape. This idea lies behind Otero's definition of the landscape as 'xogos graves e tristesiros do espírito. Ofercen exemplos de unha beleza que se chamaría inteleitoal nos tempos afeitos a separaren as operacións da intelixencia e as da intuición e sensibilidade de un xeito completo' (ESDPG, 15). Here we see the clear Bergsonian differentiation between intelligence and intuition or sensibility, without pejorative connotations for the latter: they are referred to as being equally valid means of intellectual enquiry.

In the context of this chapter I shall explore Otero's appropriation of three of the principal features of Bergson's philosophy. In addition to intuition, these are duration (time experienced subjectively as opposed to time quantified scientifically) and the *élan vital* (a secular notion of life-force),<sup>43</sup> closely associated with each other: Bergson proposes intuition as an alternative to the limitations of intelligence (in the sense of positivist rationalism), which is the only method that allows the apprehension of duration and the *élan vital*.<sup>44</sup>

If we are to fully understand the extent and nature of the intellectual relationship between Bergson and Otero's Nature-philosophy, the question of whether influence or coincidence defines their interaction must be posed, since this issue has dominated related criticism. Two critics have addressed in detail the relationship between the philosophy of Henri Bergson and the work of Otero Pedrayo. Herrero Pérez recognises that the ideas of Otero with which her article is concerned form part

---

<sup>42</sup> Kolakowski, *op. cit.*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> A.R. Lacey, *Bergson*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 183.

<sup>44</sup> Nieves Herrero Pérez, 'Ramón Otero Pedrayo e Henri Bergson: notas para unha filosofía galega', *Agora* 2 (1982), 171-181 (174-175).

of a wider theory of Galician landscape and Nature. She suggests the route that an investigation of this might take by stating that Otero's 'paisaxe adquire unha significación simbólica e convírtese, non só para el, senón tamén para os restantes da súa xeración, no rostro da terra, na faciana visible dunha realidade humana coa que se senten profundamente identificados'.<sup>45</sup> Anxo Tarrío Varela writes intelligently on Otero from a wider, 'global' perspective, a viewpoint not usually granted to him by the majority of critics.<sup>46</sup> As Herrero Pérez points out, Bergsonian thought offers a more esoteric account of evolution that acts for the moderate Catholic scholar as a viable alternative to Spencer and Darwin, an account of evolutionism that accommodates religion, if not orthodox Christianity:

A filosofía bergsoniana parte do recoñecemento da evolución da realidade, 'o feito indiscutible do mundo material'. Asimilando o seu contido máis valioso pretende substituír 'o falso evolucionismo de Spencer' por 'un evolucionismo verdadeiro no que a realidade fora seguida na súa xeneración e non seu crecemento'. Os conceptos de *durée* e de *élan vital* son, como se sabe, os eixes desta teoría.<sup>47</sup>

Bergson's terminology, although abstract and idiosyncratic, does maintain an implicit link with Judaic-Christian discourse:

O pulo vital (*élan vital*) é a fonte inesgotable da que flúen tódalas cousas nun deitar perenne. E ó pulo vital primitivo dá Bergson o nome de Deus. Considera a Deus como o centro do que xorden os mundos, infinitos coma as moxenas dun imenso lume; Deus para Bergson é vida que non se detén, é acción e liberdade.<sup>48</sup>

Otero demonstrates his grasp of this implication: '[Bergson] sospeita á Deus tras o 'elán' vital' (HOMES, 14). According to Kolakowski, the *élan vital* 'permeates the universe and guides the evolutionary process',<sup>49</sup> and represents 'the eternally creative

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-173.

<sup>46</sup> Tarrío Varela, 'Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX', in *Otero Pedrayo na revista Nós: 1920-1936* (Escolma, Departamento de Filoloxía Galega, Universidade de Santiago, Día das letras galegas, 1988), 25-46.

<sup>47</sup> Herrero Pérez, *op. cit.*, 174.

<sup>48</sup> Tarrío Varela, 'Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX', 31.

<sup>49</sup> Kolakowski, *op. cit.*, 34.

source of being which is ultimately God himself'.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the philosophical importance of *L'Évolution créatrice* derives from what Kolakowski rates as 'the boldest attempt to assimilate the theory of evolution to a world view which implied a Great Mind at the steering-wheel of the universe and the absolute irreducibility of the human soul to its material conditions'.<sup>51</sup> Bergson incorporates the theory of evolution into an essentially spiritualist picture of the world, according to which matter itself is intelligible only within the framework of a creative, divine spirit.<sup>52</sup> His philosophy also includes an equivalent of the soul's survival after death.<sup>53</sup> By this I do not wish to infer that Otero is an avid opponent of Darwinian theories of evolution; rather, they do propose some opposition to Otero's religious concept of the world. As a formative influence, Catholicism came before Otero's youthful non-conformity in Madrid and the Galician nationalism of his professional maturity. Bergsonism offers both appeal and compatibility to the Galician thinker's religious sensitivity. However, before Otero had the subject matter and vocation with which to employ Bergson's philosophy as a component for presenting the individuality of Galician notions of time or attitudes towards landscape (as emblematic of a distinct identity), its notable impression on him would have been through its defence of intuition. When regarded as a valid method of intellectual enquiry, intuition facilitates Otero's intellectual production and exposition, advocating an open association of ideas and concepts. Bergsonism strongly compliments Otero's personal Catholic credo of life after death combined with his Romantic and Celticist-based conceptions of this. Appeal and coincidence of vision lead Otero to appreciate Bergsonian thought, although I intend

---

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 53. Otero remarks: 'a doutrina das primeiras páxinas de «L'Évolution créatrice» de Bergsón aparece certa e xusta si se considerar as obras ceibes do espírito' (ROM, 12).

<sup>52</sup> Kolakowski, *op. cit.*, 4

<sup>53</sup> 'Since the matter of the past perishes, but the memory of it does not, and since memory is not an aspect of matter, it is likely that the human mind is largely independent of body and can survive its destruction.' *Ibid.*, 3.

to argue here that appeal leads the way: it is when committed to Galicia that the discourse and substance of that philosopher's thought is employed as part of an activity directly stemming from that cultural and political proselytisation.<sup>54</sup>

The attraction of Bergsonian thought for Otero rests fundamentally on its rejection of positivism, of a mechanised, scientific and quantified design for life; it was for him, as it had been for the Generation of 1898, 'unha resposta máis a esa ansia de espíritoalidade que caracterizou o fin de século'.<sup>55</sup> Bergsonism asserts that intuition is a category of knowledge and a valid means of interpreting natural processes and phenomena. We have seen at the beginning of this chapter how Otero characterises the Galician response to landscape and Nature as an intuitive phenomenon, a faculty not bound by intelligence or reason. Nieves Herrero believes that a great part of the attraction of Bergson's ideas for Otero lies in its emphasis on life and vitality, the evolution of the natural world; on this basis, I agree with Herrero Pérez that Bergsonian philosophy must have provided Otero with the satisfaction of a shared obsession, and also new ways in which to interpret and live life.<sup>56</sup> Herrero Pérez therefore sees Bergson's work as signifying for Otero '[unha] obsesión compartida', in which equivalent terms and themes of the source philosophy exist. She argues that Otero's writings contain an original and authentic 'peasant philosophy' related to western philosophical tradition, playing down the notion of influence in favour of a coincidental approach;<sup>57</sup> she believes that the philosophy of

---

<sup>54</sup> It is interesting to note that not all Iberian intellectuals have regarded Bergsonism as making sufficient room for religion. Machado's 'Poema de un día', from *Campos de Castilla*, reveals a reading of Bergson that attacks the philosopher for not including God in an exposition seen as only accounting for a finite, mortal existence. However, given the appeal of Bergsonism to Otero, and the important role it played in his vocation as a writer and as a *galeguista*, it is not difficult to see how the Galician writer would choose to make the implicit connections between Bergsonian discourse and that of Christianity in a manner compatible with his own faith and its conditioning of his vision of Galician identity.

<sup>55</sup> Herrero Pérez, *op. cit.*, 173.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

Henri Bergson 'non debe ser explicada simplemente como influencia'.<sup>58</sup> Tarrío Varela also suggests that a reading of the cultural relationship between Otero and Bergson simply in terms of thinker and influence is flawed:

a devoción de Otero por Bergson non é algo accidental e pasaxeiro senón esencial e que está ben xustificada xa que a obra do filósofo francés, á parte de servirle de teoría e de consolo na construción do seu concepto dunha Europa máis humana e libre, permitiulle deixar ceibe o potencial lírico dende o que facer unha interpretación de Galicia e do mundo e liberarse dos xustillos da razón para compoñer unha literatura que ben merece ser divulgada fóra das nosas fronteiras.<sup>59</sup>

However, in my opinion Bergsonian and Oterian thought (such as the latter's approach to interpreting his environment and its relationship with its inhabitants) do not merely signify parallel systems as Herrero Pérez argues: they stop being so when Otero openly employs readily identifiable Bergsonian discourse in his writings upon several issues, principally landscape. The issue entails greater complexity than has so far been accounted for and which is contingent upon Otero's integration into the Galician nationalist movement, how this provided him with an artistic vocation and political motivation to write, and the role of Bergsonism in both of these processes. I share Tarrío Varela's assessment of Otero's relationship with Bergsonism and its implications for his induction into *galeguismo*:

frente do racionalismo fenomenolóxico kantiano (...) está a intuición bergsoniana como un método de coñecemento das esencia que o século XX soubou reivindicar. E é aí onde Otero, dada a súa textura intelectual e o seu temperamento vitalista, atopa unha xustificación ó seu xeito de comportarse, de pensar e de escribir, así como ó seu proceso ideolóxico de iniciación no galeguismo.<sup>60</sup>

In my view, the debate centres on whether Otero assimilated *a posteriori* or adopted *a priori* the discourse and thought that we can readily attribute to Bergson: a chance parallelism between Bergson's established philosophy and Otero's thought cannot be inferred where prior influence and distinguishable appropriation can be demonstrated.

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>59</sup> Tarrío Varela, 'Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX', 46.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

It is hard to give serious credence to the coincidence scenario when Otero's landscape discourse borrows heavily from that of Bergson.<sup>61</sup> When not openly establishing a link with Bergson's ideas in his text, Otero employs vocabulary appropriated from the Greek, adapted to 'authentic' Galician verbs that might be attributed to his own separate system. Otero expresses Bergson's double movement of 'ascent' and 'descent' by the Greek *anábase* e *catábase* and the Galician *amurchar* and *agromar*:<sup>62</sup> 'os piñeiros en toda sazón, no inverno as néboas, na primavera a anabasis do tenro agromar, no outono a catabasis do marelo amurchar, pintan na paisaxe os tempos' (ESDPG, 56). Further complexity lies in Otero's employment of Bergsonian discourse in conjunction with other ideas (such as the Nietzschean *werden*) that he had adapted to his reading of the Galician landscape (*devalar*, *decorrer*, *devenir*). When choosing ideas, Otero's criteria are purely intuitive rather than rigorously intellectual in motivation: he does not distinguish between philosophies that are traditionally in conflict or incompatible, but adopts those aspects of each system of thought for an individual role in his theory as a whole, irrespective of possible contradictions that these sometimes contrasting tenets may imply when juxtaposed in a foreign system of thought or world-view.

The two issues must be fully individuated. Does Otero simply find in Bergsonian thought similarities with his own already established Nature-philosophy, an apprehension of those processes that he saw as pivotal for the Galician landscape and its relationship with Galicianness, and employ its discourse alongside his own existing terminology? Or is he adopting and adapting source ideas whose appeal to

---

<sup>61</sup> As Herrero Pérez herself notes, 'del [Bergson] toma en ocasión os términos *durée*, *elan*, *suceder*, (no que respecta este último especificando claramente "na súa acepción bergsoniana"), e algúns detalles revelan unha lectura atenta do autor de *L'Evolution Creatrice*, como cando alude explicitamente ó exemplo do vaso de auga co que o filósofo francés ilustraba "o feito indiscutible da evolución"' Nieves Herrero Pérez, *op. cit.*, 173. See Otero's 'Filosofía do camiño', in *Parladoiro*, 150.

<sup>62</sup> Herrero Pérez, *op. cit.*, 176.

and influence on him is quite apparent in order to shape a philosophy around the same topic? Herrero Pérez proposes that the former is the case:

contrapoñamos, sen embargo, as imaxes que cada un dos autores nos ofrecen na explicación do proceder da vida. Lembremos que Bergson, ó exemplificar os dous movementos de 'ascenso' e de 'descenso', empregaba dúas palabras ben significativas: dicía (...) que o movemento de descenso consiste 'en algo así como desenvolver un rolo xa preparado' ou 'nun resorte que se afloxa'. 'Rollo' e 'resorte' son evidentemente dúas palabras pertencentes ó vocabulario dunha sociedade desenvolta e tecnificada. Pola contra, no texto de Otero que poñamos en paralelo ó de Bergson, víamos como el tomaba as metáforas da natureza (o movemento de ascenso era 'o agromar', o de descenso 'o amurcharse'), como home pertencente a unha sociedade que vive en íntimo contacto co mundo natural. Neste sentido, el mesmo ten falado dun 'pensamento campesío' inspirado pola natureza e os seus procesos.<sup>63</sup>

I do not agree that this is purely coincidental. Otero's concept of a 'pensamento campesío' in my opinion is another facet of his ennobling of the countryside and everything in it, especially the peasant. There is difficulty in establishing definitively if Otero had formulated this philosophy of landscape or time his 'pensamento campesío' - before coming into contact with Bergson's works, or had made simply a 'naturalised', or culturally specific adaptation afterwards, as he has clearly done with all other aspects of cultural history discussed in this thesis. This is because one of the principal catalysts for Otero's adoption of intuition as a criterion that could govern intellectual activity is precisely Bergsonism. Otero presents a Galician parallel to that philosophy, precisely in the same manner as he does with the concept of *devalar*, fully acknowledging the source ideas behind this. However, reiterating her opinion, Herrero Pérez views Bergson not as a simple influence on Otero. Both figures, she suggests, share 'unha intuición común', and in Otero's case, traces of his own core culture based on the sentimental and geographical observation of native landscape condition the expression of such intuition. One point in favour of Herrero Pérez' argument regards the arrival at similar conclusions by different thinkers without prior

---

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

knowledge of each other's work. This is the case, coincidentally, with Bergson himself and a contemporary.<sup>64</sup> Yet there is evidence to suggest that Bergson is a source whose influence Otero applies, rather than a thinker whose ideas coincide with those of the Galician writer.

My argument pivots upon the extent to which Otero had read Bergson before formulating his idea of the Galician landscape as a facet of Galician identity, since with few other writers does the exposition of erudition and reference form such a key feature of expression as it does with Otero. If he had theorised independently his 'pensamento campesío' before the period of his conversion to *galeguismo* during 1917 to 1925 (and before he began to apply his vast erudition to a designated cultural purpose and political cause), then it would be easier to accept the view that Bergsonian thought is a philosophy that simply coincides with his own and to which he gives several intellectual nods. But it is highly unlikely that Otero the bibliophile did not come into contact with Bergsonian thought in the stimulating intellectual circles of Madrid from 1905 to 1911, either by reading the original texts in French or through translations such as the immensely influential *Los datos inmediatos de la conciencia*.<sup>65</sup> Quite apart from the obvious sources of reception of cultural reviews, magazines and libraries, Otero's library holds books by Bergson and others relating to his philosophy. Original texts in French include *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion*,<sup>66</sup> which was published in 1932, and *L'Évolution créatrice*, an edition from

---

<sup>64</sup> 'It is perhaps rather strange that of the two main philosophers of time of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bergson and McTaggart, neither seems to have paid any attention to the other. Bergson wrote his main relevant works before McTaggart's famous 1908 article, but he never overtly reacted to it and shows no signs of being influenced by it in his later writings', Lacey, *op. cit.*, 88-89.

<sup>65</sup> The translation of Bergson's first book, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889).

<sup>66</sup> Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1932). Otero also provides a review of the book for *Nós*: 'Foi pouco comentado o libro derradeiro de Bergson. Eiquí soilo lle adicaremos unha liñas admirativas da honradeza do lustre vello, que no remate da súa carreira, na lingua máis clara que ningún francés usou, sospeita á Deus tras o 'elán' vidal, e adica aos místecos páxinas de incomparable xustiza. Libro fondo, socegado, requintamento de un vivir filosófico que fina ca mesmea dinidade espiritoal dos primeiros ensaios' (LETRAS, 14).

1957.<sup>67</sup> A 1923 edition of the third volume of A. Thibaudet's *Trente ans de vie française*, entitled 'Le Bergonisme', is also present.<sup>68</sup> There is also a translation of the latter work by Carlos Madariaga, published in 1912,<sup>69</sup> and a work in Castilian on *La filosofía de Henri Bergson*, from 1917.<sup>70</sup> Out of these works, two date from the period before nationalist commitment, and are in Castilian, suggesting that Otero had direct access to Bergsonian thought – as did most Spanish intellectuals of the time – before formulating his own ideas on Galician identity and landscape: before his open adoption of *galeguista* ideology. Thibaudet's study coincides with Otero's deepening involvement with Galician nationalist affairs. Moreover, on the premise that *Arredor de si* is the spiritual and intellectual biography of the *Nós* group, and fundamentally of its author, Bergsonism acts as a catalyst for the protagonist's recuperation of identity. Otero links such an identity in the latter stages of the book with landscape and Nature. The fictionalised figure of Otero, Adrián Solovio, finds intellectual and spiritual inspiration in Bergsonian thought ('lendo a Bergson atopou un consolo'). Filgueira Valverde also reinforces my argument – that the consolidation of Bergsonism in Otero's formation and outlook precedes or concurs with his adhesion to *galeguismo* by identifying Losada Diéguez as having introduced Otero to Bergson's concept of time.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Otero's comments in 'Morte e resurrección' suggest that Bergsonism is applied to a reading of the Galician psychology (and by association, its character) rather than simply identified with it. As Tarrío Varela observes of Otero, 'non dubida *en aplicar* a ese escuro e cósmico pensar do home galego o método

---

<sup>67</sup> Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: PUF, 1957).

<sup>68</sup> A. Thibaudet, *Trente ans de vie française*. III. *Le Bergonisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1923).

<sup>69</sup> Henri Bergson, *La evolución creadora*. Trad. Carlos Madariaga (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1912).

<sup>70</sup> M. García Morente, *La filosofía de Henri Bergson* (Madrid: Publicación Residencia de estudiantes, 1917).

<sup>71</sup> 'Peculiar neoromántico, había sido guiado por Losada Diéguez hacia la concepción bergsoniana del tiempo'. José Filgueira Valverde, 'La lírica de OP', *R. Menéndez Pidal. R. Otero Pedrayo. Simposio celebrado en Madrid. Actas editadas por Manuel Mourelle de Lama* (Sada, A Coruña: Edición do Castro, 1991), 151-166 (54).

intuitivo de Bergson'.<sup>72</sup> Otero himself talks of application: 'botar diante esta afirmación do bergsonismo da alma e da paisaxe galega' (MR, 89).

Further evidence to suggest that Bergson is more of an influence than a parallel may be found in the detectable presence of his discourse in other works by Otero. In Tarrío Varela's words, the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* is 'enchoupado de bergsonismo', precisely in those sections of the essay that concern the subject matter in question, 'nesa visión dunha Galicia en continuo dinamismo paisaxístico e espiritual'.<sup>73</sup> Crucially, we must consider whether Otero who did not become even in part 'committed' to Galicia until 1917, and not fully until 1924 to 1925 had by then formulated his vision of the Galician landscape that was to be so intimately connected with his portrayal of Galician identity. If he had, there is no text to show for it. As a geographer, Otero was aware of Galicia's natural idiosyncrasies in a scientific way that complimented his childhood appreciation of the outside world around Trasalba; I do not believe that he would have associated this relationship with the nationalist idea of Galicia if he had not joined the *Irmandades da fala*. For Bergsonian thought plays a crucial part in both processes, as Tarrío underlines:

existe un elemento no entramado intelectual de Otero Pedrayo que debeu influir de xeito decisivo, nun intre dado, non só na súa práctica literaria senón ademais no seu comportamento xeral na sociedade e, cousa moi importante, na súa evolución ideolóxica dentro do galeguismo. Refírome á asumpción, por parte del, do pensamento bergsoniano no tocante á importancia que o filósofo francés concedeu á intuición como método de coñecemento e conseguinte consideración do tempo realmente vivido, e dicir da *durée* como xeito íntimo que o home ten de medi-lo tempo e senti-la vida.<sup>74</sup>

Carmen Blanco has also underlined the similar origins of Otero and Bergson's philosophical ethos, and how the influence of the latter on the former has shaped Otero's literary practice: 'o irracionalismo vitalista oteriano é da mesma raíz que o

---

<sup>72</sup> Tarrío Varela, 'Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX', 28. The italics are my own.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

pensamento do seu admirado Bergson (...) e encontra na literatura o molde idóneo para a expresión das súas contradicións e complexidades.<sup>75</sup> Or, as expressed in *Arredor de si*, ‘non é pecado, polo contrario necesidade, deixarse levar pola vida’ (AS, 115). Bergson freed thinkers from long-standing definitions of intellectual expression and pursuit, and took away for Otero the sense of ‘sin’ in not being systematic. A lack of systematic editing and revision pervades (and often afflicts) his work. Intuition, and not perfectionism, guides Otero’s thought processes, which are transmitted directly to the page and then to print. This also explains the singularity of his style of writing and the nature of his written expositions. In addition to possibly forming some of the putative source material for his philosophy of landscape, Bergsonism is one of the underlying philosophies (one also thinks of German historicism) on which his approach to *galeguista* and literary activities indeed his whole notion of vocation hinged. Tarrío Varela once more provides us with a perceptive insight into this aspect of Otero’s trajectory:

sospeito que ata descubrir a Bergson, Otero non se sentiu seguro do seu propio valer; que, oscuramente, sentía como defecto insalvable a falla de organización e sistematicidade intelectual que, dende logo, o definen. (...). Ata descubrir a Bergson, quizais Otero pensaba que ese instinto seu de deixar levar pola vida era realmente un pecado. Para o meu modo de ver, insisto, tal pensamento informa boa parte do talante humano de Otero e explica tamén en boa parte un certo caos que calquera que se achegue de vagar á súa obra non pode deixar de detectar.<sup>76</sup>

Otero must have found Bergson to be one of the few thinkers from the span of cultural history to justify his own unsystematic and unordered thought processes, which hinged on intuitive association and the priority of sentiment as a filter for experience and observation. For Otero, the aesthetic of Galician art, landscape and life comprise

---

<sup>75</sup> Carmen Blanco, ‘A muller en *Arredor de si*’, *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX* (Santiago de Compostela: Consello da Cultura Galega, 1990), 227-251 (231).

<sup>76</sup> Tarrío Varela, ‘Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX’, 33-34.

‘a terra e a vida naturalmente fundidas’.<sup>77</sup> This begins with and rests upon Otero’s ‘discovery’ of Galicia and his own sense of belonging to her traditions and culture, at a point when he had already imbibed of those cultural currents that had most influenced him, and which would govern and sustain his intellectual responses for the rest of his life. I therefore reiterate my conviction that Bergson constitutes a major influence that answered Otero’s intellectual and artistic needs perhaps more than any other single philosopher or philosophical source. Rather than a separate philosophy related to Galicia and her landscape, Otero formulates a domestication of Bergsonian thought, a philosophical import and acculturation that rests on plausible and local cognates in Otero’s writings. Otero’s comprehension of Bergsonism and discovery of *galeguidade* are inseparable: both govern his depiction of landscape. The concept of the Galician landscape as cultural entity could only have been and indeed was fully formulated after his conversion; previously, such an intellectual endeavour lacked any sense of purpose or design. The politics of *galeguismo* and the cultural mission of the *Xeración Nós* provided vocation: the gradual and enthusiastic increase in Otero’s literary and cultural production in the advent of the events in Galicia of 1917 testifies to this. Just as later nationalists or Marxist theoreticians would seize upon language as a more internationalist and universal framework on which to build ideology, earlier thinkers, invariably conditioned by Herderian notions of organic and cultural nationhood, drew upon the immediacy of their own distinctive environment. Although Otero’s concept of Galician identity incorporates other philosophical elements (such as Idealism), his conversion to Galician nationalism and its literature depends on an understanding and adoption of Bergsonian thought. The conversion rests on an act of

---

<sup>77</sup> Francisco Fernández del Riego, *op. cit.*, 81.

intuition, and Otero associates his defence of intuition exclusively with the philosophy of Bergson, and relates this to Romanticism, Celticism, and Galician identity.

Having established the location of Bergsonism in Otero's cultural reception and practice, I now wish to evaluate the precise manner in which it leaves its mark on Otero's outlook as regards Galician identity and *devalar*. Herrero Pérez underlines some of those elements: 'o proceso da evolución da vida impoñe ó proceso da súa involución, que o proceso creativo impoñe ó destructivo, e en definitiva, que a vida impoñe á morte e ambas deben verse como aspectos dunha única realidade que é o desenvolvemento do absolutamente novo.'<sup>78</sup> This comprises one of the central strands of Bergson's thought: the world is divided into consciousness, or life, and matter. The *élan vital* – the creative impulse of life itself that imposes itself on matter – creates new forms. For Otero, the Galician landscape is in constant movement and development, or *devalar*, a flux between *anábase* and *catábase* ('agromar' and 'amurchar'): the cultural analogue of this philosophical import entails an accentuation of Galicians' perception of death, decline and rebirth, given the recognition of these in the landscape. Furthermore, Galicians counter the negative connotations of death through vitality, faith and creativity; the latter quality is a specifically Celtic inheritance, whose presence is interpreted in the natural world. Nature, landscape and time as perceived by the Galician are an affirmation of the after-life and a transcendent creator. Bergson's placing of creation over destruction and life over death, and his breaking down of the categories between nature and culture, lend themselves well to Otero's vision of 'morte e resurrección' as metaphors for religious meaning perceived by the Galician in the largely rural world around him as an associated way of living life.

---

<sup>78</sup> Tarrío Varela, 'Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX', 31.

In addition, Bergsonian notions of temporality favour life lived rather than measured mechanically, an intuitive grasp of time and reality that Otero sought to depict as a Galician attribute. Bergson identifies in many texts two differing notions of time: that of the objective (the watch) and the subjective (life), and on occasions affirms the possibility of establishing a classification of peoples according to their manner of experiencing temporality.<sup>79</sup> Like other features of his unsystematised theory, Otero appropriates the notion of *devalar* not just from the Nietzschean *werden*, but also from the flame or wave analogy employed by Bergson to explain 'duration'. *Devalar* - flow, perpetual movement or 'becoming' in the landscape can be more precisely explained as a concept through Bergson's image of a wave constantly renewing its material but without the complication of moving.<sup>80</sup> The short story 'O vello e mais o río' echoes these Bergsonian notions of time and movement that Otero applies to the Galician landscape and its relationship with man. In the description of the old man's apprehension of modes of temporality and mortality perceptible in Nature, Otero employs the verbs *decorrer* and *devalar* together with the Bergsonian image of flowing water: 'collía a auga con tino e respeto, decatábase de ter descuberto un novo sistema de contar o tempo. E era seu tempo, seus minutos, decorrendo, xiados pero tamén amantiños, que choraban deixando bágoas nos dedos do vello cando voltaban ó río, obrigados pola lei do eterno *devalar*' (VELLO, 65). Otero also maintains that 'o método pro entendemento da Paisaxe ten de supor un senso e vivenza primeira do tempo' (ESDPG, 14). A.R. Lacey describes how duration embodies a unified process rather than a set of discrete moments, heterogenous and not homegenous in nature, containing no two similar parts. He uses the analogy of the melody that owes its entire nature to change and must last its entire length to be

---

<sup>79</sup> Herrero Pérez, *op. cit.*, 178.

<sup>80</sup> Lacey, *op. cit.*, 49.

understood. For a melody to exist it must be held together by consciousness, which unites its different temporal parts. Duration, like a melody, is essentially something experienced,<sup>81</sup> a unity that owes its entire nature to change: it must last its whole length to be the melody that we recognise through consciousness,<sup>82</sup> like an experience always influenced by all previous experiences.<sup>83</sup> Kolakowski also elucidates duration: 'real time (...) is neither homogenous or divisible; it is (...) what each of us is: we know it intuitively, from direct experience.'<sup>84</sup> Each moment carries within it the entire flow of the past and each is new and unrepeatable; furthermore, duration is only possible through memory, in which the past is accumulated in its entirety.<sup>85</sup> This sense of the mind-related nature of time can be found in the work of Otero. In *Rosalía*, for example, the perception of the outer world and *devalar*, with all of its philosophical implications, proceeds from the inner, mental mechanisms of the young poetess: 'o mundo, a paisaxe, van devalando, devalando sen conformidade á lei no maxinar da rapaza' (ROS, 22). This recalls those tenets of Bergson's thought that sustain that only the memory and thus consciousness maintain the continuity of the world,<sup>86</sup> and that real temporal succession or duration occurs only in the mind and is projected on to matter.<sup>87</sup> On the premise that intuition and consciousness allow the perception of duration, evolutionary processes, and in particular the evolution of organic matter, are therefore the work of mind.<sup>88</sup> As Nieves Herrero points out, Otero refers to one of the analogies employed by Bergson to explicate this aspect of his philosophy: 'moita forza na creación e moita forza do convencimento da filosofía

---

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>84</sup> Kolakowski, *op. cit.*, 3.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

bergsoniana débouse ao esponxado no vaso de auga; a forza de o tomar por exemplo, o propio mestre e os ouvintes acostumaron a sentir nun local pechado un decorrer do tempo preciso pra entender o máis elemental do sistema' (FDC, 150).

I concur with Ríos Panisse's assertion that Otero is Bergsonian in his conception of time as *duration*, *decorrer* or *devalar*, eliminating pre-Kantian oppositions of past-future or Nature-culture.<sup>89</sup> Otero understands the Galician landscape as duration, without past or future or distinction between culture and Nature. Nature is therefore a human and cultural interpretation of the world, an idea synthesised in the novel *Devalar*.<sup>90</sup> This enables a philosophical rendering of the Galician affinity with Nature and the cultural significance of landscape in Galician culture; hence the affirmation that 'a cosmicidade na paisaxe, [é] case sempre proieución da cosmicidade na cultura' (ESDPG, 14). This breaking down of interpretative categories may be seen also as a Celtic trait by Otero, since he comments that 'non hai marcos precisos pras realidás no cerne do espírito céltigo' (ROM, 143). My standpoint here is identical to that of Ríos Panisse in her response to the novel *Devalar*: the culture or vision of a people is analogous to Nature which is interpreted subjectively and modified; the Galicians, as a Celtic 'pobo en camiño', interpret landscape as life, whereas for other peoples (static peoples), landscape is simply lived in. Constant movement, however, and an emphasis on perceived temporality, as well as the identification of culture or history with Nature are all factors that point towards Bergsonian thought. Here Otero's emphasis on 'arestoridade' ('nowness') as seen in previous citations can be recalled. Ríos Panisse concludes that 'o home galego ten que ter, por iso, unha presenza esencial neste

---

<sup>89</sup> Ríos Panisse, 'Introducción', in *Devalar*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

*Devalar de Galicia que quiere plasmar Otero*'.<sup>91</sup> Galicians are intimately in touch with the processes of their landscape, in harmony with the fundamental laws of Nature that hinge on the essential processes of life and death. In landscape, historical, religious, ethnic and national signs can be read to comprise a cultural totality recognised by a consciousness attuned to a given temporal mode.

### ***The human alteration of the land***

Another interpretation of Otero's assertion that he seeks to explain landscape by people is the 'amorosa humanización' (ESDPG, 50)<sup>92</sup> or human alteration of the land by the Galician. This is another cardinal feature of his work which many critics have identified; Ríos Panisse observes how for Otero man is 'un elemento esencial da paisaxe. (...) protagonista modificador desa paisaxe'.<sup>93</sup> Galicia is 'terra de humanizada paisaxe' (EH, 197), comprising 'paisaxe fondamente humanizada. Humus, humán' (HDG, 18); 'a feliz e total adaptación da raza a terra' (EH, 15) encapsulates this. 'Los labregos', Otero maintains, 'han creado esa riqueza formidable, ese país de tipo verdaderamente europeo, que es hoy Galicia.'<sup>94</sup> Of the Monterrey valley, for example, Rivero de Avia and some regions of Ourense, Otero comments that 'todo el espíritu de Galicia está allí identificado con el paisaje profundamente humanizado'.<sup>95</sup> In the Miño central can be found 'una (...) íntima asociación de las obras del hombre y los rumbos de la plástica y la evolución natural' (CDO, 21). A readily definable Galician trait therefore consists of the alteration of the

---

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> I use the term 'humanisation' in this section fully aware of some of Otero's reticence in applying it: he refers to '[a] humanización da terra' as being made up of 'palabras demasiado usadas', but settles on its usage, 'namentras se non descubran noutas máis direita siñificanza' (HDG, 17).

<sup>93</sup> Ríos Panisse, 'A visión da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', 107.

<sup>94</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 124.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

inhabited world, since according to Otero's affirmation, 'de ningún xeito podemos teorizar arredor da paisaxe natural na Nosa Terra. Foi máis que domeado, humanizado o bosque' (ESDPG, 24). Representing this vision of the decisive Galician interaction with habitat to a wider audience, Otero states that

toda la historia y todo el devenir íntimo del esfuerzo gallego en el mundo están principalmente en la recreación de su tierra. Galicia ha sido un pueblo escultor; basta recordar aquellos paisajes en donde las vertientes de las montañas descienden a los ríos, profundamente encajonados por precipicios rápidos y todos aquellos precipicios de roca pizarrosa, dura, enemiga, en apariencia del hombre, gracias a una labor perseverante y secular de infinitas generaciones de campesinos, se transformaron en verdaderos jardines; porque allí se ha creado la tierra vegetal, allí se ha luchado contra los elementos, contra los torrentes y las naturales inclinaciones del suelo, creando sistemas maravillosos para sostener el cultivo de la vid y de las huertas.<sup>96</sup>

This tendency expresses Galician creativity; in Galicia we find 'a terra coltivada con mimo de xardín, o mar traballado como agro', indicative of 'a beleza requintada da arte do pobo' (KOKORO, 139). It also demonstrates the Galician love of the aesthetic, where 'el mayor tributo del país gallego a la belleza es la organización y logro de sus paisajes' (CDO, 149) and the Galician landscape is 'unha escultura labrada polo amor, labrada con bágoas e admiración' (MAC, 18). Otero defines the beauty of the Galician landscape as 'compenetración do esforzo humano coa paisaxe natural' (EH, 221-222). Stonework, woodwork, shipbuilding and farming all comply with 'un nativo pulo do noso espírito' (MR, 100). There exists therefore an instinctive relationship between the Galician response to landscape and creativity, applied to both small and large structure alike:

O galego criado na súa paisaxe (...) aspira a transportalo á obra das súas mans ó compás da inspiración e na dirección dun soño interior. E dá ó palleiro ou á meda unha forma case orgánica, dispón a carga dun carro en masas de equilibrio inestable e suxeitas a un canon estético particular, pon na pedra da casa máis simple a sombra dunha parra ou a sombra dun leve releve, cobre de símbolos o hórreo, o caxato de camiñar, tódolos seus obxectos, astra dispón dunha maneira artística o lume do fogar e,

---

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

morta a chama, o monte de cinzas. Vexamos como esta inspiración levada ás obras da cultura superior é a fórmula dunha arte galega sen ningunha rixidez. (EH, 210)

Typically Otero alludes to dichotomies in cultural history in order to define Galician architecture as an art without rigidity; the range of meaning is extended when describing the architects of the Baroque, to include vitality, impulse, and feeling:

Eles manexaron enormes masas de pedra, ordenándoas dunha maneira simple, sen a longa meditación técnica deixándose levar polo íntimo impulso galego: o máximo equilibrio ligado á máxima gracia e expresión vital. O que poderíamos chamar escolástica da arte á moda impositivos modelos que eles evitaban ou vitalizaban coa alegre seguridade que dá o sentir racial. (EH, 214-215)

The Galician shaping of the landscape through architectural works is emblematic of Galician culture in both an ahistorical and a historical sense; it reveals constants of the Galician national character that are also expressed through allusions to the emblematic values of Romanticism ('o barroco é en Galicia algo forte, masculino, étnico, poderosamente aberto a tódalas suxerencias', EH, 213), and through certain dispositions of a given epoch ('é, ademais, a válvula do xenio galego que contido nos marcos da España de costas a Europa, puxo na pedra tódolos seus recordos e esperanzas', EH, 213). In the truest spirit of Romanticism, Galician architecture reflects the popular imagination of a people ('o granito galego impón outra imaxinación máis segura e total, máis metida na imaxinación folclórica do pobo na arquitectura e na escultura', EH, 214); it is, therefore, cultural identity expressed in a Nature altered by the human hand ('do eido interior, do espírito galego, traballado en roca mai', ROM, 169). Although Otero uses the idea of struggle and effort to convey the Galician adaptation to and of his habitat, the resulting tone is one of ultimate harmony, another facet of the warm Galician relationship with Nature: 'a presenza dunha raza que soubo adaptarse a este medio moral e incorporarse nel, creou a rexión, o círculo cultural, e, de tal maneira se confunden ámbolos factores, o natural e o

humano' (EH, 13-14). In terms of settlements, Otero chooses Santiago de Compostela to exemplify this fusion: 'eiquí podémonos maxinar un comenzo d'estética do paisaxe e do arte e vida galegos, a terra e a vida naturalmente fundidas' (EDA, 4). And in regard to professions, Otero uses that of the quarryman of the Romanesque period as an example of the significance that man's intervention in the landscape holds for Galician culture: 'os canteiros e os maxineiros románicos, anónimos, admirables poetas, traballaban instintivamente sen darse conta, seguindo a maneira da terra. Esa é a colaboración mais grande e respeitabre que se pode producir n-un pobo' (EDA, 2). 'N-este sentido', Otero adds, 'temos en Galiza unha arte fondamente representativa dende os moimentos máxicos ou relixiosos da alborada céltiga e da mocedá do románico hastra os luxosos crepúsculos do noso barroco' (EDA, 2). The transformation of Nature and landscape does not only embody a practical dimension in the Galician striving to master milieu; it denotes a clear artistic expression that remains a cultural constant throughout Galician history.

The peasant's status as the most authentic embodiment of the principal tenets of Galician culture is also maintained. Otero attributes the subjugation and work of the landscape to 'aquela enorme masa campesina que se extendía sobre toda Galicia, (...) que traballou e convertiuna nun xardín amorosamente cultivado' (MAC, 28). Similarly, 'o puro canto unánime do corazón de Galicia' consists of 'o sentido da natureza humanizada, o tema sempre renovador do pobo artista e sensitivo' (EH, 242). The peasantry faces the task of manipulating the land, to harness its outward composition with its capacity for production: 'O problema levado por cada labrego, por cada xeneración, é de armuñizar, de entendere. Díse de un bon paisano de terras de pan, de terras de viño, que entende seu eido. Con coñecimento e amor críanse,

estase criando, a tona histórica da Galiza sufincada na xeórxica en ritmos e tempos degraus dispostos' (ESDPG, 24).

All of these qualities are classed as having their roots in Galicia's supposed Celtic ancestors, as part of Otero's construction of a positive historical and ethnic account of Galicia. 'unha presenza de conciencia organizou a paisaxe galega', (MR, 100). Otero comments, 'a primeira conciencia human espertou entr'isos granitos, traballounos criando torrón labrego e cobriunos d'aldeas. O moimento da primeira Galiza, o castro está forxado n'un elemento da paisaxe. Tanto com'ás longas chuvias garimosas debe a nosa terra seu releve o amor con que foi esculpurada pol-o traballo unánime das xenerazós' (ROM, 129-130). The early Galicians initiated the notable human modification of environment that this section has addressed; the Celt brought a consciousness to Galicia that affected all aspects of the surrounding locality: 'a pedra, a mar, a chuiva, o luar, os piñeiros, agardaban pola presenza do home céltigo a conciencia como a masa dos instrumentos e artistas da orquesta agardan pola primeira medida da batuta de abeto do «Kapelmeister». Son nada sen el' (MR, 96). The Galician landscape is for Otero 'das millor e máis fondamente humanizadas por unha vella cultura figuraria' (EAP, 159). This period signified 'unha verdadeira identificación, un penetrar da paisaxe no home e do home na paisaxe creadora da eternidade vital de Galicia' (EH, 26), a symbiotic relationship that is apparent in many areas of Otero's approach to the Galician relationship with Nature. The creative expression of culture in the landscape that Otero describes as being repeated throughout different epochs of Galician history begins with the Celts' construction of hilltop settlements, the distinctive *castros*: 'nas constelacións de castros acharémo-lo esquema dunha posible arte da paisaxe, algo como o Dominio de Arnheim, soñado por Edgardo, pero aquí o artista é a Raza e o tema reviste impresionante simplicidade

cósmica. (...) O pobo celta soubo tallar nos cumes a primeira e a súa esencial figura imaxinada' (EH, 29). Before the relevance for Otero of the *castro* in Galician cultural history can be assessed, I must first consider the influences behind the idea of the humanisation of the land and the depiction of the landscape as a historical entity.

In a previous section, I commented upon the dual influence of Virgil and Thomson. In the modern poet, Virgil's conception of the peasant who follows the Creator's purposes in bringing Nature to fulfilment is adapted to comply with an intended ideological transmission.<sup>97</sup> An excerpt from a short story by Otero, recounting the act of ploughing, distinctly reflects this Virgilian influence:

O tío Trocado houbérase contentado de que a portelo tivera máis forras. Pero de seguida, calcando co zoco a estrema do eido, como tomándolle o pulso á nabeira, o home riuse e, fortalecido, máis que nunca namorado do griseiro torrón, fixo o sinal da cruz e púxose ó primeiro suco. Endexamais monxe copista ou escritor consideraron o pergameo ou a folla de papel co sentimento de amor e respecto do vello tío Trocado diante da folla de boa terra da Seara, como se fora un primeiro amor, un torrón virxe. Longas foulas tremedoiras percorrían a pel dos bois, un intre pousóns, cando rubiu o primeiro recender da terra rachada. Era un sono turbado, aquel eido estaba feito de sonos. Os sucos antigos inda se podían enxergar, como unha lembranza. Formas dubidasas estrábanse ou sospeitábanse na fermosa peza. Gustaba do primeiro ulido da terra, e do calmo gozo de se decatarse da fortaleza da man e a finura do enxergar, guiando dereitos os sucos, e quería erguer o zoco ó home para máis... Procurou un amparo e defensa meténdose entre a xugada coas mans abertas apegadas ós cerrizos que tremores ondeados percorrían. O can estaba con el, e o seu quentor e o dos bois defendíanlo descontra o maino e medoño espertar das formas na terra. (ETL, 126-127)

Ratzel proceeds from idealistic philosophy to present man in organic union with the land, remodelling and ravaging the earth's surface with a knowing mind.<sup>98</sup> Spengler's brief assertions on this theme amid the considerable expanse of *The Decline of the West* show some similarity to the ideas of Ratzel, although they remain closer to Romantic and Herderian modes of expression:

He who digs and ploughs is seeking not to plunder, but to alter Nature. To plant implies, not to take something, but to produce something. But with this, man himself

---

<sup>97</sup> James Sambrook, *op. cit.*, xxv-xxvi.

<sup>98</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, 177.

becomes plant – namely, as peasant. He roots in the earth that he tends, the soul of man discovers a soul in the countryside, and a new earth-boundness of being, a new feeling, pronounces itself. Hostile Nature becomes the friend; earth becomes Mother Earth. Between sowing and begetting, harvest and death, the child and the grain, a profound affinity is set up.<sup>99</sup>

This serves well as an intimation of Otero's full interaction with the ideas of Spengler that I return to consider at several points in this thesis. The present matter in question however requires that other connotations concerning landscape and culture in Otero's writings must be taken into account. If the shaping of Nature and landscape through labour and endeavour transforms Galicia in the present, its legacy, effect and symbolism can also be identified in later generations, 'a laboura humán enxergada como un intre do longo proceso e decorrer a prol de unha perfeición' (ESDPG, 23). One such aspect is the notion of the landscape as a historical artefact of differing cultural strata that form core culture.

The interaction of the Galician with his landscape and surroundings throughout the centuries renders the landscape a series of historical 'layers', a cultural palimpsest: 'a historia rexístrase, con intención ou sin ela, na paisaxe con diverso ritmo, a historia cósmica e a das obras e afáns dos homes' (VNF, 528). Natural development in the landscape and the traces of man's presence discussed previously record the historical process. This is a concept seen as applying not just to Galicia, but also to Spain in its entirety:

Sobre ese suelo variado y difícil, generosamente agradecido al trabajo, se realiza una lenta y creadora fusión de energías humanas, reflejadas en la Naturaleza y en el arte, que la historia perdura con un valor de perenne actualidad. En el paisaje, se advierte la presencia, o por lo menos el eco, de la trayectoria histórica. (GDE, I, 6)

However, Otero reiterates late in life that the relationship between history and landscape is of especial significance in Galicia: 'el paisaje es en todo país, y más en

---

<sup>99</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West (Der Untergang des Abendlandes)*, trans. C.F. Atkinson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928), 2 vols., II, 89-90.

Galicia, historia plasmada, natural y humana, en lentas estratificaciones, en huellas de largos ciclos vegetales y de esfuerzo humano, en realizaciones y en fracasos. Y para sentirlo no se puede olvidar el tiempo de la historia y de la tradición' (PF, 434). The entirety of both natural phenomenon and human activity over time is perceptible through memory, an awareness of history and tradition: 'en cada paisaje el observador debe registrar y graduar las dimensiones apreciables del suceder «histórico» de los hombres inserto en la lentitud del «tiempo cósmico» y las variaciones de los ciclos de la vegetación' (CDO, 37). There is then a logical extension of the suggestions conveyed by *devalar* and Bergsonian thought present in the depiction of 'memorias e resoancias nas paisaxes' (HDG, 14). Otero's leanings towards this idea are fully evident in his statement that 'espreitamos na nosa Terra (...) o decorrer dos ritmos sazoeiros e diurnos sen poñer marcos demasiado fondamente chantados entre a natureza e máis a historia' (ESDPG, 33).

A major leitmotif of Bergson's philosophy is the survival of the past in the present and the role of memory.<sup>100</sup> This is another factor that renders landscape more cultural entity than mere habitat in Otero's conceptualisation. Galician history, Otero comments, 'que se apalpa na paisaxe, nas cousas que se ven diareamente fala de orixes' (COMP, 74). Landscape as a map of Galicia's past forms an index of ethnic and historical identity; in his endeavour to present the validity of Galicia's cultural distinctiveness within a historical context, Otero highlights its varied features that condition the observer's reading of the land, history and identity, such as *castros*, dolmens, churches and ruins. As Henrique Monteagudo indicates, the tendency to attribute ethnic characteristics to the landscape embodies a constant in Otero's work

---

<sup>100</sup> Lacey, *op. cit.*, 49.

that comprises a more specifically ideological component.<sup>101</sup> The novel *A Romaría de Xelmírez* contains some notable examples of this recourse. A speech made by Xelmírez is heard by ‘a carballeira verde e polas penedosas entrañas do coto, gardadoras dunha orixinaria conciencia galega’ (XEL, 85-86). Nature houses ‘a esquencida lingua céltica que só despois e sempre saben falar as furnas e os bosques’ (XEL, 121). Furthermore, Xohán da Isorna comes into contact with ethnic memories that are prompted by contact with Nature amidst the setting of a resonant leitmotif in cultural history, the wood, a key Herderian symbol for the ancient authenticity and legitimacy of Germanic culture:

demorábase na verde escuridade dos arboredos. (...) O mozo, levado polo camiñar descubridor de descoñecidas relacións, sentía como as capas abisais da alma, as denantes non sospeitadas, lle subían átona da conciencia: sentimentos étnicos, escuros, agora poderosos na noite, que o alagaban en imaxinacións sen forma nin anxeio, gostosas coma os ensoños das mañás. (XEL, 147-148)

*Castros* and dolmens represent the first example of the Galician propensity for harnessing land and landscape (‘foron os castros e os dólmenes a primeira forma imposta á materia do chan galego polos galegos primeiros’, CASTRO, 99). They are also an archetypal symbol of Galician ethnic identity and its implications for the Galician’s place in Nature. ‘O seu tesouro é outro’, Otero states, ‘o tesouro do sentimento da terra e da raza’ (ROM, 155). This ‘treasure’ is the affinity with the land forged in part through work: ‘cinguidos pola néboa das lendas, traballados polo arado, rañados pola erosión atmosférica, vestidos pola humilde vexetación ben querida dos rebaños ou por coroas rumorosas de castiñeiros e piñeiros, son perenne testemoio de íntima comunión do celta coa terra que ten e domina’ (EH, 27). The *castro* also represents the Galician village in its original form (‘foi a primeira defensa do clán, a primeira idea da parroquia, a figura inicial do agrupamento dos homes’, CASTRO,

---

<sup>101</sup> Henrique Monteagudo, ‘Introducción’, *A Romaría de Xelmírez*, 30.

99) and the basis of local Galician population, the essential embryonic patterns and values of Galician civilization: 'cada castro é a fortaleza dun clan, como cada igrexa é o santuario dunha parroquia. É dicir: a estrutura vital e orgánica da poboación galega está trazada dunha vez para sempre desde as orixes históricas' (EH, 28). This also applies to the settlements that surround the *castro* ('son o primeiro esquema da aldea galega', EH, 28). Rather than a redundant feature ('o castro non é nunca unha ruína', EH, 27), this element in the landscape represents the closely-knit bonds perceived to exist between the Galician and the land whose significance is acknowledged and respected: 'o seu prestixio pasa por riba dos cambios históricos. O campesiño sente por eles un vago respecto e tamén un certo orgullo' (EH, 27).

The dolmen occupies an identical place in Otero's depiction of the historical palimpsest of landscape. It marks the beginning of the external, physical expression of Galicianness in stonework and architecture: 'desde o dolmen a pedra galega tivo significanza humana e unha presenza de conciencia organizou a paisaxe galega' (ROM, 100). In the landscape, the dolmen represents the religious nature of Galician cultural personality: 'dentro da historia vaise tinxindo de máis outro senso. Xa para nós é metafísica verba. Metafísica da nosa carne, do sangue espiritual noso' (MR, 100). We are once again reminded, therefore, of the extent to which Otero equates landscape and nature with history and culture.

Otero's commentary on the interaction between these factors through the focus of the *castro* and the dolmen is remarkably similar to Ortega y Gasset's writings on the cultural bearing of castles in *Notas* (1930). Ortega highlights 'el seguro efecto melodramático que los castillos producen en nuestra sensibilidad menos pulida',<sup>102</sup> describing cathedrals and castles as both intermediaries between pure nature and pure

---

<sup>102</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Notas* (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1964), 117.

humanity and nature and history.<sup>103</sup> Because of this, Ortega proposes that 'el paisaje se intensifica y transforma en escenario. La piedra, sin dejar de serlo, se carga de eléctrico dramatismo espiritual'.<sup>104</sup> This sounds remarkably similar to the discourse and imagery employed by Otero; Ortega's affirmation that rationalism does not constitute the ideal disposition for this regard of man-made structures in landscape as more than just static adornment or functional construction intensifies this parallel (if not influence): 'esta síntesis tendrá siempre las secretas preferencias de las almas no anquilosadas en un estrecho racionalismo'.<sup>105</sup> Like Otero, Ortega points towards the psychological and reflective effects induced in the observer by a given structure: 'después de haber sacudido nuestra sensibilidad melodramática y el fondo romántico que llevamos en el alma - poso inevitable en gentes que tienen a sus espaldas una larga historia , los castillos nos envían ideas. Las mismas formas extravagantes con que nos conmueven nos invitan luego a la meditación'.<sup>106</sup> Castles bear obvious political and cultural overtones for Otero, whereas for Ortega they are perhaps the logical figure to employ, together with that of the cathedral. Otero therefore sublimates unmistakably indigenous features of the Galician landscape that represent historical succession; significantly, the *castro* is raised in importance above Ortega's chosen structure, the castle; as in the case of Ortega, however, there is an approximation between man-made and natural structures the *castro* is not merely in the landscape, it is landscape: 'o castelo sobre o castro. Un simbolo do decorrer da hestorea. Morre o castelo inda que máis novo e traballado en pedra. O castro non morre, pois sendo paisaxe soilo ten imperio sobre d'il a lei cósmica que raña os montes e non a lei hestórea que chimpa as torreadas casas' (ROM 140).

---

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 118.

But by far the most important of influences on Otero's portrayal of the *castro* and the dolmen is the poetry of Eduardo Pondal, specifically *Os queixumes dos pinos* (1880). This is a collection that for Otero comprises

Poesía que en breves e sinxelos ritmos, contén a ialma inmorredoira da raza e da terra; grandes poil-ô seu conxuro xurden voces cósmicas do fondo do espírito e sabemos que o millor do noso ser tén un lugar ceibe na dinámica da hestórea, (...). Co iste libro Galiza dixo seu espírito pra sempre. Non o espírito individual d'un ou d'outro; o integral da Terra que fora do pasado e do futuro brila com'un radioso luceiro sobr'a mar épica dos destinos. (ROM, 109)

In the poetry of Pondal the *castro* and the dolmen are recurrent cultural motifs within the landscape, structures that act as ancestral signposts: 'os verdes castros, / xenio dos nosos / grandes avós'.<sup>107</sup> In 'Rei dos castros, castro forte', the landscape therefore bears testimony to a chapter of Galician ethnic past that serves as a building-block in the affirmative reconstruction of the past:

Así a túa fermosura  
respete o futuro tempo,  
e na túa nobre frente  
conserves o nobre sello,  
que é propio tan só dos fortes  
que ó tempo non se rendeno:  
o seas doce lembranza  
dos días que feneceron,  
daqueles que inda virán  
a poboar noso eido,  
e pasado tempo antigo  
chamarán o noso tempo.<sup>108</sup>

The depiction of the *castro* as not a ruin from a forgotten past, but a relevant signpost of a dignified history that informs the present and also contributes to the shaping of the future, signifies an evident influence on Otero. Furthermore, the contemplation of this landscape feature provokes affinity of an esoteric nature in the observer: 'eu non sei por que, na alma / o que sinto non comprendo, / cal virxen que o

---

<sup>107</sup> Eduardo Pondal, 'Fada garrida de leves alas', *Queixumes dos pinos e outros poemas* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1985), 79-81 (81).

<sup>108</sup> Pondal, 'Rei dos castros, castro forte', *op. cit.*, 67.

seu amado / mira cun placer secreto.’<sup>109</sup> Pondal employs the same techniques in ‘O dolmen de Dombate’; the poet evokes the megalith as ‘fillo doutras edades’, ‘como calada esfinxe, que sublime non fale’.<sup>110</sup> The recognition of the dolmen as a site of Galician antiquity provokes meditation upon its historical significance; the subject, travelling by, tells us how he meditates upon ‘nos nosos xa pasados, nos celtas memorabres, / nas súas antigas glories, nos seus duros combates, / nos nosos vellos dolmens e castros verdexantes’.<sup>111</sup> This has a positive effect on the observer (‘sempre ledado exgramaba: ¡O dolmen de Dombate!’)<sup>112</sup> that entails a long-lasting, cultural memory: ‘Agora que pasan os meus anos xogorales, / agora que só vivo de tristes suidades, / que cumpro con traballo meu terrenal viaxe / e que á mina cabeza branca a grave idade, / aínda recordo, aínda, o dolmen de Dombate.’<sup>113</sup>

Christian structures also condition the reading of the landscape. Churches ‘animan a paisaxe campestre’ (EH, 168), and the effect of the monastic tradition in Galicia also registers in the landscape: ‘a paisaxe galega cos seus tempos vai cos tempos litúrxicos gracias á longa colonización monástica da Galiza’ (ESDPG, 16). Similarly, the feudal towers of *pazos* ‘dan una sensación de tiempo’ (CDO, 42). The experiencing of landscape in all its cultural implications is predicated on the experience of time: ‘es casi siempre indispensable a la íntima vivencia del paisaje’ (CDO, 42). Echoing Bergson, Otero presents as analogous the relationship of time and landscape with our consciousness. Ruins lack none of the significance of any other building in the perception of cultural substance in the historical relief of the landscape. This concerns even the humblest of structures in Otero’s view: ‘a mín, as ruínas das casas labregas: unha pedra de lareira, un cortello esmorado, a pedra furada

---

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>111</sup> Pondal, ‘O dolmen de Dombate’, *op. cit.*, 133-134.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

d'un lagar, parécenme tan respeitabres com'as ruínas d'un mosteiro' (EAP, 5). Through the analogy of human death, Otero further seeks to break down the distinction between man and landscape, man-made works and nature: 'son estas ruínas com'os corpos dos labregos, os que mantidos de berzas e bica, mistúranse decontado co-a terra do camposanto; d'estas ruínas recobra posesión a natureza, un piñeiro, un érvedo, chega pra esnaquizar as n-outrora amadas parés petruciaes' (EAP, 5). Otero favours then ruins that are the work of time rather than the work of men, a dichotomy adopted from Saint-Pierre and Chateaubriand.<sup>114</sup> The preoccupation with ruins as a cultural entity is ubiquitous in Romanticism. Furthermore, Herrero Pérez identifies the logical connection with Bergson: ruins are for Otero the open register of what is inscribed in time, given that he sees them as part of living Nature, overcome by vegetation, guarding the echoes and remnants of the past in the present and representing the very symbol of time's continuity.<sup>115</sup>

Whether ruin or church, each feature that has resulted from the humanisation of the landscape forms a layer in Galician cultural memory, a tier in the relief of identity that entails religious, historical or ethnic import. Here the influence of Ratzel remains at the fore. In his *Politische Geographie*, Ratzel asserts that the tradition of common life does not simply integrate the rank and file with each other, but also with the soil, in which remnants of past generations are embedded. From this, Ratzel maintains, religious relations to spiritual ideas are developed, which often weave stronger bonds than the simple customs of common labour.<sup>116</sup> The physical transformation of the external world and the historical remnants of this process

---

<sup>114</sup> See D.G. Charlton, *New Images of the Natural in France. A Study in European Cultural History, 1750-1800*, (CUP, 1984), 98-99.

<sup>115</sup> Herrero Pérez, *op. cit.*, 178.

<sup>116</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, 206.

therefore express Galician identity; they are reminders of the diverse elements that make up identity from a historical perspective:

Dolmen de Dombate, da Muruxosa ou do Barbanza, pórtico de Salomé, ou coro de profetas da Gloria compostelán, lanzal fartura decorativa da Berenguela ou sinxelo froito de calquera cupulino labrego de eirexa de Beirmar, alento vento mareiro nas cordaxes do barco da estrofa rosaliana, endexamais seredes entre nós e para quen nos comprenda, ¡ruína! Vivides «sub specie aeternitatis» no futuro da alma galega. (ROM, 101-102).

Each expression of a given age changes in tandem with new historical epochs and an accrued sense of self; just as Galicians inscribe their buildings on the landscape, aspects of Galician identity at given moments of history are engraved on time and survive in the present: 'o xenio galego (...) alenta fundamente inxerido no seu chan histórico deica conxugarse coíl e trocalo asegún inclinacións súas' (HDG, 17).

### ***The projection of being – a Galician view of reality***

So far I have addressed the issue of how the Galician is depicted as physically shaping Nature and landscape throughout history, in a manner attuned to the cultural expression of his identity at a given moment in history. However, I wish to present another dimension to this facet of the cultural identity question in Otero's works, where the Galician views the world metaphysically. Metaphysically, because there are clear associations made by Otero between Galician perception and the philosophy of Idealism.

In the early section of the *Ensaio histórico...*, Otero rules out objectivity as a governing tenet of the Galician world-view, further excluding rationalism as an accurate approximation of how Galicians interpret reality. 'Outros camiños máis aceptables lévannos á paisaxe que xa penetramos por intuición' (EH, 24), states Otero enigmatically, without going on to specify or even allude to what these other

philosophical byroads may be in this particular section of his writing. Elsewhere, he provides us with clues as to the philosophy that he wishes to align with the Galician character. Cartesian philosophy is definitely not the source: 'de certo, os ollos galegos teñen criado hourizontes ceibados por eles da inorme sinxeleza da esfera, do cárcere xeométrico, con un alento e saudade de outro tempo e forma' (ESDPG, 18). Otero reiterates the importance that he ascribes to the relativist and indefinable nature of a philosophical outlook on reality; the only determinants that he specifies are temperament and formation:

cada un enxerga as cousas e enxuicia o vivir segundo o seu temperamento, mellor dito, segundo a súa educación. O universo para Spinoza corpo de Deus, para Sto. Tomás criatura, para os idealistas fórmula conceptual, para os positivistas escenario de forzas cegas, para uns dono de un fito, para outros privado de finalidade. O cerne e fonte de cada filosofía, de cada carácter individual, foxe a calquera intención definidora. É unha intuición non demostrable. (MR, 99)

Perhaps this explains his reluctance ever to explicitly link Idealism with Galician identity. Nevertheless, I feel that references in his work more than imply such a link. Proceeding from his critique of 'definitory intentions', Otero comments: 'no caso da Galicia, calquera intención deixa fóra a superior realidade, se non se inspira no fito de esculcar na nosa historia a fuxida do espírito, a loita xornaleira da alma patuxando na lama das formas' (MR, 99). This is Otero at his most typically vague and, for the cultural historian, his most enigmatic. Essentially, however, Otero suggests that for a philosophy to be compatible with or descriptive of the Galician condition, it must take into account its peculiarities. Another related comment nudges the location of this philosophy closer towards Idealist thought:

Pois somos herdeiros no ben de unha cultura e illa con podere ou feblementes, é por cada un de nós vivida conforme a nosa persoalidade. Arxila ou pedra de grá, lamestra ou fonte nova. As formas levámoslas nós e conforme a elas somos donos de interpretar, a cada intre do decorrer, os procesos e tempos do mundo de fora que no

enxergar apaixonado ou meditativo acomódase en diferente proporción o noso sistema de mensuras e relacións. (ESDPG, 19)

Here Otero refers to the aspects of subjectivism and individual perception in terms of relating to 'o mundo de fora'. Once again Otero refers to 'formas' the forms perhaps of identifying or interpreting the world this time allocating the means of perception to the Galicians themselves. It is in a post-Civil war interview that Otero most expressly employs strictly philosophical discourse in order to define Galician perception:

o espírito galego vai pra o mundo, imantado por un máis aló. De certo, hai en cada cultura un xeito de enxergar as cousas. E cando descemos da pureza filosófica, a relación suxeto-ouxeto vai rexida por unha tradición e instinto adequerido no suxeto, que en certo senso inventa ou coñece soio un aspecto do ouxeto... Entre nós, o ollar vai máis aló do siñificante.<sup>117</sup>

Otero presents the hypothesis that a given culture's perception is incommensurable with that of another: the basic supposition that can be extracted from the above statement is that the culture-bound observer 'invents' or knows the object partially. Galicians, Otero infers, do far more than simply see the object. The object seen by the subject implies more than visual image. Whereas the basis of this commentary lies more in the mechanics of an unspecified imported philosophical system that in some ways resembles Idealism, there are examples from Otero's writings that confirm a sound familiarity with this philosophy.

In his induction speech for the *Real Academia Galega*, Otero discusses the Idealists collectively, highlighting the place of their metaphysics in the trajectory of European philosophy and elements of their thought:

todo o Romantismo meridional, hastra o francés, padeceu da inferioridade do pensamento filosófico. Faltoulle unha viseón nova do Universo. Na Xermania o

---

<sup>117</sup> Cosmo Barreiros, 'Parladoiro', in *Ramón Otero Pedrayo: a súa vida e a súa obra. Homaxe da Galicia universal* (Caracas, 1958). 25-29 (26).

Romantismo fixo filosofía e a filosofía Romantismo. Despois do derradeiro pensador do século XVIII, Kant, veñen unha tral'outra ledas, collidas da man, apaixonadas, as rondas das filosofías idealistas. Elas xustificaron o élan do Ege [sic], abrangueron a hestórea como un desenrolo de símbolos, construíron mundos levados pol-a mán da intuición. (ROM, 58)

Idealism is for Otero a new vision of the universe, intimately associated with the Romantic movement and heavily dependent on intuition. R. Cardinal, in a contextualisation of the German Romantics, describes how Kant's meditations on mind and reality led him to the tentative suggestion that since to some degree it is our mental functions that create our knowledge of the external world, the conditions under which things appear as objective are in fact dependent on the subject.<sup>118</sup> Kant's ideas were cheerfully adapted by less imaginatively inhibited thinkers into a philosophy of subjectivity that offered a persuasive justification of fantasy.<sup>119</sup> Herder's affirmation that 'we live in a world we ourselves create' suffered the same inflation into extravagant metaphysical shapes by the Idealist Movement in philosophy expounded by Hegel (1770-1831), Schelling (1775-1854) and Fichte (1762-1814).<sup>120</sup>

These philosophers are referred to in the novel *Fra Venero*. Hegel 'vai maquiando as posibles traducións da idea absoluta. Mira o decorrer do friso grego, lembra a peregrinaxe cristiá e a doutrina das categorías: a idea intuída pola arte, pola relixión representada e concebida na filosofía. Mañás de Tubinga: latexan no sol os degoiros idealistas sementadores dos ventos do espírito' (FV, 76). Fichte is described as 'o xefe indiscutible' (FV, 80) of the Idealists, which is perhaps why Otero makes more references to the discourse of his philosophy, and why I tend to concentrate more on Fichte in this study. Finally Schelling is 'engaiolado na ledicia da luz da mañá e daqueloutra que lle raia na alma quizais pensa ser a gran intención do universo e da historia, a chea reconciliación e volta á divindade' (FV, 76). The protagonist

---

<sup>118</sup> Cardinal, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, 204.

Werner familiarises himself with Schelling's formulation of Idealism: 'Werner satisfixo o seu gran desexo de coñecer ao filósofo Schelling. Un cabaleiro de humor acedo paraceulle o autor *da Filosofía da Natureza*' (FV, 91). In *Romantismo...*, Otero refers to 'o misticismo de Schelling, o que puxo a maor paixón na Metafísica (xuntanza da contemprazón, da aizón e do amor n'un feito místico) [que] está no centro da ideoloxía románteca' (ROM, 34).

Idealism is one of the most esoteric philosophical systems, and notoriously difficult to pin down in terms not just of its principal tenets, but its wider significance for culture. In the context of this study, I will try to provide an overview of Idealist philosophy where this is seen as relevant to an understanding of Otero, without encumbering the reader with a detailed analysis of its different phases. This approach is particularly apt when attempting to unravel the connections that Otero seeks to portray; Otero may name the names of Idealist and Romantic philosophers, but the detailed process of Idealist philosophy within Galician psychology is not spelled out.

Of Fichte's philosophy, Otero comments approvingly that 'o «Ego» absoluto de Fichte foi un credo na vida espritoal dos romántecos. ¿Non é a paixón do Ego a maor paixón moderna?' (ROM, 33). Otero therefore employs discourse that we can attribute to the Idealist philosophical tradition, especially that of Fichte.<sup>121</sup> This is particularly evident where Otero describes the relationship between world and Galician in terms of national characteristics. The Galicians, Otero maintains,

son os afeitos a non estimar máis vida que a vexetal, e a non disfrutar senón da tona da conciencia. Esta soamente pode refrexar a tona superficial do vivir misterioso da natureza, formando as dúas tonas unha esfera elemental, asento da psicoloxía do home medio e de abondo para lle proporcionaren un minimum de sentido de harmonía do ego co que non é o ego. Do mundo seu co mundo de afora. Mais por baixo da tona

---

<sup>121</sup> Otero regards these metaphysics as a 'Northern' phenomenon: 'Romantismo no Sul: sensoal, trunfo do mundo obxectivo. Romantismo do Norte: Metafísica, imperio do ego criador, idealismo' (LG, 12).

psicológica devandita afóndase deica profundidades infindas o espírito que poideramos chamar metafísico. Paralelamente no home e na natureza. (MR, 87-88)

The full extent of Otero's appropriation of Fichtean discourse and the design regarding man and nature that he seeks to elicit through this can be appreciated on the basis of Cardinal's elucidation of Fichte's Ego-based philosophy:

What then is one to make of the apparently independent and impersonal world which exists outside the mind? Fichte's answer was that this was to be termed the Non-Ego, and was to be defined as the product of the Ego, an objective appearance created by a prior act of what he called the 'formative imagination' of the subject. Fichte was obliged to argue that the reason why the Non-Ego appears unfamiliar and separate is simply that the creation of external reality is effected by an unconscious activity of mind, such that consciousness does not afterwards recognize it and can thus experience the Non-Ego as true Gegenstand (alien object).<sup>122</sup>

Entering into greater detail concerning 'las graves e insignes aventuras del Idealismo', Otero remarks how 'en Fichte se hace de la "acción", del operar, el principio supremo de la filosofía e de aquí ser justamente denominada su doctrina como un "reiner moralismus"' (CHV, 204). Fichte's philosophy in this respect signified a complete reversal of Kantian methodology.<sup>123</sup> Whereas Kant worked his way patiently from the perceptual world to the inner reality of moral certainty, Fichte refused to admit that limitations could be set upon the mind's knowledge.<sup>124</sup> Fichte swept away the thing-in-itself, therefore, and proclaimed the Ego as the autonomous formative principle upon which all else depends.<sup>125</sup> Matter and form alike were henceforth subsumed under the one heading of the Ego, the agency that synthesizes existence and knowledge, objectivity and subjectivity.<sup>126</sup> However, according to Cardinal, literary Romanticism misinterpreted Fichtean philosophy:

---

<sup>122</sup> Cardinal, *op. cit.*, 57-58.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

When Fichte spoke of the Ego as the formative principle, the Romantic poets took this to mean that the world is a subjective creation, that is, the product of the individual subjectivity. But Fichte did not intend such a point: his concept of the 'Ego' does not pertain to the individual, empirical subject but rather to the subject-principle in general, of which the individual subject is but a limited mode.<sup>127</sup>

The comments made by Otero regarding 'os amigos de Tubinga', in which Schelling, Hölderlin and Hegel are mentioned, are important in this respect. Otero concludes that 'cando a Galiza ceibe súa verba metafísica, de fixo que terá, queira que non queira, unha vibración dos tres amigos de Tubinga, quizais tamén de Fichte, de fixo de Novalis' (ADT, 242). Otero repeats this sentiment more explicitly, drawing on the Tower of Hercules in Corunna to symbolise Galicia's reception of cultural history, of 'os temas variados do decorrer da Europa concordes cas íntimas arelanzas da ialma galega' (EB, 162). In this way, Otero suggests, 'a meditación dos filósofos idealistas sería rexistrada polo máxico espello das afincás galegas' (EB, 162). This would result in the apprehension of 'a historia da función da Galiza no mundo ou a do mundo en función da Galiza' (EB, 162). And Galicia signifies Celtic for Otero. He defines 'o sentimento e a paixón, non chamada filosofía, da psicoloxía da raza' as 'ningunha máis alonxada da consideración difrenzal entre suxeto i obxeto' (PDA, 61), before deferring to an evaluation of Celtic psychology as a means by which to convey the Galician outlook:

O celta verdadeiro non sinte no fondo do seu ser a separazón crara entre o «ego» i o «non ego». Pra il o mundo está poboado de egos, a concenza entroques de se demarcar no mundo interior abrangue o mundo das cousas decorrentes e fuxitivas cara a unha infinitude traxicamente perseguida. Un paisaxe endexamais se lle amostra sinxelo e decorativo fondo pictórico sinón pasa de formas de ialmas cuias voces son escoitadas na concéncia. (PDA, 61-62)

Not only does Otero elaborate upon Fichtean philosophy in order to present a Celtic-Galician take on perception, he also alludes to Kant: 'ningunha raza ergueu máis outo

---

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

o sentimento dun vivir universal onde as categorías de lugar e tempo son simples coordenadas de relación transitórea' (PDA, 62). This tallies with another reference to Kant, where Otero praises 'a excelencia do millor regalo pro espírito do home moderno: a ilusión de se sentire liberado das categorías kantianas de espazo e tempo' (RES, 33). Although Celticism was an imagined reference for the antiquity of Galician culture, it should also be remembered that the *Xeración Nós* believed that the so-called Celtic nations would lead a renaissance of European affairs; hence, 'modern' and 'Celtic' are not distant polarities but related codifications whose meanings overlap and converge.

Furst attempts to elucidate Idealism through a description of Fichte's philosophy and its contention that the very existence and shape of the world depended entirely on the vision of the individual imagination. To simplify, the table or tree is because and as we see it.<sup>128</sup> For an Idealist, we may therefore conclude that it is not the vision of an object, for example, that is disputable, but the reality of that object. In the Idealist picture of the world, man is the centre and boundary of all reality. Whereas the Romantics strove to experience reality fully and in all its intensity, Idealism sought to explain our knowledge of reality. Berlin explores the significance for the subject-object relationship in the wake of this transformation of the traditional view of the world:

Nature is no longer Dame Nature or Mistress Nature, neither the despot of the materialists nor the governess of the deists, nor Hume's kindly housekeeper, nor Shaftesbury's *natura naturans*, 'All-loving and All-lovely, All-divine!', but in whatever guise I meet her, she is the counterpart of act or spirit, the matter upon which I work my will, that which I mould.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism* (London: Methuen, 1979), 40.

<sup>129</sup> Isaiah Berlin, 'The Romantic Revolution', in *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and their History* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 168-193 (179).

Since the world depends on our perception we can reshape it in a constantly progressive, magical idealism.<sup>130</sup> The individual imagination and volition are then the source of the very existence and shape of the world. I believe that in his adaptation (or corruption) of Idealism, Otero wishes to attribute this to all Galicians, to render the idealist perception of the world a specifically Galician trait. Otero seeks to present the Galicians as perceiving their landscape in a manner predicated upon their distinct cultural identity. The Galician observer interprets the outside world in terms of the contents of the cultural specificity of the Galician outlook. Hence a projection takes place of personality (religious, historical, cultural, emotional) onto the outer world of landscape and nature. There is some expression of this idea in Otero's imaginative prose. In *Devalar*, Don Froitoso watches the landscape every night: 'os outros afánanse coa vendima. El, dende a fiestra, rubindo a escaleira da imaxinación que lle vivifica o mundo, vendima nas parreiras do ceo, acios brancos, acios loiros de estrelas' (DEV, 101). Here, the subjectivity of mind ('the stairway of the imagination') clearly alters the character's perception of the world. Otero shows an interest in the history of the application of a given philosophy on landscape: 'os homes da Edade Media levaban dentro d'eles unha filosofía e proieutábana na paisaxe, Igoal os modernos i-os novecentistas, todos levamos unha filosofía mais ou menos confesada' (NEPR, 8-9). This landscape is native, imagined or inherited ('todos levan na ialma unha paisaxe, a nativa ou a soñada ou a que leva no sangue herdada dos antergos', ROM, 115). For example, this is applied to a lyrical description of Rosalía de Castro ('levaba n'ela a paisaxe compostelán', ROM, 98), and to the fictional depiction of Diego Xelmírez' travelling party: 'cada un portaba a

---

<sup>130</sup> Furst, *op. cit.*, 43.

paisaxe-nai esmaltada na alma e enfeitizados nela facíase máis levadeiro o camiño’ (XEL, 242).

However, it is the focus on feeling, sentiment and imagination in Otero’s commentaries that, together with more emphatic references, direct the cultural historian towards Idealist sources, as well as archetypal Romantic co-ordinates that are discussed later in this section. Examples range from where Otero himself is the subject to those where a fictionalised character projects elements of identity onto landscape. In *Os camiños da vida*, the euphoric identification of Paio with Galicia occurs through the medium of the landscape:

O Paio sentíase ledos conforme agatuñaban a costa. Sentía unha emoción que lle arrepiaba o corpo e lle alporizaba o espírito. A alma e a baleira paisaxe eran para el instantes da sinfonía dun vivir a penas iniciado; gustaba do ar triunfante que xugaba a súa mocidade, un ar de romántico andante. (CDV, 242-243)

Paio the observer is equated with the observed landscape, where a mentalised Nature is fragmented in symbols of the personal experience: the epiphany induced by his commitment to Galicia. Through idealism, and the contention that the product of inner disposition (the mind, sentiment) conditions what the Galicians see, perceive or interpret, Otero emphasises the special affinity between people and land even further. Perhaps this is the substance of innumerable observations and remarks made by Otero along these lines: ‘pois tratándose da Galiza, ¿quen porá os marcos entre o home e a terra? A concéncia galega, como a chuvia atránteica, de tal xeito amoleceu a esgrevieza das cousas que istas chegaron a revestire semellanzas de concéncia humán’ (VVG, 93). These words concerning Galician consciousness recall Berlin’s summary of Idealism’s account of the mind as moulding reality, breaking it down to conform to the will of the subject. In cultural history, the creative imagination forms the means to perform this magical idealism, this poeticisation of Nature and projection of self onto

Nature, landscape or the outside world. For this reason the artist occupies the supreme place in the scheme.<sup>131</sup>

Here lies also the source of the Romantic tendency towards anthropocentrism. The Romantic arrogates to himself the powers of the divine creator, so that external reality strains to reflect itself within his mind.<sup>132</sup> Referring to the philosophy of Schelling, Cardinal summarises how ‘man’s imagination becomes the precondition for Nature to be at all. From this it is only a step to saying that the relation between self and the world is not merely one of affinity, but one of identity. The microcosm and the macrocosm then become one. What lies without is the same as what lies within.’<sup>133</sup> This is the gist of the idea that finds ample expression in Otero’s work: ‘hai algunhas terras no mundo que chegaron a identificar a paisaxe coas almas, coa alma popular que é a gran creadora de cantigas e de posicións, e coa alma dos artistas e dos filósofos, i unha desas terras é evidentemente Galicia. Por iso fai falla esta unión fonda con ela’ (MAC, 17). Otero therefore relates the identification of landscape and the subjectivity of popular, collective expression and artistic creation to an affectionate, nationalistic identification with Galicia. The artistic figure chosen to symbolise this projection of the subjective onto landscape is Rosalía de Castro:

en realidade un artista que queira obteñer a simpatía da nova paisaxe ten que vivila dinamecamente é dicir pôrse a tono c’o seu variado simbolismo espiritoal froito da longa compenetración d’unha raza sensetiva c’o seu ambiente xeográfico e sobretudo pasálo pol-o seu propio ser pra en certa maneira recrealo. Non sendo impermeable nin indefrente a paisaxe galega deixase ordear pol-as individualidás creadoras. O de Rosalía leva todo il a imprompta do seu espírito ou outras veces o poeta escondese no sentir do pobo e xurde a paisaxe que podemos chamar folklórica. Porque dicir natural é pouco menos que non dicir nada. (ROM, 92)

---

<sup>131</sup> ‘The work of art has a mediating function in that it portrays, in a symbolical approximation, the artist’s vision of the transcendental realm to which his imagination gives him access’. Furst, *op. cit.*, 43. Cardinal summarises how for the Romantics, ‘imagination is the sense which replaces all others, being hearing, seeing, feeling, and thinking all at once’ Cardinal, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

We may detect echoes of idealistic tendencies in Otero's presentation of Rosalía as the artist-representative of national identity: subjective interpretation of landscape based on the personality of the observer. Otero's reference to the inadequacy of the term 'natural' and emphasis on 'folkloric' also ramifies the Romantic roots at the heart of this portrait.<sup>134</sup> Rosalía's personal, interior experiences are expressed in the processes of the natural world, the objective and the subjective blurred and fused in an expression of spiritual communion with the landscape: 'as malencónecas pedras que gardan a lembranza dos días da grandeza galega quedaron mais carregadas de poesía, cinguidas pol-as hedras, sempre verdes da door de Rosalía de Castro' (ROM, 187). It therefore concurs with Dulin Bondue's assessment of Otero's depiction of the poetess, where 'el paisaje verdadero y el que lleva en su alma se entremezclan, siendo difícil su demarcación: los ríos del dolor anímicos fluyen íntimamente con las aguas del Sar'.<sup>135</sup> The inner relates to the outer for Otero: 'sempre na paisaxe interior de Rosalía decorre o río da door coma na paisaxe amada fuxen as ondas do Sar. Ela sofriu e soñou acarón das augas. Sinte a paisaxe galega d'un xeito espirtoal, e ô mesmo tempo xusto' (ROM, 91). The felt modifies the seen: 'Rosalía abrangue c'a sua door o anaco de mundo que contempla e sempre tén ô mundo unha fiestra aberta' (ROM, 94-95). The result is the fusion of the seen and the felt, the inner and the outer; Otero depicts this as a quintessentially Galician characteristic: 'non se pode demarcar onde remata a ialma e comenza o mundo. Todo il poboado de presenzas espirtoás xurde ou chea pol-a paixón do poeta, ou absorvida a ialma creadora na sua beleza, no seu desespero, na sua malenconía. Ela espresou iste modo esenzal da Galiza que os estranos e os desleigados esquencen' (ROM, 92).

---

<sup>134</sup> Herder believes that 'a poet is a creator of people; he gives it a world to contemplate, he holds its soul in his hand' and also that 'he is, of course, to an equal extent created by it' Quoted from Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 203-204.

<sup>135</sup> Bondue, *op. cit.*, II, 340.

The sources of this idea should not be depicted as being restricted entirely to the philosophical extremes of the Romantic age; there are also innumerable channels of influence that can be traced to the literary and artistic manifestations of the Romantic movement, of which Otero is very aware: 'Rosalía proieutándose no mundo chega ô cume do lirísmo dicir lirísmo é repetir romantismo' (ROM, 76). Romanticism expanded on Herder's assertion that the only access to the interior world of a people is through its artistic creations, its expressions rather than imitations. Perhaps with idealistic excesses in mind, Furst defines the conception of the creative imagination as a more reliable criterion of Romanticism than any other single factor.<sup>136</sup> The Romantic conception of Nature as the projection of the human imagination, of landscape as the image of inner space, is less constrained by abstract philosophical discourse. The paintings of Caspar David Friedrich are an easily visualised, well-known and accessible example of this tendency. Although this conception of the relationship between world and imagination is synonymous with Romanticism, I have chosen to examine Rousseau, MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian*, and the philosophical writings of Novalis in order to highlight how Otero's approach interacts with this idea.

Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* offers precursory notions of what the Romantics later championed as the intimate relationship between man and Nature based on utter subjectivity, where the objectivity of the individual observer is eroded in the Romantic apotheosis of the imagination. Otero displays his familiarity with the work in *Romantismo...*, declaring that 'As «Promenades» son quizais a millor estilazón da esenza rousseaunniana' (ROM, 40).<sup>137</sup> He goes on to translate a segment

---

<sup>136</sup> Furst, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>137</sup> Otero discusses the work favourably: 'Voltando a Rousseau, abrimos o seu derradeiro libro: *Reveries d'un promoneur solitaire*. Non parés feito por home vello, desfeito, ventando pol-a morte. Tén anacos - os millores - feitos pol-a mau d'un mozo, de neno grande, insatisfeito, mal criado e xenial que

of the fifth walk that typifies the intimate relationship based on pathos and subjectivity that characterises the work as a whole, and an artistic and philosophical movement:

saindo d'unha doce e longa ensonazón, véndome entre as follas, froles e paxaros, e deixando pasear os ollos, ô lonxe, sobr'as romántecas orelas que pechan a grande larganza d'auga crara e cristaiña, éu asimilaba todas istas garimosas cousas á miña ensonazón; e chegando, por grados, a mín mesmo e ô que me arrodeaba, non podía detremiñar separazón entr'as ficiós e a realidade; de tal xeito todo concurría a facerme querido meu vivir solitario en tan ditosa terra. (ROM, 40)

The imaginings of the subject are therefore fused with what is seen in a lyrical communion with Nature. What results is an augmented affinity between observer and observed, between man and his milieu so that both become harmoniously indistinguishable from one another according to the subjective terms of the former: 'I feel transports of joy and inexpressible raptures in becoming fused as it were with the great system of beings and identifying myself with the whole of nature.'<sup>138</sup> In addition to Rousseau, parallels with Otero's treatment of landscape may be found in that Macpherson depicts his native Highlands as 'something onto which moods may be projected, an embellishment, a ready source of similes,'<sup>139</sup> and 'as a powerful living force of terrible bleakness and awesome beauty'.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, the affinity between Macpherson's Highlander heroes and the setting in which the stories are based is also evident in that the landscape depicted 'does not merely echo the desolate mood of the characters, but it is the characters themselves who are a reflection of the landscape'.<sup>141</sup>

---

sempre foi Rousseau' (NEPR, 8-9). He also places the work in context when tracing attitudes to landscape through cultural history. 'en Rousseau, e sen sair das Reveries, temos maneira de paisaxe garimosa os primeiros romántecos. Logo houbo o Sul, o Oriente, a paisaxe humanamente apaixonada das ruínas e dos cemiterios' (NEPR, 9).

<sup>138</sup> Rousseau, *Rêveries Of The Solitary Walker*, 111

<sup>139</sup> H. Gaskill, 'Ossian in Europe', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, XXI, no.4 (December 1994), 643-678 (670).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 671.

And with Novalis, we almost come back full circle to the tenets of idealism, from literary Romanticism to the philosophical expression of the age.<sup>142</sup>

Articles such as ‘Dous diáreos: Novalis e Constant’ where Otero goes into biographical detail and imaginative reconstruction concerning the life and personality of Novalis, demonstrate a wider knowledge of the man and his epoch, both in historical and philosophical terms. What is certain is that Otero considered Novalis’ philosophy as indispensable to a holistic Galician world view, if his comments on which I remarked earlier are taken into consideration (Novalis’ importance in this respect is classed succinctly as ‘de fixo’). In two of many asides from his study of Feijóo, Otero refers to ‘el genial Novalis’, ‘uno de los puros románticos’; he mentions “Discípulos de Sais” and the writer’s influence on Maeterlinck. Also referred to is Novalis’ unfinished novel, *Ofterdingen*, ‘comenzada a escribir en las montañas de Turingia en el invierno de 1799 - los personajes debían al final desvanecerse en legendarios’ (PF, 338-339, fn. 8). More significantly, Otero touches upon ‘la idea de las simpatías de Novalis y la creencia de que el espíritu pueda señorear algunos aspectos del universo’, and draws a comparison between Novalis and Schelling as regard their vindication of Orphism and the Middle Ages as a reaction against rationalist excess of the eighteenth century (PF, 331). Otero concludes the short but informative departure from the main thrust of his text: ‘su pensamiento nace de la elaboración de la obra artística, es por tanto estético y lírico aunque invada el mundo de los conceptos. A la misma actitud obedecen en lo esencial corrientes artísticas y filosóficas. Como el “realismo mágico”’ (PF, 331).<sup>143</sup> Quoting Dilthey, Otero describes how in Novalis ‘la naturaleza surge como un tropo universal

---

<sup>142</sup> Of which Otero shows himself to be very much aware when he comments concerning Novalis that ‘cada direizón románteca tén outra xustificazón filósofeca’ (ROM, 33).

<sup>143</sup> A point that Otero makes some forty years before: ‘Novalis católeco, consideraba realizada a unidade interior do home pol-a relixión: o ideal da Edade Meia, pol-os romántecos xustificada trunfalmente fronte ás ideas da ilustrazón’. (ROM, 33).

del espírito, como unha imagen simbólica del éste' (PF, 338-339, fn.8). Novalis' influence shapes Otero's portrayal of Galician poetry and literature as an integral part of this process as conditioning how Galicians envisage, or 'read' their landscape through the aspect of their sensibility or mind: 'Novalis xuzga a realidade com'unha creazón da fantasía «O mundo fáise ensono, o ensono fáise mundo». Viviú n'unha especie de atmosfera astral, feita d'espritos na que non tiñan sinon fuxitiva realidade as formas do mundo pensabres pol-a intelixenza' (ROM, 33).

His philosophy reflects the artistic and philosophical tendency of the pre- or early Romantic period: to break down the barrier between reason and imagination. This was particularly in relation to the contemplation of the physical world: 'one must look at a landscape as one looks at a dryad and an oread. One should feel a landscape as one does a body. Every landscape is an ideal body for a particular *kind of spirit*.'<sup>144</sup> This 'magical idealism,' as Novalis describes his conception, and to which we have seen Otero refer, consists of 'making Romantic' or transcending the fragmentation of the world through poetry and philosophy,<sup>145</sup> and requires the distinctions between self and nonself, external and internal experience, to fall away,<sup>146</sup> so that 'the poet is truly bereft of his senses instead everything takes place within him. In the truest sense he presents *subject object - mind and world*.'<sup>147</sup> For Novalis, the imagination is the organ capable of perceiving what the senses cannot.<sup>148</sup> However, his philosophical writings lie closer to those of fully-fledged Idealism. Cardinal elucidates Novalis' doctrine of magical idealism and the creative autonomy of the artist-scientist as one which requires interior reflection to be complemented by exterior projection; this leads to the

---

<sup>144</sup> Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, Trans. and ed. by Margaret Mahoney Stoljar (State University of New York Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>148</sup> Kristin Pfefferkorn, *Novalis. A Romantic's Theory of Language and Poetry* (Yale University Press, 1988), 23.

self and nature being indivisible halves of an integral whole.<sup>149</sup> Cardinal argues that, although peculiar to Novalis in the extreme expectations he placed on it, the theory of magical idealism may serve as a paradigm of the Romantic conception of imagination.<sup>150</sup> For Otero, Novalis' ideas concerning perception translate as an imaginative contemplation and 'reading' of Nature as an extension of the Galician self. Galicians are attached sentimentally to their landscape, and see their landscape imaginatively, shaping it mentally in terms of their own identity. The connection made by Otero between this process and literature has its antecedent partly in Novalis and mostly in artistic Romanticism. It is also reinforced in the contemporary sense by the poetry of Teixeira de Pascoaes. In an untitled poem from 1904, the artistic act is attributed to the magical idealization of Nature as an extension of human sensibility:

Eu gosto de sentir minh'alma derramar-se,  
Como a chuva do céu, sobre todo o Universo...  
De ver suavemente o mundo humanizar-se  
E senti-lo vibrar dentro de cada verso.  
É belo ver num ramo a ânsia dum abraço  
E um beijo cintilar nos lábios dum rochedo...  
Ver grande sentimento iluminar o espaço,  
Ver lágrimas cair dos olhos do arvoredo.  
Que a sensação do sol ao produzir o dia,  
Chegue ao meu coração, fazendo-o estremecer.  
E as estrelas alcance a mística harmonia  
Que a dor, qual ermo vento, acorda no meu ser...

Sê un dilúvio, ó Alma, inunda este Planeta.  
Que te penetrem as raízes com amor;  
Que se tranforme em seiva o sonho do poeta,  
E cristalize o Ideal numa infinita flor  
De Justiça e de Luz, d'Amour e Piedade  
Que abrigue á sua somba a imensa Criação,  
As árvores, o mar, a vasta Humanidade,  
O que é lágrima e treva, angústia e solidão!...<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> Cardinal, *op. cit.*, 36.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>151</sup> Teixeira de Pascoaes, *op. cit.*, II. 55. Para a Luz (1<sup>st</sup> edition, Porto, 1904),

In two poems from Pondal's *Os queixumes dos pinos* we may also see this idea represented by the subject; in 'Polo Baixo Cantando' and 'Polo Alto Cantando' we can see differing degrees of projection. The implication of movement in both poems also suggests mood, from pessimism to optimism in Pondal's poetic call-to-arms. In the first poem, the subject is 'o booo bergantiñán'. Travelling at night his response to nature around him is ambivalent 'por cousas que no exprica, / dun fondo e vago afán, / mil escuras suidades / ceibando os ecos vai; / e da patria a punxente servidume / parece recordar.'<sup>152</sup> The tone is different, however, with the change of direction suggested in 'Polo Alto...'. Here the singing traveller is 'o sonoro', driven by 'un suidoso afán'. 'Mil vagas suidades' contrast with the 'mil escuras suidades' of the other poem's parallel, whilst the ethnic impulse, these 'cousas que non exprica', leads to a positive action ('mil punxentes recordos / se praxe en espallar), where aspects of the past ('servidume') are not remembered so negatively, and the implication of further response is given by the use of suspension points ('da pequena patria a servidume / parece recordar...').

Otero regards Galician poetry that is inspired by or concerns landscape as a reflexive artistic expression, which in turn enhances, modifies and conditions given perceptions of the external world. He describes this relationship in economical, descriptive prose:

sentado no pretil dunha fonte, ollando fuxir o río indiferente, o empregado percorre as follas do libro. Versos. Versos galegos. Cantan a grandeza anterga da raza celta, choran saudades, rin como as bocas labregas no magosto. O empregado considera a paisaxe. Parécelle outra. Adquire unha nobreza e fermosura non percibida denantes: o pazo triste e saudoso, o esforzo creador das viñas rubindo as costas penedosas, a grave ensonación dos piñeirais. (MR, 105)

---

<sup>152</sup> Pondal, 'Polo Baixo Cantando', *op. cit.*, 9.

Otero's vision is such that landscape – at least the Galician landscape – is mentally and physically defined by a people, rather than a people being physically determined and conditioned by the processes of Nature alone. Otero employs the adverb 'literariamente' to suggest that it is through literature particularly – and one thinks again of Rosalía de Castro and Eduardo Pondal – that one can record how Galician identity (he uses the term 'psicoloxía' in the same commentary) can be expressed by the motif of landscape. Hence, concerning Rosalía and Pondal, Otero refers to 'todas as suxerenzas que os dous nomes, amados e venerabres, espertan en calquer espírito galego' (ROM, 70). The reading of Pondal, Otero affirms, 'resoa en cada espírito galego oscuramente, como denantes dos «Queixumes» eran oscura noite bruante os piñeirais e a onda nos cons' (MR, 108). The relationship between the peasantry and the artistic intelligentsia therefore rests on differing manners of approaching the same interpretation of land, that of 'sentir' and 'dicir': 'o que sinten escuramente os labregos foi o que dixeron pra sempre os poetas e os artistas' (EDA, 110).<sup>153</sup> The use of the adverb 'escuramente/oscuramente' in these two statements may also be read as 'intuitivamente'.

Otero's employment of Idealist philosophical elements and its echoes in Romanticism can be further evaluated through a comparison with the treatment afforded to landscape by the writers of the Generation of 1898, specifically two well-known poems by Antonio Machado. In 'Campos de Soria', Machado presents an original poetic equilibrium between the objective and subjective. After recognising the external, objective existence of objects in the world as landscape, Machado's poet-observer reacts in an emotive fashion. In the first stages of the poem, the reader is presented with the physical panorama; we then become aware of a gradual build-up of

---

<sup>153</sup> Otero subscribes to the Romantic concept of the poet as a doomed superior being who is a mouthpiece of the divine: 'o poeta, escravo d'un sino superior trai o seu tempo contado. Ven pra decir ós homes algo superior e non pode deteñerse porque outros agardan' (ROM, 114).

subjectivity (particularly after the seventh section) that culminates in an intriguing interrogative in the ninth and final section:

¡Oh, sí, conmigo vais, campos de Soria,  
tardes tranquilas, montes de violeta,  
alamedas del río, verde sueño  
del suelo gris y de la parda tierra,  
agria melancolía  
de la ciudad decrepita,  
me habéis llegado al alma,  
¿o acaso estabais en el fondo de ella?<sup>154</sup>

This is the strongest suggestion in Machado of the philosophy of Idealism or its related tenets within Romanticism. Otero's conception of landscape, on the other hand, does not consist either of an emotive attributing of 'self' to the signs and symbols perceived in the landscape as if it were a Symbolist *état de âme*. Identity is not just read off the landscape, but read into it, projected by what Otero sees as a subjective element of the Galician psychological make-up. The difference between these portrayals of the relationship between man and landscape can be summarised as proactive and reactive respectively. However, there is greater similarity between Otero's treatment of landscape and that of Machado as seen in the poem 'A Orillas del Duero'. Where Machado projects martial imagery onto the landscape in an early section of the poem, Otero suggests that the outer world is expressive of the Galician mindset. In Machado's lament for former greatness ('Castilla ayer dominadora'), a dynamic, heroic and above all imagined past is superimposed by the observer onto the landscape beheld: the landscape is interpreted through the observer's notion of an attributed historical and cultural heritage. The Galician writer's intellectual formation in Madrid followed that of the Generation of 1898 by ten to fifteen years, and explains

---

<sup>154</sup> Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla*, ed. Geoffrey Ribbans (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), 138.

in part many similarities between their quest through landscape for new evaluations of national identity and a fresh impetus for social and political regeneration.

Much of the aesthetic emotion expressed in the work of Azorín resides, according to de Jongh-Rossel, in 'la unión suprema e inexpresada de este paisaje con la raza, con el arte, con la literatura de nuestra tierra'.<sup>155</sup> This also brings to mind 'una compenetración del paisaje con el "paisaje psíquico" de Ossorio'<sup>156</sup> (with relation to Baroja's *Camino de perfección*), and Unamuno's *En torno al casticismo*, 'un ejemplo excelente de la inseparabilidad de: literatura como fuente de conocimiento; de historia como estudio del espíritu colectivo del pueblo; y de la íntima conexión entre paisaje (naturaleza) y determinismo psicológico'.<sup>157</sup> Although for the *noventayochistas* the Castilian landscape is more autonomous, the observer's disposition signifies a fundamental part of their new approach to the relationship between landscape and man and its implications for Spanish society. Here is another probable source of influence on Otero, where their new literary vision consisted of an indivisible relationship between (Spanish) landscape, the writer and all that is observed.

The application by Otero of Idealist philosophical tenets to his own elucidation of the Galician cultural relationship with Nature and landscape would be of astounding originality if there were not considerable grounds for regarding the poetry of Teixeira de Pascoaes as a probable mediatory text that shapes Otero's employment of Idealism. This is specifically the collection centred on the character of Marânus which the poet interestingly dedicates to Galicia in a gesture of artistic solidarity.<sup>158</sup> In 'Marânus e a sombra do Marão', man is 'criatura e criador', the

---

<sup>155</sup> Azorín, *Los valores literarios* (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1913), 316]. Quoted from Elena M. de Jongh-Rossel, *El Krausismo y la generación de 1898*, (Valencia: Albatros Hispanofila, 1985), 157.

<sup>156</sup> de Jongh-Rossel, *El Krausismo y la generación de 1898*, 162.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>158</sup> Teixeira de Pascoaes, 'Oferta', *Marânus*, *op. cit.*, III, 163. The first edition of *Marânus* was published in 1911; a second followed in 1920 and both were published in Porto. Otero is aware of the

relationship between the seen and he who sees being such that ‘tudo o que se avista com os olhos / É o mesmo que se sente com a alma’.<sup>159</sup> However, it is discourse later on in the poem that points directly to the influence of transcendental Idealism. ‘O reino espiritual / Pertence á mesma ignota natureza / Das cousas (...)’, states the poet, then adding that ‘os seres benditos que o povoam / Já não são de material organizada; / São a carne, liberta e redimida, / Transcendentalizada e idealizada.’<sup>160</sup> In addition to Otero’s familiarity with Teixeira de Pascoaes’ work, there is also some evidence to suggest that Otero too plays upon the discourse of Idealist philosophy to allude to the projection of a mood onto the landscape. Writing in the first person, Otero refers to easily identifiable philosophical sources (the transcendental Idealism of Fichte) to describe his emotional disposition linked to the landscape: ‘ista noite chego á casa da aldea cun sentimento de fonda tristura, de angústia, case de desespero, non remanecido da frescura sutil do outono engaiolada nos fíos de maino chober pois pra o meu sentir esperta na paisaxe outra vida de máis trascendente idealidade’ (EDF, 233). The Galician landscape is ‘unha paisaxe transcendental que soio pode ser imaxinada’ (ESDPG, 49).

Otero borrows the basic proposals of Idealism in order to account for a vision of Galician landscape as a mentalised product of Galician identity. Idealism is the source idea that constitutes the means for Otero to articulate how landscape is both perceived and presented by the Galicians. Landscape represents therefore Galician identity because it reflects how the Galicians see and define their world mentally, as well as the physical expressions of their place in it. The inner consciousness of the individual and of the people defines the outer world, a cultural canvas on which

---

dedication: ‘os mellores espíritos de Portugal achan na terra do Miño e en Tras-Os-Montes a esencial enerxía portuguesa e Teixeira de Pascoais adicou o gran poema étnico e cósmico, “Maranos”, a “Galicia, terra irmã de Portugal, / Que o mesmo Oceano abraça longamente...”’ (EH, 144).

<sup>159</sup> Teixeira de Pascoaes, ‘Marânus e a sombra do marão’, *op. cit.*, III, 204-209 (207).

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 208

identity is psychologically impressed - in the mind of the beholder. Otero portrays the Galician landscape especially as an indispensable element of Galician culture: the psychological as much as the physical product of the Galician people. Otero seeks to present an account of Galician modes of interpreting the world where the imaginative act takes place in every Galician, on a normal level of perception and also that of art. The order of importance in the three-tier system of Taine employed by the Generation of 1898, landscape-character-culture, is transformed through the selective criteria of Oteran thought to become character-landscape-culture. Stated in simpler terms, the landscape is or signifies what the Galicians take to the landscape based on the condition of previous cultural reception. Again, this is an idea that also suggests the underlying presence of German historicist thought. It is problematic to ascertain the extent to which Otero applies the demonstrable influence of Idealism to Galician perception; in this respect, and for the cultural historian, Otero is unusually generous with the pointers towards sources, although some of those sources (one thinks of Novalis) bear similarity to others. It is difficult to imagine that the material reality of the Galician landscape - its churches, natural features and villages – consists, in his view of Galician psychology, of nothing more than an illusory representation without solidity, existing like an idea merely in the mind. This would be hard to reconcile with the considerable emphasis placed by him on the actual reality of Galician nationhood, and its reliance on the very real social values and customs of the countryside. Otero's inclusion of idealism is not that absolute, and he also relies on less recondite Romantic conceptions, although it holds considerable importance for an understanding of the complexity of the cultural history that is imported into his writings. Otero engages with philosophy and shows a greater familiarity with genuine philosophical discourse and method than many of the members of the Generation of

1898. But he is at heart a Romantic Spain's last Romantic and I therefore favour the view that Otero approaches Idealism via literary Romanticism's distortions of this philosophy, and moulds a composite picture of Galician perception from several sources. Nevertheless, to put what is an abstract approach to landscape somewhat better in perspective, I find it interesting to consider to what extent the contemplation of Castilian fields by Spaniards today is conditioned by the poetry of Antonio Machado; and in a recent study, *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama proclaims the argument of his book to be the contention that landscapes are culture before they are nature, constructs of imagination projected onto wood, water or rock.<sup>161</sup>

### ***Landscape as ideological sign***

Finally, I turn to analyse how Oswald Spengler contributes to Otero's intellectual construction of landscape as cultural entity resonant with symbolism and ideological implication, an index of Galician identity. With perhaps the exception of Ríos Panisse,<sup>162</sup> critics have yet to examine in detail the influence of the German thinker on Otero Pedrayo, especially concerning the latter's formulation of Galician cultural identity. I would briefly like to consider Spanish and Galician attitudes towards Spengler and his thought. In a European context as a whole, Hughes points out that 'in the late 1920's and early 1930's Spengler's theories had become a fashionable topic for semi-intellectual conversation'.<sup>163</sup> According to Fischer, the reception of Spengler's ideas in Spain was favourable; José Ortega y Gasset was a

---

<sup>161</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), 61.

<sup>162</sup> María do Carme Ríos Panisse, 'A visión da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX* (Santiago de Compostela: Consello da Cultura Galega, 1990), 87-127; see also the same critic's introduction to her edition of *Devalar* (Galaxia: Vigo, 1992).

<sup>163</sup> H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler, a Critical Estimate* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 72

supporter and frequent correspondent of Spengler's, and *La rebelión de las masas* (1929) is 'Spenglerian in tone as well as substance'.<sup>164</sup> In addition to this work, Ortega's *Revista de Occidente*, which first appeared in July 1923, and the *Biblioteca de ideas del siglo veinte*, a series of translations of foreign (mostly German) texts that he began in 1922, are further possible sources of contact with Spengler's ideas in addition to *The Decline of the West* in its original German. Ortega also provided the preface to the 1927 Castilian translation of Spengler's work published in Madrid by Espasa Calpe under the title *La Decadencia de Occidente*. This edition features in Otero's library.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, Vicente Risco claims that one of the ongoing intellectual concerns of the young men who would go on to form the *Xeración Nós* was the decline of Western culture later expressed so imaginatively by Spengler: 'a ideia da decadencia d'Ocidente era unha idea vivente en nós moito antes de que Spengler tivera pensado en escribir o seu libro'.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, as Joaquim Ventura demonstrates, Risco's own *Las tinieblas de Occidente*, which deals with similar themes, was rendered redundant by the publication of Spengler's work.<sup>167</sup>

Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), together with Bergson, Nietzsche, Carlyle and Dilthey, represented the culmination of intellectual and spiritual anxiety expressed from the latter half of the nineteenth century as a revolt against positivism and materialism. This was just part of the intellectual ambit in which the *Xeración Nós* as well as the Generation of 1898 developed, and Spengler's reaction against such

---

<sup>164</sup> Klaus P Fischer *History and Prophecy. Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 55-56.

<sup>165</sup> This is an indication of the heavy dependence on Madrid for cultural resources and contact. The *Xeración Nós* depended on and thrived upon the anachronisms of European culture that could never furnish the degree of cutting edge, native high culture that the Galician group expressed as its objective. Although one of the *Nós* magazine's avowed aims was to allow a consolidated Galician culture of the future to bypass the centre, Madrid was a necessary junction on the cultural highway that led to the fulfilment of that aspiration.

<sup>166</sup> 'Nós, os inadaptados', *Nós* 115: 115-23 (115).

<sup>167</sup> See Joaquim Ventura, *O nacionalismo kármico de Vicente Risco* (Santiago de Compostela: Laidvento, 2000).

forces and trends encapsulates the main appeal of his ideas for Otero. The *modernista* period of Otero's youth and ever-present nostalgia for quintessential Romanticism show the intellectual formation of the writer to be symptomatic of a reaction against the same anti-metaphysical and anti-theological strands in cultural history. Similarly, the plenitude of his career has as its foundation the same rejection of positivist values and reason, embodied in his defence of the traditional patterns of Galician society and in his criticism of the largely non-Galician bourgeoisie and the changes brought about by the rise of this new social class in Galicia. A mechanical, rationalised design for life and the universe, rooted in the notion of a bourgeois, economic world-view, could not be farther from Otero's Herderian-based disposition to religion and tradition as the keys to the history of peoples and cultures. Spengler and Otero, quite apart from the former's influence and the latter's fickle sieving of source ideas, have a great deal in common from a critical perspective. Like Otero, Spengler 'stands at the convergence of a variety of contrasting and sometimes contradictory intellectual strands'.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, Hughes' guide to how Spengler and his work should be approached holds equally well for students of the Galician polymath; he warns how we must keep in constant check Spengler's bewildering shifts of character, from the sober historian to the lofty seer of the future, from the cool, detached observer to the impassioned participant forgetting in his excitement his former pretensions to objectivity.<sup>169</sup> Hughes advises us to learn and recognise all of these contrasting roles, but not to fall into the error of analysing them in isolation; instead, we should constantly bear in mind the different levels at which he is writing.<sup>170</sup>

*Der Untergang des Abendlandes, or The Decline of the West* (1918-1922), is Spengler's major contribution to social theory and the philosophy of history, a break

---

<sup>168</sup> H. Stuart Hughes, *op. cit.*, 152.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

with conventional historiography in which he rejects the theory of progress and linear development in history, and argues that the historian can not only study the past, but also anticipate forthcoming patterns of history and culture. This was on the premise – strikingly reminiscent of Herder - that civilisations must pass through a life cycle, and that cultures, or rather their ‘spirits’, are incommensurable. The title of the work reflects Spengler’s contention that the West had already experienced the creative era of culture and now found itself in a period of material comfort and reflection. He saw the future of the West as marked by inevitable decline, especially since he seems to have drawn on the perennial concept of four phases in the history of any civilisation: birth and original growth, maturity, old age and finally decline and death. Culture, history, and Western European civilisation were all matters close to Otero’s own intellectual concerns, as is evidenced by the many references to Spengler made by Otero in his numerous essays. Furthermore, Otero shared Spengler’s penchant for intuition, metaphor and pathos, and the clairvoyant rather than scholarly bent to Spengler’s work corresponds to some extent with the Galician nationalist agenda, as will be shown in the latter part of this thesis. Otero’s selective adoption and rejection of various aspects of Spengler’s thought reveals the inner complexity of his formulation of Galicianness, as well as the diverse cultural and ideological criteria underpinning this. Spengler’s presence is felt in every chapter of this thesis.

Spengler’s own introduction to his masterwork gives some idea of the vast scope of his vision of Western culture: ‘in this book is attempted for the first time the venture of predetermining history, of following the still untravelled stages in the destiny of Culture, and specifically of the only Culture of our time and on our planet which is actually in the phase of fulfilment the West-European-American’.<sup>171</sup> In

---

<sup>171</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, 1, 3.

addition to secondary sources, it is principally from a personal reading and interpretation of Goethe's *Faust* that Spengler derives what he considers to be the essential characteristics of Western European culture, appropriately deemed as 'Faustian'.

Spengler is not systematic in defining 'Faustism', but instead employs the term and its adjectival form recurrently throughout *The Decline of the West* as part of sweeping glosses on history and culture. As Hughes observes, 'the words, the concepts that constantly recur in the *Decline* carry special meaning parcelled out by the author in fairly arbitrary fashion'.<sup>172</sup> I will therefore attempt to present as complete a definition of 'Faustism' as possible based on Spengler's own statements and those of critics, and explore the many meanings that Otero seeks to elicit from the term. I have relied on two studies in particular, Klaus Fischer's *History and Prophecy. Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West* (1989), and Stuart Hughes' *Oswald Spengler, a Critical Estimate* (1962), given that these have provided me with an excellent contextual background to the thinker and his position in European cultural history, as well as an elucidation on some of the more intricate aspects of his discourse and thought.

To begin with, I rely on Hughes' concise summary of Spengler's account of the beginnings of Faustian culture:

it was not until the tenth century that the Faustian culture was born. With the reform of the papacy, the reestablishment of an imperial authority, the articulation of feudal society, and the emergence of Romanesque architecture, the new culture manifests itself in clear and vigorous form. Its focal point is Christianity [...]. This driving, aspiring faith gives to the springtime of the Faustian spirit a quality of high tension. Like its prototype in the Apollonian [i.e., Classical] culture, the Homeric era and here Spengler echoes Vico - the European Middle Ages overflow with the excitement of passionate deeds and spiritual discovery.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> Hughes, *op. cit.*, 97.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

According to Spengler, Faustian culture is ‘the Western Culture that blossomed forth with the birth of the Romanesque style in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in the Northern plain between the Elbe and the Tagus’.<sup>174</sup> Otero appropriates repeatedly these key items of Spengler’s discourse when discussing Galician landscape and culture. In his induction speech for the *Real Academia Galega* in 1931, Otero himself provides evidence that he had an intimate knowledge of Spengler’s text in its original German - and its implicit designation of ‘Faustian’: ‘Spengler caracteriza o espírito faústico pol’o símbolo do espazo puro, sin fronteiras (“Hinaus zu weite Feld” di Fausto fuxindo da vila) cuio corpo é a cultura occidental’ (ROM, 29). Similarly, in a passing reference to the eleventh-century philosopher and theologian St. Anselm, Otero seems to have understood the term precisely as outlined broadly by Spengler across the entire span of *The Decline of the West*: ‘Anselmo, cunha intuición xenial, inventa a Escolástica toda tecida arredor da proba ontolóxica que ten moito do anhelo que Spengler chama fáustico, de Occidente’ (EH, 132).

Most significantly, it is in the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* (1932), Otero’s account of the spiritual and historical evolution of the Galicians and Galicia, where Spengler’s pervading influence is at its most conspicuous:

a Europa románica é mais xenerosamente ecuménica cá barroca. En Galicia esta diferenza sobresa de maneira esencial. Romanismo quere dici-la Galicia das peregrinacións, a vida íntima dun pobo que adquire a plenitude da súa figura histórica. O pobo dos campos, organizado en parroquias, garda a agrupación dos antigos *clans* precristianos. Desde o século X Galicia libre da ameaza musulmana, estraña á atracción do Sur árabe, mudéjar, mozárabe, é un país de mosteiros. Pero de ningunha maneira unha Tebaida. Aquí palpamos outra vez máis o rumbo occidental da historia galega. (EH, 136-37)

Otero identifies Romanesque architecture (so crucial to Spengler’s assessment of the flourishing of Western culture) with the emerging historical identity of Galicia

---

<sup>174</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 283.

within a wider cultural community symbolised by the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Identifying with the 'Celtic' and contrasting with the 'Moorish', Otero overtly emphasises the 'Western' heritage and culture of Galicia. As we shall see shortly, this constitutes the greater part of his adaptation of Spengler's ideas.

Employing Nietzschean discourse, Spengler also defines the 'Faustian' world-view as being in direct opposition to that of classical culture:

The nude statue is Apollonian, the art of the fugue Faustian. Apollonian are: mechanical statics, the sensuous cult of the Olympian gods, the politically individual city-states of Greece, the doom of Œdipus and the phallus-symbol. Faustian are: Galilean dynamics, Catholic and Protestant dogmatics, the great dynasties of the Baroque with their cabinet diplomacy, the destiny of Lear and the Madonna-ideal from Dante's Beatrice to the last line of Faust II. The painting that defines the individual body by contours is Apollonian, that which forms space by means of light and shade is Faustian - this is the difference between the fresco of Polygnotus and the oil painting of Rembrandt. The Apollonian existence is that of the Greek who describes his ego as *soma* and who lacks all idea of an inner development and therefore all real history, inward and outward; the Faustian is an existence which is led with a deep consciousness and introspection of the ego, and a resolutely personal culture evidenced in memoirs, reflections, retrospects and prospects and conscience.<sup>175</sup>

In this broad and complex amalgam of ideas, Spengler's synthesis draws upon an obvious cultural dichotomy, of which more later. Spengler also attaches the notion of 'space' to Faustism. He is also characteristically oblique in defining this: "'Space" speaking now in the Faustian idiom is a spiritual something, rigidly distinct from the momentary sense-present, which could not be represented in an Apollonian language, whether Greek or Latin.'<sup>176</sup> And since he speaks in the 'Faustian idiom,' there is a certain need to translate: 'space' is the physical embodiment and metaphor of Faustian culture, 'a passionate Faustian tendency towards the infinite',<sup>177</sup> the 'Faustian thrust and drive towards an infinitely distant goal'.<sup>178</sup> As Fischer explains, cultures are

---

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 183.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 75.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 238.

qualitatively different because they are animated by different principles or themes; these 'idiosyncratic' themes resided, for Spengler, at the heart of culture's prime symbols or collective visions of reality apprehended by an entire people: how they perceive space and time and how they embody them in works of art, architecture, music, or religion.<sup>179</sup>

The idea of infinite space is therefore the prime symbol of Faustian culture, emblematic of the world-view of Faustian man. Hughes summarises how Spengler saw in Faust the embodiment of western man as a whole:

Like his ideal prototype - the hero of Marlowe and Goethe - Faustian man has lived in eternal restlessness, and in longing for the unattainable. His is the art of endless vistas and limitless spaces. [...] His world he has seen as dynamic movement, where the Apollonian contemplated it in static repose. In the will to conquer distance Faustian man has created his most eloquent symbols: the Copernican view of the universe, the faith of the explorer, and the machines that decade by decade have produced more and travelled faster than even their inventors had considered possible.<sup>180</sup>

Fischer adds that 'this yearning for the infinite, epitomized by the legend of Faust, is embodied in the infinite universe of Copernicus, the Faustian striving for ultimate knowledge, the infinite space of tone embodied in chamber music, and the imperialistic impulse to expand in geographical space'.<sup>181</sup> Spengler uses the analogy of architecture to elucidate this notion of Faustism: 'there is one and only one soul, the Faustian, that craves for a style which drives through walls into the limitless universe of space and makes both the exterior and the interior of the building complementary images of one and the same world-feeling.'<sup>182</sup> Otero loosely appropriates the analogy when describing the organ in the cathedral of Santiago de

---

<sup>179</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.*, 140.

<sup>180</sup> Hughes, *op. cit.*, 79.

<sup>181</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.*, 142-43.

<sup>182</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 224. This interpretation of the Gothic has wider European expression in Chateaubriand and Ruskin. Spanish antecedents include Bécquer's *Historia de los templos de España*, particularly the description of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo.

Compostela: ‘o órgano mor da Catedral. Eiqui pódese apricar a doutriña de Spengler. Dorme na capela, feita por il, de Nosa Señora do Pilar, no ábside: a lus cai escenográficamente dend’ a bóvada octógona sobr’ as marmóreas de coores dispostos n-un xeito decorativo e suntuoso’ (TC, 17).<sup>183</sup> I imagine that only a limited number of those who read this when it was first published were familiar with the ideas of Spengler to which Otero refers. The allusion does, however, tell us much about Otero the writer who wrote essentially for himself if not for an idealised readership that was hopefully capable of both understanding such references and responding to ideological suggestion.

However, there is a more bellicose side to Spengler’s portrayal of Faustian culture and its aspirations that is not only imperialist, but wholly incongruous with the criteria of a nationalist writer from a peripheral region of a country coming to terms with the loss of empire and its own niche in the world. The image of Faustian man borrowed from Goethe is associated by Spengler with the relentless European impulse towards expansion and conquest; the destiny of Faust was the destiny of Western civilization, whose daemonic energy would lead to bloody conquests of foreign people and compulsive attempts to exploit natural resources through technological knowledge: Spengler believed that the Faustian impulse was both spiritual - the search for complete self-knowledge and physical - the complete mastery over Nature and other men.<sup>184</sup> Of the two strands of Faustism that Fischer has identified here, Otero seems to have adopted exclusively the spiritual. These other ‘physical’ facets of Faustian identity do not sit so easily with Otero’s agenda: the nationalist defence of an identity supposedly emerging from centuries of Castilian, centralist repression. Instead, as we shall see in a later chapter, Otero uses Spengler’s discourse and ideas to

---

<sup>183</sup> According to Fischer, the cathedral is one of ‘the archetypal features in the Faustian landscape’: *op. cit.*, 148.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

reinforce Celticism's place within Galician identity, such as where this concerns the portrayal of an inherent melancholy and sensibility within the Galician character. Ultimately, by alluding to Spengler, Otero seeks to posit the notion of Galicia's place in a wider community and culture (Europe) mediated by cultural nationhood rather than centralist hegemony. He himself defines 'cultura occidental' as 'calquera cousa significativa para as direccións puramente espirituais da alta cultura' (EH, 14). That is the sphere towards which Otero wishes to drive Galician culture by alleging its inclusion within the 'West'.

The Faustian desire for pure spatial infinity reminds us of Otero's definition of the Galicians as a 'pobo en camiño', a supposedly Celtic trait characteristic of inherent dynamism and spiritual disposition largely contingent on a close affinity with nature. The link is implicit, for example, in Otero's dictionary-like definition of Faustism: 'Faustismo: tensión cara ô infindo. Sempre máis aló pol-o coñecemento, pol-a aición' (LG, 27). The theme of Faustian 'space' links to that of the special affinity that Otero alleged to exist between the Galicians and their landscape, since it is in the 'space' of the Galician landscape as a supposedly Faustian landscape that Galicians enter into religious and dynamic harmony with their environment. Furthermore, Spengler's affirmation that 'a race has roots. Race and landscape belong together' (II, 119), brings to mind similar assertions made by Otero, such as where landscape and people are 'dúas palabras que na Galiza sempre camiñan xuntas' (PZG, 83). In this context, the expression of Spengler is almost identical to that of Otero the essay writer, a similarity that again suggests the influence of the former during a crucial period of Otero's development as a writer in all genres. Perhaps we should recall here that the first volume of *The Decline of the West* was published in German in 1919; it is shortly afterwards that Otero begins to refer (or allude) to Spengler in his

writings, precisely as his integration into the *galeguista* movement advanced. His vocation as an active, practising writer and thinker was almost exclusively contingent on this membership of a pro-Galician organisation or movement. Above all, Otero designates as Faustian certain aspects of Galician landscape and culture in order to stress what he believes to be the European and Celtic traits present in the *galeguidade* that he envisaged. In its spiritual striving towards the infinite and craving for magnitude, Spengler's Faustism – or at least Otero's interpretation of it – correlates with many qualities that the Galician nationalist attributed to Galicia's supposed Celtic heritage, and which he wished to allocate to a Galicia perceived as being firmly integrated into wider European culture and history: 'dentro deste mundo da cultura se comprende o celtismo integramente e levando de fixo un papel superior, pois o faustismo no que ten de anceios de infinitude é tan xermánico polo menos como céltico' (191).

It is in the protagonist of Otero's first short novel, *Pantelas, home libre* (1925) where all of these characteristics, and others which I believe to stem directly from a reading of *The Decline of the West*, are configured. Pantelas is a character 'fondamente envolteito na vida cósmica do campo', whose personality and psychology as described by the narrator - 'de aire contido e tristeiro' - rely heavily on Romantic notions of Celtic psychology derived largely from MaçPherson's *Poems of Ossian*, as well as major Romantic archetypes (PHL, 65). All of these ideas are reflected in the characterisation of Pantelas. As a child, he is already intimately attached to Nature, and fully integrated into the surrounding landscape, as is suggested by his desire for solitude and distance as a remedy for innate melancholy: 'xa mozo lanzal, forte e varudo, aloucado ás veces, outras ferido por unha tristura noxenta que o facía perderse nas tardes de festa lonxe da trullada polas caralleiras

máis fondas das regatas' (PHL, 68). The allusion to Pantelas' yearning for 'space' and distance is again reflected in characterisation that is emblematic of Romanticism, and in his troublesome relationship with his wife, Balbanera: 'ela ás veces ríase del porque o atopaba tan serio; puña ás veces os ollos nunhas estrañas cousas lonxanas que ela non comprendía' (PHL, 69). The image of mountain peaks and the vogue for exploring mountain scenery characterises the inception of Romanticism and owes much to Goethe's scientific ventures,<sup>185</sup> as well as to the more obvious source of Byron's Manfred communing with himself in the high Alps.<sup>186</sup> Spengler alludes to this important icon of Romantic sensibility and indeed incorporates it into his own definition of Faustism: 'the glimpse into the boundaries is what, in the garden, reveals to a Faustian Soul the meaning of Nature. It was we and not the Hellenes or the men of the high Renaissance that prized and sought out high mountaintops for the sake of the limitless range of vision that they afford. This is a Faustian craving to be alone with endless space'.<sup>187</sup>

Otero effects a plurality and simultaneity of meanings that can all be attached to the notion of landscape as cultural entity by alluding to this aspect of Faustism (and, of course, Romanticism) in his characterisation of Pantelas. After serving twelve years in prison for the murder of his flirtatious wife's lover, Pantelas finds spiritual rebirth through seeking out mountaintops for communion with Nature and landscape: 'o Pantelas algúns días de inverno sentíase aprisionado na estreitura do val e subía á montaña. [...] Deixaba correr os ollos polos lombos azuis ou nevados das serras lonxanas' (LG, 84). Although Otero does not employ 'Faustism' or its adjective

---

<sup>185</sup> As Otero expresses this: 'hoxe resulta un dos aspectos máis interesantes do autor do "Fausto" aquela variada e sosteñida aitividade centífica. Co seu martelo de xeólogo escada os Alpes e as montañas hercynianas da Alemaña e Bohemia. Rube pra abranguer hourizontes, pra eisaltar o esprito, mais tamén pra interrogar a simbólica das rocas' (LG, 15-16).

<sup>186</sup> Byron is of course a major precedent for the motif of mountain solitude; obvious examples are 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' (1812) and 'Manfred' (1817).

<sup>187</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 241.

‘Faustian’ in *Pantelas, home libre* (a practice restricted to his essays), all of the characteristics and intentions that we can associate with a more explicit use of the term are present in the short novel. Pantelas has the ‘Faustian craving’ to be alone with space so as to satisfy a spiritual need, and ‘an ineffable longing tempts him to indefinable horizons’.<sup>188</sup> His is ‘the soul of Faustian man, whose deepest and most permanent endeavour has been a striving for infinity’.<sup>189</sup> In characterising the protagonist in this way, Otero seeks also to depict Galician landscape and Nature as Faustian, a significance whose wider connotations I shall now examine.

When Spengler defines ‘endless space as the prime symbol of the North’,<sup>190</sup> the notion of ‘space’ and, in consequence, Faustism, is linked to a classic dichotomy in cultural history that is derived from the geographical theory of ‘Northern and Southern’ nations largely formulated by the Schlegels, Mme. de Staël and again drawing greatly upon the cultural legacy of MacPherson’s Ossian. Spengler plays consistently throughout *The Decline of the West* on the dichotomy of Faustian and Apollonian, ‘the opposition of Classical and Faustian world-feeling’.<sup>191</sup> Such an opposition correlates with that of ‘Northern and Southern’, ‘ancients and moderns,’ and other binary oppositions used to express the cultural watershed represented by Romanticism. Spengler states that ‘now for the first time it is possible to comprehend in full the elemental opposition of the Classical and Western souls. In the whole panorama of history, innumerable and intense as historical relations are, we find no two things so fundamentally alien to one another as these.’<sup>192</sup> Otero is very aware of Spengler’s allusions to these themes: ‘Spengler sinalou o carácter estático, puntiforme, limitado a un presente de cidade dos homes clásicos. Non podían

---

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 501.

<sup>189</sup> Hughes, *op. cit.*, 77.

<sup>190</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 189

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 242.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 78.

concebi-la historia universal' (EH, 56). The opposition of 'North and South' is largely analogous (almost synonymous) in cultural history with that of Romantic and Classical, which Otero also adapts as a *galeguista* and with differing degrees of cognateness to Atlantic and Mediterranean, Christian and Mudéjar, Galician and Castilian. On those occasions when Otero employs Spengler's Faustian discourse, he invites the reader to make wider interpretations that are contingent on a broad knowledge of cultural history. Furthermore, there is a logical and discernible relationship between the dichotomies and their implications for an erudite Galician nationalist writer of the twenties and thirties. Whilst discussing Galicia's Romantic epoch, for example, Otero clearly identifies the beneficial effects of Romanticism on Galicia with the idea of 'North': 'da Europa do Norte tiña que vi-la chamada espertadora da durmida conciencia galega' (EH, 235).

The *atlantista* symbolism employed by the *Xeración Nós* (most evident in Otero's novel *Arredor de si*) included, as well as 'nube' and 'faro', the idea of 'Norte', associated to a great extent with a vague notion of Ireland and the Celts. Once again, this was largely drawing on the legacy of MacPherson as well as the more immediate historiographical influence of Manuel Murguía. Similarly, Otero employs 'North' as a leitmotif extensively in the novel *Devalar* indeed throughout all of his works to denote the fraternal ethnic and cultural links supposedly existing between Galicia and communities on the western edge of Europe: a Europe that for the *Xeración Nós* was everything that a Castilian-biased Spanish state was not. Crucially for Otero, the idea of 'North' as a cultural beacon was also a source of inspiration for Goethe: 'en la vida de Goethe suele ser simbolizada por la influencia de la belleza de la torre de Estrasburgo la súbita y genial dedicación del poeta a la inspiración del Norte' (PF, 122, fn.20). 'North' was therefore seen as the symbolic

essence and repository of European culture, an intellectual codeword for a cultural tradition in which the *Xeración Nós* sought ideologically to place Galicia as a discrete cultural identity. Another reference to Spengler in Otero's works provides further details as to Otero's interpretation of 'Faustian': 'Spengler caracteriza como "fáustico" o espírito da Europa ocidental, moderna, manifestada en grande dende os comezos do arte e poesía románica, na alborada da que se chama Edade Media' (LG, 27).

This modifies even further our understanding of Otero's appropriation of aspects of Spengler's text. Otero seeks to approximate Galicia to what is interpreted as 'modern': once again this is Europe, its history and culture, in accordance with the Europeanising vein of the *Xeración Nós*. Otero puts the theory of this concept into literary practice by linking the loaded cultural idea of 'North' and Spengler's term 'Faustian' to the Galician landscape. One instance where the full, complicated sweep of this relationship can be seen is in the short article 'O latín i a paisaxe', published in 1927: 'hai outro latín que vai mellor coa paisaxe. Sobre todo coa do norte e coa atlántica, coas néboas, cos curtos veráns, co pesadelo das noites: o latín da Edade Media. Como que foi criado por poderosos imaxinativos no gótico isolamento dos claustros e martelado no fogo da teoloxía. Latín fáustico, diría Spengler' (LAT, 171-172). Otero is making a clear link between Spengler's broad definition of Faustian and the sort of landscape he himself sought to define as Galician; or rather, the sort of Galicia he wanted to define and idealise through landscape: European, Atlantic, quasi-Ossianic (i.e. Celtic), and, most especially, 'Northern', with the many connotations and ideological implications that this held for the *Xeración Nós*.<sup>193</sup> Later, in 1955, Otero makes the same comparison in the early pages of his *Ensaio sobor da paisaxe galega*, this time rendering the envisaged connection between 'Northern', European

---

<sup>193</sup> In the article 'Occitania e Atlántida,' Otero clearly sets out the same link as 'Ocidente, cultura atlántica, fáustica, Europa' (OA, 130).

(or Faustian) landscapes, the Galician landscape, and the cultural symbolism that each of these held for him, far more explicit: ‘Spengler fala con tino e emoción do pardo fáustico. Cecaives neste traballo teremos proporción pra o descubrir en tempos e estaxes tamén ispirados por un senso particular do tempo e devalar das nosas paisaxes’ (ESDPG, 17).

As Ríos Panisse suggests, in a synopsis of Otero’s reading of Spengler, it is the *atlantista* quest to belong to a wider community and therefore to affirm Galician nationhood, as much as Otero’s own intellectual preferences, that prefigure his adaptation of Spengler’s ideas in the treatment of landscape: Faust is ‘o personaxe que representa a ideosincrasia celta e xermánica da acción como cousa concreta, do devalar como filosofía do vivir, despreciando todo o definido e estable’;<sup>194</sup> and Faustism is the spirit of maximum liberty displayed through the human identification with the cosmos advocated by Catholic idealism and reaching its apex in the Middle Ages; this identification was lost with man’s domination of the cosmos that began with the technological developments of the Renaissance, and can only be recovered by ‘os pobos atlantistas, celtas, razas conservadoras aínda, daquela simbiose medieval home-cosmos’.<sup>195</sup>

The employment of Faustism, with all its possible meanings and many interpretations, enabled Otero to effect simultaneously a multitude of connotations, both ideological and intellectual, in shorthand manner. For example, when discussing Rosalía de Castro, Otero suggests that we can ‘considerar a Rosalía com’a precursor, c’o seu incoscente faustismo e a sua maravillosa concéncea do verso, do mais moderno e requintado lirismo’ (ROM, 96). It is not possible to conclude precisely whether Otero elicits one, several or all of the many connotations that ‘faustismo’

---

<sup>194</sup> *Devalar*, ed. Ríos Panisse, 36 n.39.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

holds for him in describing Rosalía de Castro in this way. However, what is absolutely clear is the nature of the intentions that lie behind his choice of adjective, and the cultural and ideological implications inherent in such a choice of words.

Otero wanted Galicia to see herself and to be seen as part of the 'West', and Faustism is yet another cultural recourse employed in order to affirm Galician distinctiveness, in contradistinction to the predominant Castilian tradition. This extensive response to *The Decline of the West* offers us a fascinating insight into how an intellectual criterion goes comfortably in tandem with a nationalist agenda, and how source ideas are manipulated, altered and made to conform to political expediency. Spengler's text also provided echoes of the organicist concept of language, an idea that was at the very forefront of Otero's political activities and writings in defence of Galician nationhood; the full extent of Spengler's influence and Otero's adoption and alteration of his ideas is therefore considered in the following chapters. The Faustian Galicia of Otero Pedrayo was Celtic and European, forming part of a historical and cultural tradition. It was also yet another response from the periphery to the cultural and political reflections upon end-of-empire malaise made by another intellectual grouping. The most immediate significance of this for pre-Civil War *galeguistas* was the de-Castilianisation of all things vaguely held to be Galician, and the inscribing of an ethnic and historical claim to Celticness as Otherness in the revised history and anticipated future of Galicia that was attempted by the *Xeración Nós*.

To conclude, I summarise the most important elements and implications of the interaction between the Galicians and the world they inhabit according to Otero. The love of the land is essential to Galician reality and stems from an ancestral Celtic heritage; it is also the most profound example of such a relationship in Western

European countries, and is epitomised by the peasantry. Land, Nature and landscape are transcendental values; between these entities and the Galician there is deep, spiritual empathy, a tellurian harmony that binds family, community and ultimately nation together, and which pivots on the activities associated with traditional, agricultural labour. This Rousseau-esque lyrical communion with Nature, together with religion, is the common denominator of Galician cultural identity.

*Devalar*, relying heavily on Bergsonian philosophy, is Otero's original reading of the significance of the Galician landscape where culture, history and Nature are held as equal and interchangeable values through the medium of time. This further emphasises the intuitive Galician response to Nature. Because Galician identity is rooted in the dynamism of Celtic forebears, Galicians are especially attached to their environment, which is also in a dynamic process of perpetual growth and decay. Just as Galician landscape is in constant movement and development, Galician people process through history towards God undaunted by death or change. Vitality and dynamism are therefore cultural attributes through the analogue of the largely rural world and the transcendental meaning perceived therein. The landscape is also a palimpsest, where given historical strata can be recognised and their importance meditated upon by the observer. Landscape is therefore an emblematic and metaphorical representation of national reality as viewed from a wide historical perspective. Most importantly, there is common ground between notions of time, metaphysical reality and culture detectable in the landscape and those of the observer. Landscape is therefore interpreted as life, as a cultural entity with which an essentially spiritual dialogue is presented via the Galician intuitive grasp of time and Nature.

The Galician shapes the world physically and metaphysically. The human alteration of landscape, the transformation of the physical milieu takes place

according to the requisites of Galician culture. This encompasses an aesthetic dimension, a degree of creativity that does not restrict this activity to the merely practical, but also elevates it to the level of artistic construction. Once more, this is an inherent Celtic impulse that is first manifest in the hill fort, or *castro*. The landscape is therefore an index of identity, spanning all spheres; a repository of Galicia's cultural past. In addition, features of the landscape are 'signs' informing and reminding the Galician of the historical constituents of his identity. By applying the philosophy of idealism and Romanticism to landscape, Otero presents a complex picture of Galician perception as the arbitrary definer of reality, where the world is interpreted in an imaginative and highly subjective manner that is partly conditioned by literary influences and prior cultural awareness. Identity is therefore not only read off the land, it is also read into it, projected. From Romantic approaches to landscape Otero derives the concept of a benevolent affinity between man and Nature, which is based largely upon the fusion of the objective and the subjective that takes place in the sensibility and mind of the individual. These ideas are applied to the Galicians and their landscape in order to construct a sense of identity explicitly connected with the processes and features of Nature, and to strengthen Otero's own concept of the Galician landscape as a cultural projection of the Galicians themselves. The predominant role that Galician psychology plays in the interpretation of the outer world is the most recondite of Otero's constructs regarding cultural identity.

Finally, through the appropriation, and ultimately manipulation, of Spengler's concept of 'faustismo', Otero presents the natural environment of Galicia as being symbolic of Western European, Atlantic and 'Northern' aspects of nationhood, thereby attempting to install Galicia into a wider frame of historical and cultural tradition. 'It is clear', writes Simon Schama, 'that inherited landscape myths and

memories share two common characteristics: their surprising endurance through the centuries and their power to shape institutions that we still live with. National identity, to take just the most obvious example, would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition; its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland.<sup>196</sup> The cartographer of this nationalist landscape in Galicia is Otero Pedrayo, who self-consciously designs the traditional relationship between Nature and the Galician in order to express the virtues of a potential Galicia, above all his own. And were this imagined community to materialise as he envisaged, it would be in full possession and control of its native tongue.

---

<sup>196</sup> Simon Schama, *op. cit.*, 15.

### Chapter Three - Language

In Otero's depiction of the Galician language as an indispensable component and determinant of Galician identity,<sup>1</sup> several diverse influences ranging from recent European cultural history to ideological imperative and from local intellectual heritage to contemporary philosophical thought can be isolated, identified and evaluated. This chapter addresses the manner in which the various elements of Herder's ideas on language surface in Otero's writings as an indication of the direct nature of this influence. Historicist ideas on language saturate works like the *Ensaio histórico...*, and form the basis of Otero's vision of language as the link that unites cultures formed by a wide range of diverse factors, as a sign of identity that is the unique expression of a collective underlying national spirit. I will show how, as with the original historicist position, Otero presents language and its developmental nature as the tool that creates and consolidates a people and its sense of self, and supports human interaction within community. I also intend to highlight how Herder's promotion of the preservation of language as an equivalent to the defence of identity influences Otero's proselytizing emphasis on the right to linguistic self-realisation as a metaphor for wider political demands. I intend to show the connection therefore between Herder's portrayal of language as a fundamental necessity for the survival of a given national identity and Otero's pre-Civil war political

---

<sup>1</sup> As I briefly mention in the opening chapter, Otero's first writings are in Castilian and precede his integration into the nationalist ranks of *galeguismo*. From then on until 1936, his writings are almost exclusively composed in Galician, except where he wishes to discuss Galician culture with a wider audience. A prime example of this practice is the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega*, composed and originally published in Castilian and a natural vehicle to widen an appreciation of its subject matter. After the Civil War, Otero writes mostly in Castilian, such as *Las Palmas del convento* (1941) and *La vocación de Adrián Silva* (1950). Only several years after the war, however, he writes occasional articles in Galician where the subject matter is not of a sensitive nature. As we would expect, his post-Civil War production in Galician increases in correlation to the gradual easing of restrictions during the Franco dictatorship.

commentary and later writings on language and society. I also address the theme of the necessity to create in language as an imperative for national creative expression, a core essential of Romantic historicism. Throughout this introductory section and the entire chapter, I refer to important sources for the foundations of linguistic nationalism, such as Fichte, Rousseau and von Humboldt, with special regard to their elaborations upon themes ultimately derived from Herderian positions. I dedicate particular attention to the contemporary affirmation of Romantic and historicist ideas made by the German thinker, Oswald Spengler, given his importance to Otero's overall configuration of Galician identity in a European context. Irish cultural and political models are taken into account by an examination of contemporary ideological import specifically through the connection made between language and national regeneration by Eamonn de Valera, plus wider diffused context of 'Celtic Renaissance'. I bring the chapter to a close by assessing how Otero's linguistic history of Galicia adds to our understanding of his subjective treatment as a whole, concentrating on the relationship with Portugal and other countries that he presents. Firstly, however, I consider the legacy of the eighteenth-century Galician Benedictine monk and scholar, Martín Sarmiento, and his isolated but industrious defence of Galician.

*Martín Sarmiento: a precursory format for a nationalist linguistic programme*

Otero Pedrayo played an important role in initiating a revision of the intellectual activity that had taken place in Galicia during the century of the Enlightenment. Naturally, his interest is not restricted merely to assessing such activity, but extends to

linking this to the expression of cultural identity in Galicia: 'o provincialismo galego non é tan definitivo para non deixar marxe á reivindicación do espírito da terra' (EH, 218). In regard to Benito Jerónimo Feijóo (1676-1764), the Spanish philosopher monk and pioneer of the philosophical essay in Spain, Otero composed numerous articles and a lengthy biography during the final years of his life. However, in terms of the language question, we can look towards one figure in particular from this period. Otero praises the 'fuerte e interesante personalidad' (PF, 186) and 'prodixiosa individualidade' (EH, 221) of the eighteenth-century Benedictine monk and scholar, Father Martín Sarmiento (1695-1772). His humble and industrious dedication to knowledge seems to strike a chord with the tirelessly erudite Otero, who praises 'os titánicos estudos do P. Sarmiento' (SHD, 29), 'a súa inorme erudición' (PROL, xii), and 'o amor e a etnográfica pasión do P. Sarmiento' (SHD, 94).

Sarmiento has been more cited than read by Galician scholars.<sup>2</sup> This is not surprising, given that his writings have not enjoyed great publishing attention or fortune: Otero draws attention to this, and shows evident knowledge of the publishing history of Sarmiento's work,<sup>3</sup> a large part of which remained unpublished until relatively recently, whilst other writings only came to light in fragmentary form. References to him are

---

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Eduardo Seoane of the University of Santiago de Compostela for enlightening me as to the accessibility of Sarmiento's works to Galician scholars.

<sup>3</sup> Otero says: 'sorprende que a Galiza nova non se dispoña a faguer unha ediceon compreta da obra xurdia do P. Sarmiento, pouco conecida, e dina pol'o menos de ocupar na cultura media da xente letrada unha atenceon semellante o que disfrouta o P. Feijóo' (LPS, 3-4). Forty four years later, Otero is still discussing Sarmiento texts: 'Sus pliegos cubiertos de menuda letra llegaron a la cifra de muchos millares. Se formaron colecciones de copias. Su índice es perfecto. Solo una mínima parte ha sido publicada después de su muerte. Citaremos de algunos asuntos: «Castellanos de Orense». «Sobre las propiedades curativas de la planta llamada en gallego «carqueixa», «Nacimiento y crianza de San Fernando en Galicia». En vida y aparte de las «Demostraciones del Teatro Crítico» sólo vio publicadas sus «Memorias para la historia de la Poesía y poetas españoles» editadas en 1775, libro admirable de saber y de intuición pues vislumbra los orígenes de la lírica medieval y la existencia de las escuelas poéticas galaico-portuguesas cuyo misterio no fue aclarado hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XIX' (CDO, 128). In this text Otero also provides a biography of Sarmiento.

almost always through indirect sources, and show only a partial knowledge of the extent, nature and importance of his work. It is clear, however, that Otero does not fall into this category, as his discussion of Sarmiento's work demonstrates. His erudite voracity allows him an unusually reliable perspective on a much-neglected area of Galician cultural history.

The first edition of Sarmiento's *Sobre el origen de la Lengua Gallega y sobre la Paleografía Española* was published in *Revista Contemporánea*<sup>4</sup> by Dr. López de la Vega, and at the end of his study entitled *Gallegos Ilustres. El sabio beneditino Fray Martín Sarmiento*. The second was better known than the first, and was published two years later in *La Ilustración Gallega y Asturiana* (II, 1880), by Manuel Murguía.<sup>5</sup> In addition, there are publications that coincide with the *Nós* period, such as the *Onomástico etimológico de la lengua gallega*, published by Lago in 1923,<sup>6</sup> and 'Elementos etimológicos según el método de Euclides', published in the *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* between 1928 and 1931.<sup>7</sup> The latter text is a good compendium of Sarmiento's thoughts on various themes, such as the dignity, antiquity and purity of the Galician language, its place within the teaching process and the responsibility of the Church and State for the marginalisation of Galician. Given that Otero bases his entire homage to Sarmiento published in *A Nosa Terra* in 1931 on quotations from 'o Boletín da Academia Hespáñola', and that references to Sarmiento appear for the first time in his work during this period, it is likely that this was the principal source and starting point for his interpretation of Sarmiento that leads to further commentaries, culminating in a detailed

---

<sup>4</sup> (Madrid, XIII, 1878, 296-320).

<sup>5</sup> J.L. Pensado, *Opúsculos lingüísticos gallegos del siglo XVIII* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1974), 9.

<sup>6</sup> (Tui: Tipografía Regional).

<sup>7</sup> (n. 15, 16, 17 and 18).

section on the monk in *Galicia: cultura de occidente* (1975). During the post-Civil War period, another possible source includes *Vida y viajes literarios, número y calidad de los escritos del Rvdmo. P.M. Fray Martín Sarmiento*, published in Vigo in 1952 by L. Viñas Cortegoso. Although not concerned with the defence of Galician, the *Demostración Crítico-Apologética de el Teatro Crítico Universal* Sarmiento's defence of Feijóo's most well-known work - was familiar to Otero.<sup>8</sup>

Sarmiento's deep interest in and recording of Galician folk culture, which anticipates Herder and is pre-Romantic in spirit,<sup>9</sup> has Otero's admiration: 'o P Sarmiento gardou vivo o sentido da historia e por conseguinte da paisaxe popular manifestada no folklore e na lingua. (...). Sarmiento sabía percibi-la orixe e a corrente oculta e fecundadora' (EH, 221). Sarmiento's defence of the largely oral nature of Galician at that time, and his belief that there is a homogenous form of a language present in Galicia, rather than a collection of multiple dialectal forms, also appeals; Otero describes how

o P. Sarmiento pol-o ano 1766 escribía falando da lingua galega: «Tengo observado que las lenguas vulgares que solamente se hablan y no se escriben, son casi eternas, inmutables, y que cada día aumentan más y más, conservando siempre el carácter privativo de la lengua... las lenguas que se hablan y no se escriben son más copiosas de voces de la lengua que las lenguas que se escriben... Estoy aturdido de la abundancia de las voces gallegas puras que oí y recogí en Galicia... Dícese que (en Galicia) de un lugar a otro hay lengua diferente. No hallé esa multitud de lenguas. Estos o los otros terminos sueltos que se hablan aquí y no allí es cierto que los hay, pero sin salir del gallego en general, y esto sucederá en todo país cuya lengua se habla y no se escribe».<sup>10</sup> (ROM, 45)

---

<sup>8</sup> Published in Madrid in 1732 by Imprenta de los Herederos de Francisco del Hierro.

<sup>9</sup> A quality to which Otero makes reference, vindicating the work of Sarmiento: 'en moitos camiños o P. Sarmiento leva ós emozoados abrentes románticos en hourizontes de literatura popular, de tradición. Con milllores estudos, o noso XIX houbera cheamente saudado no P. Sarmiento o Grimm galego. Entre o barroco e o romántico houbo entre nós fondas e sombrizas corredoiras' (SHD, 90).

<sup>10</sup> Otero quotes from 'Elementos etimológicos según el método de Euclides', published as one of the series of selections of Sarmiento's writings entitled 'Estudios filológicos del padre Sarmiento', in *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 1928-1931, XV-XVIII (Facimile edition, Madrid, *Revista de Archivos, bibliotecas y museos*), 1928, XV, 670-684 (674). The editor of these selections is an unidentified 'J.P.'

Sarmiento's tenacious defence of the dignity of Galician as a language, and his many works dedicated to Galician lexicography and etymology,<sup>11</sup> are an obvious precursor and model for the activities of the *Xeración Nós*: Otero refers to 'o xenio profético e mañanceiro do pai Sarmiento' (GEG, 15), and describes how Sarmiento 'estudou filoloxicamente o romance galego reivindicando a súa dignidade, e o seu dereito inmortal da vida. Máis alá das fronteiras canónicas da Galicia provincia romana sentiu un tremer de orixes, e soubo coloca-lo castro, a aldea, a historia e a estética galega no horizonte que lles cómpre' (EH, 221-222).

In one of the several quotations that make up the introduction to Otero's 1931 article on the monk, Sarmiento speculates on the effects that the exploitation and colonisation of Galicia by non-Galicians (a recurrent theme in Otero's works) have had on the use of the Galician language. Similarly, the historical perspective offered by Sarmiento's quite blunt dismissal of Castilian's place in Galician society appeals to the author of the *Ensaio histórico...*: 'para maldita la cosa se necesita en Galicia la lengua castellana: le ha bastado por algunos siglos la lengua gallega que tanto apreció el rey D. Alfonso el Sabio y acaso su padre San Fernando' (LPS, 4).<sup>12</sup> Sarmiento acknowledged a Celtic presence in Galicia,<sup>13</sup> played down the Moorish presence and linguistic effects by

---

<sup>11</sup> Otero enthuses over 'os fermosos traballos monográficos de toponimia e xeografía histórica – etimoloxía de Valdeorras, o río Miño e o municipio de Lais, vías románs, casteláns de Ourense' (PROL, xiii).

<sup>12</sup> For the most part, Sarmiento proposes a bilingual solution to the language problem. The political bodies to which Otero was affiliated also pressed for this during the Second Republic, although in his works it is hard to distinguish the precise nature of Otero's attitudes to bilingualism. What the political climate of the Second Republic permitted and what a neo-Romantic nationalist sought were fundamentally different things.

<sup>13</sup> Martín Sarmiento, *Estudio sobre el origen y formación de la lengua gallega* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1943), 36.

comparison with Castile,<sup>14</sup> advocated a pluralist linguistic policy for education that would accommodate all Spain's languages (except Basque), encouraged the introduction of Galician into the liturgy of the Church and engaged in the cultural activities of etymology and lexicography. There is a lack of specific comments by Otero on some of these individual issues, but we can speculate that Sarmiento's ideas register with Otero, who describes how 'o ilustre monxe non deixou de tocar apenas ningún dos males da Galiza' (LPS, 3). Sarmiento's condemnation of the Castilian-centric marginalisation and repression of Galician and Galicia (often effected from the classroom) is couched in a discourse that would not have been out of place during the *Nós* epoch. As Otero's own quotations from Sarmiento's work as published in the *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* illustrate, the eighteenth-century scholar sketches various programmes of intellectual activity (whose aim would be to augment the use of Galician) that would later be undertaken by the *Xeración Nós*, if not by Otero himself.<sup>15</sup> Otero recognises that at the hub of this is language: 'en todo o escrito sostén a tésis da necesidade fundamental de que a Galiza seipa e fale o galego' (LPS, 4). In short, his profile reads like that of a member of this generation, or at least of the *Rexurdimento*, a point that Otero seizes upon in his evaluation of Sarmiento's legacy: 'foi il un grande galeguista, e n'un século no que'o esprito galego xúzgase morto agás da arquiteitura, e por un home apraudido e considerado en toda a Hespaña como un prodixio de ciencia' (LPS, 3). He credits Sarmiento with adumbrating those issues that would dominate his own period of cultural

---

<sup>14</sup> 'Otra singularidad tiene la lengua gallega, y es que no tiene voz alguna morisca, (...). No goza la lengua castellana de este privilegio, si bien el castellano muy antiguo estuvo tan limpio como el idioma gallego; pero después de las conquistas se llenó de voces moriscas o arábicas'. *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>15</sup> Otero quotes the following extracts from Sarmiento's work as published in *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*: 'no sería menos curiosa una descripción geográfica de todo y solo el Reino de Galicia en lengua gallega' (LPS, 3). 'No es dudable que si con el tiempo se diese a luz y se imprimiese en gallego una historia general y una historia natural de todo el reino de Galicia, se aficionarían los Gallegos a su lengua nativa' (LPS, 3). These are formats for the variety of study carried out by Otero.

and political revaluation: ‘¿non é certo qu’istes conceptos do P. Sarmiento figuran escritos fai poucos días por Lousada, por Risco, por Vilar Ponte?’ (LPS, 3). He praises Sarmiento’s coupling of scholarliness with commitment to pro-Galician affairs: ‘non enxuciou soamente como erudito. Sentiu a múltiple presenza dunha realidade e pode ser chamado o máis galeguista dos precursores’ (EH, 222). ‘O ilustre P. Sarmento,’ Otero writes, ‘enxamáis esquencido das realidás galegas’ (EH, 21). It is precisely that quality – of cultural revaluation tied to a strong Galician sentiment – that endears Sarmiento to Otero and consolidates his influence on Otero’s treatment of language as essential to any form of cultural identity.

### ***Historicism and the linguistic bases of Romantic nationalism***

There are indications that Otero’s assessment of the relationship between language and identity owes a primordial debt to the fathers of linguistic nationalism, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Johann Gottfried Fichte (1762–1814). As John Edwards underlines, ‘nationalism, from its modern inception, was inextricably bound up with language’.<sup>16</sup> The linking of language with national identity had its first expression in the works of these two figures, and was reinforced by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). It was a consolidated product of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Romanticism.<sup>17</sup> For this reason, I shall also refer to Rousseau’s writings - in a section of this chapter that is predominantly concerned with the historicist

---

<sup>16</sup> John Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 23.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Hegel, in his *Vorlesungen*, insisted that the the concept of ‘Volksgeist’ – which for him was basic to any theory of the State – was inconceivable without the identification of language and nation. Savigny saw in language the matrix of a people’s collective consciousness out of which the idea of law came to emerge, whilst Schleiermacher and Friedrich Schlegel viewed language as the means by which true political reality could be grasped’. F.M.Barnard, *Herder’s Social and Political Thought. From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 161.

view given that Rousseau, like Herder, recognised language as the natural lifeblood of human culture and social demeanour in all of its forms.<sup>18</sup>

Firstly, Otero shows clear historicist leanings by suggesting that language is more important than racial type as a guarantor of nationhood or cultural particularity: ‘en las lenguas se refleja el espíritu de los pueblos y de las culturas aun mejor que en las Razas’ (TTL, 97).<sup>19</sup> Herder saw language and its related historical tradition as the essentially spiritual quality most natural for political association.<sup>20</sup> Language expresses the collective experience of the group, or *Volk*. By referring to language as ‘forma psicológica da Raza’ and stating that ‘son vida do esprito as línguas, fala de Pátrias’ (PDP, 4), Otero draws upon Herder’s emphasis regarding the importance of language to human groupings, as an indication of their status as separate social units: ‘each language has its distinct national character,’ wrote the German thinker, ‘it seems that nature imposes upon us an obligation only to our mother tongue, for it is better attuned to our character and coextensive with our way of thinking.’<sup>21</sup> Rousseau had expressed similar ideas that are summarised by his assertion that ‘language distinguishes nations from each other’.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Fichte had emphasised language as a living embodiment of national grouping and cultural history, ‘the sensuous and mental life of the nation deposited in the language... [that] proceeds

---

<sup>18</sup> See the introduction to J.J. Rousseau and J.G. Herder, *Two Essays On The Origin of Language*, translated by John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (University of Chicago, 1986), v.

<sup>19</sup> Here is one of the few cases of ‘Raza’ appearing to mean ‘race’, rather than ‘people’, the standard meaning Otero wishes to convey with the term.

<sup>20</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> J.G. Herder, ‘On Diligence in the Study of Several Learned Languages’ (1764), from *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784-91)*, in *Selected Early Works (1764-1767)*, ed. Ernest A. Menze and Karl Menges, translated by Ernest A. Menze and Michael Palma (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Rousseau, ‘Essay on the Origin of Languages’, in *Two Essays On The Origin of Language*, 5.

from the whole previous life of the nation'.<sup>23</sup> This is similar to von Humboldt's opinion that language 'is a product of the whole nation',<sup>24</sup> 'it is through language that the vast products of entire ages and nations have an effect on the individual'.<sup>25</sup>

When elaborating upon geographical relativism and peculiarity, and its implications for the nation-language relationship, Otero echoes historicist concepts: 'as terras dotadas de carácter de seu, individual, intransferible, crean os seus idiomas inspirando os elementos materiais estraños que mellor lles conveñan. Á mesma lei obedecen as formas artísticas' (EH, 40). The 'law' referred to is that of pluralism, Herder's cultural relativism. 'Intransferible' recalls the historicist belief in the incommensurability of national cultures and their status as discrete entities reflected by different languages. It is clear that Otero applies this also to the sociolinguistic relationships within nations themselves: 'con frecuencia se olvida que las lenguas son diferenciaciones locales. Tienen sus círculos geográficos, sus centros de irradiación, sus zonas de penumbra. (...) No puede olvidarse tampoco la existencia de hablares propios de la ciudad y del campo, de los oficios, de las clases sociales' (PF, 452, 453). Differing linguistic use arises from naturally occurring peculiarity; Otero demonstrates a thorough application of linguistic organicism to all aspects of society: 'cada "forma de vida" impone dentro de las determinaciones generales del idioma su lenguaje propio, el caudal de palabras característico de las diversas profesiones liberales o de la técnica pura, cuyas frases han de adaptarse forzosamente a las peculiaridades "de cada vivir"' (GDE, I, 124). Herder proposes that societies are created by factors such as climate, geography, physical

---

<sup>23</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (Chicago and London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1922), 68.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Essays on Language*, ed. T.Harden and D. Farelly (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 55.

and biological needs, and are united by common traditions and common memories, of which language is the principal link and vehicle.<sup>26</sup> Von Humboldt later reiterates this, stating that 'language is an organic entity and must be treated as such',<sup>27</sup> and that 'different languages, (...) constitute different views of life'.<sup>28</sup> The uniqueness of languages and their respective national cultures is also a theme touched upon by Rousseau, for whom the difference between language forms 'may be partly cause and partly effect of differences in national character'.<sup>29</sup> Behind Otero's discussion of the impact of Romanticism on Galician evaluations of cultural identity during the *Rexurdimento* lies Herder's belief that language created a *Volk*.<sup>30</sup> This idea permeates Otero's telling summary of the re-emergence of Galician literary activity in the nineteenth century: 'había unha poesía, unha língoa, ergo un pobo' (FITO, 4). It is in a discourse couched in the values and outlook of historicism that Otero reiterates the importance of national literature for the continuity of language and, therefore, national identity, a theme to which I will return shortly.

Further evidence of Herder's influence is detected in Otero's interpretation of how a native language is closely bound to the notion of locality and the development of human relationships within it:

se ama en la lengua patria una belleza indefinible en su esencia y semejante a la del paisaje en cuyo ámbito se revelan las primeras aspiraciones del alma y se produce el inicial contacto con la realidad. Belleza indefinible pero a la que prestan con facilidad argumentos demostrativos la inteligencia y la cultura, ambas dóciles y contentas si las enciende una llama de entusiasmo. El acento, el ritmo, el orden de las palabras, viven

---

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah Berlin, 'J.G. Herder', in pamphlet series, *Men and Ideas* (1965), 37.

<sup>27</sup> Von Humboldt, *op. cit.*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>29</sup> Rousseau, *Émile, or Education*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Dent, 1911), 73.

<sup>30</sup> Herder 'firmly established the principle that language was the most natural and hence indispensable basis of socio-political association; that language created a Volk'. Barnard, *op. cit.*, 30.

unidas a sentimientos tan indiscutibles como la belleza moral, la simpatía, el amor de los padres, las primeras amistades. (PF, 452)

Writing on Herder's concepts of culture and community, Spencer expands on the crucial implications in Herder's work for cultural identity: a language mirrors a people's way of thinking and expresses the relationships that they share; also human relations help account for language diversity.<sup>31</sup> It is only through and in the language of community with its history and traditions that these relationships are formed from infancy.<sup>32</sup> This developmental, organic concept of language underpins Otero's comments above.

For Herder, words were the cement of a nation's social fabric, connecting the past with the present; without words and their deeper effects, society, literature, family and history lacked meaning and purpose.<sup>33</sup> This underpins Otero's affirmation that 'a lingua é (...) o acervo común da patria',<sup>34</sup> and shapes the imperative tone of his prescriptions for the preservation and maintenance of language use. One example of this can be found in 'Pra unha políteca galega', where the speaking of Galician is therefore classed as a political act:

en galego temos que pensar e sentir si queremos ser considerados no mundo e non ser tidos por homildes imitadores que copian por non crer na propia forza. Temos unha arte, unha expression musical, unha maneira nosa de pensamento e de emoceón. Deixala morrer sería o suicídeo que non se perdoa pois é pecado contra o espírito. (PUPG, 161)

Otero therefore defines the preservation of Galician as a religious duty through the analogy of suicide and the avoidance of sin. Beyond his all-encompassing religious discourse, however, we find familiar bases. In Herder's outlook, speech communities

---

<sup>31</sup> Vicki Ann Spencer, *Herder, Culture and Community. The Political Implications of an Expressivist Theory of Language* (Oxford: Unpublished D.Phil, January 1995), 86.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>33</sup> Berlin, 'J.G. Herder', 38.

<sup>34</sup> Outeiriño, *op. cit.*

only survive as discrete entities as long as they preserve their language as a collective inheritance,<sup>35</sup> as the ‘acervo común’ of the nation. Without its language, a *Volk* is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms devoid of the unique consciousness that sustains it as a social entity, with or without a state.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, we can detect further Herderian influence in Otero’s emphasis on the necessity for conscientious human effort in the preservation of Galician, what Spencer refers to as ‘a subjective element to Herder’s theory of expressivism ‘where human beings are responsible for the creation of their language and culture’.<sup>37</sup> On this note, it is worth drawing attention to Otero’s quotation of a stanza of Taibo García’s poetry, which stipulates that ‘o galego que non fala / na lingua da sua terra / nin sabe o que tén de seu / nin é merecente d’ela’ (VTG, 47).

It is difficult to establish the exact belief held by Otero in regard to the origin of language, and specifically the Galician language. On the one hand, he declares towards the end of his life in the context of an interview that ‘a lingua é (...) unha creación de Dios’.<sup>38</sup> Two decades earlier, however, his approach is more scientific in his work on the geography of Spain: ‘nunca sabremos los orígenes del lenguaje porque han desaparecido los idiomas primitivos, a excepción del vasco, que según teorías bien fundamentadas parece ser un lenguaje ibérico’ (GDE, I, 124). If we choose to speculate on a possible influence here, then the history of ideas points towards both Herder and his mentor Hamann, although I have not come across any reference to the latter in Otero’s works. Herder declares that speech is a divine gift from God,<sup>39</sup> however, by asserting that

---

<sup>35</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 57-58.

<sup>37</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, 273.

<sup>38</sup> Outeiriño, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, 41.

language is a gift from God he also implies that it is a natural phenomenon,<sup>40</sup> and rejects the fundamentalist theory of a divine origin of language held by Hamann.<sup>41</sup> Hamann's possible appeal to Otero may rest upon this and also his absolute rejection of Enlightenment rationalism.<sup>42</sup> However, there is only one reference in Otero's scattered discussions of the Galician language that suggests a belief that the Galician tongue or language itself is a gift from God or a channel of communication between man and Heaven. There is no reference to Hamann, and I therefore choose to reject the hypothesis of an influence here. I believe instead that Otero occasionally imposes (whether consciously or subconsciously) his symbolic discourse of 'heaven and earth' upon Herder's secularised ideas, a codification that refers essentially to the main patterns of his outlook. Otero believes that language 'es una realidad inmanente y eterna',<sup>43</sup> suggesting once again a debt to Herder's belief in man's innate ability to reason and develop speech, where reason and a language are co-terminous and simultaneous phenomena:<sup>44</sup> the Cartesian allusion ('ergo un pobo') certainly points to this.

Previously, we have seen how Otero explains language diversity by geographical, social and historical – in short, organic – diversity. Herderian thought offered Otero an organic frontier for Galicia, the cultural consolidation of a sense of community within the

---

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 85. 'Herder's rejection of the fundamentalist theory of a divine origin of language stands, for example, in direct contrast with Hamann's views. (...). But although Herder made various attempts to appease his mentor, he never adopted either the more extreme mystical elements of Hamann's thought or his unfettered rejection of Enlightenment rationalism. For Hamann, unlike Herder, believes language is unquestionably a special creation of God. People communicate more than their ideas in speech, they reveal their inner selves. Now, this "self" along with our linguistic powers has both a godlike and human dimension. Since, as human beings, we are created in God's image, human reason and language are seen by Hamann to share a common foundation in the language of God. Speech is a continuous process of interpretation whereby human language is translated from the language of the angels. Language, on this view, is thus both a medium for human expression and an activity for the interpretation of divine ideas and energies': *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 102-103. A parliamentary intervention from 19/08/1931.

<sup>44</sup> See Edwards, *op. cit.*, 23.

clear parameters of language as an obvious nationalistic entity. Herder singles out language as the most determinative characteristic of a *Volk*. For statehood, to be 'natural', it had to coincide with nationhood, with an ethnic community.<sup>45</sup> This is one reason why Otero rejects the mechanistic philosophical tradition. Fichte's far more patriotic adaptation of Herder's ideas into a broader sociopolitical position in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807–08), or *Addresses to the German Nation*, also bears on the evaluation of language as a denomination of nationality and natural grouping:

Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole.<sup>46</sup>

The influence of a further two of Herder's most seminal ideas can be distinguished in Otero's writings on the subject of language: the right of any given linguistic community to pursue self-realisation, and the contention that national identity is unsustainable without a native language. Both Fichte's and von Humboldt's stress that the preservation and practice of the ancestral tongue is essential if a nation's cultural identity must survive. Their position, like that of Otero in the subsequent century, was inherited from Herder. In keeping with his nationalist agenda, Otero incorporates these fundamental elements of original linguistic nationalism into his own depiction of the Galician language as a cardinal element of cultural identity, employing them as a rallying cry for the ongoing recuperation and defence of Galician against the historical dominance of Castilian. In 1972, he alludes to the concept of diglossia in his musing upon the socio-linguistic reality of a bilingual community:

---

<sup>45</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 141.

<sup>46</sup> Fichte, *op. cit.*, 223-224.

En los países donde viven dos o más lenguas en lucha y siempre, aún sin coacción exterior, aún sin sentimiento de reivindicaciones nacionales, dos lenguas en contacto y los dialectos de una misma están en lucha, como las formaciones vegetales en el bosque-, se agrega un concepto del deber, que puede revestir las formas de un heroísmo cotidiano. En los políglotas, desde niños, no hay dos lenguas igualmente estimadas. Siempre prevalece una. (PF, 452-453)

One of the most notable and constant features of Herder's work is his condemnation of the imposition of alien or dominant cultures and languages on weaker or indigenous cultures, which irrevocably change a minority cultural identity if not denying it the possibility of cultural survival.<sup>47</sup> Herder believed that the outright rejection of a community's language amounts to the divorce of those people from the social practices which form part of their identity, and the disruption of their self-awareness.<sup>48</sup> Otero adopts the Herderian contention that loss of language entails loss of identity, making a succinct observation intended to have clear ideological effects at the time of writing: 'péñese que ao caer a lingua cae tamén a vida galega' (MR, 113-114). This entails the absolute necessity for the safeguarding of one's national tongue and allowed Otero to posit language as both a passive and proactive form of cultural identity, as a given and a must. It formed part of an atemporal portrait of the Galician outlook as well as an essential ingredient of persuasive, proselytising nationalist rhetoric, particularly during the pre-Civil War period, where Galician as a language is lauded for its ability to express all registers and discourse: 'o noso idioma está d'abondo capacitado para expresar toda crás de sentimentos e para medio de expresión de total-as manifestacións culturaes, artísticas e científicas' (DEC, 1). Elsewhere, Otero employs more poetic language, the

---

<sup>47</sup> 'For the identity of a people and its culture are intimately tied to their language. Hence, while cultural survival remains a possibility, the culture of a people is irrevocably changed with the imposition of a foreign language'. Spencer, *op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

maternal metaphor and the imperative to convey this: 'a nai Galiza non chora: espántase, pois non pode pensar nos fillos tal crimen. Espantarse é fuxir pra non ver a realidade. A nai sabe perdoar. Falade sua lingua, adicádelle o millor da vosa yalma que é a sua, e a nai arrolará voso descanso con cantigas de espranza e lediza de trunfo nos ollos e nos beizos' (ROM, 190).

Therefore, language and its preservation signified for Otero a crucial means of ensuring the continuity of national culture, a standpoint ultimately derived from Herder, and reinforced by the writings of Fichte and Von Humboldt. Language was also another aspect of the Herderian promotion of the peaceful diversity of cultures that was the source idea for the avowed universalism and high-profile cultural relativism of the *Xeración Nós*. 'As long as we keep our native language on our tongue,' Herder wrote, 'we will penetrate so much more deeply the distinctiveness of each language'.<sup>49</sup> It was Herder and German historicism, with its insistent emphasis on language's place at the heart of cultural activities, that was the single most unifying and informing feature from the history of ideas that formed the linchpin of the *Xeración Nós*' community and cultural politics. Such concepts were readily accessible to scholars like Otero, and were representative of the larger Spanish picture. Amador de los Ríos' *Historia crítica de la literatura española* (1861-65), for example, is infused with the ideas of Herder. These same ideas were also being reformulated and imaginatively reiterated during the 1920's and 1930's by a popular contemporary European thinker, Oswald Spengler.

---

<sup>49</sup> Herder, *Selected Early Works (1764-1767)*, 33.

### *Spengler's 'language battle' and Galician 'Faustian' identity*

Otero's response to the ideas expressed by Spengler concerning language offers us an insight into the Galician intellectual's vision of the historical development of the Galician language and its anticipated role within a consolidated sense of identity. As we have seen, Otero's conception of language as the principal tenet of identity derives mainly from the Herderian strand of historicism. Given the pervasive presence of Herder's thought in *The Decline of the West* discussed in the previous chapter, traceable lines of thought between Spengler's text and Otero's writings demonstrate not only part of the huge appeal of the former to the latter, but also the intellectual and philosophical criteria behind Otero's adaptation of Spengler's Herderian-tinged ideas. In what is little more than a re-working and echoing of Herder's approach to the relationship between language, people and place, Spengler articulates an organic and ethnic link between a people and its language. The latter, he writes, 'obeys not laws, but pulse' – Spengler therefore taps into the dichotomy between the measured and the felt, the rational and the Romantic in the rejection of the mechanical, positivist outlook:

Thus a race-character is involved, *a priori*, in the way in which the matter to be communicated is set in sentences. Sentences are not the same for Tacitus and Napoleon as for Cicero and Nietzsche. The Englishman's order is material syntactically in a different way from the German. Not the ideas and thoughts, but the thinking, the kind of life, the blood, determine in the primitive, classical, Chinese, and Western speech-communities the type of the sentence-unit, and with it the mechanical relation to the word sentence.<sup>50</sup> (II, 142)

---

<sup>50</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 3.

Otero sees language in an analogous way to Spengler's composite formulation and its debt to the chief ideologue of cultural nationhood. Like Herder, Spengler conceived language as an expressive embodiment of a people's historical development and cultural heritage. 'Race can dispense with language,' Spengler insists, 'but the very speaking of a language is an expression of antecedent race, as are religious arts and styles of thought and everything else that happens in the history of the spirit' (II, 339). Otero's portrayals of the Galician language bear similarity to this; as a neo-Romantic nationalist intellectual, he would have been instinctively – intuitively – drawn to the Herderian defence of language easily detectable in Spengler's then controversial but fashionable text from which he drew extensively.<sup>51</sup> In *The Decline of the West*, Spengler appropriates a predictable aspect of European cultural history for his own interpretation of the Faustian: 'piety towards the mother tongue – the very term testifies to deep ethical forces, and accounts for the bitterness of our ever-recurring language battles – is a trait of the late Western soul, almost unknowable for the men of other Cultures and entirely so for the primitive' (II, 120). Language was the chief component of the *Xeración Nós*' recuperative programme of cultural and political differentiation. As the most fecund member of *Nós* and a man who experimented successfully in all genres of literature, Otero stands out as the figure most identifiable with the process of restoring the status of Galician as a language suitable for all social encounters and practice, not least of all cultural. In this Spenglerian 'language battle', Otero was complying with the nationalist agenda of distancing an essential item of nationhood from all things supposedly Castilian by emphasising Galicia's historical and cultural proximity to the 'Western soul', to

---

<sup>51</sup> See Craig Patterson, 'North and South and The Decline of the West: Galicia, Spengler and Otero Pedrayo', *Galician Review* 3-4 (1999-2000), 52-76.

Faustism and to Europe. Here we can apply Anderson's observations of language's capacity to generate imagined communities and build particular solidarities.<sup>52</sup>

In seeking inspiration from sources as diverse and discrete as Irish nationalism and Oswald Spengler, Otero was not only looking for a favourable benchmark, but also inscribing Galicia, the imagined Galicia of the *Xeración Nós*, within a tradition that he understood as being represented by Spengler's Faustism, in precisely the same manner undertaken in his approach to Nature and Galician self-representation discussed in the previous chapter. This approach rests heavily on notions of *atlantista* fraternity, and on a supposed norm to be followed by Atlantic nations, Celtic nations, 'Northern' nations, European nations, nations possessing what Spengler deemed the 'Western soul': for Otero they are Faustian too. Through language, Anderson notes, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.<sup>53</sup> 'Fellowships' and a restored past are elicited and employed by Otero through his understanding and appropriation of Spengler's Faustism, and from the abstract, hybrid concept of the German thinker we can trace a discernible link to the practical expression of that dreamed future in the political activities of Otero in the Spanish Cortes during the 1930's, where Otero is both didactic and proactive in his promotion of Galician as an irrefutable part of Galician nationhood: 'es la única garantía y el único vehículo que tenemos para que el día de mañana el joven espíritu gallego, que está soterrado bajo una porción de capas de incompreensión, pueda despertar'.<sup>54</sup> Otero's defence and promotion of Galician, from monographic essays to the Cortes, is the most practical employment of ideas taken in part from *The Decline of the*

---

<sup>52</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 133.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>54</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 102-03.

*West*. As a more accessible means of proselytisation, nationalist propaganda and expression of cultural nationhood, it easily surpasses the erudite and almost codified nature of Otero's suggestion of a 'Faustian' Galician landscape, as well as his conception of history and nationhood, which will be considered later in this thesis. Yet it is not as emotive, attractive or immediate as the relationship depicted as existing with Ireland.

### ***Language and the 'Celtic Renaissance' – Otero's atlantista nationalism***

The influence of recent and contemporary events in Ireland on the outlook and activities of the *Xeración Nós* cannot be overestimated, as I suggest in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Otero is arbitrary in his approach to Irish literature. English language authors like Yeats and Synge are those most praised and translated in the *Nós* magazine; this was not simply because of their literary merit, as might have been the case with Joyce, who was not a nationalist writer. Under the auspices of the *Xeración Nós*' pro-'Celtic' and 'Atlantic' agenda, anything written by Irish authors was 'good' literature, in spite of the fact that it was written in English, the direct cognate of Castilian in Irish nationalist culture. This seems to have been overlooked, or did not enter into the equation of their ideological selection procedure, especially when so many texts were translated in turn from French translations. However, Otero does not fail to draw upon the case of the Irish language itself when this is convenient to the cultural or political message he seeks to convey. In the early thirties Otero declares that

Sen teimar ningunha frase heroica, atendendo ao mandado da conciencia histórica, podemos asegurar ser mellor unha Galicia pobre falando galego que unha Galicia rica usando outra lingua. Esto dixo De Valera da súa Irlanda. E débese pensar tamén da

Galicia, aínda que a realidade nos ensine que para ser ricos e fortes, non hai outro camiño que o de ser cada día máis xurdiamente galegos dando ao concepto de galeguidade as notas de humanidade superior que lle son propias por natureza. (MR, 114)

Otero also elaborates on de Valera's words in his induction speech for the *Real Academia Galega*: 'a língoa tiveron por língoa d'escravos. Dixo de Valera que prefería unha probe Irlanda, labrega e escura falando gaélico a unha rica Irlanda eispresándose en inglés' (ROM, 189-190). These references and appropriations draw their inspiration from an early political speech made by de Valera in 1917, in which the Irish nationalist contended that 'my choice, freedom without the language or the language without freedom, I would far rather have the language without freedom'.<sup>55</sup> Like de Valera, Otero suggests almost naively that if there were enough collective and popular support for the native language and culture, political freedom would logically and naturally ensue. The nationalist prism through which complex economic and social problems were often viewed tended to lead to simplified proposals for their solution, as was also the case with the *Xeración Nós*' attitudes towards the relationship between modernity, economic backwardness and centralism.<sup>56</sup>

There is common and coincidental ground between the outlooks of de Valera and Otero. Their life and times coincide to within a few years. Both envisaged and promoted their own idyllic vision of a rural, Catholic republic as the national ideal. Both sought to recapture their country's past and geography, and both drew upon the connections between language, self, race and place in their nationalist endeavours.<sup>57</sup> De Valera 'exploited historical tradition to instil in the people a pride in their Irishness and a sense

---

<sup>55</sup> Quoted from M.C. Bromage, *De Valera and the March of a Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1956), 66.

<sup>56</sup> See Craig Patterson, '1929, 1965, 1976: notas oterianas para unha Galicia imaxinada', in *Actas da conferencia 'Os camiños da estirpe: a literatura galega no seu devalar'* 16-17/06/2000 (University of Birmingham, forthcoming).

<sup>57</sup> See Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London, 1995), 11-12.

of their own greatness',<sup>58</sup> a practice in which Otero the cultural nationalist historian was also engaged. In Bruree on 30 October 1955, De Valera said of language:

it is the bond that kept our people together throughout the centuries, and enabled them to resist all the efforts to make them English. It would be useful to us in that way today, when we have poured in upon us, from every direction, influences which are contrary to the traditional views and hopes of our people. The biggest thing that could be done for our people is to restore the language. If you do that the other things will be added to you...<sup>59</sup>

It is virtually impossible, without clear indications by Otero in his works, to gauge to what extent these and other statements were familiar to him and his colleagues; I believe that they were, given the interest taken in Irish politics and culture by the *Xeración Nós* on a regular basis through newspapers, journals and their own study. The tone and measure of some of de Valera's speeches are highly similar to those found in Otero's written work; this is the case even when there are obvious constraints upon artistic and intellectual expression in Galicia. De Valera's later pronouncements on language may not have been necessarily influential on Otero, but we can emphasise the similarity of their approach to the same issue, which perhaps owed itself to earlier events in Irish socio-linguistic history. De Valera and others in Ireland 'were essentially continuing the highly romanticised tradition so carefully accented by the Gaelic League'.<sup>60</sup> As we know, Otero had a sound knowledge of recent historical, political and cultural events in Ireland, and of the Gaelic League and other defenders of the national tongue. Otero's tendency is to draw attention to how the speaking of Irish had declined before the Gaelic League (an equivalent perhaps in his eyes of the *Irmandades da fala* or *Xeración Nós*) in order to

---

<sup>58</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *De Valera, The Man and the Myths* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1991), 182-183.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted from Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, 55.

warn against a similar outcome in Galicia, rather than how such a large number of people spoke Irish as a mother tongue:

antes de 1893 o vello idioma irlandés, o *erse* iba camiño d'unha morte total. Apenas era falado por medio millón dos catro de habitantes con que contaba a illa. Durante o período de O'Connell, da Xoven Irlanda, de Parnell soilo algúns homes aislados (o obispo Mac Hale entre eles) comprenderon a importancia do idioma nacional. (IRL, 16)

The date 1893 refers of course to the founding of the Gaelic League, prompted by Hyde's famous address to the Irish Literary Society in 1892 on the necessity for de-anglicising the country.<sup>61</sup> In that speech, Hyde had proposed what he considered to be practical answers to the question of how to edify the use of Irish, such as researching the history of the language in order to foment pride in its speakers, employing traditional Irish personal and place names, enjoying traditional music and games, preserving traditional Irish customs and habits of dress, and reading Irish and Anglo-Irish books.<sup>62</sup> In short, this range of activities and approach was the very sort of apolitical attempt to appeal that characterised the didactic but non-coercive 'language policy' of Otero and the *Xeración Nós*: given that these events and patterns are directly referred to by Otero, I must conclude that they are influential in his treatment of the language issue. Their condition and discourse supplements the essentially Herderian core of Otero's outlook on language and its relationship with cultural identity.

De Valera, his activities within the Irish Free State and the earlier influences of the Gaelic League enhanced in the present of the 1920's and 1930's the long-term importance that language was always going to hold (given the all-pervasive influence of German historicism) for Otero and his colleagues. As with these earlier source ideas,

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>62</sup> Janet Egleson Dunleavy & Gareth W. Dunleavy, *Douglas Hyde. A Maker of Modern Ireland* (University of California Press, 1991), 184.

political and cultural inspiration from contemporary Ireland provided a point of reference by which language could be portrayed as an ahistorical, non-negotiable aspect of Galician identity, and by which the maintenance and normalization of language could be encouraged as a necessity in the present. As Edwards points out in his linking of language, society and identity, 'the Irish revival movement was part of a larger European trend, particularly within the Celtic areas, in which romantic, nationalistic efforts were made to transform the "Celtic twilight" into the "Celtic Renaissance"'.<sup>63</sup> This was clearly Otero's intention in all spheres of his work. Following the reference to de Valera, Otero says that 'a lingua (...) ten de ser a primeira obrigación de todos. Pois co uso e cultivo cotidián chegarase axiña ao punto de unanimidade mínimo para que a galeguidade sexa a fórmula completa das arelas de todos os galegos' (MR, 113). Furthermore, his pre-War fiction allows his thoughts on the language issue to be framed in the more imaginative, more subtly persuasive context of the novel.

In *Os camiños da vida* (1928), Adrián Soutelo, a veteran of the failed Galician *levantamiento* of 1846, meets the Irish and Polish exiles, O'Bryan and Potocky, in Paris. Both characters are fictional spokesmen for expressing Otero's concern about the cultural stakes of the language-identity question:

o vasto peito de Potocky estralaba en salaios ó pensar na lingua da súa nai varrida das escolas, arrincada das imprentas, botada coma unha xerga maldizoada da cátedra sagrada. O'Bryan, os ollos griseiros perdidos nunha liña de mar e ceo, pensaba ouvir o bater das augas atlánticas nos rochedos da costa sas sagas. Os cisnes brancos da Irlanda morrían un a un nos lagos mornos; ano tras ano chegaría tempo en que os rapaces encherían a escola e o templo cantaruxando nunha lingua estraña e bronca. (CDV, 228)<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Here Otero is tapping into the huge Romantic theme of the subjugation of Poland.

However, Otero is never a fatalist or pessimist concerning this issue; he never speaks of irreversible loss and his approach is characterized predominantly by optimism, the same ebullience that generally embodies the entire outlook of the *Xeración Nós*. The Irish and Polish nationalists' resistance and faith in their cause inspires hope and cultural commitment in the Galician contingent. By speaking Gaelic, his native tongue, O'Bryan 'espertou a alma daqueles homes' (CDV, 229). In contact with them, Soutelo feels 'xurdir ceibe aquela visión da Galiza que ata entón soamente se me tiña presentado como unha néboa de rapaz' (CDV, 229). One way in which we can read this episode is that of a more imaginative portrayal of the 'awakening' effect of ideological transmission perceived by Otero and his colleagues to occur between 'Atlantic' sources and Galicia through translations, literature, historical study and current affairs. In this way, fictional Irish refugees can be substituted for de Valera and his commentaries on language and its importance for national identity.

Soutelo travels to Ireland at his friend O'Bryan's request; 'atoparáste entre parentes' (CDV, 264) the Irishman tells the Galician. What follows is a highly improbable Celtic odyssey, which changes the viewpoint of the young idealist Soutelo on Galicia, its cultural and political rebirth, and its language. Arriving in Waterford and an Ireland beset by hunger, emigration and land disputes, Soutelo tells us: 'sentín desexos de falar galego ós rapaces enlarafuzados' (CDV, 268). He falls in love with O'Bryan's sister, Edith, immerses himself in Gaelic legend and becomes aware of an emotive relationship between himself and the Irish landscape. On a symbolic level (and symbols are fundamental to nationalism), the text itself can be read as another very utopian variation of pan-Celtic nationalist literature. Soutelo's indifference disappears after

contact with Ireland and its nationalists: O'Bryan speaks only Gaelic, inducing Soutelo to speak Galician constantly from that point onwards. For this reason, later on in the narrative we are told of Soutelo that 'chamaba a atención de todos o que falara galego sempre' (CDV, 218). This subsequent contact and transferral of ideas and ideology leads Soutelo's nephew, Paio, to a life dedicated to Galicia and to the traditional 'village' values championed by Otero.<sup>65</sup> In later chapters, Soutelo places his hopes in Paio, so that, in the words of Soutelo, '[el] sexa o que eu non puideren ser' (CDV, 230). It is here that the relationship Otero formulated between the writers of the *Rexurdimento*, his own generation and the influence of historicism and the Galician language question, can be clearly assessed. Alluding to Eduardo Pondal, Soutelo tells Paio: 'a pobre Galiza, aldraxada por todos, salvaráse cando acerte a ser ergueita polas palabras dun bardo. Eu sospeito que aquel mozo, que é da terra de Bergantiños, fará algo pola nosa lingua esquencida. E sobre todo polo sentimento da patria' (CDV, 290). Here we see the reiteration of definite historicist connections between language, poetry and nationhood as factors that are mutually inclusive. This was perhaps best summarised by Fichte: 'to such a language [a living language], therefore, poetry is the highest and best means of flooding the life of all with the spiritual culture that has been attained'.<sup>66</sup> Otero echoes this historicist sentiment in both essay and fiction. The need for intellectual and creative expression in a given language in order to ensure its survival is emphasised: 'a lingua privada do amor, e das ideas dos artistas e dos pensadores desaparecera do escenario

---

<sup>65</sup> Throughout his work, Otero posited the idea of a new *fidalgúa* that would constitute a reinvigorated leadership for Galician society. One of their tasks would be to encourage the use of Galician in other sectors of Galician society: 'convencelos [ós labregos] de que teñen unha lingua digna, fermosa, rica disposta, para dicir nela tódalas cousas novas e vellas' (ACP). See Patterson, '1929, 1965, 1976: notas oterianas para unha Galicia imaxinada'.

<sup>66</sup> Fichte, *op. cit.*, 79.

aparencial da historia' (ROM, 46). He explicitly applies this to the context of Galicia and the late impact of Romanticism, listing Galician artists who have contributed to the reevaluation of language and culture after centuries of decadence: 'Pintos, Añón, Rosalía, Pondal, Curros... Os prosistas e os poetas, sobre todo os poetas en poucos anos dán o mundo a sensazón d'unha lingua trunfante' (ROM, 46). Furthermore, he reinforces this sentiment in his fiction, notably in *Arredor de si*, written directly after *Romantismo...*:

de noite, á luz dunha candeia, acompañado pola música da chuvia nos vidros, Adrián percorría un a un os poemas dos *Queixumes*. En Europa, en cuartos confortables, ó pé das rúas onde se fai a actualidade do mundo, Adrián lera os poetas novos. Non lle producían a impresión do pequeno libro esquecido na alcoba da casa vella, perdida na campía galega. Xurdía unha afirmación de raza e de lingua. (AS, 180)

Here Otero imaginatively reiterates the relationship between local, native literature specifically the optimistic and affirmative poetry of Eduardo Pondal found in *Os queixumes dos pinos* (1886) and an awareness of one's own cultural identity. After this contact with national poetry, Solovio's attitude to his own native tongue is considerably transformed: 'ó correr do inverno, Adrián falaba sempre en galego cos labregos' (AS, 180). Not only does such contact induce him to speak Galician, it also educates him as to the expressive possibilities of the language; here Otero seeks to vindicate the language after centuries of socio-political prejudice and underplay any sense of decline by associating the speaking of Galician with renewal and vitality:

algunhas veces Adrián coidaba oír un baixo latín cheo de mocidade e de futuridade. No comercio cos labregos, o esperto senso crítico de Solovio dependeu ben pronto a falsidade dunha afirmación na que el, por costume e preguiza, participara: a de ser o galego unha lingua vella, unha ruína, non doada para conter nin fecundar unha idea moderna, impropia para a Técnica e para a Filosofía por exemplo. Pois desde que Adrián falaba galego sentía todo o seu ser renovado, non tiña que loitar contra a lingua demasiado feita e traballada que lle impuña unha retórica moitas veces enxoitorada do ceibe nacer do pensamento. Na mesma indecisión había unha garantía de mocidade.

Tampouco vía a morte diaria do galego nos beizos dos paisanos que falaban castelán por influencia da cidade e da América. Era un castelán exterior e falso. Na construción da frase, no acento, na alma das verbas falaban galego disfrazado doutra cousa transitoria. (AS, 181)

The narrator's assertion that Galician is still influential in the speech patterns of natives who speak another language (Castilian) brings to mind Rousseau's observations in *Émile* (1762) of the German peasant: 'everything may have a thousand meanings to him, but each idea can only have one form, so he can only learn one language. I have heard them speak first in German, then in Latin, French, or Italian; true, they used half a dozen different vocabularies, but they always spoke German. ...they will never have but one language'.<sup>67</sup>

Otero's point of view concerning the historicist and Romantic idea of the mutual inclusivity that existed between literature and a language's survival never altered; in 1965, he comments that 'gracias ó espírito de traballo e á aición dos poetas, a língoa galega rube a unha atmósfera brillante e xa necesaria pra moitos alentares' (ALDEA, 149). Using language as a key symbol and leitmotif, this strange but key episode in the narrative centre of *Os camiños da vida* is none other than part of Otero and the *Xeración Nós*' wider plan consisting of linking the two nationalist movements of Ireland and Galicia, in order to reinforce the declared universalism of that same grouping. Similarly, later passages of *Arredor de si* that coincide with the protagonist's epiphanic recovery and affirmation of identity reiterate the relationship between local Galician heritage and historicist ideas on language. The perspective Otero advances for such a heritage is broad and long-term in nature, given the historical character he confers upon the development of Galician as a language.

---

<sup>67</sup> Rousseau, *Emile, or Education*, 73.

### *Otero's history of Galicia: a linguistic perspective*

By compiling commentaries from numerous areas of his writing, the nature and profile of Otero's chronological perspective on the history of the Galician language can be evaluated in light of the other influences explored in this chapter. Naturally, Otero strives to emphasise the place of Galicia's early linguistic heritage, describing as Celtic 'as vellas raíces da lingua anterga, cravadas eternamente na toponimia' (EH, 21). Indeed, the allusion to Galicia's supposed Celtic origins never quite recedes in Otero's work, and is Romantic in character; the character Rosalía de Castro defines 'a nosa fala' as 'mar de Ossián nas furnas do peito da nosa xente' (ROS, 58). Any notion that the Galicians were defeated at the hands of the conquering Romans, or of the preceding language cultures becoming redundant and insignificant for Galicia's historical identity in the aftermath of the Roman invasion and occupation, is similarly underplayed:

é moi fácil dicir: o latín foi suplantando ás linguas indíxenas. Un inmenso e temeroso misterio - temor de incerta orixe, lento, tenebroso e informe - enche a historia íntima de Galicia desde que foi sometida pola estratexia e pola estrada, pola experiencia e pola técnica á Paz Romana, até o momento en que os últimos vellos proferiron as últimas palabras da lingua céltica, descoñecida e non obstante presente e necesaria para deseña-la figura de Galicia no mundo. (EH, 38-39)

An organic analogy is used to reinforce this area of Otero's account in the *Ensaio histórico...*: 'en Galicia, como por toda a Iberia, agás no país vasco, as linguas antigas, as de palabras que soan ó primeiro metal traballado, foron lentamente substituídas, da mesma maneira que na paisaxe xeolóxica o mar invadindo suavemente un val o transforma en ría' (EH, 39). However, if Otero shows signs of a conventional historical perspective

here, such a perspective inevitably yields to the overriding nationalist prerogative, which has as its goal the dignifying of a minority culture. Otero makes Galicia the proactive agent of its own linguistic expression in history, where an original national consciousness expresses itself through the different languages of historical evolution: ‘mellor que dicir no latín vulgar substituíu á lingua céltica, ¿non cumpriría dicir que Galicia se expresou en latín como antes en céltico?’ (EH, 39). For Otero, ‘creóu Galiza a súa fala’ (EH, 104). This is an interpretation of socio-linguistic reality to which Otero obviously gives a great deal of credence, given that he expands upon the same concept in the same section of the *Ensaio histórico...*, this time linking the relationship between Galician cultural expression and art with that of language: ‘non debe dicirse, por exemplo: Galicia absorbida pola arte barroca, seño o xenio artístico de Galicia expresándose en barroco. E Galicia adopta o latín non pola forza do Imperio senón polo Imperio da Idea: pois fala latín a Apostolicidade cristiá’ (EH, 40). Latin is therefore not imposed by a conquering and, more importantly, imperialist army; rather, Otero presents Galicia as a historical entity ‘adopting’ Latin: ‘na selva outoniza do latín [está] o eido e a carballeira nova da fala, a que recollerá o soar da redenzón’ (SETE, 227). Behind these depictions lies the notion of *Volksgeist*, of an enduring and unalterable ‘national spirit’ that I examine in greater depth in chapter five.

Otero makes a direct comparison with those ‘Atlantic’ and fellow Celtic nations where the Roman presence was limited or non-existent, and suggests almost apologetically that as a result of these circumstances pre-Roman indigenous culture – particularly literary and linguistic – survived in a far more intact condition:

comparémo-la súa sorte coa de Irlanda, coa de Escocia, Gales e Cornualles. Nestas terras non lexislou o Tribunal do Pretor. Como non foron articuladas polo nervio das vías romanas, puideron colle-la Verdade do Evanxeo nun relicario integralmente celta. Xamais se afastaron da súa orixe e nelas segue brillando un rasto vivo da prístina conciencia histórica expresada na súa lingua primeira. O latín foi, en Irlanda, floración culta, delicada, de invernadeiro, baixo os arcos das abadías cubertos de inscricións célticas. Os monxes traducían do celta ó latín as epopeias étnicas da súa patria e o canto tribal e a lenda heroica do mar dan un fondo de perspectiva á concisa expresión latina. (EH, 40)

Therefore, in Otero's vignettes on the development of the Galician language, Latin and the language with which it interacted and inevitably merged are not discussed with the historical accuracy and objectivity we would associate with modern historiography. Instead, they are employed by a minority culture's leading nationalist intellectual to present Galicia's linguistic history in such a way that national dignity is uppermost and a national 'spirit' is the arbitrator of its destiny: 'o latín afaciase á terra galega e iniciaba a intención dunha lingua chamada a superiores destinos' (EH, 99-100). Part of that destiny was Galicia's medieval lyric, the *Cancioneiro*, 'la máxima gloria de la cultura entre el Ortegál y el Duero [que] se extendió por todos los reinos de España' (CDO, 82). Through this literary medium Galician evolved to become 'una lengua a un tiempo refinada y popular' (CDO, 111), 'unha lingua franca do lirismo e que aínda perdida seguiu poñendo o seu breve acento de emoción nas rimas castelás que procuraban intimidade, paisaxe, matiz de horas fondas sobre o campo e a alma' (EH, 149). During this period, 'a galega foi a primeira língoa moderna de Hespaña que chegou a un auto frolecer literario e nela Alfonso X «o úneco Rei Sabio que no trono de España tivo asento» como dixo Curros Enríquez, dixo o millor do seu esprito' (PUPG, 161). Otero uses the organic metaphor of 'jardín fragante' to describe this period of literary and linguistic fecundity (CDO, 112), reminding us once again of the huge intellectual debt to Herder.

Describing the centuries of decline following Galicia's literary predominance in the Middle Ages, Adrián Soutelo in *Os camiños da vida* expresses the historicist doctrine that equates loss of language with loss of identity: “hai moito que perdeu a personalidade. Pouquiño a pouco foise esquencendo da gloriosa historia doutro tempo; a lingua doce, áxil, expresiva, volvérase un patois de labregos” (CDV, 230). Given the importance placed on the notion of ‘rebirth’ and ‘awakening’ in Otero’s nationalist discourse, a great deal of his writings on the historical course of the Galician language is dedicated to the *Rexurdimento* and the emancipation of Galician in the wake of the late impact of Romanticism in Spain. After the decadence of ‘un pasado noxento e probe’ (ROM, 190), the re-emergence of Galician as a literary language is celebrated: ‘ista lingoa, forte, densa, vivente na campía frolecéu dende os meados do XIX n’unha fermosa literatura’ (ROM, 45). Its return to literary greatness is attributed largely to the poetry of Rosalía de Castro:

dio en 1863 con su libro «Cantares Gallegos» cidadanía universal poética a la lengua gallega olvidada por inciertas fatalidades desde el siglo XV, y con otro libro de poemas hondos y personalísimos «Follas Novas» alcanzó un nivel lírico quizá incomparable atienden y veneran en un Parnaso de ultratumba, Shelly y Nerval, Hölderlin y Baudelaire en las florestas poéticas de Occidente. (CDO, 134)

From here, Otero’s retrospective moves on to encompass the *Nós* epoch, and employs the same natural, organic imagery we can now fully associate with his writings on language that testify to a direct link to the philosophy of Herder:

Mail-a vida sabe agardar. Com’a sementeira dos centeos sofre o rigor das invernías. Com’as follas murchas dos carballos apeganse as ponlas aterecidas, e trunfantes das nordesias de Xaneiro, aínda recollen o pasar levián dos aires da primaveira. A lingoa baixouse rent’ô chán, fixose pequeniña e homildosa, apegada ás esenzas da terra, do terrón étneo: os paisanos. Eles com’unha capa xeolóxica viviron sobr’a entrana da terra. Labraron as leiras de sol a sol e pol-a noite acarón do lume recreaban o mundo infindo

das tradizós, vivían o universo sentido com'a presenza misteriosa e decorrente de moitedumes de almas, non perderon un chisco da súa inmorrente mitoloxía salvadora. Cando o Romantismo afondou as perspeutivas, os homes de sentimento descubríronse a sí mesmos o decatarse do seu ser galego. Neles e arredor d'eles, latexaba a ialma magoada da terra. Sentiron a un tempo door, vergonza e espranza. Estaban citados a un xuízo de conciencia. Mediron a usa tremenda responsabilidade. Os homes da cultura foran os responsabres do gran pecado. Outros homes da cultura debían, pol-o propio esforzo, redimilo. Eran poucos, febres, mozos, desprezados. (ROM, 46-47)

In true Romantic fashion, Otero idealises the Galician peasant as the repository of language and essential Galician culture during centuries of stagnation.<sup>68</sup> In this account of the stirring of the 'sleeping beauty' of Galician language and culture, a Catholic discourse of sin and redemption is applied to the description of the *Rexurdimento* writers and the members of the *Xeración Nós*.<sup>69</sup> 'O uso apaixonado e cotián da Língua' fortifies what Otero designates as 'a segunda renacencia do ser e esprito da Galiza': the *Nós* epoch (PROL, xx). This period is precisely important for Galicia because it marks a new evaluation of Galician culture, a history 'sentida e vivida dende o impeitizo o cerne galego (...) escrita na língoa fermosa, fidalga e labrega língoa dos Cancioeiros, de Pondal, de Rosalía e Castelao... a língoa nai, dos cóns e das espranzas da Europa' (PROL, xxii). Furthermore, he does distinguish between literature written by Galician authors in Castilian and Galician. Otero favours Valle-Inclán above Pardo Bazán as artists who represent Galician culture; yet he remarks that 'a verdadeira Galiza non estaba neles. Xermolaba volta a Rosalía, a Pondal, ó tema do romántico, ó devalar das formas no mito, nos mozos da Irmandade da Fala, nos poetas e artistas devoltos ó engado da fala esencial e anterga' (PROL, xx-xxi).

---

<sup>68</sup> See Patterson, '1929, 1965, 1976: notas oterianas para unha Galicia imaxinada'.

<sup>69</sup> For an extended analysis of this, see Derek Flitter, 'Icons and imperatives in the construction of Galician identity: the "Xeración Nós"', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2000), xxxvi, No. 3, 296-309.

As is the case with Otero's treatment of Nature, language is depicted as a palimpsest, an entity of pluralistic constitution; in this manner, Otero's differentialist cultural agenda can celebrate and distance, isolate and unite divisible but complementary components of the Galician language as it re-emerged in literary form during the mid- to late- nineteenth century:

unhas veces apegadiña á terra, outras vencedora dos meridianos, a lingua galega gardou a virtude mañanceira dos primeiros tempos en que foi ledamente falada. Nela a raíz latina fíxose verde, inzóuse de renovos e follatos, e a raíz céltiga, esgrevia e bruante como o mar nos penedos da costa, fíxose moderna e cristiana. Se as laxes do dolmen falan o céltigo antergo, as pedras da ponte xa marmuran un romance orixinario que andando o tempo tan axiña como as correntes do río será o verbo de Alfonso Décimo, de Camoens, de Rosalía. Un verbo que se adentra esperando no porvir do mundo de hoxe. (PONTE, 101)

The mention of Camões is not insignificant. As Quintana and Valcárcel observe, citing an article of Otero in which a peasant boy talks to his father, Otero stressed the close cultural and historical ties that bound Galician and Portuguese closely:

- Meu pai, ¿e os portugueses porque falan coma nós?
- Porque somos da mesma xente e vimos da mesma troncalidade. (VIEIROS)

However, it is hard to concur with their affirmation that 'Otero nunca asumíu unha perspectiva lusista'.<sup>70</sup> His *atlantista* sympathies and outlook as a nationalist led him to espouse, to varying degrees, greater consolidation of the affinity between Portugal and Galicia. This was far more zealous during the pre-Civil War period, when Otero suggested that 'a lingua debe voltar a ser a mesma para fortalecemento do ser transcendental da Céltiga ibérica' (MR, 114). However, Otero later revises this approach to Galician linguistic politics:

---

<sup>70</sup> Quintana and Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 96.

hai unha tendencia a xunta-lo galego có portugués. Son orixinalmente a mesma lingua, pero o galego non pode xuntarse co portugués. O galego é unha lingua per se. Din algúns que a única maneira de salva-lo galego é que falemos e escribamos como os portugueses. Non o creo. Iso sería en caso de última desesperación.<sup>71</sup>

In spite of this, Otero always appears to have visualised a ‘cultural empire’ shared by Galicia and Portugal based on linguistic and historical affinity engendered by their relationship, the acceptable alternative to imposed political imperialism. He perceives

a unanimidade da língoa espallada dende a Galiza e o Portugal hastra o Brasil. Como o poema de sombras de Teixeira acompásase co doloroso solpor da alma de Rosalía, o grande optimismo da galeguidade abrangue as esenciais criadoras de Portugal. Sen conqueridos, nin conqueridores. (ELEM, 217)

One of many antecedent expressions of this sentiment can be found in Pondal’s poem, ‘A fala’. Addressing the language directly, the poet highlights the alleged fraternal ties between Galicia and Portugal, juxtaposing the Camões and the mythical warrior patriarch, Breogán, in the same exclamation: ‘ (...) chamarás os fillos / que aló do Miño están, / os bos fillos do Luso, / apartados irmáns / de nós por un destino / envexoso e fatal. / Cos robustos acentos, / grandes, / os chamarás, / ¡verbo do gran Camoens, / fala de Breogán!’<sup>72</sup>

Otero reaches back to German historicism in order to establish the interaction between language and culture as an indispensable element of Galician identity. He adopts all of Herder’s four claims that Spencer identifies: language constitutes the culture of a given community; language serves as a medium for the transmission of culture between generations; and a common language binds diverse cultural activities and factors into a

---

<sup>71</sup> F. Ramos, ‘Unha tarde inédita con Otero Pedrayo’, *La Voz de Galicia*, 27/05/1982.

<sup>72</sup> Eduardo Pondal, ‘A fala’, *op. cit.*, 126-127 (127).

human grouping or national community, a *Volk*, a *pobo*.<sup>73</sup> By defining Galicia as language group or speech community along historicist lines, Otero announces his alignment of cultural membership with cultural self-representation, where the defence of the living language is simultaneously a defence of the values of the human group using it.<sup>74</sup> With an account of a historical tradition grounded in language Otero once again reveals his essentially historicist disposition. This long-term perspective is indicative of Otero's portrayal of the Galicians as a 'pobo', a *Volk* or nationality whose spiritual, social and political association - its 'genius' - is patent in its distinct language and the literature that this produces. In keeping with intellectual activity of a nationalist nature, Otero Pedrayo's writing is characterised by its suggestion of action, and often seeks to align readers with certain positive values. In no other aspect of his interpretation of Galician personality is this more evident than in regard to language as a *sine qua non* of identity and nationhood. In this respect, Otero both defines and prescribes. Nevertheless, in his sometimes unorthodox approach to Iberian religious history and ambivalence regarding certain areas of Catholic doctrine, Otero proves the criterion of his intellectual selection and interpretation to be far from straightforward, or predictable, as we shall see in the next chapter.

---

<sup>73</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, 107.

<sup>74</sup> John Breuilly, 'The Sources of Nationalist Ideology', in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (OUP, 1994), 103-113 (107).

## Chapter Four - Religion

The most anthropological dimension of Otero's thesis addresses the religious constituent of Galician identity. From the outset of his involvement with Galician cultural and political affairs, Otero associates the need to formulate an idea of Galician uniqueness with the religious. Paraphrasing Nikolai Berdyaev, he talks of 'a necesidade de procurar unha disciplina da alma (primeiro do home, logo da cultura), ollando para a eternidade' (NB, 54-55). These two concepts – a religious disposition and an awareness of eternity – form the basis on which Otero's world-view rests, and function as the pillars for the entirety of his work. As Carballo Calero observes, the two factors are indivisible,<sup>1</sup> and are particularly evident in the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* (1932) (in which Otero charts the relationship between Galician history, identity and religion), and in *A Romeiría de Xelmírez* (1934) (the novel based on the journey made by the bishop Xelmírez and his delegation to Rome in 1104 to petition for the granting of an archbishopric for Santiago de Compostela). These are works that will be considered in this chapter. The sources employed by Otero in his construction of a religious profile of Galician individuality are both numerous and diverse.

After going on to examine the place of polytheism and superstition in Otero's work, I will evaluate the importance of popular religious belief in Galician culture according to Otero, with particular reference to Murguía's *Galicia*, and to the pivotal importance of the Romantics' sympathy for a supposed Celtic religious identification with Nature and the incorporation of this into their aesthetic programme. Regarding Otero's original approach to pantheism as the most personal of his projections for

---

<sup>1</sup> See Carballo Calero, 'Ramón, príncipe de Aquitania', 32.

Galician identity, I will pay careful attention to his appropriation and distortion of this theologically polemical term. The issue of whether the influence of Krausism can be identified in Otero's thesis (in the form of 'panentheism') will be addressed, and I will speculate upon its possible effect on his radical variation on the pantheist theme. Other undercurrents of the Galician religious character include the legacy of Priscillianism. I intend to show how Otero's treatment of historical sources pertaining to this issue is affected by ideological and imaginative considerations, and assess the veracity of his historiographical approach through comparisons with contemporary and later studies of Priscillianism. I also highlight the debt of Otero's apologetic defence of Priscillian to Murguía's *Historia de Galicia*.

Following this analysis of the writer's portrayal of pre-Christian religious history and its significance for the cultural personality of Galicia, I will detail his account of Galicia's transition to Christianity and the establishment of the early church. Otero's outline of a historical trajectory for Galician religious identity and the consolidation of Christianity as the outward national religion are viewed through the writer's depiction of major religious figures such as St. Martin of Braga and Diego Xelmírez. Otero's conception of the vital role played by religion (and specifically Catholicism) in the evolution of Galician culture as expounded in his *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* - stems directly from Chateaubriand's defence of Christianity as the 'light of history' in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* and *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Chateaubriand, like Herder, has considerable impact on almost every aspect of Otero's explanation of Galician spirituality and religious conception of history. Indeed, Pérez Prieto with whose assessment I largely concur details brilliantly much of the common ground

between Otero and Chateaubriand.<sup>2</sup> In some instances, however, I have felt it necessary to expand upon specific issues with additional detail and comparison, in order to highlight even further the reliance by Otero on this writer of seminal importance for European cultural history.

I once again take into account affirmations of historicist ideas by thinkers such as Nikolai Berdyaev and Menéndez Pelayo in a European and local context respectively, focusing on the common ground between the latter and Otero, mainly regarding their use of binary oppositions to characterise a given nation's religious identity. Schleiermacher's expression of nascent Romantic values as a philosophy of religion and Tolstoy's evangelical Christianity are also identified as contributing ideas to the notion of 'human' Catholicism as Galicia's national faith. My analysis ends with an examination of Otero's unparalleled poetic and idealistic portrait of the religious capital of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela. I begin, however, by considering religion's place at the heart of Otero's envisaged Galician society, a faith rooted in Galician peasant culture with its popular religious affinities to Nature and origins in an earlier, supposedly Celtic heritage that is never fully eclipsed by Catholicism.

### ***Religion: the core of Galician identity***

Although Otero shows a preoccupation with the religious nature of mankind in general ('o home búscase no que ten de eterno', FIN), he reiterates throughout the entirety of his work the inherent sense of spiritual awareness possessed by the Galician, 'o delicado e formidable dramatismo da alma galega coa súa emoción creadora do mundo

---

<sup>2</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 73-74.

e do ultramundo' (EH, 243). In 1974, his approach can be seen to have remained unchanged since the pre-Civil War period:

O labrego, o home galego en xeral, o home de calquera patria que ó longo dos séculos se teña afirmado rexa e ceibemente no peirao da historia, diante do máis alá, do morrer e do infinito, leva en sí a concencia de ser algunha mañá gozoso na chea daquela luz soio coñecida polas cativas línguas, porque el leva en sí a lembranza... (GEG, 10)

He also describes how

O galego di adéus ó mundo botando fogos de artificio ou bebendo ó antigo na bodega do compadre e, aínda na troula ou na esmorga, latexa unha confianza e ofrenda a Deus ou ó esprito infindo que todo regala e todo acolle menos a cativeza e o cálculo aforrativo volto norma i ética da vida. (GEG, 15)

Religion is the social cement that binds work, family and village together to form tradition as a metaphysical unifier that ranks above materialism. Two years before his death, after witnessing numerous changes to traditional Galician ways of life, Otero still expresses his hope that the village remains 'unha comunidade de traballo e de amor, non esquecida endexamais da presenza do castro e da igrexa' (GEG, 15). In 1930, he had made further use of De Valera's rhetoric concerning the preservation and practice of native language, adapting this to comply with his own vision of an essentially rural Galician society and its transcendent sense of religion: 'entre un pobo labrego ben mantido e luxado, mais de todo materialista e pragmático, e un pobo labrego que come e vive mal, mais animado polo sentimento do inmorredoiro, calquera, todo amante de Galicia, escollería o segundo' (ADTL). Clearly, by the mid-1970s, Otero no longer expects the Galician to suffer a poor diet and lack of modern amenities in order to preserve religion's place and significance in Galician society, although he hopes that it will continue to be the major denominator of Galician identity. As always, rural society is

the primary blueprint for Otero's wider conception of Galician culture, and he certainly champions the countryside for being the bastion of esteemed religious values. The symbol of this is the peasant: 'o labrego disfruta dun mundo espiritual, en cuio alentar atopa a felicidade, que o seu sentido relixioso do mundo préstalle unha superioridade interior que os homes da cidade poden envexar' (ADTL). Culture and nationhood draw on religion as life-blood, although urbanisation has prejudiced this perennial relationship: 'a tónica dos pobos e das culturas está n-algo que se téñ desmaziado esquencido desde que a cultura foi estimada como fenómeno supremamente urbán. Está no sentimento relixioso. Na forma e no espírito de acolle-las Parolas do Evanxeo' (OA, 130). The idea that cities sap the religious sentiment of a nation and its people is an inherently Romantic one, especially present in Chateaubriand. Keith Thomas describes how, in the works of early Romanticism, the town was portrayed as a less holy place than the countryside, so that devotional literature was characterised by what the poet John Clare referred to as the 'religion of the fields': the young poet Henry Needler declared that on country walks 'my thoughts naturally take a solemn and religious turn'; the Platonist Peter Sterrey agreed that fields and groves awakened an idea of the divine; even the down-to-earth Bulstrode Whitelocke quoted 'him who the Popish authors call St Francis' to impress upon the reader that the minutest feature of Nature was a book of God announcing his power and goodness.<sup>3</sup> These sentiments reflected a more channelled consideration of Nature as an active religious agent now morally beneficial as well as beautiful; by the later eighteenth

---

<sup>3</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man And The Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England (1500-1800)* (London: Penguin, 1984), 249.

century 'the appreciation of nature, and particularly wild nature, had been converted into a sort of religious act'.<sup>4</sup>

Chateaubriand spans this evolution in religious sensibility. His influence on the Galician writer's depictions of a mainly agricultural society happy in working the land and praising God is clear and palpable, particularly in certain passages from *Le Génie du Cristianisme*, describing how 'the soul of the husbandman expands with joy under the influence of religion, as the soil which he cultivates is gladdened by the dews of heaven'.<sup>5</sup> The villagers leave their toil at the sound of the bells of the village church, to attend the rural festival.<sup>6</sup> This influence is more evident if we consider the *Mémoires d'outre tombe*. Chateaubriand describes childhood memories of a chapel service in his native Brittany:

When, in winter, at the hour of evening service, the cathedral filled with people; when old sailors on their knees and young women and children holding little candles read from their prayer books; when the multitude, at the moment of benediction, recited in unison the *Tantum ergo* (...) I experienced an extraordinary feeling of religion.<sup>7</sup>

Chateaubriand's portrait of simple religious emotion, and popular human and poetic sensibility reflected in the faith of the poor, influences the tone and atmosphere invoked by the Galician scholar, who expands upon this in his habitual descriptive fashion to elaborate upon the churchgoers' sense of piety. Also emphasised is the link between (Galician) Man and Land, between heaven and earth. Chateaubriand's influence is echoed especially in the 'extraordinary feeling of religion' experienced by Otero during a church service in the parish of Trasalba:

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 260-261.

<sup>5</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion*, 498.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 498-499.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Como endexamáis tivera sentido, sentín hoxe a grandeza da Fé. Unha pobre eirexa: laxes usadas, sinxelas arquivoltas, a espadaña madrugueira co niño da campana, paxaro calado diante o bater do vento profético das Lamentacións. O vello abade, cangado, cós seus coarenta anos de laboura parroquial ás costas, canta os oficios con voz crebada, grave e fermosa voz de outro tempo. Probes montóns de vellas e vellos, espaxeados sobre as lousas como o vento amoreira montóns de follas murchas no oco dos castiñeiros acaracochados. Pouca cousa: osos, carne, ollos cansos, febles, cor da terra comedora no vagantío da nau oscura que figura inmensa, agrandada pola dor da penitencia, conforme van morrendo unha tras outra, espaciadas, sin remedio, cumprindo os destinos, as luciñas do tenebrario, como vidas.

Pouca cousa: vellas, vellos, algunha viuda moza có loito novo, algúns nenos. Testas labouradas pola vida como os penedos polo tempo. A pía, enxoita, cega, privada da luz de ollar da auga bieita. Os altares, ledos, cós seus santiños bonitos, amados, encobertos polo velo do loito tremendo. Soio fican catro, tres, dúas chamas no tenebrario. Na derradeira quéimase a dor de todas. Tristes pábilos de fume levián. Un medo no pobo axionllado, un berro afogado nas gorxas diante o desenrolo do misterio. Morre a luciña derradeira, tremorosa. As sombras disformes galgan amodiño polos muros, encravándose na bóveda como outas fantasmas.

Sae a procesión. Fica a eirexa deserta, abraiada pola lembranza da inxusticia, desconsolada. Vai diante a cruz, o bulto da cruz enloitado. Vai unha ducia de vellos, corpos estevados ou rexos, cabezas brancas de neve ou calvas lucentes como seixos. As mans afeitadas a deitar toxeiros, maquiar pedras, guiar o arado, erguer a eixada, as máns poderosas, portan velas pequeniñas, propias de neno ou de monxa, inocentes, virxinales. O domingo levaron as ponlas de oliveiras triunfal. Hoxe treman penitentes polo pecado dos tempos. No adral o vento das serras azouta a paisaxe estremecida pola primavera: o vento raña a pel ondeante das centeeiras novas; dun salgueiral encuberto chega a nota do cuco. Polo camiño non pasa ninguén. A pobre procesión dá a volta arredor da eirexa. Preside o abade, velliño, coa alba branca de espuma. Van detrás as mulleres. Van pisando as cobas, as tampas orceladas, as sepulturas novas, terra nova que figura moldear o corpo do difunto. "Humus" - humán. Alí están os pais, as nais, os fillos. As xeneracións decorridas figuran camiñar silandeiras na pobre procesión, sin badeladas, nin foguetes, nin música, no adral esquencido, e se recoller na eirexa deserta, có istes homes e istas mulleres que figuran inocentes, transfigurados, có abade que vive da esmola, na eirexa ergueita ao ceo, no meio da ledicia dos agros, esperanza e confianza das cobas dos berces.

Arestora en todas as eirexas galegas as acochadas nas enrugadas serras xigantes, as ancoradas pé das ondas, as que presiden os ditosos vales, as das prazas urbáns e as ruas algareiras - arestora, cando no ceo de occidente comenza a parpadexar o Orión dubidoso na luz minguante do solpor, a mesma procesión leva tras da cruz enloitada xentes semellantes. Un grande consolo decorre como a man de Deus encol do misterio da natureza frolecida. A semán penitente purifica a exaltación da primavera. E nas almas, na espadaña sin voz, na pía enxoita, nos altares enloitados, na eirexa deserta, nos corazóns dooridos, aniña como un paxariño, a esperanza certa da mañán de Resurrección. (XS, 324)

This must rank amongst the finest examples of Otero's writing at its most evocative, poetic and representative of his own outlook and sensibility. Intensity and sublimity are evoked through the images of a community's simple humility and its attributed historical dimension – Otero stresses a cohesive organic grouping united in faith, generation after generation (pointing towards the other intellectual substratum of *Volksgeist*). The sublime is also elicited through light and dark imagery, in order to reinforce the notion of transcendent truth and hope that is also linked to the symbolism of springtime and its natural imagery.

It is worth drawing attention to a passage, from a contemporary work of fiction with which Otero was familiar, which owes a similar debt to Chateaubriand. This is *Chopi*, or *The Peasants*, by Wladyslaw Stanislaw Reymont (1867-1925), first published as four volumes from 1902 to 1909 and translated into all major European languages by the mid-twenties. Otero's library contains three of the four volumes translated into French, which date from 1925.<sup>8</sup> Reymont's most famous work is an epic four-part novel offering a panorama of Polish peasant life during four seasons of the year, and contains several lyrical descriptions of traditional religious ritual. A lengthy, poetic account of Sunday mass is described from the perspective of the peasant Kuba. Chateaubriand's influence is evident in the emphasis placed on the sublime trappings of the liturgy that reinforce the transcendent nature of the faith: 'stained-glass windows', 'austere saintly images', 'aureoles', 'the sweet dark maternal face of the Virgin'. The religious service prompts an outpouring of religious emotion and contrition triggered by the priest's sermon, 'so powerful that many wept tears, and many heads were bowed down in remorse'. At the end of the service, the congregation is 'tearful and lamenting, heart-

---

<sup>8</sup> Listed as L. Reymont, *Les paysans*. I. *L'automne*. II. *L'hiver*. III. *Le printemps* (Paris: Payot, 1925).

broken and contrite, imploring the mercy of God'.<sup>9</sup> As is the case with the personal recollections of Chateaubriand and Otero Pedrayo, the character Kuba feels the cathartic and extraordinary sense of religion, his soul 'full, even to bursting, of love and ecstatic bliss'.<sup>10</sup> Although more restrained, Otero's account of a similar service entails the same message of religious rapture that is enabled by the rites of the church, an idea that has *Le Génie du Christianisme* as its identifiable literary source. Although Otero is familiar with this work at first hand, Chateaubriand's influence is similarly present in Reymont's work, with which Otero is also familiar. The layered effect of influence and reference, passing directly from the identifiable, original source idea to Otero and quite plausibly reinforced by contemporary writing, is another example of the frequency of this pattern in Otero's intellectual reception.

This spiritual awareness also extends to the recognition of death as a continuation, rather than a termination: what Otero refers to as 'esa admirable posición frente da morte que temos esculpado na psicoloxía galega' (M&R 107). Death is part of Galician life and community and looked upon as a tenet of social unity that transcends any scientific, legal or materialistic bond: 'bajo la máscara de lo actual el gallego guarda la fe religiosa con la nota predominante de la creencia en la inmortalidad. Por eso la muerte no disocia las familias ni los pequeños pueblos, antes los asocia y así los entierros y conmemoraciones fúnebres se ven concurridísimos' (CDO, 147). An awareness of mortality and contemplation of the afterlife is an element of social cohesion in the rural world attuned to the land and its inexorable processes: 'a vida da familia non é soila na aldeia; queda a vida de relación desenrolada nas operacións agrícolas as mallas, as escasas, as vendimas,

---

<sup>9</sup> Ladislav Reymont, 'Autumn', *The Peasants*, (London: Jarrolds, 1938), 66.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

e no adro da eirexa' (EDA, 7). The land mirrors patterns of life and death; in this reflection lies the bond with the Galician: 'o paisano ten o sentimento da terra no sentido da sua eternidá; il morre, viran outros, sempre adscrito á gleba com'os servos, considérase com'un aicidente na vida infinita do eido' (EDA, 5). Every aspect of Galician life and society is affected by a perception of the finality of life and a consciousness of the immortal: 'pois ó ser de Galicia, desde a língua ata a arte e as formas mís sinxelas do vivir enxebre, nacen e desenrólanse enroitadas polo sentimento de inmortalidade' (LC). Consequently, the dead are regarded as part of the village community: 'n'aldea os mortos seguen empadroados cada un no seu logar' (MAC, 2). Otero identifies in Galician culture 'o comercio dos mortos cos vivos' (KOKORO, 139), and remarks how 'todos van sendo terra no adral o eido sementado de inmortalidade da parroquia' (TDP, 326).

In *Le Génie du Cristianisme*, Chateaubriand describes how the villagers 'assemble in the parish churchyard on the verdant graves of their forefathers'.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the agricultural process and Nature as metaphors for the inexorable cycle of life are juxtaposed with the images of older villagers and the cemetery: 'The people seem to hear the grain taking root in the earth and the plants growing and maturing. Amid the silence of the woods arise unknown voices, as from the choir of rural angels whose succour has been implored; and the plaintive and sweet notes of the nightingale salute the ears of the veterans, who are seated not far from the solitary tombs'.<sup>12</sup> We must also consider the possible reinforcement of these ideas by Wladyslaw Reymont in a

---

<sup>11</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 498-499.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 500.

description of a Polish peasant funeral, and the contemplation of the transience of mortal existence that this provokes:

The mysterious Latin words fell upon their hearts like clods of frost-baked earth; and as they walked on, they bowed their heads instinctively to the sounds, as men must bow to the inexorable scythe of death. Now they felt absolutely resigned to all that might come – as indifferent as those rocks they saw cropping out of the fields close by them, in their hard grey strength; or the fallows and flowery meadows, and the mighty trees which may at any time be blasted by the thunderbolt, and yet which raise their heads to Heaven boldly, with a silent song of gladsome life! (...) Thus they traversed all the village, each one so lost in serious thoughts that he felt as if alone in a boundless desert, and seeing with his mind's eye all his forefathers borne to the churchyard, visible through the great poplar trunks.<sup>13</sup>

Although more austere in tone than Chateaubriand or Reymont, Otero's lengthy depiction of a Galician religious procession seen earlier resonates with Chateaubriand's description of a funeral procession in its portrayal of religion's binding together of generations, tradition, community and work on the land. This idea abounds in Chateaubriand's prose, where the notion of resurrection is conveyed by the implied continuity of the dead in their offspring and the earthly legacy of their labour that is left behind. A funeral procession taking a husbandman to the tomb of his fathers passes 'among the yellow sheaves which he himself perhaps had cultivated', passing by the places where 'he had often sought for his oxen a protecting shade from the noontide heat', or 'taken his repast of milk and rye-bread amid the chirping of grasshoppers and the warbling of larks'. In death he is surrounded by the most pleasing monuments of his life, 'virtuous children and flourishing harvests.'<sup>14</sup> Otero portrays the remembrance of the dead and their relevance to the living as an especially Galician characteristic enhanced and enabled by contact with Nature, as is the case with Trocadero in 'O ensoñar do torrón labrego':

---

<sup>13</sup> Ladislav Reymont, 'Summer', *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 506-507.

No silencio, fóra das latricadas dos rueiros, dos enganos dos camiños, un home de cerne antigo picando cigarro, na única compañía dos penedos envolveitos en garamatadas amigas do golpe, podía enxergar as cousas de denantes as varudas destouzas, as mallas de dúas ducias apareladas, os namorados parrafeos cos fachicos acesos de ceo, os carretos espaciosos da montaña e ata parolar un pouco, con tino, non preguntando ren, non achegándose moito, con algún amigo chegado no empardecer das beiras de alén-cova... (ETL, 126).

It is unsurprising that Otero should draw so much upon Chateaubriand; quite apart from his defence of Catholicism and decisive contribution to a transition in European sensibility, Chateaubriand (a Breton) was a translator of the Ossian poems and a major interpreter of what was deemed 'Celtic' – essentially, a further sublimation of emerging Romantic values. Otero's vision of Galician religious attitudes and conceptions of mortality and the afterlife draw heavily on the Celtic revival and its Galician interpretation, to such a degree that what is perceived as the Celtic view of the relationship between life and death is also deemed to be Galician. This is regarded by Otero as a phenomenon especially characteristic of 'Northern' countries, 'las norteñas terras verdes, de bruma y cielos plomizos', to which two specific tendencies are attributed: 'los ritos y las creencias relacionadas con el 'más allá', con la Muerte, y las fiestas religiosas con peregrinación a determinados Santuarios, relacionados muchas veces en lo exterior y siempre en el fondo, con la esperanza vencedora de la muerte' (GDE, I, 132). This is also individuated as a specifically Galician feature: 'el sentido, muy agudo y despierto, de la vida de ultratumba, relacionada con la saudade, es general, aunque no se advierta a primera vista, en el carácter gallego. De ahí el amor a los Cruceros, el culto y respeto a las ánimas y otras creencias profundas y espiritualmente sutiles' (GDE, I, 135). Meditation upon the afterlife is a quality that allegedly stems from

the Celts, what Otero refers to as ‘a cosmocidade saudosa da Céltiga inmorrrente’ (HDG, 208), and is a common trait of those Celtic countries in which Otero includes Galicia as a member. ‘Nas terras céltigas, e dende logo na Galicia, o pensamento da morte envolve e encobre’ (GDE, 15), Otero claims, suggesting that ‘nos países celtas o sentimento sempre presente da morte é unha garantía do valor da inmortalidade’ (SE, 153). He also refers to ‘a morte tan amada en Galicia – en tódolos países célticos’ (EH, 129).

Consequently, for the Celt and therefore for the Galicians, ‘o cadavre siñifica pouco, a morte non é remate sinón transformaceón, as ialmas volven’ (PDA, 62). According to Otero, Galicians see death as a transition: ‘cando un cristián, un galego, cae na fosa dun deses verdescentes cementerios aldeáns – que son o mais fermoso anaco da terra de Galicia – son mans de rapaciños os que botan a terra, i esa despedida de inocencia pode inaugurar un viaxe á eternidade’.<sup>15</sup> The character A raíña Camelia in *Rosalía* states that ‘os defuntiños dos adrais (...) son o canto do pobo en camiño, a fórmula do tempo galego...’ (ROS, 41). The dead are linked by Otero to that dynamic part of the Galician character that is Celtic (‘pobo en camiño’) and to Galician notions of time: an alternative, Nature-bound conception of death as a form of resurrection, of rebirth in autumn, an endlessly repeated cycle that stems from a transcendent design most visible in Nature. Otero highlights ‘a significanza do noso outono na paisaxe e na vida’ (MR, 101), ‘a sazón do decorrer cadaneiro da Nosa Terra máis chea da presenza inmorrrente do espírito’ (PROL, v). Otero’s philosophical elaboration upon this perennial Romantic theme recalls imagery from some of the poetry of Rosalía de Castro in *En las orillas del Sar*, which is set significantly during autumn, ‘caprichoso y bello’ and is

---

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from A. Gómez Antón, *A derradeira dimensión de Otero Pedrayo* (A comisión de cultura da Diputación de Ourense, 1980), 51.

linked specifically to the earth: 'en la tumba de las muertas hojas / vieron solo esperanzas y sonrisas.'<sup>16</sup> The same imagery is employed to present the Galician outlook on death associated with the seasons:

Sintiéndose acabar con el estío  
la desahuciada enferma,  
    ¡Moriré en el otoño!  
- pensó entre melancólica y contenta,  
y sentiré rodar sobre mi tumba  
las hojas también muertas.  
Mas... ni aun la muerte complacerla quiso,  
cruel también con ella;  
perdonóle la vida en el invierno  
y cuando todo renacía en la tierra  
la mató lentamente, entre los himnos  
alegres de la hermosa primavera.<sup>17</sup>

As well as a later affirmation of Romantic aesthetics, Rosalía's poetry is also a native, and so national, expression for Otero of Galician sensibility. In his habitually eclectic manner, however, he attaches one idea to another in order to bind essentially biblical themes to the interpretation of Galician distinctiveness. In a discourse that echoes Bergson, Otero states his belief that 'a verba Morte somentes quere dicir un decrecemento da mesma cantidade de vida que na verba irmá Resurrección abrangue un raiolar confiado sen nin sequera a memoria dun instante de morte' (MR, 86). It is in the aptly titled essay 'Morte e resurrección' that Otero waxes most lyrically and revealingly about this topic:

as razas celtas aman a morte como outra vida, quizais como a exaltación suprema da vida. Non son capaces de estableceren marcos entre a vida e a morte. Os difuntos séntanse no fogar, acoden ás chamadas, aconsellan, mandan, interveñen. O cemiterio ou a lembranza dos mortos non é, nelas, obxecto ou tema de repulsión. A vida, sen quebrar o seu fío esencial, mergúllase no mar da morte e nel, como corrente espiritual, conserva a

---

<sup>16</sup> Rosalía de Castro, *En las orillas del Sar* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997), IX, 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XC, 163.

súa individualidade, porque desde os comezos do vivir que chamamos mortal, as ondas do mar da morte baten nos máis fortes e confiados promontorios, e nas praias máis dondas e agarimosas da vida. Fan a súa cultura baixo o signo da lembranza e traballan a terra para a inmortalidade. Foxen do terrón mol das veigas para esculcaren a esgrevia resistencia das rochas duras. E deste xeito proxectan un sentimento de inmortalidade na paisaxe, desfán o imperativo da morte e gardan sempre unha cultura orixinal porque remanece das forzas ceibes do espírito. (MR, 89-90)

This is an excellent example of how many strands of cultural history and influence are interwoven by Otero in order to form his own composite vision of life and death, Nature and Galician identity. Celticism mingles with Bergsonian notions of time as duration, and Chateaubriand's influence is again present. Otero draws on multiple sources, therefore, to define the Galician conception of life and death as continuity, as an inheritance from the supposedly Celtic period of its history rationalised via more recent cultural coordinates. This is tied to Nature, given that 'a relixiosidade celta precisaba un fondo celta de paisaxe' (EH, 106). Otero also evokes 'a fonda vibración da ialma céltiga, (...), o seu comercio xornaleiro ca natureza sentida como presenza de alén mundo' (NAZON, 240). The processes of Nature, of autumnal decline and springtime growth, are for the Galician an instinctive and *intuitive* - Bergson again - guarantee of life after death:

quen viva na campía galega ou quen de lonxe dela sinte a cósmica disciplina das súas sazóns, xa sabe de abondo qué pensar encol da verba morte e da verba resurrección. Cando cavilamos nelas, en galego, en celta, fóra dos libros, fóra das metódicas do pensamento *ad usum*, sentimos como elas se baleiran do senso sólido que teñen noutras linguas e noutras psicologías, cómo o seu contido espállase en fondura misteriosa na que latexan ao lonxe formas novas de vida, como non pechan o que queremos dicir con elas, e déixanse substituír polo sentimento de presencias cheas de futuridade e leviáns esquemas esperanzados cinguidos nun arco luminoso, inmorrente, coas esenciais da lembranza. (MR, 86)

Here is Otero's familiar rejection of rationalist categories for interpreting the world; instead, feeling is accentuated as the means for contemplating issues of a metaphysical

nature. As Otero affirms, ‘a nosa relixión da morte leva en si o degoiro de resucitar’.<sup>18</sup> For the Galician there is fluidity between the notions of life and death, a breaking down of the traditional distinction between these categories that Otero suggests is prevalent in some other cultures. This is an outlook which he depicts as deriving from a residual Celtic philosophy that is ingrained in the Galician mindset and explained through a reference to Nature, and is especially relevant in Autumn, the Romantics’ preferred season, when ‘os labregos ollan as costelaciós como dor do rosario do outono i apálpase no vivir da aldea unha presenza de espírito’ (OUT, 250).

Life and death constitute, then, a relationship whose origins are twofold and run parallel: that of Christianity, or the bonds of the social fabric in the present, and that of an earlier ethnic impulse linked closely to Nature. The religious sense of land worship is a Celtic attribute for the *Xeración Nós*; as Pérez Prieto points out, it is ‘o “sentimento relixioso da terra”, do que falou Risco; un sentimento que vibra en cada galego coa forza dos avós celtas. En definitiva un certo panteísmo vexetal’.<sup>19</sup> Otero adapts the idea from the Romantic identification of a sympathetic relationship with Nature with all that was regarded as Celtic. It is unsurprising, therefore, that a strong dose of paganism is accommodated within his version of religious Galician psychology.

### ***Paganism and ethnic religious identity***

It is the peasant who embodies what Otero refers to as ‘o sentir politeísta dos galegos’ (EH, 33), rooted in ‘o politeísmo celta difícil de separar da gnose prisciliana’

---

<sup>18</sup> Cosme Barreiros, *op. cit.*, 52.

<sup>19</sup> Victorino Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 86.

(EH, 94), and other remnants of Galicia's pre-Christian past which constitute 'un eco da ampla concepción do mundo, politeísta e dinámica, nunca fixada nun tempo, dos celtas galegos (...) explorando a alma popular' (EH, 33-34). The peasant represents for Otero the ethnic embodiment and guardian of the Galician bond with Nature and its religious significance for Galician culture. He equates them with 'as esenzas da terra, do terrón étnico' and sees them as maintaining 'o mundo infindo das tradizós' and their 'inmorrente mitoloxía salvadora' (ROM, 46-47). In the case of the devout and of non-believers, Otero claims that there is a metaphysical, polytheistic awareness in the Galician's spiritual personality that shapes his activities and behaviour, adding to these a dimension beyond everyday reality or secular pragmatism. The former 'experimenta a presenza misteriosa de secretos poderes, de almas amigas ou enemigas, en tódalas formas da natureza'; in the latter there remains 'unha solución de continuidade (...), un mundo de espíritos e na súa actividade non será exclusivamente movido por conveniencias prácticas' (EH, 24).

This recalls Murguía's comments in *Galicia* regarding the Galician peasant imagination, which populates cemeteries, crossroads and lonely places with benign and malign spirits: 'Crédulo y temeroso, nada de cuanto está al alcance de su vista y de su inteligencia deja de tener a sus ojos algo de misterioso al cual concede influjo eficaz sobre sus cosas y destinos'.<sup>20</sup> Otero's position is identical to that of Murguía in terms of expression. In later life, Otero concedes that modernity has diminished the Galician's essentially pagan relationship with his local environment: 'la acción constante de la educación, el mundo exterior, los progresos técnicos, han ido paulatinamente ahuyentando del alma gallega su concepción mitológica y mágica, revestida de cristiana

---

<sup>20</sup> M. Murguía, *Galicia* (Vigo: Xerais, 1982), 161-162.

esperanza' (CDO, 147). However, he also observes that 'lo mismo casi se podía sostener de cualquier viejo país de la cultura, de la vieja cultura occidental. Pero en el «casi» yace el problema. Por ser Galicia más imaginativa y lírica y hondamente preocupada por el más allá de la muerte' (CDO, 147). He thereby affirms Galicia's 'western' identity and her unique spiritual concerns that I discuss elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> Otero concludes of modernity and its effects on popular Galician beliefs, 'persevera en el fondo la misma concepción respecto de la muerte' (CDO, 147). His emphasis on this point does not change, since in the 1930's he had declared: 'aínda conserva o pobo o senso terrible e divino da morte. Da morte que as cidades modernas tratan c'un criterio d'hixiene e d'estética monicepal' (ROM, 195). He links this to the continued adherence to superstitions that is at its strongest in the countryside, in spite of modern additions to the rural infrastructure:

no se podría comprender por los más de los lectores y aficionados a temas gallegos la noche aldeana de nuestro país sin la posible aparición de la Estadea o Santa Compañía o ronda procesional de los difuntos con luces y cantos fúnebres. Algunos la han confundido con procesión de brujas, siendo muy diferente. La electrificación del campo la ha alejado. En el fondo sigue. De aquí aún en las ciudades el terror de las jóvenes campesinas a la oscuridad por el miedo de encontrarse con un difunto. (CDO, 147)

Otero underlines the importance of popular folkloric belief for an adequate understanding of Galician culture:

quen queira que tente un esquema da cultura galega non pode furtarse ó encanto das lendas inspiradoras de tradicións duradeiras na alma do pobo, de obras de arte popular e culta, de símbolos relixiosos. Estas cousas, tan suxestivas, deberían ser contadas sen perderen a súa encantadora simplicidade. (EH, 52)

His depiction of Catholicism as the faith through which Galician identity attains its plenitude in history is discussed later on in this chapter. However, older systems of

---

<sup>21</sup> See Craig Patterson, 'North and South and *The Decline of the West*: Galicia, Spengler and Otero Pedrayo', *Galician Review* 3 (2000), 52-76.

belief are also included in the patterns of Galician religious character: 'o paisano en xeneral, tén un conceuto fondamentale politeista da natureza e da vida; a súa devoción vai sempre encamiñada a fis inmediatos; rara vez chega a unha conceución da esenza da doutrina católica' (EDA, 7). He maintains a certain ambivalence as to the superior of the two systems for the *labrego*: '¿habería alguén que fose quen de valorar na alma do labrego a importancia relativa da misa e do rito céltico ?' (EH, 48). He defines these older beliefs that lie under the veneer of Catholicism as 'ese sentido relixioso do pobo que os anatemas dos bispos non poden acadar' (EH, 72). Both currents of Galician historical and religious history are important to Otero, since they play equally important roles in determining in part the uniqueness of the Galician outlook.

In addition to the long-standing sources behind Otero's inclusion of a pagan and polytheistic element in the equation of Galician identity previously discussed, there are also the contemporary influences of Synge and Spengler. J.M. Synge (1871-1909), like many of his fellow Irish contemporaries, was an enormous influence on the *Xeración Nós*; as well as being mentioned several times by Otero, one of his most well-known works, *The Aran Islands*, is present in Otero's library, in French translation.<sup>22</sup> The vivid world of peasant culture, Catholicism and superstition, folklore and fishing presented in the work is as direct a cultural cognate one could find for the *Xeración Nós* in a foreign literature already preferred on the basis of political and ideological parallels. Otero makes a direct comparison between the two cultures and their folkloric belief systems by referring to *The Aran Islands*, and also reveals his close knowledge of the work. He evokes 'o mundo poboado de fadas, com'as illas Aran de Synge' and 'espiritos que

---

<sup>22</sup> J.M. Synge, *Les îles Aran*, traduit de l'anglais par Léon Gazalgette (Paris: Rieder et Cie, 1921).

sempre preocuparon os teólogos' (ROM, 142), and describes the mythology of the world for which Synge accounts in the book.

The Irish writer recalls an elderly islander, old Máirtín, who symbolises the religious strata evident in the islanders. Catholicism often filters older beliefs ('on our way home he gave me the Catholic theory of the fairies'<sup>23</sup>), if not providing them with a thin veneer ('his old face puckered with a gleam of pagan malice').<sup>24</sup> The final stages of a funeral are described with the same observation of latent beliefs: 'before they covered the coffin an old man kneeled down by the grave and repeated a simple prayer for the dead. There was an irony in these words of atonement and Catholic belief spoken by voices that were still hoarse with the cries of pagan desperation'.<sup>25</sup> Synge later concludes that 'these people make no distinction between the natural and the supernatural'.<sup>26</sup> Spengler, whose influence here Otero clearly confirms, also attributes peasant religious sentiment to remnants of previous religions: 'the present-day piety of the peasant is older than Christianity, his gods are more ancient than those of any higher religion'.<sup>27</sup> Spengler goes on: 'his real ethic, his real metaphysics which no scholar of the city has yet thought it worth while to discover, lie outside all religious and spiritual history, have in fact no history at all'.<sup>28</sup> It is this reference to the transhistorical, rural nature of the peasant's belief system and sense of piety to which Otero refers: 'dise ser o labrego *ahistórico*, de fisionomía de pedra inmovre. Téense dito por moitos. Mais a voce de Spengler conqueriu máis estesa fondura' (SHD, 20).

---

<sup>23</sup> J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands* (London: Penguin, 1992), 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>27</sup> Oswald Spengler, *op. cit.*, II, 96.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Otero also highlights religious festivals as being emblematic of these aspects of Galician religious traits. Amongst these, that of San Martiño (or Saint Martin of Tours) is prominent, and maintains ‘un inconciente simbolismo’ (EH, 82). ‘Non é un simple rito de calendario’, says Otero of the November celebrations held in Ourense, but ‘unha festa étnica [...] caracterizada non só pola consagración relixiosa do día senón tamén por un escuro e poderoso sentimento non exento de melancólica nostalxia xa que recorda o crepúsculo dun culto antigo’ (EH, 81). The *fiesta* of San Xoán, St. John’s Eve, also serves to recall the polytheism still supposedly active in the Galician character:

a noite e a mañá de San Xoán parecen, nos campos, facernos regresar a unha época anterior á purificación de Galicia pola cruz e polo sonido catártico do bronze dos sinos. É unha noite de renovación e esperanza, resurrección do sol e da alegría. Bailando arredor das fogueiras, os perfís dos danzantes proxectan sombras de cósmico e misterioso pasado. (EH 34)

Of these customs, Murguía comments that ‘nos revelan y dan a conocer bajo su verdadero aspecto los principios religiosos de nuestros celtas. Ellas encierran el fondo doctrinal de la aún no muerta religión y dicen las fórmulas y ceremonias del pasado culto’.<sup>29</sup> Ethnicity and religion are bound together by these traditions that precede but are not negated by Christianity. Instead, there is co-existence in Galician spiritual identity. Church and pagan beliefs often related to Nature are expressed in the popular festival as an amalgam of two strands of belief, a two-tier religiousness where both components are essential to a complete sense of identity:

a ermida, pequena e sen estilo, non desentoa dos grandes cons, duros, enigmáticos, estraños, que a rodean. Son eles o eixo e motivo da festa relixiosa: é necesaria oír misa, pero tamén é preciso pasar entre dous cons máxicos que teñen a virtude de cura-la gagueira. (...). Rara é a festa que non garde polo menos un eco da fe anterior. (EH, 48)

---

<sup>29</sup> Manuel Murguía, *Galicia*, 163.

In Chapter One, I explored Otero's representation of the close relationship between the Galician, his environment and Nature. That analysis cross-references here with his description of the religious dimension of the Man-Nature relationship: 'o sentido politeísta dos galegos sentía, tanto nas noites de luar coma nas escuras, corre-lo misterioso dinamismo da natureza en mil formas fuxidías, escapando na auga das correntes, no murmuro dos bosques, na enigmática indiferencia das pedras' (EH, 95). Otero associates this awareness of religion through an awareness of Nature directly with the supposed Celtic stratum of Galicia's personality: 'tódolos aspectos misteriosos e enigmáticos da natureza estaban poboados para o celta por espíritos, da mesma maneira que hoxe están na conciencia íntima e subterránea do labrego e do mariñeiro do noso país' (EH, 33). He also evokes the image of 'o pobo labrego arrimado ó consolo do fogar da tradición traballando de sol a sol, vivindo nun mundo mitolóxico de natureza animada por espíritos' (EH, 200).

Some well-known stanzas from Rosalía de Castro's *Follas Novas* (1880) are an example of prior Galician expression of Romanticism's sympathy for polytheism:

Hai nas ribeiras verdes, hai nas risoñas praias  
e nos penedos ásperos do noso inmenso mar,  
fadas de estraño nome, de encanto non sabidos,  
que só con nós comparten seu prácido folgar.

Hai antre a sombra amante das nosas carballeiras,  
e das curtiñas frescas no vivido esplendor,  
e no romor das fontes, espritos cariñosos  
que só ós que aquí naceron lles dan falas de amor.<sup>30</sup>

Otero believed Celticism to provide a polytheistic constituent of the Galician historical, ethnic and cultural whole. The divinity revered by those supposed Celts depicted in

---

<sup>30</sup> Rosalía de Castro, 'Da Terra: ¡Calade!', *Follas Novas* (Madrid: Akal, 1994), 209.

Ossianic poetry is detectable in Nature, which links with pantheism to suggest another attribute of identity related to landscape. In MacPherson's poems, the dead are glimpsed amongst the backdrop of Nature and interact with the living. There could have been no better source material for this identification of an ethnic past with the landscape than the Ossianic poems of Macpherson or John Smith, fundamental for the subsequent identification of the Romantic with the Celtic. Moreover, Ossian is of crucial importance to the cohesive sensibility of Goethe's *Werther*. Chateaubriand also addresses this theme of prior beliefs and popular evaluations of a religious presence attributed to and harboured by Nature: 'these powerful emotions, excited by wild nature, have not ceased to exist, and the forests still retain for us their awful divinity.'<sup>31</sup>

### ***Pantheism proper and Otero's 'affectionate bond' with Nature***

The theme of paganism leads us to the theme of pantheism in Otero's work. One cannot define Otero as a pantheist whether regarding his personal attitude towards the relationship between God and Nature or the association of similar links with aspects of Galician personality - without assessing his particular interpretation (and modification) of the term. In the interview with Victor Freixanes, Otero subtly reminds us of the need to qualify 'pantheism' when it is identified with his own character:

[FREIXANES] As veces, lendo algunhas das súas páxinas, escoitándolle falar, penso se non terá vostede algo de panteísta...

[OTERO] - ¿Refírese vostede ao meu vencellamento afectivo, físico e espiritual á terra? contesta Otero . Pois claro que si. O amor á terra somente se explica cun vencellamento absoluto ca terra. Eu sinto a chegada do vran, a chegada do inverno, a primavera, no meu

---

<sup>31</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 304.

sangue denantes que nos primeiros gromos... Póñome por triste ou ledo con soio abrir as fiestras pola mañá... Podo chorar diante da natureza. Esto sábeno moi ben os campesiños. Eu sentínme sempre campesiño... A terra somos nós; vive, medra esmorece con nós e nós con ela. Neste senso, e en moitos outros, a miña nenez en Trasalba é definitiva, é o contacto co cosmos, ca noite terrible, os solpores, a chuvia e os cambios da lúa...<sup>32</sup>

Rather than an open-ended notion subject to a conventional interpretation, Otero instead defines pantheism as regards his own outlook as a love of the land, his ‘vencellamento afectivo, físico e espiritual á terra’, as a quality permitting emotional responses to Nature, and as Man’s identification with Nature and the universe. It is crucial that we note here how, when faced with the direct suggestion that he is a pantheist, Otero does not convey cultural history’s traditional interpretation of the term, that is, the problematic identification of Nature with God. I draw attention to this during the early sections of this analysis in order to avoid any confusion that may arise as to the religious nature of Otero’s discourse when describing Nature. Rather than pantheism in the accepted sense, Otero’s ‘pantheism’ is a telluric spiritualism that does not confuse creator and creation, but instead enjoys the recognition of the former in the latter. As I will demonstrate, Otero is a theist for whom Nature is a source of, or means to, religious knowledge and awareness, and the worship of God.

At this point, it is necessary to remind ourselves of Otero’s religious orientation within the recent historical context of Galician society, in order to cast greater light on the individuality of his thought regarding Galician religious identity. Before the Civil War, Otero had drifted to the traditionalist margin of the *Partido Galeguista* following its alliance with the *Frente Popular*, the left-wing Republican coalition party that sought to reduce the Church’s power in Spain in every conceivable way. Following the aftermath of 1936, Otero embodied the ethical and moral leadership of surviving *galeguismo* by

---

<sup>32</sup> V. Freixanes, *Unha Ducía de Galegos* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1976), 26.

being allocated the role of the moderate Catholic figurehead of pro-Galician affairs amply distanced from the National Catholicism of the Franco regime. Religious orthodoxy and propriety was the framework for his public standing and personal conception of Galicia and its people. It is therefore unlikely that Otero would break directly with Catholic orthodoxy in his writings, although this does not prevent him from expressing a sympathetic understanding and awareness of many heterodox aspects of Galician religious history or the history of ideas, as will be seen with the case of Priscillian.

‘Pantheism’ for Otero signifies many meanings except the most obvious: an identification of Nature, or the World, with God as one substance. The rationale behind this is not clear. Otero could have easily coined another term to describe this concept, with whose controversial aspects he is well aware as a cultural historian. However, Otero’s sensibility owes a great deal to the Romantic sources that champion the pantheistic impulse; perhaps this is the reason why he cannot refrain from using the term, even though his modification of it transforms its accepted meaning and risks misunderstanding on the reader’s part. From his statement to Freixanes, we can deduce easily that Otero is careful to define his own personal interpretation of what has always been a contentious term in cultural history. In his own words, Otero denotes pantheism as an emotional, physical and spiritual bond with the land, landscape or earth, as well as an intuitive and emotional response to the processes of Nature that is particularly associated by him with peasant culture and sensibility. This ‘pantheism’ is in close contact with the Cosmos, or the worldview of the peasantry with which Otero had been familiar in Trasalba since boyhood. It is not, as Pérez Prieto reminds us, ‘un artellamento teolóxico

que cuestione a Trascendencia',<sup>33</sup> although it is a religious phenomenon that entails metaphysical overtones, a human impulse towards Pantheism. I concur with Pérez Prieto's definition of Otero's God as 'un Deus que se manifesta maravillosamente na natureza, obra do seu amor, especialmente na terra galega, toda ela rebordante de Deus; ata o punto de que Deus parece atoparse coma mergullado nesa natureza, mais sen perder nunca a súa transcendencia para caer nun panteísmo emanentista'.<sup>34</sup> God is in Nature, but is not Nature alone; he sustains the world, but is not equalled by it. As Otero remarks, 'en la naturaleza se le descubría a cada paso una gracia y belleza de la creación' (PF, 346), and 'cada val é o vaso fermoso onde o decorrer da vida se escancia en honra do Creador' (GEG, 12). Similarly, Otero opens the *Ensaio histórico...* in the following manner:

a fiestra ábrese sobre a paisaxe tocada pola emoción do Outono e nada pode furtarse á vaga e poderosa presenza do espírito: os bosques meditativos, os primeiros centeos verdeando nos pentagramas dos longos sulcos, o tema cósmico das montañas exaltado agora polos preciosos ouros dun sol que naceu entre misteriosas neves creadoras. (EH, 9)

Otero filters the landscape through his own sensibility and conception of Galicia that are religious in character: God as a concept, therefore, precedes others and is not subordinate. This personal interpretation is projected in his assessment of the Galician human condition. Galicia is a place 'onde todo está confundido, onde precisado, a alma coa natureza, e dos poucos sitios onde o espírito se confunde coas cousas naturais, i os procesos psicolóxicos de cultura parece que van mesturados' (MAC, 52). The Galician soul is at one with Nature ('a alma coa natureza') and God's existence or presence is in the landscape ('o espírito se confunde coas cousas naturais'), but not regarded as the same entity. Otero's idiosyncratic modification of early Romanticism's pantheism is clearly

---

<sup>33</sup> Victorino Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 66-67.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

associated with Galician culture by him in one of his many digressions on Rosalía de Castro:

¿Deixábase levar Rosalía da leenda romántica nada do letreiro? Cecais aquí a contradición facíalle máis fondo o valor da Crus. Inda que “das pedras mudas” que seu “secreto gardan” rubira un feitizo estrano e letal. Son versos longos, curtados na mesma canteira dos de Hölderlin ou de Novalis. Versos como fendas longas deixando albiscar a lus do lume de Eleusis ou de Mithra do Misterio. Non temos nomeado a Hölderlin e Novalis a fume de pallas, non. Un estudo fondo do espírito de Rosalía (...) deixa entrelocir a tentazón do panteísmo, a chamada d’unha “íalma do mundo”, o esboroárese da realidade en símbolos... Tentazón ben galega. Sempre encarnizada nos espíritos sensitivos, nas maxinacións criadoras... (VTG, 58)

It is therefore on account of this intimate bond between the Galician, his religious awareness (both pagan and Christian) and his natural milieu, reflected for example in the description of a seaman, that Otero opts for the term ‘pantheism’:

o mariñeiro ama a mar onde terá calquer noite sepultura. Queira ou non sua razón d’eisistencia está ligada ôs baixos, âs furnas, ôs fondos. No día craro do inverno non hai mariñeiro nin paisaxe. Hai o panteísmo á que arelan en derradeiro examen os celtas, panteísmo, sin palabras, fondo e indiferente â filosofía e ô literatura com’o son os fachos, as rocas, o músculo que guía a proa, i-a arela de infinidade franqueada na frente salgada dos homes da mar. (ROM 120-121)

Man is at one with Nature in whose entirety a metaphysical entity is perceived instinctively; the Galicians’ daily work within Nature’s domain enhances this proximity to what is divine, although given Otero’s idiosyncratic evaluation of pantheism, the divine is not the world, but visible in and affirmed by the very world it has created. Here, many years before the Freixanes interview, Otero draws attention to an unconventional form of pantheism ‘sin palabras’, indifferent to philosophy and literature: an intuitive Galician response to Nature and its reflection of divinity of which he later talks in the 1975 interview as being one of his own personal attributes.

Having examined the connotations Otero seeks to elicit through references to pantheism, I move on to consider the probable sources for this idea. As will be shown, the influences that lead to this evaluation of pantheism are complex in their diversity and drawn from a wide array of aesthetic and philosophical positions that are associated with Romanticism.

Spinoza is the father of the idea of pantheism in modern cultural history. Although he was reclaimed by Otero's chief cultural influence (the Romantics) as a model for religious belief and enquiry, Otero rejects this area of Spinozan thought. This is perhaps because of the philosopher's 'complete and undiluted pantheism'.<sup>35</sup> Spinoza's *Ethics*, a work present in Otero's library, identifies God with Nature, *Deus sive Natura*, as a self-created single-substance that is the cause, directly or indirectly, of all things.<sup>36</sup> As Stuart Hampshire points out, Spinoza's maxim denies the possibility of a transcendent creator, distinct from his creation, which is the first principle of Judaism and of Christianity.<sup>37</sup> This does not facilitate any straightforward adoption by a Catholic scholar, especially since Spinoza's philosophy removed completely the need 'for any intermediary between God and man in the form of a church and of a priesthood',<sup>38</sup> the very pillars of Otero's rural religious ideal. As far as Otero is concerned, Galician religious sensibility is founded largely on supposed Celtic sensibility, 'a intelixencia sintetizadora e panteísta e a imaxinación creadora celta' (EH, 79), and he distances himself from Spinoza through a discussion of the Celtic appreciation of the religious presence in Nature:

---

<sup>35</sup> Russell, *op. cit.*, 554.

<sup>36</sup> Stuart Hampshire, 'Introduction', in Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (London: Penguin, 1996), vii.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

fálase moito do sentimento da natureza nos Celtas e do seu panteísmo. Mais fixando ben compriría chamarlle diversamente ao seu tratamento poético i-especulativo do mundo. Sensibilizano, dánlle unha certa vontade, dispoñen ao seu xeito as categorías esenzaes. Toda a sua loita é amor co mundo moi distante do Spinozismo centífico ou vulgar. Pol-a Saudade liberan ao mundo das suas cadeas lóxicas e realizan o miragre de vivir no fío esenzal do decorrer do esprito, en chea sobranía pol-a Libertade. (OA, 131)

Otero champions the apparent undogmatic, intuitive and dynamic religious nature of the Celts, particularly their sense of impulse and freedom (of spirit) that forms the diametrical opposite of what Spinoza himself had termed 'our cumbersome geometric order' in reference to the *Ethics*.<sup>39</sup> Otero elaborates upon these qualities in relation to Galician architecture: 'o xenio plástico, vital, orgánico e panteísta de Galicia non podería expresarse na esquemática e sintética disciplina do templo razonador, completo coma un sistema, como unha 'Summa' abstracte' (EH, 183). 'Summa' is of course a direct reference to the schematic exposition of the *Ethics*. The Spinozan God exists in the natural world but not beyond it. The existence of Otero's God is detectable in the natural world, but is not contained by it; Otero's deity is transcendent and omnipotent. His use of 'pantheism' has more to do with the Galicians' relationship with Nature that entails a religious dimension, than with immanentism. Hence his interpretation of pantheism bypasses the theological pitfalls of Spinoza's philosophy in its recourse to the Celtic myth, the common ideological mainstay of Otero and his colleagues. And in reverting to that myth, an essentially Romantic creation in cultural history, Otero is drawing on Romantic values, artists and thinkers: hence his critique of rationalism, 'o templo razonador', and of the systematic response rather than the spontaneous and spiritual. These are the sources that provide the values and aesthetic markers for what he deems as pantheist.

---

<sup>39</sup> Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, 122.

Otero's 'pantheism' did not signify a dissatisfaction with Catholicism, since Nature never constitutes a rival divinity in his work; he remains a monotheist and orthodox Catholic who shares with Chateaubriand a belief in an ontological God, and who is able to think freely before the history of ideas and enter into sympathetic dialogue with unorthodox concepts and beliefs. Nature is a catalyst for the belief in God and a reassurance of the magnanimity and benevolence of the divine, all of which are characteristics found in those sources to which Otero constantly returns. Pantheism is therefore not so much a flirtation with heterodox belief as a code word for an antecedent history of ideas that was indispensable to Otero's intellectual expression. The subjective interpretation of the term, indeed, its distortion, underlies the writer's need to maintain his own orthodoxy, whilst conveying his ideas in terms of their relationship and debt to others, such as Rousseau, the most obvious representative of 'the semi-religious devotion to wild landscape'.<sup>40</sup> 'Where do you find him existing, you will say?', Rousseau enquires in *Émile*, 'not merely in the revolving heavens, nor in the sun which gives us light, not in myself alone, but in the sheep that grazes, the bird that flies, the stone that falls, and the leaf blown by the wind'.<sup>41</sup> Rousseau's work may have fostered a rise in pantheistic fervour in European letters, but it does not view Nature as independent of God and as some sort of rival deity; instead, God is clearly visible in Nature, rather than identified as being equal to it: 'I see God everywhere in his works; I feel him within myself; I behold him all around me'.<sup>42</sup> Similar sentiments are reflected in Goethe's *Werther*, where the discourse of the sublime carries across the notion of a ubiquitous, single magnanimous

---

<sup>40</sup> Keith Thomas, *op. cit.*, 261.

<sup>41</sup> Rousseau, *Emile, or Education*, 237.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

creator. Contemplating the overwhelming natural beauty of a landscape before him, Werther is filled with a sense of religious rapture:

I felt as if I had been made a god in that overwhelming abundance, and the glorious forms of infinite Creation moved in my soul, giving it life. Immense mountains surrounded me, chasms yawned at my feet, streams swollen by rain tumbled headlong, rivers flowed below me and the forests and mountains resounded; and I could see those immeasurable and incomprehensible powers at work in the depth of the earth, and above the earth's surface, beneath the heavens, there teemed all the infinite species of Creation. [...]. From the most inaccessible of mountains, to the desert where no man has ever set foot, to the very ends of the unknown ocean, breathes the spirit of the eternal Creator, rejoicing in every speck of dust that is alive and knows Him.<sup>43</sup>

Divinity is glimpsed in Nature, rather than merely equated with it in purely pantheistic fashion. The bucolic and mystical rapture captures the religious aspect perceived in the landscape by the observer. Although Goethe was an avowed pantheist, aspects of his work such as these, quite apart from their obvious romantic appeal to Otero, also offer him acceptable portraits of Nature as a religious entity.

Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) is another writer whose pantheism in the conventional sense of cultural history is difficult to determine. Otero's predilection for the poetry of Lamartine has been well documented by critics. Nicole Dulin Bondue summarises characteristics common to both men:

Otero latía al mismo ritmo que los grandes del romanticismo francés. El recuerdo de Lamartine brotaba a menudo de sus labios, se deleitaba recitando sus versos. La biografía de Otero guardaba algún parentesco con Chateaubriand y Lamartine. Como ellos tuvo un gran cargo político. Su cuna fidalga, educación católica, hipersensibilidad frente a la naturaleza, simpatía 'ontológica' hacia temas vitales para los románticos, lo identificaba necesariamente con aquellos.<sup>44</sup>

Victorino Pérez Prieto also comments on the many similarities between the two figures, highlighting their common 'estirpe aristocrática e educación católica', 'gran amor á

---

<sup>43</sup> Goethe, *op. cit.*, 65-66.

<sup>44</sup> Dulin Bondue, *op. cit.*, II, 256.

Natureza' and 'un acento idílico e idealista' in their writings;<sup>45</sup> he also evokes their shared 'anela de Deus e unha fe no agarimo da Natureza', and similar political and social ideas.<sup>46</sup> Poems like 'Le vallon' present us with a God whose existence is confirmed in Nature's splendour, rather than a deity directly equated with the world: 'Dieu, pour le concevoir, a fait l'intelligence; / Sous la nature enfin découvre son auteur! / Une voix à l'esprit parle dans son silence, / Qui n'a pas entendu cette voix dans son coeur?'<sup>47</sup> In 'La Prière' there is a clear sense of subservience and hierarchy between Nature and the God that has created it: 'la nature (...) / S'élève au Créateur du jour et de la nuit, / Et semble offrir à Dieu, dans son brillant langage, / De la création le magnifique hommage'.<sup>48</sup> Here there is a clear sense of subservience where Nature pays homage to its creator, rather than complete pantheistic identification. From this, the observer is reassured of God's existence in the world by the magnificence of his creations in which aspects of him are reflected and his personality infused:

Et, sans avoir besoin d'entendre ta parole,  
 Je lis au front des cieux mon glorieux symbole.  
 L'étendue à mes yeux révèle ta grandeur,  
 La terre ta bonté, les astres ta splendeur.  
 Tu t'es produit toi même en ton brillant ouvrage;  
 L'univers tout entier réfléchit ton image,  
 Et mon âme à son tour réfléchit l'univers.<sup>49</sup>

Lamartine's approach to the relationship between Nature and deity, and the influence Otero derives from this, can be summarised by a line from 'Dieu', where 'le monde est

---

<sup>45</sup> Victorino Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 74.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Alphonse Lamartine, 'Le vallon', *Méditations poétiques* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 56.

<sup>48</sup> Lamartine, 'La Prière', *op. cit.*, 116.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

son image'.<sup>50</sup> Nature is rendered an absolute exemplification of divine existence and design, rather than its physical embodiment, and instils religious sentiment in the receptive observer.

Novalis attempts to synthesise the pantheistic and the Christian, and offers similar depictions of the relationship between the world, humanity and Christianity in his *Spiritual Songs*. One example is 'The Saviour': 'He is the stay; he is the sun; / Life's well that evermore will run; / From herb, stone, sea, and light's expanse / Glimmers his childish countenance'.<sup>51</sup> In his *Philosophical Writings*, Novalis expands upon this: 'only pantheistically does God appear wholly and only in pantheism is God wholly everywhere, in every individual'.<sup>52</sup> This would again appear to entail many of the connotations that Otero seeks to induce by his own assessment of pantheism as linked to Galician identity. As Hans Küng remarks concerning *Christendom in Europe*, Novalis' poetically framed ego philosophy has God as the great Ego, in whose universe every individual ego has its basis for life. The God of the universe envisaged by Novalis, his moral foundation and centre, is also the God that Otero depicts in the Galicia of his works, a God in the world, present in the self, in the conscience of each individual.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike Hegel, Schelling or Hölderlin, Otero never abandons the notion of a biblical God, nor does he attempt to fuse a pantheistic and polytheistic system with a revised sense of monotheism, a kind of syncretic monotheism that, as Küng underlines, combines the All-Embracing, the Absolute, the Divine, in whom Zeus, Yahweh, and God the Father are subsumed, while leaving behind the idea of a 'personal God' as a crude

---

<sup>50</sup> Lamartine, 'Dieu', *op. cit.*, 196.

<sup>51</sup> Novalis, *Hymns to the Night. Spiritual Songs* (trans. G. MacDonald) (London: Temple Lodge, 1992), 49.

<sup>52</sup> Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, 127.

<sup>53</sup> Hans Küng, 'Religion in the Mirror of Romantic Poetry', in Walter Jens, Hans Küng, *Literature and Religion* (trans. P. Heinegg (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 147-164 (150).

anthropomorphism.<sup>54</sup> However, he does share some of the early Romantics' zeal for making some of the rigid doctrines of Christianity more flexible, those tenets that the men of Tübingen, and Hölderlin in particular, were keen to abandon altogether.<sup>55</sup> These are co-ordinates for a reconsidered notion of pantheism and Christianity linked to Nature with which Otero is familiar, and panentheism, 'all-things-in-God', is an issue that I will return to shortly in my speculations upon the influence of Krausism.

In terms of Galician sources, Nicomedes Pastor Díaz (1811-1863) is a writer who also shapes Otero's sense of annotated pantheism. Otero regards Pastor Díaz as the epitome of Spanish Romanticism who can be lauded all the more for being Galician:

unha misteriosa y entrañable predisposición romántica en los horizontes, el carácter, la misma habla de Galicia. (...). Nada completo, rematado en planos decisivos, nada clásico. Siempre el aspirar y el recordar. (...). Por ese sentir dolorido, maravillado, insatisfecho, es un gallego, Nicomedes Pastor Díaz el más puro vate romántico, genuinamente romántico, en lengua castellana. (CDO, 132)

Furthermore, Otero sees parallels between the Galician writer and poet, and Chateaubriand (CDO, 133), basing this comparison on their common 'Celtic' and Western European qualities, and their emergence from the staid aesthetic and artistic mores of their respective countries (EH, 235). I wish to draw attention to an excerpt from a Pastor Díaz' novel, *De Villahermosa a la China*, which Otero describes as 'una prosa amplia, matizada', 'de extraña composición [que] difusa al explorar las sirtes del alma, dotada de bellísimos momentos (CDO, 133). The passage in question encapsulates perfectly not only Otero's notion of pantheism, but also his vision of the Man-Nature relationship in Galicia, which I have discussed in Chapter Two. In autumn,

---

<sup>54</sup> Küng, 'Religion as the Reconciliation of Classical Antiquity and Christianity', in *Literature and Religion*, 107-126 (113).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

parecía a Sofía que su alma tomaba parte por la primera vez de su vida en aquella fiesta de la fecundidad de la naturaleza. Por primera vez asociaba la actividad humana a la hermosura del campo; por primera vez, sin duda, su contemplación del paisaje, hasta entonces estéril, se mezclaba con la grandeza del destino del hombre, y entrelazaba la poesía de las grandes escenas con la bondad de los cuidados de la Providencia y con la recompensa de los trabajos de la vida. Era la primera vez que, al lado de la inmensidad de la creación, se le revelaba la importancia de la intervención del hombre, ministro inteligente del poder divino en la preparación de sus cuadros más bellos, en la producción de sus olores más ricos. La sensibilidad de su corazón llegaba a donde no alcanza la razón de la ciencia en las investigaciones de la cosmogonía y en las observaciones de la historia natural. Comprendió por una intuición del alma aquel sentimiento que constituye la natural dignidad y grandeza de los trabajos del campo; vio la excelsa categoría que ocupa en el orden de las criaturas el privilegiado ser, que es en el palacio de la Divinidad su único operario y casi su asociado colaborador. Su pensamiento no era todavía bastante elevado para descubrir que en el templo de la creación es también el hombre, entre todos los hijos de Dios, su único sacerdote.<sup>56</sup>

Abounding here are various *topoi* that are favoured by Otero: the Romantic apotheosis of feeling over reason, the Virgilian glorification of the labours of the field, and the portrayal of man 'shaping' and adapting Nature. One particular passage from *Las palmas del convento* echoes the above extract from Pastor Díaz:

el paisaje era el atrio del templo del Señor y aquel pequeño horizonte de densas arboledas, de pobres aldeas envueltas en el mimoso tejido de las tierras labrantías de los siervos era para Fray Benito un compendio de los temas de la amplia Galicia desde Los Ancares al mar ofrecía como himno perenne a la gloria de Dios y del Apóstol Santiago. (PDC, 47)

St. Francis of Assisi (1181/2-1226) is also clearly influential on Otero's interpretation of Nature's role in the Galician religious consciousness. Pérez Prieto identifies 'o seu amor a San Francisco, o "poverello" ó que adicou varias das súas colaboracións literarias; como o santo de Asís, Don Ramón sentía a Deus nas creaturas. Sabemos que quixo ser amortallado co seu hábito franciscano'.<sup>57</sup> St. Francis' love of nature and sense of social compassion and of the spiritual dangers of prosperity are all aspects of Otero's own

---

<sup>56</sup> Nicomedes Pastor Díaz, *De Villahermosa a la China*, in *Obras Completas*, III (Madrid, 1970). 215-216.

<sup>57</sup> Victorino Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 66.

outlook. In St. Francis writings, there is also a precursory dimension of aesthetic and philosophical concerns shared by Otero and those who influence him. As G.K. Chesterton observes, 'all those things that nobody understood before Wordsworth were familiar to St. Francis. All those things that were first discovered by Tolstoy had been taken for granted by St. Francis'.<sup>58</sup> It is St. Francis' most famous composition, the 'Canticle of Brother Sun' that informs Otero's sense of 'pantheism'. The poet-Saint describes how all Nature gives allegiance and praise to 'Most High, all-powerful, good Lord', especially 'Sir Brother Sun' and 'Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us'.<sup>59</sup> The canticle therefore praises a clearly omnipotent God, from earth to heaven, from attributes of Nature to their creator. This is one of the key influences on Otero's literary treatment of Nature and landscape, which, as Henrique Monteagudo points out, 'encaixa á perfección co sentimento franciscano e panteísta'.<sup>60</sup>

I conclude my discussion of Otero's pantheism by returning to the two most important influences on his sensibility and intellectual disposition: Chateaubriand and Herder. There are passages from the *Mémoires d'outre tombe* that bear similarity with Otero's depiction of the interaction between a religious entity, the world and with Nature, passages with which Otero was profoundly familiar.<sup>61</sup> Chateaubriand focuses on 'those leaves which fall like our years, those flowers which fade like our hours, those clouds which pass like our illusions, that light which fails like our intelligence, that sun which cools like our love, those rivers which freeze like our life have a secret connection with

---

<sup>58</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *St Francis of Assisi* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1996), 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare of Assisi, *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works*, trans. and ed.. R.J. Armstrong and I.C. Brady (London: SPCK, 1982), 38-39.

<sup>60</sup> Henrique Monteagudo, 'Introducción', in Otero Pedrayo, *A Romaría de Xelmírez*, 87-64 (30).

<sup>61</sup> In his final years, Otero recalled that 'eu de neno sabía de memoria, aínda hoxe o sei, o primeiro libro das memorias de ultratumba de Chateaubriand, que fala de Bretaña, daquel mar triste, dalques pantasma, daqueles bosques' (MAC, 42).

our destinies'.<sup>62</sup> An awareness of natural phenomena and patterns enhances the subject's proximity to Nature, an occurrence directly linked to the knowledge of mortality and death as a norm of social awareness and reality. The narrator perceives the 'moral quality', or religious nature, in the natural world that surrounds him; this invites contemplation of more metaphysical themes, the 'secret connection with our destinies', where happiness is sought on planes 'beyond the circle of human realities'.<sup>63</sup> Another extract from Chateaubriand's memoirs is decidedly Rousseau-esque in tone, and describes how the writer rests to contemplate Nature in the evening: 'I gratefully fell into that state of drowsiness which is so familiar to men who travel the world's highways; I no longer had any clear recollections; I felt as if I were living and vegetation with Nature in a kind of pantheism'.<sup>64</sup> This is another facet of the relationship I believe Otero wishes to attribute to the Galicians: in Chateaubriand's terms, it is a kind of pantheism, and not pantheism proper; a co-habitation or sense of merging with Nature based on and indivisible from a greater awareness of its creator and religious significance. As Flitter notes, Chateaubriand's response to Nature is one where natural beauty assumed emotional significance as incontrovertible evidence of the existence of the true Creator, and appeared as just one instance of the supremely poetical qualities of Catholicism.<sup>65</sup> In the fifth book of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, 'The Existence of God Demonstrated By The Wonders of Nature', Chateaubriand declares that 'there is a God. The plants of the valley and the cedars of the mountain bless his name; the insect hums his praise; the elephant salutes him with the rising day; the bird glorifies him among the foliage; the

---

<sup>62</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Memoirs of Chateaubriand*, 68-69.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>65</sup> Derek Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Literary Theory and Criticism*, 120.

lightning bespeaks his power, and the ocean declares his immensity (...), the universe his imagination made manifest'.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps Otero's pantheism is best described as a monistic pantheism that identifies a Creator and Creation whilst allowing the former to be fully identified in the latter – this would again suggest the standard influence of Herder. According to McEachran, Herder places God 'beyond' space and time, from where his power enters space and time to become the universe itself. McEachran reverts to panentheism rather than pantheism to classify this idea, where God is both immanent and transcendental, and expresses himself qualitatively throughout the whole of Nature whilst remaining, in essence, greater than Nature.<sup>67</sup> This certainly encapsulates what Otero wishes to imply by 'pantheism'; Herder and other early German Romantics are the probable source of the notion of pantheism as panentheism. However, in an Iberian context, any discussion of panentheism leads inevitably to Krausism, which was a cultural and ideological influence widely diffused amongst Spanish intellectuals by the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century.

There are many aspects of Krausist thought that might directly appeal to Otero's non-dogmatic Catholic disposition, such as 'the profound religious spirit that informs all its doctrines, its metaphysics as well as its ethics, its aesthetics as well as its philosophy of history';<sup>68</sup> furthermore, its 'reforming and humanitarian impulse that translates into a program of action',<sup>69</sup> its advocacy of Europeanisation and 'desire for social concord built on a foundation of Christian ethics'.<sup>70</sup> And as de Jongh-Rossel outlines, Krausism defined

---

<sup>66</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 139.

<sup>67</sup> F. McEachran, *The Life and Philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder*, (Oxford, 1939), 78.

<sup>68</sup> Juan López Morillas, *The Krausist Movement and Ideological Change in Spain, 1854-1874* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

itself through a defence of religious freedom, and the freedom of thought and tolerance.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in addition to the obvious Idealist antecedents also favoured by Otero, Karl Krause had adopted the Herderian idea of history as the projection in time of man's movement towards God,<sup>72</sup> an idea which, as will be shown towards the end of this chapter, Otero fully adopts, although from other sources. The later Spanish interpreter of Krause's ideas, Giner de los Ríos, also drew upon the idea of *Volkgeist*.<sup>73</sup> The enemies of Krausism in Spain had focused on its apparent immanentism; however, as López Morillas reminds us, Krause had rejected Schelling because of the pantheism professed in his works.<sup>74</sup> Instead, Krause formulated panentheism, with which Otero's portrait of a Nature-orientated religious disposition had a great deal in common.<sup>75</sup> The movement's cornerstone philosophy, rationalism, pushed its followers in a heterodox direction,<sup>76</sup> and in its quest for the perfection of man, Krausism opposed the Catholic doctrine of original sin and rejected a personified God. However, it also regarded Catholicism as a necessary force and step in humanity's progress towards a perfect religion. Otero may certainly have supported a democratic and progressive system of education, but not of the secular variety promoted by the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. Otero's liberalism and cultural formation in Madrid during the first decade of the twentieth century might point towards

---

<sup>71</sup> de Jongh-Rossel, *op. cit.*, 70.

<sup>72</sup> Juan López Morillas, *op. cit.*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> 'Giner has received from Herder and his followers, as a basic idea, the notion of the existence of a national genius, a combination of traits that give special and unmistakable form to a country's psyche' *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>75</sup> Krausist panentheism entailed '(a) that the world does not exhaust, nor even contain, God's total essence; (b) that the world occupies, in relation to God, a subordinate but not independent place, or, stated in other terms, that God freely thinks, feels, and wills the world, that God posits the world as a moment of the divine essence; (c) that what we call world is the totality of manifestations of the divine essence in time and space; and (d) that knowledge of the world is knowledge of the divine essence and its manifestations'. *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> 'El krausismo no se opuso jamás al catolicismo ortodoxo, como no se opuso a ninguna doctrina, pero que la piedra angular de esta filosofía, el racionalismo, llevó a sus seguidores a una dirección heterodoxa'. De Jongh-Rossel, *op. cit.*, 43.

Krausism as exercising an influence in the forging of an intellectual outlook. However, in his essays and articles there are only ambivalent references to the culture of Krausism and the *Institución*. Otero links Krausism, amongst many other features of a determined part of Spanish history, to ‘os síntomas da decadencia ibérica’.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, examples from Otero’s fiction can be read as rejections of Krausism in favour of a more ‘native’ Galician concept of the God-Nature-Man relationship.

There are only two critics who have attempted to link Krausism to Otero’s works. Ricardo Gullón enthuses, in regard to *Arredor de si*: ‘aquí temos que dicir que a influencia de Giner de los Ríos e da Institución Libre de Ensenanza é, para gloria de Otero Pedrayo, a que impregna ese libro desde a primeira liña ata a última. Eu (...) entendo moi ben que Otero estea constantemente intentando que o pensamento gineriano pase á súa obra’.<sup>78</sup> In the novel there are certainly many passing references to Krausism, given that one of its main early twentieth-century settings is Madrid. However, these are mostly ambivalent, and do not suggest either rejection or approval by Otero. I believe that Gullón’s reading is flawed by a lack of knowledge regarding Otero’s intellectual formation and religious sensibility, and by a failure to familiarise himself with Otero’s context and that of the strongly nationalist tendencies of the greater part of modern Galician literature. In fact, there is a clear allusion in *Arredor de si* to Krausism that can be interpreted as Otero’s rejection of it as a Madrid-based secular philosophy that was not compatible with Galician cultural needs. Wandering about Madrid without any clear spiritual aim or vocation in his life, Adrián Solovio asks himself: ‘habería aínda o

---

<sup>77</sup> ‘Pondal por natureza estrano á transitórea políteca de supreficie, a Madri [sic], ó Kraussismo [sic], á oratórea, a todol-os síntomas da decadencia ibérecica predica unha políteca xeográfica e racial’ (ROM, 186).

<sup>78</sup> R. Gullón, ‘Relacións intertextuais en *Arredor de si*’, *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX* (Santiago de Compostela: Consello da Cultura Galega, 1990), 201-214 (207).

anuncio da cátedra de Filosofía Krausista fundada por Sanz del Río?’ (AS, 67). Presently, he comes to the Plaza del Oriente, from where the Guadarrama mountain range can be seen in the distance. This was a favourite and well-known destination for Krausist schoolteachers to take parties of children as part of their reformatory approach to education. However, Solovio does not concentrate on the obvious significance of the visible; instead, he projects the inner workings of his mind onto the physical horizon and imagines his native Galician home:

aló, na ribeira galega, despois de dous días de vento do sur, aborrallouse o ceo. No aire quente figuraban medrar os brotes das cepas. ¿De onde vén este recender insospeitado na volta dun camiño? A acacia toda vestida de ouro vexetal non tiña medo das bambeadelas do vento. Xa chuvisca. Repenica nos vidros da casa do Adrián. Figura amolecer os penedos da costa e medrar o cachón do río. O mundo agardaba pola chuvia. Ben o sabía o merlo do xardín. Pois toda a noite ensaiaba scherzos e risadas, fugas e tons, baixiño, inzándoos a penas en xogo arelante. Enchía a presenza do paxaro a escuridade mollada, e calquera que andase pola noite decatárase de algo novo e latexante, como se un enorme niño se tecese nas tebras. (AS, 67-68)

There is an implicit textual and cultural message here: Krausism, represented by a instantly recognisable feature of the central Castilian landscape, has images of natural processes from Galicia superimposed upon it in Solovio’s mind’s eye, after the protagonist has considered a teaching post in Krausist philosophy. These images of springtime growth serve as narrative foreshadowing of the protagonist’s discovery of his national identity; they are also a subtle pointer as to the author’s approach to an important episode of Spanish cultural history *vis-á-vis* his nationalist commitment. It is worth pointing out that the troubled Solovio does not find equanimity by becoming a teacher of Krausist philosophy in Castile, but by returning to Galicia to live the life of a neo-*fidalgo*, at one with Nature, Galicia and himself.

Gómez Antón remarks of Krausism that ‘pode que iste senso relixioso influíse na sensibilidade de D. Ramón, pró, po-la sua “catolicidade”, deixou ise fondo “panenteístico” con que definíuse a relixiosidade de Krause’.<sup>79</sup> There can be no doubt that Otero may have been sympathetic towards the writings of Karl Krause and their subsequent Iberian adaptations through Sanz del Río and Giner de los Ríos, especially regarding their Herderian conception of man’s natural sense of religion. On the one hand, Otero would certainly share Krause’s definition of humanity as ‘la síntesis armónica de la naturaleza y el espíritu bajo la unidad absoluta de Dios’.<sup>80</sup> However, it is hard to imagine Otero the Romantic, who placed considerable emphasis on intuition and feeling, as well as on the importance of the traditional social cohesion of church, village and *pazo*, as sharing Krause’s desire to see faith and reason reconciled in a religion where reason alone suffices as a means of knowing God.<sup>81</sup> In his works there are enough ambivalent references to suggest that he certainly had been in contact with this particular philosophy, although it had little import in shaping his ideas concerning Galicia, and as I have proposed, an important textual signpost implies rejection of decisive interaction or adoption. Otero’s pantheism therefore had no need to draw on Spanish Krausism when there were far more appealing sources for such an idea in Christian Romanticism and the works of Herder. As for Otero’s Catholicism, once tied to Galician nationalism, it simply had no need to draw upon a secular, centre-based philosophy, although it was not as rigid or ultra-orthodox as to exclude a standpoint on the religion-Nature relationship that shares much common ground with pantheism, or even to prevent a dogged defence of a heretic from Galicia’s early Christian history.

---

<sup>79</sup> Gómez Antón, *op. cit.*, 80.

<sup>80</sup> Elena M. de Jongh-Rossel, *op. cit.*, 11-12.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Priscillian, priscilianismo and the religious relief of Galician culture*

Priscillian of Avila (ca. 340 – 385 A.D.) is a recurrent feature on the map of Oteran texts, and features extensively in *Ensaio sobre a cultura galega* and *Galicia: cultura de occidente*. His legacy is also addressed in fictional works, which emphasise the importance it holds for the writer. As with pantheism, a close examination of the related issue of Priscillian reveals Otero's more complex attitude to the religious composition of Galician identity than is suggested by the orthodox Catholicism of his public image and stereotyping by politically-motivated criticism.

Pérez Prieto claims that the historical veracity of Otero's ideas on Priscillian are questionable; he points out that Otero does not reach a theological judgement concerning the heretic's life and suggests that Otero probably did not read his works or the few historical sources available on Priscillian.<sup>82</sup> However, Prieto seems to be considering exclusively the *Ensaio* here, in which Otero's defence of Priscillian is passionate in its nationalist characterisation of him as a quintessentially Galician figure, 'unha poderosa individualidade, a maior se cadra que Galicia xerou e probablemente máis impresionante polo seu equívoco inicial' (EH, 61). Otero opens 'Gnose e Catolicismo', the section that deals with the Priscillian episode, with two quotations in Latin from important historical

---

<sup>82</sup> 'De feito, Otero non chega a un xuício teolóxico de Prisciliano, probablemente non coñecese a súa obra, nin lese o pouco que nos quedou del; funciona máis ben a nivel de mito, de símbolo'. Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 85.

sources,<sup>83</sup> and refers to Priscillian's writings in a manner that suggests some familiarity with at least secondary sources.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, Otero's comments in *Galicia: cultura de occidente* suggest that he had had contact with further sources since his initial and lengthy discussion of Priscillian in 1932; there is some similarity here with the dynamics of the Sarmiento influence regarding the language issue. Perhaps it was López Caneda's thesis in 1966 which analyses the accuracy and nature of the section on Priscillian in the *Ensaio histórico* - that prompted Otero to familiarise himself further with the few extant historical sources in which Priscillian features. Only sources pertaining to the last five years of Priscillian's life are extant,<sup>85</sup> and there is clear evidence to suggest that Otero made endeavours to consult either these sources or studies of them. However, his writings on this matter constantly show a propensity for blurring the lines between scant historical detail and apologetic propaganda biased towards the nationalist need to identify and extol distinct historical figures from Galicia's past. Thus, in 1974 Otero's discourse is characterised by a slightly greater degree of dispassion,<sup>86</sup> although it is not devoid of the enthusiastic and defensive zeal associated with his writings on Priscillian before 1936. Although couched in a marginally more historiographical discourse, his later writings on this theme show that he has retained many interpretations of Priscillian that other historians have put into

---

<sup>83</sup> From Priscillian's epistle in Paulus Orosius' "Commonitorium", and from a canon of the first Council of Braga.

<sup>84</sup> 'Os escritos de Prisciliano non indican un temperamento literario, indican, mellor ca iso, preparación dialéctica e agudo exercicio da arte de disputar' (EH, 63-64). Otero also refers to Priscillian's treatment by Spanish and non-Spanish intellectuals: 'o sabio doutor da unidade relixiosa española, D. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, assume perante o priscilianismo a mesma actitude de argumentación e parece sufri-la mesma inquietude dos ortodoxos do tempo de Priscilianismo' (EH, 65); 'o Dr. Paret de Tubinga é se cadra na rica literatura formada arredor do obsesivo misterioso da Europa culta, quen se acerca a el con menos prexuícios. Esforzouse, polo menos, por considerar a Prisciliano sincero. Non é pouco' (EH, 66).

<sup>85</sup> Ramón López Caneda, 'Prisciliano. Su pensamiento y su problema histórico', *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos* XVI, Santiago de Compostela, 1966, 1-201 (71).

<sup>86</sup> 'Soio quixera lembrar a orixinalidade do carácter de Priscilián', (PROL, vii).

considerable doubt. On the one hand, he discusses the lack of abundant sources concerning Priscillian's life and legacy, suggesting that 'se han conservado algunas fórmulas morales, fragmentos de himnos' (CDO, 92), and that 'existen las suficientes para trazar unas líneas esenciales', whilst reminding the reader that 'su intimismo y hasta la naturaleza de su doctrina' remain in obscurity (CDO, 91). This is clearly an elderly Otero who, rather than showing greater concern for historiographical ethics, has simply read more around the subject and is commenting on this further erudition in a work aimed not solely at a Galician audience. He reminds us of the different readings of sources concerning Priscillian's life in relation to the differing determinants of given historical epochs,<sup>87</sup> and only marginally distances himself (by a change in discourse) from the interpretations made before 1936: 'su fama se asoció por algunos a la de un precursor de la Reforma o la de un creyente en antiguos mitos celtas envueltos en interpretaciones y adaptaciones cristianas' (CDO, 92). Otero then is presenting the facts as he sees them to the reader rather than appropriating or ignoring them as part of nationalist affirmation. Whilst Otero concedes that 'su figura puede ser muy diferente de su leyenda' (CDO, 92), he still clings onto the unsubstantiated belief that Priscillian's thought derived from Druidic or Celtic roots:<sup>88</sup> 'en su doctrina, después del martirio del fundador, creció el tallo y flor embriagadora del gnosticismo. Esta explicación parece responder a la realidad. Que en aquella gnosis oriental latieron cuerdas de inspiración druídica o céltica, muy tensas y vivas en el corazón del pueblo gallego, parece acertado' (CDO, 92).

---

<sup>87</sup> 'Según los tiempos es leído y entendido de diferente modo el Cronicón de Sulpicio Severo, la información principal sobre la vida de Prisciliano. Sulpicio Severo, un autor que vivió del 360 a 425 considerado como imitador de Salustio' (CDO, 92).

<sup>88</sup> Otero shows a certain insistence on the presence of druidism in Galicia in spite of a lack of historical evidence: 'pouco importa que non haxa testemoios exactos sobre os druidas galegos, mais ninguén tampouco non negará a existencia do druidismo en Galicia. É a forma superior e a aspiración da antiga vida celta' (EH, 64). He adds: '¿non sería Prisciliano un home de formación druídica?' (EH, 64).

The use of 'parece' leads to the conclusion that Otero, although appearing to have investigated the Priscillian issue more rigorously, still maintains his belief in a Celtic connection, in spite of the fact that López Caneda has shed considerable doubt on such a link.<sup>89</sup> As Bobillo points out, the precedent in Galician literature for Priscillianism as 'conciliador y sincretista de las tradiciones celtas y las religiones orientales y neoplatónicas' was established by Murguía in his *Historia de Galicia*,<sup>90</sup> which revived interest in the obscure figure in the late nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> A more imaginative depiction that conforms with the sublimated nationalist concept of early Galician history still prevails in Otero's later commentaries on this point: 'un genial gallego (...) hace pensar en el viejo y fecundo tema clásico del druida' (CDO, 92).

The core of Otero's ideas is by no means original in its formulation: as López Caneda observes, Menéndez y Pelayo, Unamuno, Murguía, López Ferreiro and others came to similar conclusions regarding the heretic,<sup>92</sup> and Otero largely expanded from Murguía's position, given the ideological significance attached to this by Otero and other *galeguistas*.<sup>93</sup> Galician Romantics championed the figure of Priscillian as a

---

<sup>89</sup> Priscillianism is shown to have its roots in pre-Celtic rather than Neolithic religious origins; López Caneda dismisses any link with Celtic religious practices or druidism, and cites the lack of common ground between the Celts' conception of nature and that of Priscillian's asceticism, Gnosticism and Manichaeism as the strongest evidence to deny a plausible relationship: 'todo el pensamiento celta parece enlazarse con cierto concepto teosófico del mundo, suponiendo participación de la naturaleza divina en animales, plantas, fuego, etc... Debe esto tenerse en cuenta porque será uno de los argumentos más fuertes para negar la relación Prisciliano-celtismo'. López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 175.

<sup>90</sup> Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 154. *Historia de Galicia* was published in Lugo, 1865-66; A Coruña, 1888, 1891 and 1913.

<sup>91</sup> López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 102.

<sup>92</sup> Of Priscillian, Unamuno comments that 'bautizando las supersticiones célticas, trató de cristianizar a su pueblo', *Andanzas y visiones españolas* (Madrid, 1929), 69. López Caneda details the common ground between these thinkers as regards Priscillian: 'para todos ellos (...) Prisciliano representa en la historia de Galicia el deseo de resucitar y revigorizar las creencias anteriores, fundiéndolas en los elementos doctrinales de la Iglesia Católica'. López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Murguía saw Priscillian as 'una de sus [Galicia] personalidades más gloriosas' López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 165.

personification of an attempted local religion.<sup>94</sup> As Pérez Prieto concludes, from a modern perspective Murguía's ideas 'resúltannos máis poético-románticas ca científicas'.<sup>95</sup> For Murguía, Priscillianism also led to the consolidation of a high ecclesiastical hierarchy that gave cohesion to Galician religious thought.<sup>96</sup> As the reader can already appreciate, there are considerable parallels here with Otero's approach, indicating once more the relationship between Otero's historical discourse and approach, and the *Rexurdimento* historian.

Having established the history of Otero's critical line, I turn to examine the dynamics of the myth and symbolic value of Priscillian for Otero regarding Galicia's religious past and present. Otero identifies two areas in which Priscillian and his influence have helped shaped Galician religious culture: 'para unha consideración histórica da cultura galega, ofrece o priscilianismo dous temas esenciais: o dunha caracterización psicolóxica e o dunha literatura. En canto ó primeiro aspecto, puxo de releve polo menos algunhas determinantes esenciais do carácter galego' (EH, 73).

Let us first consider the 'psychological' implications for Galician culture. I concur with Pérez Prieto's evaluation here that Otero's conceives Priscillianism as a failed attempt at syncretizing older belief systems with an emerging Christianity, rather than an outright attempt to introduce new Gnostic doctrines to Galicia.<sup>97</sup> Priscillian is a decisive figure who initiated 'un movemento de adaptación da relixiosidade céltica ó mundo católico e non un ensaio de doutrinas estrañas' (EH, 62). That spirit comprises the pagan

---

<sup>94</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 81.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Murguía believed *priscilianismo* to have been positive for Galicia, 'porque provocó el ensamblamento ideológico entre un mundo que se hundía y la nueva aurora que amanecía sobre el horizonte doctrinal de la Europa occidental; porque facilitó el paso de las antiguas a las nuevas creencias; porque provocó la unificación de criterios en la alta jerarquía eclesiástica; porque dio cohesión al pensamiento religioso de Galicia'. López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 164.

<sup>97</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 84.

beliefs discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, whilst it is also disposed to Christianity and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Otero believes that ‘non hai serios motivos para non supóñermolo cristián’ (EH, 64), and claims that Priscillian, although sincerely Christian, ‘quixo adaptar Galicia e o Occidente a unha forma de cristianismo máis próximo do vello sentimento celta do mundo e do ultramundo e foi gnóstico’ (EH, 64-65). He is regarded as the first major figure in Galician religious history (‘¿Quen negará a Prisciliano, pola precedencia indiscutible, no tempo e no valor, o se-lo primeiro teólogo galego?’, EH, 76). Priscillianism is depicted as a populist, unerudite movement that promoted ‘a fe de raíz étnica’ following its leader’s death (EH, 71). What is clear from a more objective historical perspective is the fact that the heartland of Priscillianism was Galicia, where it flourished on a popular scale. Both López Caneda and Henry Chadwick concur on this point;<sup>98</sup> López Caneda singles out ‘a compenetración tan íntima de todas o al menos de la mayoría de las comunidades cristianas gallegas con el priscilianismo y con su manera de concebir la vida cristiana’,<sup>99</sup> pointing out that only in Galicia were Priscillian and his six followers considered martyrs after being executed at Trier.<sup>100</sup>

Priscillian is the earliest figure from Galician history in relation to whom Otero uses a familiar, hagiographical discourse normally reserved for later figures. ‘Foi do seu tempo e aínda máis profundamente do seu pobo’ (EH, 63), Otero says in the kind of tones and sentiments that elsewhere are applied to Rosalía de Castro, whilst he himself is aware

---

<sup>98</sup> ‘Después que Prisciliano y sus compañeros fueron desterrados o ejecutados en Tréveris, Galicia entera se proclamó priscilianista, considerando mártires a los segundos. La identificación de Galicia con el Priscilianismo fue grande en todo momento’. López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 74. Chadwick mentions how ‘Galicia has become virtually identified with the Priscillianist cause.’ Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 169.

<sup>99</sup> López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 73-74.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

of the almost incongruous nature of describing a figure from the fourth century in the language normally reserved for the writers of the *Rexurdimento* and *Nós* epochs.<sup>101</sup> Priscillian appeals to Otero as the first historically important representative of Galician distinctiveness, ‘unha voz universal, momento orixinario dun turbillón que axita ó Occidente’ (EH, 54), with whom ‘Galicia inaugura la serie de sus Hijos geniales’ (CDO, 91); ‘un oucidental concreto, cecais o primeiro europeo bon de mercado no adro inical da Edade Medea’ (PORVIR, 4). Therefore, Priscillian is yet another figure employed by Otero in order to reiterate the Western European identity of Galicia that I refer to when discussing Spengler in the following chapter.

Furthermore, the Priscillianist period is ‘o momento máis interesante pola súa forza, repercusión e simbolismo, da historia antiga de Galicia’ (EH, 59). Above all, the religious effects of Priscillianism as interpreted by Otero live on in the present, retained in the collective whole of Galician identity: ‘hoxe, coma no século IV, o fundamental da doutrina segue en silencio, recolléndose na sombra do bosque da sicoloxía galega’ (EH, 62).<sup>102</sup> Priscillianism also left an important literary legacy in Otero’s opinion, and Priscillian is portrayed in this respect as a precursor to Alfonso X: ‘rodeaban escritores y poetas al brillante evangelizador que fue canónicamente preconizado obispo de Avila’ (CDO, 92). Otero avers that ‘os escritos priscilianistas son a primeira expresión literaria do espírito galego’ (EH, 74). He is keen to draw attention to their purported wider, international influence and universal significance,<sup>103</sup> ‘su inmenso éxito desde Galicia a

---

<sup>101</sup> ‘Dirase que acentuamos por demais este galeguismo da doutrina de Prisciliano’, (EH, 73).

<sup>102</sup> Castelao shares this position: ‘O *priscilianismo* botou raíces tan fondas na alma mística de Galiza que, a pesares das pauliñas dos cregos, o noso pobo aldeán sigue sendo heterodoxo. Tivemos, pois, inclusive, unidade relixiosa con características que aínda hoxe sobreviven’. Alfonso R. Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1994), 47.

<sup>103</sup> ‘A literatura priscilianista percorreu o mundo, de Occidente a oriente. Por primeira e rara ocasión escritos galegos concitaron atención unánime’, (EH, 77).

Lusitania y la Tarraconense, y sobrevolando el Pirineo en la dulce y culta Aquitania' (CDO, 92). Parallels with the deeper aspirations of an emerging modern Galician literature are therefore evoked in order to portray Priscillianist writings as both a precursor and a model.

Otero's apologetic treatment of Priscillian is reflected in the interrogative appeals made to the reader: '¿non hai na vida e na obra de o bastante pra súa xustificación? (EH, 77); 'hai algo máis fondo e máis étnico. ¿Como explicar doutra maneira o prolongado arraigo da herexia?' (EH, 62). These appeals are also indicative of the 'loita interior' that Pérez Prieto refers to as taking place in Otero, 'entre a fidelidade e salvagarda da ortodoxia romana, e a súa simpatía, xamais ocultada, por Prisciliano'.<sup>104</sup> Otero makes it absolutely clear that the Galician tendency should be to sympathise with the heretic: 'na íntima conciencia galega, aínda na máis católica, non pode formularse unha acusación absoluta contra Prisciliano. Foi un cristián, tiña o amor de Cristo, buscou o amparo dos poderes constituídos da Igrexa' (EH, 77). Priscillian's transgression was 'unha herexía circunstancial' (EH, 71-72), 'o seu equívoco inicial' (EH, 61); Otero's defence even stretches to defend Priscillian against theological attacks regarding his supposed fathering of a child,<sup>105</sup> and depicts the core of his legacy as indestructible: 'volveu de certo, vencido, que non destruído' (EH, 72). Priscillian's knowledge of heterodox currents of thought is also defended as an attempt to ally himself with Christian orthodoxy against

---

<sup>104</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 84

<sup>105</sup> 'Prisciliano tivo, de certo, un fillo. ¡Outra tétrica circunstancia que é motivo de sospeita! Pero tamén tiveron fillos San Agostiño e Abelardo. ¡Pobres fillos sobre os que pesa a grandeza inútil da proxenitura! Sulpicio Severo insinúa que Prócula, a amante de Prisciliano, recorreu ó aborto. ¿Pero teremos que crer sempre nos dittos feroces de teólogos importunes? Nunca ningún libelo acada maior virulencia ca nas guerras teolóxicas' (EH, 68).

them; Otero claims that an ascetic form of Christianity is what really characterises the religious figure:

se demostra gran coñecemento en materia de heterodoxia e doutrinas reprobables, é para acentua-la súa reprobración, pois quere antes ca nada ser considerado un ortodoxo que presenta o seu grupo como escola de ascetas tamén aberta ós laicos. (...) Nas súas exhortacións espirituais insiste na purificación moral para que a alma sexa digno habitáculo de Cristo. (EH, 75)

This does have some historical corroboration. As Chadwick points out, according to the extant Würzburg tractates, Priscillian 'appeals to an acknowledged principle (...) when he says that we need to know about darkness that we may desire the Lord's light'.<sup>106</sup> In the latter period of Otero's life, the standpoint on Priscillian is characterised by a more informative, panoramic discourse that has no need of ideological question marks, although sympathies do remain unchanged:

en la conciencia general de las gentes cultas se le define como el primer hereje condenado y ejecutado por el «brazo secular» al servicio de la Iglesia de Roma. Se piensa en la larga historia, a veces prometeica, de las herejías, en los procesos inquisitoriales. Pero ya no bate en nuestras frentes el nordeste romántico, la Iglesia ha examinado sus profundos resortes y renace la ley del Amor vencedora de los casuismos. Debemos evocar en Prisciliano la dedicación profunda, la palabra brillante y alegórica, el singular destino. (...) Queda en el misterio su intimismo y hasta la naturaleza de su doctrina pues aún no está clara su herejía, aunque sí la de sus discípulos cuya doctrina perseveró largamente en Galicia. (CDO, 91)

Otero now recognises the scarcity of historical evidence, but again turns this to the advantage of his defence of Priscillian: whilst conceding the heretical status of his followers, Otero reiterates his belief in the ambiguous nature of Priscillian's theological transgressions. Furthermore, one particular comment made by Otero is nothing short of remarkable: 'no podríamos, tampoco lo permite nuestro saber, entrar en tentadoras críticas. Pero si recordar la opinión, aún no desterrada, de ser los restos de Prisciliano y

---

<sup>106</sup> Henry Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 97.

no los del Apóstol, los descubiertos en el Arca Marmórica en los años primeros del siglo IX' (CDO, 92). Otero was one of Galicia's foremost representatives of orthodox (but not ultramontane) Catholicism and civil ethics, as well as the great defender and interpreter of Santiago de Compostela's conventional religious and nationalist status. By drawing attention in print to the popular and subversive speculation that suggests that the cathedral did not hold the body of an apostle, but that of an obscure fourth-century religious figure executed for heresy, Otero points once again to the unconventional ideas he certainly entertained in thought behind the conventional role that he embodied (and was assigned).<sup>107</sup> His discourse and approach to this particular issue is of course cautious; however, if he himself was not fascinated and engaged with this theory, and if his religious disposition was as straightforward and rigid as has been depicted by the majority of critics, then he scarcely would have mentioned it in a text destined for a readership wider than the confines of Galicia. The mere mention of this popular myth indicated a far more complex religious reality behind Otero's public image (particularly after the Civil War), a reality that applied to him as well as to the sense of Galician identity with which his writings were preoccupied. I will return to this point when summing up at the end of this chapter.

Part of the appeal of Priscillian as an almost mythical figure resides in Otero's viewing him as an early variety of Galician *fidalgo*, 'aristócrata polo sangue e pola riqueza, é dicir, descendente dunha gran familia, xefe de clan, poderoso señor de terras e cabezas de gando' (EH, 63). Although he does consider the possibility that Priscillian was Roman, rather than native Galician (EH, 63), and admits of Priscillian's ancestry that

---

<sup>107</sup> Castelao entertains the same speculation: 'a invención do corpo do Apóstolo - ¿Prisciliano ou Santiago? - fixo da nosa Terra un centro de universalidade'. *Sempre en Galiza*, 47.

'pouco sabemos dela' (EH, 63), Otero argues in favour of Priscillian harking from exclusively Galician stock: 'en Galicia, as villas demostran a existencia de grandes propietarios. Pero home de orixe estranxeira non impresionaría tan profundamente e é natural supoñelo da aristocracia xenuína da terra' (EH, 63). Above all, Priscillian is a Romantic figure for Otero: 'a figura poderosa e melancólica - ¿por que non romántica? do decapitado de Tréveris' (EH, 77). Otero never modifies this image; in 1974, Priscillian is still described as 'un patricio' (CDO, 91), as well as 'piadosa sombra', 'promoteica figura', 'vago doctor errante y sofisticado [que] no pierde atractivo y aún conserva cierta popularidad' (CDO, 92), 'una personalidad apasionante (...) con un nombre de aureola fatal y atractiva, de enorme poder sugestivo y destino trágico' (CDO, 91). Furthermore, he is seen as an early Galician victim of centralist persecution, although in this case repression does not emanate from Castile or Madrid. Again, this perspective on Priscillian throughout Otero's works never alters: late in life Otero evokes the image of 'la sangre de un genial gallego, hijo de provincia tan lejana de Roma, manchando las columnas de la «Porta Nigra» el edificio imperial romano más proximo a la selva germánica' (CDO, 92). One centralism can easily be replaced by another when the defence of a major Galician figure is at stake:

muy pronto se levantó la reacción. Pero de las dos figuras de la Iglesia de entonces, San Martín y San Ambrosio, es decir, el apóstol de las Galias y el prelado de Milán, Padre de la Iglesia, nunca condenaron a Prisciliano la curva de cuya vida, encendida y apasionada, después de ásperas luchas teológicas y políticas, se quebró trágicamente al ser llevada su acusación ante el tribunal imperial. Ocupaba el Imperio un tirano, un hispano, Máximo. Y en Tréveris, metropoli insigne romana en los confines de la selva germánica murió decapitado en 385. (CDO, 92)

Otero narrates these events to portray Priscillian as the tragic sacrificial lamb from the provinces, a representative of ethnic religious sentiment, slaughtered on the altar of

centralist, imperialist religious and political hegemony<sup>108</sup> (Priscillian was the first and only heretic to suffer formal capital punishment from the secular arm, executed by imperial order at Trier in 385).<sup>109</sup>

Having taken a controversial approach in the *Ensaio histórico...*, it is clear that the younger Otero is guarding himself against criticisms of his apology for Priscillian. However, it also seems that the elderly Otero is no longer as concerned about these issues, and records his opinions serenely, more soberly, with the benefit of hindsight, consideration and some further erudition. López Caneda argues that Otero does not defend Priscillian with the same sectarian ardour as other apologists;<sup>110</sup> I would suggest that at times he verges upon this, hoping to gain some benefit for the cultural and religious heritage of Galicia, nation. In spite of the far more passionate and subjective appearance of Otero's defence of Priscillian in 1932, he nevertheless affirms that 'a ecumenidade de Roma era necesaria e salvadora' (EH, 69). This tendency also remains constant, and is repeated in his fiction.

The theme of Priscillian's spiritual legacy and impact on Galicia is addressed mainly in two works, both published before 1936. In *A Romaría de Xelmírez*, the young apprentice cleric Xohán da Isorna detects remnants of Priscillianism as he travels with Xelmírez through the Galician landscape: 'un silandeiro camiñar de sombras [que] lle espertaba pecadentas lembranzas dun culto antigo gardado no máis fondo quizais da alma do pobo' (XEL, 90). The resonance may be termed as sinful, but Otero counters this with the familiar suggestion of its place in the retentive collective memory of Galicia, making

---

<sup>108</sup> His position here has not changed significantly since 1932: 'para nós, hoxe, o machado de Tréveris non pretendeu decapitar a un maniqueo nin a un ocultista: quixo degola-las cabezas revivescentes da hidra panteísta'. (EH, 65).

<sup>109</sup> Henry Chadwick, *op. cit.*, vii.

<sup>110</sup> López Caneda, *op. cit.*, 168.

us question the authorial standpoint. Xelmírez also senses Priscillian's ancestral 'Celtic' presence, although Otero understandably depicts the bishop and his actions as conforming with orthodox doctrine:

un xenio, sen dúbida maligno, veu chamado polos pensamentos de Xelmírez. Medraba coma unha sombra, pasaba polo ceo, un intre figuraba escurecer a Galaxia. Unha sombra coa lonxana figuranza de home, mais sen cabeza. Un decapitado. Sentiu Xelmírez un correr de palidez na faciana. Un decapitado. Xa o tiña mirado outras veces nas carballeiras outonizas, nas beiras do mar arousán, na mesma Basílica de Compostela quizais. Xelmírez pensou na cova de Pedro, na capela de *Quo vadis?*, en Gregorio VII, e ficou tranquilo, aínda que polo fondo do seu espírito se espallaban lembranzas de pobos camiñando, das falas escoitadas de neno nas campías esmaltadas de dólmens. E Xelmírez rezaba sen chegar a sentir a mordedela do remordemento e afastou a pantasma privada de testa coma un inocente medo de rapaz. (XEL, 328)

By suggesting that Priscillian's legacy is 'without doubt' malign, the narrator reiterates the conclusive message of Otero's treatment of Priscillian and his myth in the forum of his non-fictional writings: the need for orthodox Christianity to prevail, although Otero never loses sight of the full panorama of doubts, claims and counterclaims. For example, the same allusion to the possibility of Priscillian's remains resting in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela is made. In addition, Otero allows two churchmen from Xelmírez' travelling party to voice both sides of the Priscillian divide:

Foi a noite fresqueira, percorrida por ventos, decorada de estrelas semellantes ós fogos lonxanos dos pastores nas serras. Os cóengos falaban entre eles.

- Aquí foi obispo o herexe Prisciliano - dicía un, sen pór moito acedume na frase.

Outro, alporizado, berraba:

- Si, bispo apóstata, cismático, intruso, serpe de paganía, testa de hidra luciferina...

Acendeuse a vella disputa (...). (XEL, 179)

These issues form the subject matter of 'Vidas non paralelas', first published in *Nós*, in 1930.<sup>111</sup> The short novel begins with the attendance of three brothers at their father's

---

<sup>111</sup> 'Vidas non paralelas (Novelo)', *Nós* 76 (1930), 70-76. This is a novella or very long short story, subtitled 'Novelo' presumably in jest of or solidarity with Unamunian variations on the predominant

funeral, and the narrative follows the course of their lives following this event. Joaquim Ventura is the only critic to have given this work some of the critical attention it deserves as a revealing artefact of the more complex aspects of Otero's conception of Galician religious history and identity, and his fascination with the legacy of Priscillian.<sup>112</sup> He concentrates on all three brothers and the work's significance regarding Otero's context within the *Xeración Nós* according to autobiographical texts, whereas I choose here to focus exclusively on the character of Rosende, and the light that an analysis of this character can shed on the author's treatment of Priscillianism.

Rosende, a seminarist, is touted as a great theologian of the future whose family has already made great plans for him. However, he is brought before the seminary's disciplinary body before which he presents a justification and defence of Priscillian:

O estudante levado pol-a emoción xa dicía un gran discurso. Falou da creenza céltiga aliada e santificada no cristianismo polo xenio de Prisciliano. Lembrando a traxedia de Tréveris acusaba os bispos galegos, que servos de Roma non quixeron recoñecer a verdade que o pobo escuramente sentía. A Galiza panteísta tiña seu Apóstolo no mártir decapitado, a súa consagración no primeiro sangue con que a Igrexa intolerante lixou o chán da Europa. (VIDAS, 173)

Following this heterodox interpretation of Galician religious history, Rosende unites with like-minded fellows and initiates his mission, 'algo tan grande como rexurdir a doutrina de Prisciliano para facer o verdadeiro cisma de Occidente e volverlle ó mundo celta a súa teoloxía, a súa doutrina e un poder de espírito raiolante na historia' (VIDAS, 175).

Rosende now turns his studies to the formulation of 'unha doutrina de ledó panteísmo' (VIDAS, 176) in order to present Priscillianist thought in a more sympathetic manner,

---

narrative form. Citations from this work are taken from the more recent Galaxia edition: *Narrativa Breve* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1993), 163-209.

<sup>112</sup> See Joaquim Ventura, *El Grupo Nós: autoretrat d'una generació* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidad de Barcelona, 1997), 424-429.

and to 'iniciar un apostolado', 'nada menos que refacer a Historia' (VIDAS, 175). He prays daily at the tomb in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in the belief that it is the true resting place of Priscillian, and is careful also to consider what is deemed as the 'unknown' tomb of St. James.<sup>113</sup> Gnosticism and rural Galician legends are seen as the remnants of Priscillian's life, influence and thought, 'a relixión exterior para a xente' (VIDAS, 176). Journeying home to visit his mother in the spring before a planned preaching expedition along the coast in summer, the apostate student takes every opportunity to spread the word of the outlawed doctrine: 'foi de a pé, polos atallos, falando nas portas coas vellas, escoitando vidas de santos e lendas de donas encantadas nos castros. Toda a Galiza panteísta, gnóstica, misteriosa, figuraba recibir o seu apóstolo salvador na florecente primavera' (VIDAS, 176). Rosende's efforts are not depicted, it will be noticed, as going unrewarded by a lack of popular response. However, he is ostracized by his mother for his attempts to bring about a 'Galiza redimida polo cristianismo, polo seu cristianismo' (VIDAS, 177) no longer dominated by what he refers to as 'un catolicismo romano e semítico non propio destas terras de milagre' (VIDAS, 176). This religion is linked to alleged Celtic forebears, Nature and landscape.

Finally, Rosende feels remorse for having gone against the orthodoxy of the church and, troubled by this, enters a mental institution. As an old man, he is forgiven for heresy, and ends his days in the service of the church of San Francisco in Compostela. The chapter ends in a quotation from St. Matthew, IV, 18: the account of James and John abandoning their lives as fishermen to follow Jesus. Orthodoxy frames heterodoxy as the definitive standpoint of the implicit author, in spite of a sympathetic and apologetic approach.

---

<sup>113</sup> Again, the question of the identity of the relics housed in the cathedral is addressed at length.

Through his treatment of Priscillian, Otero allows a glimpse of his more complex responses to matters associated with Galicia's religious personality than are normally perceived because of his official orthodoxy and the pervading socio-political labels that are especially the legacy of a minority culture emerging from an aggressive dictatorship and its inevitable degrees of ideological bias. Those responses are also visible in Otero's disclosures to Víctor Freixanes, and the pagan and pantheist element of Galician religious sensibility depicted in his works. In the words of Tarrío Varela, the short novel 'Vidas non paralelas' is sealed, like the entire episode of Priscillianism in Otero's works, by 'a necesaria confesionalidade católica'.<sup>114</sup> However, this does not mean that Otero's approach conforms with standard orthodoxy of the time; if anything, a contemporary treatment of the episode highlights even further the unusual combination of freethinking and nationalist bias that represents Otero's position on this occasion. Pauliño Pedret Casado, a priest and contemporary of Otero, produced a study on Priscillian in the same year as the Ourense scholar published the *Ensaio histórico...* In 'Xesús ante o priscilianismo',<sup>115</sup> Pedret Casado presents Priscillian as a Gnostic and a heretic on account of his doctrines and his position regarding the church. He concluded that Priscillianism was not a positive expression of the Galician spirit and denies the possibility of somebody finding an ethnic connection.<sup>116</sup> Such an interpretation, from the orthodox and official ranks of the Catholic Church in Galicia, could not have been further from that of Otero, supposedly the bastion of traditional Catholic *galeguista* values in dictatorship Galicia.

---

<sup>114</sup> Tarrío Varela, *Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica*, 233.

<sup>115</sup> 'Xesús ante o priscilianismo', *Logos* 28 (1933), 58-68.

<sup>116</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of this, see Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 81-82.

Priscillian appeals to Otero on a literary, religious and political plane (as a victim of a centralized tyranny). In Otero's view, Priscillian was the first *galeguista* in history, whose doctrine was a transitional phase that was syncretist in nature and which strove to embody Celtic beliefs, druidism, paganism and Christianity. Priscillian had, in Otero's view, attempted to reconcile the polytheistic, pre-Christian religions with an increasingly hegemonic and ecumenical Christianity. It was tragically misunderstood and persecuted by Rome, the Council of Saragossa, the synod at Bordeaux and the trial at Trier. Priscillian's early *galeguismo*, then, also consisted of his supposed resistance to a repressive form of centralism. His contribution to Galician religious identity was a failed attempt to mediate between the old and the new, to formulate a telluric brand of Christianity that incorporated and tolerated pre-Christian beliefs predicated on a spiritual awareness via Nature: this was assimilated by the Galician character in its historical, accumulative evolution. It was a failed conciliatory force whose impact and effect is retained within national spirituality as a hybrid of Celtic and Druidic religious practices and early Christianity, and ethnic belief system that, if not existing officially, persists in the unofficial religious psyche of the Galician people. Christianity would follow, but never extirpate the popular legacy of Priscillian, whose heterodoxy is never fully accepted by Otero. Priscillian is therefore a tragic ethnic reformer who played a decisive role in the movement of Galicia and her emerging identity towards what Otero considered to be the fulfillment of her self in Christianity.

### *Religious identity and the Christian faith – the national dimension*

Otero does not consider the transition in Galicia towards Christianity as marking a gradual break with those beliefs that he believes to be inextinguishable in the Galician people. ‘¿Quién se atrevería a poñer marcos aos dous sentimentos?’ Otero asks regarding the Celtic and the Christian influence, ‘o segundo foi a perfección do primeiro’ (SAN, 134). Christianity is depicted as superimposing itself over existing patterns and symbols of belief:

a cruz rubiu astra fincarse no castro, no outeiro sagrado e sobre a pedra máxica. Unha angustia debeu pasar nos amplos horizontes cando ela dominou os cumes prestixiosos, como o Pico Sacro, Santa Tegra, a Serra de San Mamede. Unha angustia que logo se volveu en consolo e esperanza, pois non mataba totalmente. A cruz idealizaba, erguía antigos e escuros pensamentos. (EH, 50)

In the historical context of Galician religiousness, this constitutes a pacific symbiosis of polytheism and Christianity: ‘a Galicia fondamente cristián, soubo sempre estimar e respetar o simbolismo humán e poético do mundo pagano’ (GEG, 9). Otero focuses on the figure of St. Martin of Braga (c.520-580) as the Christian ambassador sympathetic to Galicia’s recent religious past:

San Martiño sentía latexar na terra galega o murmurio, renovado como as primaveras, do politeísmo céltico difícil de separar da gnose prisciliana. (...) Coñecía a relixión dos campos e para combatela escribiu o tratado “De correctione rusticorum”, libro suxestivo pola exacta visión que presenta do estado relixioso do agro galego. “Moitos demos do estado relixioso do ceo presiden no mar, nos ríos, nas fontes ou nas selvas e fanse adorar coma deuses polos ignorantes” (EH, 94-95).

St. Martin came to Galicia with the purpose of converting the Suevi. The *De correctione rusticorum* appears to be Otero's main historical source for this period of Galicia's religious past, and he translates from the Latin to Galician as part of his profile of St. Martin of Braga's mission and Galicia's religion of the fields soon to be enveloped by the religion of Rome: 'en poucos outros testemoios [the tract of St. Martin of Braga] se traslucen a verdade da sicoloxía íntima dun pobo e máis que nada da clase campesiña ahistórica' (EH, 95). There is a third factor that Otero addresses in relation to this epoch: the Suevian invasion of 409 A.D. that complicated the religious panorama already dominated by the interaction between local paganism and Christianity:

o bárbaro e estraño paganismo dos suevos entra en violento conflito coas católicas urbes romanas e co racial credo politeísta exaltado e cuberto de ardente teoloxía por Prisciliano. (...) Tórnase máis complicada e máis aguda a loita relixiosa. Había en Galicia unha relixión local, o priscilianismo, o que non ocorría nas outras Hispanias onde polo menos os términos se simplificaban: arrianismo e catolicismo fronte a fronte. En Galicia, amais diso, outra hidra xurdía a cada intre do vago latexar celta dos campos. O apóstolo católico en ningún outro país tivo que combater en tantos frentes. Tiña que ser polemista e transigente. Dous enormes pasados céltico e xermánico renovábanse ameazadores perante el, complicados con dúas teoloxías heterodoxas - Prisciliano e Arrio - e carecía da axuda do César Católico distante e débil. (EH, 86-87)

St. Martin of Braga is the beleaguered Christian missionary beset on all sides who consolidates the ecumenical supremacy of the Christian doctrine amidst considerable difficulties: 'non só converteu ó catolicismo á fera xente sueva, senón que extirpou, no que lle foi posible, os recordos da relixión celta e da gnose priscilianista. San Martiño catequizou definitivamente a Galicia. Polo menos da maneira máis definitiva que pode ser sometido o radical panteísmo dun pobo celta' (EH, 82). Although born in Pannonia, in what is modern day Hungary, St. Martin is adopted by Otero as a Galician of historical

significance, who out of his love for Galicia and sympathy for Priscillian<sup>117</sup> 'pode considerarse un dos creadores do noso pobo' (EH, 92).<sup>118</sup> The result of St. Martin's labours was the founding of 'a estraña igrexa aberta na dura entraña dun con na paisaxe solitaria de rocas, bosques e augas' (EH, 94): an unmistakably Galician church in Otero's eyes. The sovereignty of Catholicism over other beliefs was a gradual process of adaptation and ultimately a subjugation that took place out of necessity on the surface of history. For example, in terms of the Benedictine order, Otero talks of 'la íntima relación del paisaje gallego y la religión benedictina. Es decir, unha profunda adaptación histórica del mundo rural con sus ritmadas estaciones y sus brotes de paganía a la regla benedictina' (PF, 78). The affirmation of both religions, the 'Celtic' and the Catholic, substantiate Otero's portrayal of Galicia as an 'Atlantic' and Celtic country from a deeper historical and ideological perspective. Beliefs such as those attached to the myth of San Andrés de Teixido are 'Creencias surgidas del fondo de las religiones célticas, comunes a los litorales atlánticos' (CDO, 51).

We inevitably return to Chateaubriand as the dominant influence that shaped this portrait of both the nature and necessity of the introduction of Christianity into Galicia. *Le Génie du Cristianisme* touches upon the relationship between popular devotions and sanctioned religion:

---

<sup>117</sup> St. Martin of Tours is favoured by Otero because of his protestation to Maximus against the killing of heretics and civil interventions in the matters of the church (in spite of his opposition to Priscillianism).

<sup>118</sup> Castelao, who differs markedly from Otero regarding the legacy of Xelmírez for Galicia, shares the Ourensan's enthusiasm for regarding the saint as a national figure: 'o priscilianismo, tinxido de amor á natureza, móstrase, incluso, na devoción a San Martiño (un santo que chorou a morte do noso primeiro teólogo e non soubo negar a súa amizade aos cristiáns de Galiza, que sufriron aldraxes e pauliñas de Concilios por teren seguido as doutrinas do mártir de Tréveris), e así, o día de San Martiño segue celebrándose con fogueiras no cume dos montes e dos outeiros'. A. R. Castelao, *As cruces de pedra na Galiza* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Nós, 1949), 29.

When the common people fancy that they hear the voices of the dead in the winds, when they talk of nocturnal apparitions, when they undertake pilgrimages to obtain relief from their afflictions, it is evident that these opinions are only affecting relations between certain scenes of nature, certain sacred doctrines, and the sorrows of our hearts. Hence it follows that the more of these popular devotions a religion embraces, the more poetical it must be; since poetry is founded on the emotions of the soul and the accidents of nature rendered mysterious by the intervention of religious ideas.<sup>119</sup>

Through Chateaubriand's defence of the poetic (that is, aesthetic and sublime) virtues of Catholicism, Otero sees the incorporation of popular beliefs into its fold in Galicia as an aesthetically (not to mention ideologically) attractive occurrence. Galicia as a culture and nation only reaches its plenitude under the religious aspect of Christianity, 'a purificación de Galicia pola cruz' (EH, 34). This concept pervades and underpins the narrative course of the *Ensaio histórico...*, which is littered with statements such as the following: 'no cristianismo atopou Galiza a verdadeira patria do seu espírito' (EH, 79); 'só coa cristianización atopamos unha Galicia típica e galegos de vida famosa' (EH, 47); 'Galicia empapábase ó mesmo tempo de Evanxeo e de Latín. Sen deixar de ser celta, entraba na familia dos pobos de cultura' (EH, 40). This is extended to other works; in 'Morte e Resurrección', the symbolism of the Roman cross and the Celtic dolmen is employed to portray the adaptation to Christian consciousness as the beginnings of Galicia as a recognisable national entity: 'cando a cruz latina foi coroa do dolmen estivo a Galicia criada. A cruz, na alma anterga xa debuxada como esperanza e promesa' (MR, 100). Otero expands upon this in the proud tones of Romantic, Catholic nationalism emanating from a minority culture:

[Christianity] corou de ermidas os cotos, demarcou en sazóns e días o ano das campías, plasmou as parroquias, deu tono e verba ó latín místico e á poesía popular, exaltou a cósmica simbólica das festas, fixo da Galicia das peregrinaxes unha patria no mundo

---

<sup>119</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 473.

católico, único cosmopolitismo que unha nación céltica como a nosa pode aceptar con xusto orgullo. (LC)

Christianity built upon a pre-existing ethnic faith awakens a sense of national destiny: ‘ata a predicación do Evanxelio, non chega á entraña de Galicia un senso do mundo, e somentes desde que a ermida e a cruz enraizaron no cumio do castro, Galicia descobre o seu destino’ (GSC). Otero’s religious conception of nationalist unity therefore attempts to span the best of both worlds; whilst never sidelining the emotive and romantic appeal of a sublime Celtic past, Christianity allows for a correct and consolidated sense of unity in the present: in Otero’s words, ‘a confianza do cristianismo, adormecendo no senso da inmortalidade da Resurrección que nos ha xuntar a todos os amigos nunha Galiza trasposta nas máns de Deus’ (CAS, 208). Christianity provides for Galician society and culture an acceptable uniformity that does not entail a loss of identity or compromise with external elements that diminish Galician specificity. It awakens a sense of national identity that is not insular but relativist in nature:

o cristianismo, por orixen e fin, universal, foi o grande espertador de nazionalidás prestando dinidade á aldea e o seu traballo, ao peirao humilde, espaventando as ninfas e inzando as cruces. A liña lygur vai pol-a tradizón cristiá e o romántico dos camiños de Sant-Iago a cantar na uliveira de Mistral. (OA, 128-129)

Culture as a whole and Galician culture specifically are unquestionably linked to the spiritual heritage of Christianity: ‘toda cultura é iso: saber e traballar, co senso único, vivente, da estirpe espiritual. A nosa, creadora, maxinativa, poética, foi bautismada nas fontes da libertade ceibadas polos Apóstoles de Cristo’ (PER). Christianity also shapes Otero’s view of history, which is seen as the continual spiritual movement of humanity (in the form of nations) towards union with God: ‘pensamos nos pobos como seres que viven coa esperanza da terra prometida. Proxectan no futuro unha vida ideal, a Xerusalen

celeste, a cidade de Deus que cada un soña e espera. Toda experiencia histórica redúcese a unha serie de avances e recús neste camiño' (EH, 14-15). Prior to its employment in the *Ensaio histórico...*, the motif of the 'promised land' had been used more extensively in an article of the same name in 1929 to formulate a teleological notion of Galician history:

mais aquí adquire carácter xeral o fermoso símbolo bíblico da terra prometida. El Señor mostroulle ó pobo escolleito para que nela cumprira o seu fin providencial: ser patria da Verdade salvadora. Cada pobo debe escoitar escuramente nas infindas arelas da alma colectiva, claramente determinada nas palabras dos poetas creadores, esa promesa deitada por El Señor. Unha voz moitas veces escurecida por outras voces pasaxeiras, moitas veces aldraxada no nome de falseiros cosmopolitismos (...). Hai unha terra prometida para os galegos: Galicia. Unha terra quere dicir un espírito. Un camiño polo deserto para conseguila: un campo de sacrificio e idealidades, de tódolos instantes, de tódolos homes, de tódalas enerxías. Só se pode chegar a ser universal, é dicir, triunfador no tempo, facéndose donos da terra de redención. Para que nela poida nace-la palabra da verdade. (TP)

Here there is a clear association of Christianity with the attainment of nationhood, of people with collective soul, and of poetic expression with national expression. This points once again and unequivocally to the source ideas of Herder. It also suggests a possible influence on Otero of Menéndez y Pelayo, if not some common ground between them. Santoveña Setién describes how Menéndez y Pelayo identified nationality with religions on the basis of the ideas of Herder and F.E.D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who both saw the nation as an ethnic-cultural grouping for which God had a predetermined course in history.<sup>120</sup> This furnished Menéndez y Pelayo with the motivation to identify and recover the traits of identity particular to the Spanish nation. After having proclaimed Spain's linguistic, ethnic and cultural disparity, he conceded a preferential importance to the Catholic faith.<sup>121</sup> This all sounds very familiar. However, Santoveña Setién describes

---

<sup>120</sup> Antonio Santoveña Setién, *Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, Revisión crítico-biográfica de un pensador católico* (Universidad de Cantabria, 1994), 97.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

how the assimilation of these concepts led Menéndez y Pelayo to affirm that the Spanish nation owed its existence completely to the unifying force exercised by Catholicism. As a result, Spain was presented as a chosen people and nation, destined to act as a guide to the Christian world.<sup>122</sup> This was often expressed in contradistinction to the Moorish incursions and influence, a recourse of which Otero takes full advantage in order to define Galicia's spiritual territory: 'a invasión musulmana afirmou a sustancialidade de Galicia. A xeografía e a etnia de Iberia fan prevalece-lo seu carácter: a invasión salientou a individualidade da España húmida en contraste coa España seca' (EH, 101). Otero adds that this period marks 'o espertar, titubeante, incerto, do espírito de Galicia preparándose para a espléndida mañá da época románica' (EH, 102).

Otero is fond of his binary oppositions as tools to define fully the contours of Galicia-nation, as we shall see more fully in the next chapter. Here 'humid' Spain is contrasted with 'dry' Spain in what is little more than an elaboration upon the geo-cultural extent of Moorish influence on Iberian culture, an influence that Otero is keen to play down respecting Galicia's geographical isolation and implied sense of uniqueness: 'o árabe podía transpoñer cordilleiras pero non dominar un país de montañas anárquicas e poboación dispersa xa desde séculos enraizada e cun sentido de necesidade cósmica da patria que atoparemos en tódolos momentos da súa historia' (EH, 97). Furthermore, during the *Nós* epoch, Otero attempts to confer on Galicia exactly the same mission that Menéndez y Pelayo had sought to claim for Spain – defender of Christian faith and culture:

temo-lo dereito e a ledicia de agardar que a nosa Terra sexa un fogar de Renacemento relixioso, que ela (salvadora da cultura cristiá diante o Islam), informará no catolicismo

---

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

un novo alento do vivir inmorrente da Celtia (...), para fabrica-la barca mística que faga a nova descuberta dos camiños eternos que levan a Deus. (PORVIR)

The cultural antecedents of this idea stretch back beyond Menéndez y Pelayo, who is clearly voicing the Romantic idealisation of medieval Spain as a Christian bastion against the infidel.<sup>123</sup> His thought was appropriated and distorted by right-wing groups during the Second Republic and by the Franco regime.<sup>124</sup> But that does not disqualify the possibility of his influence on Otero, who had found himself on the fringe of the *Partido Galeguista* during the mid-thirties precisely because of his defence of Catholicism as a prerequisite not only of Galician national identity, but of Spanish national identity also. Catholicism's place at the forefront of Menéndez y Pelayo's Spanish nationalist outlook ensured some shared ideology with Otero where reaction and dogma did not intrude, and given the passing references to Menéndez y Pelayo in Otero's work, it is more than probable that Otero was familiar with the source texts of the historian, whom he defines as 'o sabio doutor da unidade relixiosa española' (EH, 65). As I argue elsewhere, during the mid-fifties Otero did not restrict his defence of 'Western' values to Galicia, but applied these also to Spain in its entirety.<sup>125</sup> His Galician nationalist status was not absolute when the prime factors of his own identity, Catholicism and religiousness, were in play.

Christianity is for Otero the true dynamic of history, not least in relation to each individual and people: 'o triunfo do espírito no mundo ao igual que en cada home individual soamente se cumprirá despóis da Morte. Do remate da Historia. No reinado de Deus. Pola Morte á Vida sen refugallo nin pesadelo de Morte. O camiño do Cristo. Ó camiño de cada home e cada pobo' (MR, 98). I have speculated on a possible

---

<sup>123</sup> Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Literary Theory and Criticism*, 10.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Antonio Santoveña Setién, *op. cit.*, 177-201.

<sup>125</sup> See 'Otero Pedrayo e a *Decadencia de Occidente*: morte, resurrección, manipulación', *Anuario de estudos galegos* 2000 (Santiago de Compostela: Editorial Galaxia), 43-68.

reinforcement of Herderian ideas through the figure of Menéndez y Pelayo, mainly on account of the many similarities between the latter's interpretations of religion and its significance for Otero's expression of Galician cultural and national identity. But Otero's discourse regarding Christianity's relationship with nationhood and history shows a clear and unmediated debt to Herder.<sup>126</sup> According to the German thinker, 'religion is the highest expression of humanity in humankind,'<sup>127</sup> and 'has tied together all the wants and hopes of humans into faith, and woven an immortal crown for humankind';<sup>128</sup> history is a progressive revelation. Fichte, in his *Addresses to the German Nation*, had commented: 'true religion in the form of Christianity was the germ of the modern world'.<sup>129</sup> These are the ideas behind Otero's definition of the impact of Christianity on Galicia as 'o momento decisivo y culminante de la Historia gallega' (GDG, 133), typically originating in early German Romanticism and historicism.

The Herderian tenet that the human being is predisposed to the hope of immortality is also reinforced by the contemporary influence of Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948). Otero came into contact with the works of this thinker by the beginning of the thirties at the latest, as is proven by the presence of three of the writer's works in the Galician's library, and numerous references in articles.<sup>130</sup> For Berdyaev, 'the tie between

---

<sup>126</sup> As Adler and Menze comment concerning Herder's theory of world history, 'the totality of the world as such is not accessible to humankind; it is only either perceptible in symbolical representation or accessible by means of analogy. Herder's conception of world history thus entails a religious component (...) which compensates for the human incapacity to perceive totality immediately.' H. Adler and E.A. Menze, 'On the Way to World History: Johann Gottfried Herder', in J.G. Herder, *On World History*, ed. Hans Adler and Ernest A. Menze, trans. Ernest A. Menze with Michael Palma (London, 1997), 13.

<sup>127</sup> J.G. Herder, *On World History*, 145.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>129</sup> Fichte, *op. cit.*, 102.

<sup>130</sup> *Le Marxisme et la religion* (Paris: Je Sers, 1931), *Esprit et liberté. Essai de philosophie chrétienne* (Paris: Je Sers, 1933), *Un nouveau Moyen Age: Réflexions sur les destinées de la Russie et de l'Europe*. During the same period of the thirties, Otero dedicated two articles to Nikolai Beryaev: 'Dúas opinións de Nicolás Berdiaeff', *A Nosa Terra* 230 (1926), 2-3; 'Un Nouveau Moyen Age', *Nós* 38, 1927.

Christianity and history is such as exists in no other world religion,<sup>131</sup> and 'it was only Christianity that made nations capable of looking towards what was to come.'<sup>132</sup> He championed the messianic nature of Christianity and its implication that the world advances towards a definite, all-explaining goal, namely the kingdom of God.<sup>133</sup>

For Berdyaev, Christianity granted history an 'immediacy and uniqueness of events which was foreign to the pagan world',<sup>134</sup> giving it the status of a dynamic process advancing towards a transcendental aim. This recalls Otero's belief that Galicia only entered upon the complete phase of its self-realisation after the influx of Christianity. In Berdyaev's contention that the Christian consciousness held that events were immediate, non-recurrent and unique, and that this was imposed on historical reality,<sup>135</sup> there is the unmistakable echo of historicist relativism, suggesting once more that the appeal of a contemporary thinker to Otero lay in a common debt to Herder. However, Berdyaev's own formulations also struck a deep chord with Otero, as did other expressions of the crisis of humanist values, like that of Spengler. Berdyaev saw the duty of Christianity as re-humanizing a world torn by technology and nationalism, tenets of thought eagerly shared by Otero, especially during the thirties. As for the question of nationalism, Otero's vision of Galician nationalism was non-aggressive in nature, and as is the case with his treatment of Spengler's work, the need to address unappealing aspects of a given thinker's thought can easily be suspended in favour of more readily functional ideas. The political path of Otero's career concurs with his contact with Berdyaev: disagreement over the coalition between the *Partido Galeguista* and the avowedly secular *Frente*

---

<sup>131</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (London, 1936), 33.

<sup>132</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Bourgeois Mind* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), 71.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>134</sup> Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, 33.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

*Popular* amidst the chronic social, political and religious divisions of Spain during the Second Republic. Bound to the indivisible link between Christianity and nationhood was a rejection of and resistance to secular egalitarian political ideas such as Marxism, and the social and philosophical norm of positivist materialism, which were considered by Otero to be incompatible with Galician society and identity. Otero was naturally predisposed to take up this position, although it also formed part of the European cultural climate during the thirties. Thinkers like Berdyaev would have merely reinforced what were plausible and straightforward ideological standpoints for an intellectual of Otero's background and disposition. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, Otero's principal opposition to Marxism was its denial to mankind of the possibility of an afterlife or any recompense of a spiritual nature. Berdyaev had rallied against Marxism for precisely the same reason:

The most striking and inhuman error of Marxism consists in refusing to see man above the classes but to place classes above the man, to reduce man in his highest manifestation and his deepest spiritual experiences to a subordinate function of the class which must condition both his contemplation and his creative work.<sup>136</sup>

Like Berdyaev, Otero defended Christianity's defence of man's personal consciousness, reason and freedom over any substitution of these by class consciousness, reason and freedom;<sup>137</sup> Marxism, although respected as an idea, was seen as allowing the souls and bodies of men to be sacrificed in the interests of economic prosperity, whereas Christianity allowed no such thing.<sup>138</sup> In addition to an egalitarian-orientated awareness of class, capitalism is also seen by both men as transitory compared with the perennial relevance of the Christian faith; in Berdyaev's words, 'classes are fugitive, economic

---

<sup>136</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *Christianity and Class War* (London, 1933), 33-34.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

goods are ephemeral: the human soul is eternal, and that soul alone will stand before the throne of God'.<sup>139</sup>

Chateaubriand often competes with Herder to be the primary source of a given idea that is imperative in Otero's outlook as regards religion and the providential vision of history. 'Eternity, therefore,' says Chateaubriand, 'should be the groundwork of the history of time, everything being referred to God as the universal cause',<sup>140</sup> and this is the ethos of *Le Génie du Christianisme* as a consolidated defence and new evaluation of the merits of the Christian faith in the aftermath of the French Revolution. It also informs a large part of Otero's sensibility. Otero follows in the tradition of previous generations of Spanish romantics repulsed by the implications of the Mendizábal legislation, in Flitter's words, 'literary men who were insisting upon the transcendent value of religious ideals and advocating a literature which celebrated and revitalised religious tradition'.<sup>141</sup> Flitter details how the French nobleman's treatise upon religion exerted a potent influence upon Romantic writers, and the emotional thrust of *Le Génie du Christianisme* involves its association of the spirituality of Catholicism with the melancholy of the Romantic temperament.<sup>142</sup> Otero's faith and intellectual character coincide with that area of Christian belief directly opposed to rationalism and materialism, and favoured feeling, sentiment and intuition.

In addition to Chateaubriand, we cannot overlook other contributions to the development in religious expression concurrent with emerging revaluations of artistic and religious feeling during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly that

---

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>140</sup> Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, 417.

<sup>141</sup> Flitter, *Spanish Romantic Literary Theory and Criticism*, 128.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

of Schleiermacher, ‘o filósofo alemán de máis fermoso nome’ (LG, 21).<sup>143</sup> In *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (*On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*) (1799), Schleiermacher defends the Romantics’ subjective and intuitive approach to religion in resistance to Enlightenment thinkers’ critique of religion, and argued Christianity’s ability to express such an approach as an organic union of religion and culture. Schleiermacher placed feeling and a subjective focus at the forefront of religious awareness above philosophy, science, dogma or belief,<sup>144</sup> so that ‘religion is the sensibility and taste for the infinite’.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, this was not pantheist in essence, but underscored the necessity for dependence on a monotheistic God.<sup>146</sup> The medium of experience as a valid channel for perceiving and recognising the greatness of an independent creator translated in Otero’s work (and that of the Romantics) as Nature. One also senses that Schleiermacher’s portrayal of religion as a universal necessity and phenomenon for all cultures which in turn gives meaning to human history holds

---

<sup>143</sup> Otero makes another admission of admiration for the philosopher’s name during the same year: Schleiermacher [sic] (o nome mais fermoso de filósofo; Scheiermacher [sic], ó pronuncio figura que se decorren as cortinas da fiestra pra mirar o ceo estrelecido)’ (VALS, 141). The philosopher is a character who briefly appears in Otero’s novel *Fra Vermo*: ‘Sleiermacher [sic] habitaba unha casa nova nas fiestras da cal un tilo viña a petar docemente con ponlas de feble e dondo verdecer. A luz da alba figuraba pousada todo o día na fronte do pensador e as súas máns, ao acompañar con movementos mainos as palabras, como se tocaran nun piano invisible a sonata da liberdade infinda do espírito. Werner titánico, fatal, atormentado, sentía un recollemento. Só unha verba para definir a Sleiermacher [sic]: transparencia. O nome evocaba os teares dos fermosos e albos veos de Silesia. E este filósofo tiña tecido os veos máis leviáns e luminosos para dignificar na danza ritual do pensamento, á razón humana. A fermosura da testa era musical. Conquerida ao largo de duras loitas, libertada das ardentes meditacións que asucan como torrents as fronteiras, a luz dos ollos, o son das verbas de Sleiermacher [sic], ceibaban a doutrina dos *Monólogos*: a vida interior na liberación do tempo, no cumprimento da individualidade, na dominación de tódalas inimigas circunstancias, no senso profético do porvir, na eternal mocidade do espírito’ (FV, 82-83).

<sup>144</sup> ‘*On Religion* is the premier expression of an understanding of religion as rooted in immediate pre-reflexive feeling and intuition, and only secondarily at the level of intellectual cognition or in moral systems and deeds. This classic theory of religion arose from the the Romantics’ intense critique of Kant’s moral and religious philosophy in the repressive political atmosphere of a Prussia that feared the social upheavals of the French revolution’. Richard Crouter, ‘Introduction’, Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (trans., ed. Richard Crouter) (CUP, 1996), xi-xxxix (xi).

<sup>145</sup> Schleiermacher, *op. cit.*, 23

<sup>146</sup> According to Crouter, Schleiermacher’s idea encompasses ‘a religious naturalism that offers a distinctive alternative to traditional theism’; providing ‘a new foundation for theology in the post-Kantian period’. Richard Crouter, ‘Introduction’, xxiii.

particular relevance for Otero: 'history, in the most proper sense, is the highest object of religion. It begins and ends with religion – for in religion's eyes prophecy is also history, and the two are not to be distinguished from one another – and at all times a true history has first had a religious purpose and proceeded from religious ideas'.<sup>147</sup> Schleiermacher's view of Christianity is echoed in Otero's depiction of Galician religiousness and the figure of Christ. Otero's Christ is 'un Cristo sinxelo, enxebre e... ¡galego!; aínda que isto non significa roubarlle a súa universalidade senón acentual-la súa encarnación no pobo galego'.<sup>148</sup> Otero naturalises the figure of Christ, so that the messiah of humanity is also the messiah of Galician nationhood, who speaks 'galego primitivo':

Este Cristo conselleiro que non sabe latín nin o grego de San Paulo, nin o hebreo das Escrituras, senon o galego primitivo que se perdeu e agora andamos a percurar nas escrituras vellas.

Cristo dos homes da loita ca terra e o vento, sinxelo, grave como a vurtiza dos albres valentes, como luzada riba dos sucos e dos toxos, pro home feito a se erguer tardeiro. (PEL, I, 115)

Furthermore, Otero regards this simple, evangelical and messianic Christianity as that most suited to Galicia because it corresponds better with the Celtic outlook on belief that he alleges to prevail in other countries: 'nos galeses e irlandeses non inza o vello Testamento. Trunfa, como entre nós, o Evanxeo e o panteísmo das fadas' (KOKORO, 139). Otero's incorporation of evangelical Christianity owes a debt to Leon Tolstoy (1828-1910), to whom Otero alludes in a newspaper article entitled 'Verbas evanxélicas'. Firstly, Otero singles out Tolstoy, St. Francis of Assisi, Leonardo da Vinci, Bach and the Galician architect Mateo as men of significant religious import: 'diante a enorme conxuración das forzas inferiores deberíase escolmar e espallar polo mundo a

---

<sup>147</sup> Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, 26.

<sup>148</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 115.

exemplaridade dos que pudéramos chamar “Evanxeos menores”<sup>149</sup> Otero’s admiration for Tolstoy’s sense of social compassion is evident in the article’s biographical glossing of the Russian writer’s life: ‘estaba tan decrebadiño o forte eslabo de raíces de abedoiras [que] morría na estación de Rostof o 7 de Santos de 1910, decíndolle aos seus familiares: Namentras hai no mundo millóns de xentes que sofren, vos soio vos preocupades polo voso León... ¿Non son estas verbas de evanxelista?’<sup>150</sup> Pérez Prieto explains how ‘o “evanxelismo ruso” ou evanxelio utópico ruso fai referencia á particular maneira de vivirlo Evanxelio que propuxo o gran novelista (...), tanto a través das súas obras coma a través do seu estilo de vida, na súa derradeira etapa’.<sup>151</sup> This entailed an attempt to see reality through the eyes of the *mujik*, or Russian peasant, and a humble approach to living life.<sup>152</sup> Pérez Prieto goes on to define Tolstoy and his outlook: ‘idealista impenitente, coidaba que podía chegar un día no que os homes, limpos de malas paixóns, habían vivir coma irmáns, realizando o Reino de Deus na terra; o amor sería a gran forza que habería lograr isto, por medio do perfeccionamento moral do individuo’.<sup>153</sup> Of the principles of Tolstoy’s utopian evangelicalism listed by Pérez Prieto, Otero would certainly have shared ‘o amor ó próximo, a non resistencia ó mal pola violencia, a simplicidade e a sobriedade de vida’, although clearly Tolstoy’s appeal fails regarding a hostility towards all social organization, including the organized Church (a tenet which saw Tolstoy himself excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901).<sup>154</sup> Tolstoy was of considerable importance for many Spanish writers, notably the Generation of 1898 as

---

<sup>149</sup> ‘Verbas evanxélicas’, *El Pueblo Gallego*, 09/II/1930. Quoted by Victorino Pérez Prieto, *A Xeración “Nós”*: *Galeguismo e relixión*, 76.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 75.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

well as the *Xeración Nós*, who saw him as a symbol against the positivism and modernity of the twentieth century in the West.<sup>155</sup> Otero therefore laments how ‘a antiga fe do pobo (...) foi substituída por unha fe deste mundo. Todos se fixeron servos do diñeiro, do corpo, da comodidade e seguranza da vida. A divina Libertade de Xesús e de San Francisco, o ideal labrego de Tolstoi xa non pesan no mundo’ (IDL).<sup>156</sup>

In Otero’s work, the character of Don Bernaldo in *Arredor de si* stands out particularly as an example of Tolstoy’s influence, especially in his evangelical idealism so closely bound up with a sense of patriotic duty towards Galicia:

quixen erguer o sentimento cristián de Galicia. Xuntar todo o esforzo dos galegos para fundar un Reino. Ningún Rei da Terra. A Nosa Nación soamente presidida por Xesús. Voltar a un cristianismo sinxelo (...). Unha nación toda labrega e mariñeira, inimiga da riqueza, unha nación que cantase na fermosa lingua dos campos, coa gloria do traballo, a gloria de Deus. (AS, 82)

The particular denomination of this Christianity is Catholicism: not an ultramontane or dogmatic Catholicism, but an intuitive, subjective sense of religiousness, ‘asunto vivido íntimamente e de inspiración humanista e evanxélica’.<sup>157</sup> As one of the authors of the ‘Afirmación católica dun grupo de nacionalistas’, published in 1931, Otero affirms Galicia’s status as ‘filla da Igrexa’, and Catholicism’s part of ‘o ser íntimo e tradicional

---

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Dulin Bondue speculates as follows on the attractive elements of Tolstoy’s thoughts for Otero: ‘León Tolstoi (1828-1910) puede haber transmitido varios mensajes a Otero. La autenticidad del campesino próximo en eso a la naturaleza, entre ellos. Compara la muerte de un hombre del campo a la caída majestuosa de un árbol. Esa autenticidad resalta frente a la mentira social que representa la civilización. Por esta línea ideológica, Tolstoi condena a Occidente, su egoísmo individualista y la mezquindad de su burguesía. A la vez, Tolstoi lucha por un cristianismo encaminado hacia la estricta observancia de una ley de amor y de una actitud moral rigurosa, que se extienda sin excepción a todos los dominios de la vida individual y colectiva. Sólo con esta actitud se podrá combatir el pesimismo al que lleva la meditación sobre la condición humana. Otero Pedrayo tuvo que leer con interés *La sonate à Kreutzer* en la que el espíritu lucha contra la carne’. Dulin Bondue, *op. cit.*, 318.

<sup>157</sup> Quintana and M. Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 57.

da nosa Terra'.<sup>158</sup> Otero emphasises these qualities by contrasting the Catholic faith with Protestantism in *Fra Venero*. In the novel, Werner assesses Protestantism:

o cristianismo organiza na Xermania o exército mais intelixente e disciplinado contra o Maldito.

Mais non podo fuxir a un sentimento de friaxe na nosa relixión. Vaime figurando demasiado intelixente, demasiado lóxica, ou práctica, ou metafísica... A nosa relixión dispónse como un sistema pedagóxico onde todo está previsto... Hai demasiada distancia lóxica entre pecado e perdón. (FV, 84)

It is clear that Lutheranism lacks the sublime poetical qualities and sense of freedom that Otero sees as the epitome of Catholicism; it is 'ausente da ledicia libre e liberadora do catolicismo',<sup>159</sup> and later, in Rome, Werner 'entendía a bendición "Urbi et Orbi" e alentaba no aire da Catolicidade' (FV, 114.) However, it is important to underline, as does Pérez Prieto, that 'o protestantismo que coñece Otero é sen dubida o protestantismo histórico que lería nalgunha Historia ou Enciclopedia, non as novas correntes (liberalismo, neoortodoxia, etc., corrente que si coñecera Unamuno, pois lera a Harnack e Hermann)'.<sup>160</sup> In one of his statements made in the Spanish Cortes, Otero affirms that 'el catolicismo es algo más que una religión, una psicología'.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, Catholicism entailed an international, universal fraternity that did not compromise national uniqueness and which was fully compatible with the Galician nationalist ideal, as Otero underlines in one of many responses in his work to legislative developments during the Second Republic: 'agora integrarán a Eirexa os verdadeiros católicos, os universalistas, os únicos cidadáns do único cosmopolitanismo aceptado polos nazionalismos' (NLI, 127).

---

<sup>158</sup> 'Afirmación católica dun grupo de nacionalistas', *Logos*, 1931.

<sup>159</sup> Pérez Prieto, *op. cit.*, 105-106.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>161</sup> *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes* – 1931, III, 1533-1534.

### *Santiago de Compostela – spiritual capital*

Nothing embodied this acceptable cosmopolitanism more for Otero than the traditional cultural and spiritual capital of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, and specifically its cathedral. No other writer in any language has dedicated so much effort to the interpretation of Galicia's 'gran cidade de vida universal' (EH, 137). For Otero, the most resonant symbol that binds Catholicism to Galician cultural identity is St. James the Apostle:

Buscó la virginidad celta de los castros y de los pétreos altares rodeados por el prestigio de una naturaleza misteriosa cuyos númenes hablaban en el son de las ondas sobre las desiertas playas, en el fragor otoñal de los bosques pulsados por el viento, en los silencios donde la hoz de la luna señala los destinos. Quiso la raza de ojos verdes, y blondas caballerías y acento bárbaro e inocente. (PDC, 53)

As ever, Otero creates unlikely ideological links between concepts or source ideas: Galicia's Celtic identity, its 'northernness' and intense awareness of Nature are the qualities that draw the apostle to northwest Iberia. Santiago and Apostle represent 'o tema esencial da historia de Galiza' (GS, 18). The building of the cathedral in Santiago

foise ordeando a conciencia de ser galego... Era o xurdimento dunha conciencia. Un anaco baril da Celtia que se erguía mozo, disposto, cheo de eternidade e dono do seu porvir. (...) deseguida, confirmando esta nova realidade, tódolos pobos sentiron a voz nova e suntáronse con ela no harmonioso coral da cristianidade. (MED)

The religious and cultural syncretism attributed by Otero to Galicia's pre-Christian and Christian past is symbolised by the growth and significance of Santiago de Compostela as Galicia's spiritual capital: 'unha brétema de celtismo envolve e perfila a creencia estrictamente católica, afirmando o prestixio e a sona do lugar' (EH, 107). Santiago de Compostela is 'la ciudad simbólica y expresiva de Galicia [que] se alza sobre célticos

castros' (CDO, 60), and with the familiar recourse of the comparison with an Atlantic neighbour, Otero portrays the transition as harmonic, where Christianity harnesses antecedent ethnic-religious traditions to allow Galician culture new expression, and universal relevance: 'é innegable que en cada país o eixo poético orixinal se adaptou a aquela superior cultura relixiosa. En Galicia, como en Irlanda, (...) a poderosa antena de Santiago excitou a orixinalidade celta e fíxoa falar na poesía dos cancioneros' (EH, 150). Santiago is the ultimate representation of Galicia's palimpsestic religious identity, 'quizais o enxerto definitivo do catolicismo no renovado toro anterior' (EH, 107), whilst the cathedral represents 'a patroa afincada na eterna roca celta, adornada coa cuncha esculpida polo mar do futuro' (EH, 169). Two figures are intimately associated with Compostela and its significance for Galician religious identity within an idealised Europe of nations based on the principle of *Volksgeist*. These are the archbishop Xelmírez and the architect Mateo:

no ronsel de Xelmírez seguen pontificados ilustres ou escuros pero todos eles dominados pola paixón de remata-la catedral, coa conciencia de que ó abri-las súas portas se franqueaba a unha plenitude de mundo. O home representativo en quen chega ó cume o anhelo secular de Europa foi o Mestre Mateo, o autor do Pórtico da Gloria e este cume do espírito só podía chegar a acadarse en Galicia, terra ecuménica e europea. (EH, 134)

Xelmírez acts as a symbol in Otero's prose of the Christian-European spirit of Galicia.<sup>162</sup>

Furthermore, Monteagudo draws attention to how Otero regards Diego Xelmírez as embodying the same importance for Galician history as the Cid holds in Castilian culture.<sup>163</sup> As well as repeated references to him in articles and short essays,<sup>164</sup> Otero

---

<sup>162</sup> Quintana and M. Valcárcel, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>163</sup> Monteagudo, *op. cit.*, 8. fn.3. Cf. Otero Pedrayo (writing under the pseudonym Santiago Amaral): 'La Historia Compostelana. Crónica de Europa', *Misión*, 1944, 14.

<sup>164</sup> Such as 'Xelmírez orador', *Nós* 71 (1929), 'A delor de Xelmírez', *O espello na serán* (Galaxia: Vigo, 1966), 85-88.

devotes many pages of the *Ensaio histórico...* to 'este home, galego e europeo, un dos primeiros europeos da Península, a encarnación dos anhelos do tempo románico'. Xelmírez, we are told, 'soubo extraer (...) as puras esencias do galeguismo e do Occidente europeo. (...) entendeu a Galicia, amouna, fíxoa entrar na terra de miragre e promisión no coro da nova Europa' (EH, 131). Xelmírez therefore embodies the Catholicism that permits Galicia membership of a broader spiritual and cultural community, Christian Europe; his role allowed for the development of Compostela as not just the spiritual capital of Galicia, but as a metropolis of the aforementioned religious fellowship (EH, 163).<sup>165</sup> His contribution is linked to the symbolism of the pilgrimage and of Romanesque architecture as an affirmation of Galician religious and national identity on a universal plane (EH, 124) 'o recordo do coral dos pobos en camiño cara ó sepulcro do Apóstolo: a maior dignidade universal de Galicia' (EH, 163). Otero even goes as far to suggest on this premise that Galician faith is stronger than that of other nations: 'a fe de Galiza ten de ser doutra natureza, meirande que noutras terras, pois afincamos nas portas do mundo' (XEL, 120)

As we have seen, the architect Mateo is portrayed in a similar fashion to Xelmírez (EH, 134). Of the philosophy and doctrine of the *Pórtico de Gloria*, 'unha doutriña e unha filosofía do amor', Otero says

foi sin dúbida Mateu un dos primeiros en formulala sin aparellos de argumentos lóxicos i escriturarios. Por elo o mestre, fora a súa homildade, é pros agradecidos contempladores do Pórtico un doutor da Eirexa, un grande e puro doutor mariano. Cui leución de amor

---

<sup>165</sup> We should note, however, that Otero's reading of this chapter of Galician religious history is not representative of the *Xeración Nós* as a whole. Castelao is far less laudatory in his assessment of Xelmírez' career: 'os galegos admiramos o talento caciquil de Xelmírez; pero non estamos tristes por ignorarmos a data da súa morte e a sepultura en que xace, porque traicionou os nosos anceios e desviou as nosas enerxías, creando un Emperador para Toledo en vez de formar un Rei para Compostela', Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, 253.

dá licencia pra exercitar as facultades da ialma no decorrente rubir dos símbolos, na soleira e promesa da historia eterna. (PORT, 237)

The *Pórtico da Gloria* is therefore the physical representation of Galician Catholicism and its implications for Galician cultural identity, as filtered through Otero's historicist outlook: Galicia is Western, European and universal. Otero believes that 'a palabra divina nunca aspirou a materializarse de modo tan eficaz como na obra do Mestre Mateo' (EH, 136). Santiago is the epitome of how Christianity has unlocked the potential of Galicia and allowed the realisation of its identity and universal significance as a unique, 'organic' nation within a Europe of similar identities:

sendo Compostela a máis enxebre das cidades galegas é, tamén, a máis universal... Santiago seguiu sendo fundamente galega, a diferenca das cosmópoles modernas creadas polo diñeiro e o pracer, sen arraigare no cerne eterno da terra onde floreceu. Nesa xuntanza galeguismo-cristianismo está a gloria de Compostela e a razón de que sexa unha metrópole. Sen ela non sería Galicia unha indestructible individualidade. (DIA)

This is where religious identity gives way to national identity within cultural parameters, and the significance of Santiago and the symbolism of the pilgrimage will be addressed at greater length in the following chapter, where I examine the proposed and idealised characteristics and implications of the Galician nation expounded in the works of Otero Pedrayo.

In the presentation of the Galicians as practising an essentially popular faith and simple religiousness rooted in peasant culture, an astonishingly diverse range of complex ideas, influences and sources is drawn upon. Furthermore, Otero's employment of these source ideas and his approach to certain aspects of Galicia's religious history belie the simplified depiction of him by a great deal of the critical corpus concerning his life and works. In the case of religious identity, Otero does not only draw upon his intellectual

preferences and tastes in order to project a national paradigm, but reaches into the depths of his own spiritual disposition and religious sensitivity. Galicians, therefore, possess a bipartite religious outlook, a symbiosis of the Celtic and the Christian, of pagan polytheism with an ethnic, evangelical Christianity, of the Celtic with heartfelt Christianity in the form of a human Catholicism epitomised by St. Francis of Assisi and Leon Tolstoy. A residual polytheism related to an ethnic Celtic past effects a religious apprehension of life and the afterlife, coupled with an equally Christian, ecumenical and ontological reading of the world, all of which is enabled by the relationship with Nature that I have discussed in Chapter Two. This syncretist religious psychology is governed by an affectionate, spiritual and physical bond with the land and Nature, not an immanentist spirituality doubting God's transcendence. Consequently, the Galician has an innate tendency to turn to Nature for a wider comprehension of the divine mystery, a telluric Christianity that includes remnants of earlier beliefs present in the national psyche, together forming the essential determinants of Galician religious character. On a collective scale, it is Catholicism that enabled the fulfilment of Galicia as a national entity, and its membership of a Europe and West seen entirely by Otero from a historicist perspective. Accordingly, Santiago de Compostela and the pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James symbolise the affirmation of a national self that is presented imaginatively and idealistically by Otero within well-defined historicist parameters.

## Chapter Five - Nationhood

‘¡Que uso crónico e cruel se fai da palabra, fermosa entre todas, de nación! Polo transitorio *fatum* histórico ven significar un imperialismo, por ser pequeno, mais noxento e matador.’ *Arredor de si* (186)

Nowhere else in the works of the leading cultural historian of the *Xeración Nós* does the influence and discourse of Johann Gottfried Herder play such a pivotal role as in the conceptualisation of an idiosyncratic national presence and form in Galicia. This chapter is an account of the manner in which this long-term influence interacts with subsequent conceptions of nationhood (predominantly those of Murguía and the rest of *Xeración Nós*) and contemporary ideologies and philosophies (Spengler, Ratzel and Spanish politics prior to 1936). I supplement my overall analysis with references to scholarship regarding nationalism, such as Gellner, Bauer, Hobsbawm, Smith and Hutchinson, in order to place Otero within a wider context. After an initial assessment of Otero’s discourse concerning an inexorable Celtic ‘national spirit’ or *Volksgeist* within Galician culture and the debt of this idea to Herder and Romantic historicism, I proceed to compare and contrast his depiction of the Galician people as a united grouping with that of other members of the *Xeración Nós*, and to sift through the cultural nuances of the notion of ‘pobo’, ‘race’ and ‘Volk’ that stem from Herder’s organic conception, racialist theory and other political usage. Special attention is given to the influence of Murguía here, and by comparison and contrast with Otero’s position I establish the precise trajectory and extent of Herder’s contribution.

I subsequently assess the proposed political and national dynamic of Galicia and Spain put forward by Otero, paying close attention to the interplay between fiction, political writing and wider political trends. I seek to define further Otero's position by examining his ideas on the future cultural and political composition of Europe, and his interpretation of the national significance of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. These are important referential co-ordinates for Otero when mapping out the varied features of the Galician nation past, present and imaginatively projected future.

The final sections of this chapter dwell upon Otero's proposals for an intellectual patronage of Galician affairs and, with greater importance, his portrayal of the village as the microcosm of national values. I focus particularly on Otero's reaction to the effect upon these of modernity and social change. Criticism has sometimes tended to present a static vision of Otero's worldview as unswervingly conservative and traditionalist, as if his ideas did not significantly evolve or alter during a long lifetime and career. By examining the topic of the village on a chronological basis, I seek to distinguish adaptations in his intellectual character over the span of a long and active life, which present us with a thinker who was subject to intellectual evolution, however restricted, rather than ideological immutability. Furthermore, Otero's portrayal of the village links inextricably with his interpretation of modernity in many of its forms, such as technological advancement or changing economic patterns. These portraits in miniature of his chosen model of Galician reality, found in his short articles and important essays, allow us to assess his thoughts on Galician society's shifting composition over a forty-year period. Moreover, Otero's fiction with its even greater potential for 'imagining' provides another vantage point from which we can assess the precise nature of his

complex standpoint. I bring the final chapter of my thesis to an end by formulating wide-ranging conclusions from the assessment of Otero's incorporation of further aspects of Oswald Spengler's thought, and elements of Vico's philosophy, into his cultural and ideological construction of Galician national identity as an indestructible reality in ascent.

### *Herder and Romantic historicism: sources for the national dynamic*

Otero counts himself amongst 'os homes modernos educados no espírito das nacionalidades' (EH, 198), a statement that guides us to Herder and Romantic historicism as sources of his groundwork for Galician nationhood founded upon the concept of a 'national spirit' unique to Galicia. 'O Romantismo espertaba o amor pol-as almas dos pobos' (ROM, 48-49) Otero maintains on taking up his seat in the Galician Academy in 1931, and as Derek Flitter points out, it is in the early stages of this expansive speech that we detect the intellectual tenor of Otero's perspective. He writes of a form of Romanticism designated as 'poesía de pobos' rather than 'poesía de poetas'; described as 'racial, étnica, inconsciente', it resides, claims Otero, beneath the surface of any 'hestórea aparential' and specifically among the peoples of a 'grande familia atránteica' of principally Celtic extraction.<sup>1</sup> Reminders of Herderism in Otero's discourse abound in his references to the imperishable nature of the Galician people, history or national 'soul'; he mentions 'as almas dos pobos' (MSY, 4), 'o pobo inmorrente' (VTG, 61), 'o fio inmorredoiro do devir galego' (MR, 113), 'o espírito inmorrente dunha Patria' (PROL, xii), 'a ialma inmorredoiro da Galiza' (ROM, 75), 'nosa fonda e inmorrente maneira' (KOKORO, 138-139), 'a nosa alma por natureza inmorrente' (MR, 112) and 'a verdadeira Galiza, a do espírito inmorrente' (GAL, 159). Otero is an inveterate Romantic:

---

<sup>1</sup> Flitter, 'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', 300.

in the final years of his life, he avows publicly that ‘nós temos fe no xenio i espírito dos pobos; aínda alentamos na fermosa teoría do *Volksgeist* do romantismo alemán... e de tódolos romantismos’ (GEG, 15), whilst in private correspondence he confesses ‘o meu caso de romántico que aínda cre no *Volksgeist*’ (DGS, 218).

In 1956, Otero departs from the basis of the *Volksgeist* concept to comment upon the uniqueness of Spanish identity within an international context and, more interestingly, from a perspective that recognises the diversity of identity within Spain itself:

lo íntimo y lo profundo de cada país, lo que vive en el alma popular, en el acento y en la característica matización, no muere nunca. Se asiste al fútbol, se conversa en la cafetería, se industrializa la agricultura, se construyen poblados de modelo estandarizado..., pero el público aficionado al fútbol, aunque vista igual no reacciona de idéntica manera en Amsterdam que en Madrid, ni es igual el espíritu de las conversaciones en una cafetería catalana que en otra francesa. El tractor será el mismo en el Missisipí que en el Guadalquivir; pero los obreros son otros, idénticos a sus antepasados en cuanto dejan al motor. Y en el poblado nuevo, higiénico y confortable, el genio levantino, extremeño o andaluz, pronto introduce los factores de una fisionomía particular, influídos por la luz, por el paisaje y por el tipo de los materiales constructivos. (GDE, I, 132)

This cautious discourse is couched in the philosophy of German historicism; the recognition of distinct ‘regional’ identities during the plenitude of the Franco era entails nothing remarkable in itself. However, the author is a Galician nationalist writing within the parameters of censorship and possible persecution; this allows us to read far more into Otero’s reiteration of the immortality of national spirit, the relativity and peculiarity of national customs, and the Herderian emphasis on place, local geographical conditions and tradition: ‘geografía y tradición suelen asociarse y completarse casi siempre, y de la fusión de ambos conceptos, brota el auténtico sabor local’ (GDE, I, 132). ‘Local flavour’ is a diluted allusion to more clearly defined definitions of cultural distinction that Herder saw as existing with or without political sanction. This is a constrained defence of the

preservation of plural national identities within the Spanish state; Otero refers to the opposite tendency of the Francoist regime in his criticism of the 'elimination' rather than tolerance of cultural individuality: 'lo que importa, pues, no es eliminar, sino evolucionar, reforzar con hábitos nuevos aquello que en cada marco geográfico tenga su razón de ser' (GDE, I, 132).

### **Celtic *Volksgeist* and a Galician national spirit**

Otero identifies this original awareness of human grouping in Galicia as Celtic: 'a primeira comunidade galega acéndese en fogar e un verbo celta' (EH, 22); the Celtic period bore witness to 'a orixinalidade galega creada coas súas virtualidades esenciais' (EH, 15). It was Manuel Murguía who first designated a Celtic *Volksgeist* for Galicia: since the Celtic settlement of the northwest, the Galician inherited a specific character whose principal traits are a love of the land, the quasi-sacred instinct of its possession, religious sensibility, intelligence, lyricism, the capacity for resistance and the absence of aggression or desires of conquest.<sup>2</sup>

The identification of a source of national consciousness assists Otero's account of Galician identity: 'na ialma galega sentimos todos a presenza d'un eixe vital inmorredoiro que nos dá a nosa forma espiritoal e nos difrenza d'as outras xentes habitadoras da Iberia. Ista visión céltiga do mundo xurde, pra quén seipa esculcar, en total-as enxebres manifestazós do espírito galego' (ROM, 25-26). According to Otero, Galicia retains its Celtic identity after the Roman conquest: 'sen deixar de ser celta,

---

<sup>2</sup> X.G. Beramendi and X.M. Núñez Seixas, *O Nacionalismo Galego* (Vigo: Edicións A Nosa Terra, 1996), 36-37.

entraba na familia dos pobos de cultura' (EH, 40). This pattern remains unaltered throughout historical periods and invasions:

pasaron sucesivamente a civilización romana, a cultura xermánica, o occidentalismo creador da Idade Media, o imperio español, a revolución mecánica e ideolóxica do século XIX. Agora pasan sutís, profundas, difíciles de captar, as novas determinantes do século. Ningunha delas matou a conciencia galega. Soubo adaptar algunhas e, incorporándoas e dirixíndoas, acadou períodos de eficacia superior. Soubo agardar polo fin doutras sen menosprezia-la propia esencia.<sup>3</sup> (EH, 15)

Here Otero follows his own criterion set out in the introduction of the *Ensaio histórico...*, pages which reveal the twin historiographical influence of Spengler and Herder:

onde houber unha raza cosmicamente fixada xorde unha posibilidade de cultura orixinal. E a tal grado de harmonía non poderían ascender tódalas terras nin tódolos pobos. Hai os que máis á présa se deben considerar acampados no chan histórico ca fixados e incorporados. Son conquistadores, estraños ó país, e o seu propio ser espiritual, brando e pasivo, traduce a ausencia de verdadeira posición histórica. As unidades culturais exténdense ó longo dunha variadísima gama de desenvolvemento. Algunhas apenas teñen reducida capacidade para asimil-las culturas estrañas imponéndolles un mínimo de interpretación orixinal. Outras, sumerixadas nunha gran cultura histórica saben aproveitala para convertérense en dominadoras e expansivas. As máis, aceptando a fórmula xeral dun tempo, tradúcena na súa propia maneira de ser. A orixinalidade é nelas tan poderosa que calquera cultura que as cubra ten necesariamente que adaptarse á súa propia interpretación. Son realidades vitais. (EH, 13-14)

Otero emphasises the persistence of a Galician national 'spirit' through the centuries by classing it within the final category, attributing command over cultural change – in spite of invasion or 'colonisation' – to this mysterious collective personality, thus promoting a sense of ethno-cultural continuity. Summarising this aspect of historicist thought, Otto Bauer comments that 'a unique national spirit, a national soul, is the substance of the nation, that which persists through all change, the unity in all individual variety'.<sup>4</sup> In

---

<sup>3</sup> Significantly, Otero does not confront the problem of the Celts inhabiting an area far larger than Galicia, presumably to emphasise the notion of the Celtic singularity of Galician identity.

<sup>4</sup> Otto Bauer, 'The Nation', in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishan (London: Verso, 1996), 39-77 (42).

Herderian terms, this is the manner and form which the development of the Galician *Volk's* collective consciousness assumes, its national 'culture'; in cultural history, this marks the break with Enlightenment thought, which tended to identify culture with civilisation and intellectual sophistication, and not with the original simplicity of nature.<sup>5</sup> The analogy of organic growth employed in order to convey historical development, where an original consciousness is preserved, further confirms the underlying influence of historicism. Herder's philosophy of history includes the concept of development as a continuous process of 'becoming' or growth which is applied to the *Volk*, the most 'natural' socio-political unity, identified with a community sharing the consciousness of its own distinctive socio-political traditions.<sup>6</sup> This idea dominates Otero's vision of Galician history, of the historical 'devalar' of the Galician people.

Otero defines Celticism as the present mould of Galician identity: 'na zona íntima, intraducible e libre do pobo galego, latexa a conciencia celta, prerromana' (EH, 20). In the pre-Civil war period, this tendency complies with the political agenda of presenting an optimistic forecast of Galician destinies, an account of the past that also serves as an ideologically sound blueprint for the future. The Celtic outlook is 'o sistema inicial de interpretación do mundo da historia e do mundo das ciencias e da natureza' with which 'cada rexión do planeta plenamente caracterizada está dotada' (EH, 12), an alleged ancestral psychology which determines and conditions all human activity and endeavour in Galicia. These origins cannot be extinguished as a template and foundation stone of national identity: 'disfrutou Galicia desde o amencer dos tempos históricos dunha conciencia orixinal. Esa conciencia pervive aínda hoxe. Ela inspirou os períodos

---

<sup>5</sup> F.M.Barnard, *op. cit.*, 118.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

vitais de Galicia' (EH, 15). This guarantees a sense of continuity and vitality in relation to an awareness of the national self: 'corre desde as orixes baixo tódalas formas externas e seguirá correndo no futuro' (EH, 20). Pan-Celtic cultural politics and the historiographical influence of Murguía therefore shape Otero's essentially historicist-veined allocation of Celtic *Volksgeist* to Galicia. The Celtic consciousness is, Otero writes, 'un xenio hoxe trunfante en total-as nacións n'as que inzou sua raza. Un xenio que presta novas e liberadoras direuzós â civilización europea' (ROM 29). As part of the reinterpretation of Galician reality past, present and future, therefore, Otero presents Galicia as a member of the alleged Celtic nations in order to confirm the European dimension of her national identity, which I investigate later in this chapter. Firstly, the portrayal of a decidedly Galician *Volk* in his works must be assessed.

### **Volk, race and pobo**

In previous chapters, I have discussed in passing how Otero considers the fishing and farming classes to be the repository and embodiment of Galician quintessence: the Celtic, ethnic impulse; the speaking of the Galician language; the sympathetic, mystic relationship with Nature; and a multi-faceted religious awareness. Of these, the bond between the Galician and the land and the importance that Otero attributes to language as a cultural necessity owe their greatest debt to Herder. The natural unit of human grouping for Herder is *das Volk*, the people, whose chief constituents are soil and language, not race, colour or religion.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Herder's social and political thought centres predominantly on socio-cultural characteristics: the customs, folklore and literary

---

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah Berlin, 'The decline of Utopian Ideas in the West', *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 20-48 (40).

traditions of a people.<sup>8</sup> Although these may be hidden and elusive, in Herder's view they compose the element of consistency in a *Volk's* changing states, by means of which it can preserve and perpetuate its identity as a distinct social unit.<sup>9</sup> These are the chief source ideas for Otero's cultural-nationalist evaluation of Galician identity that is typified by the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega*. As in all of his works, here Otero does not present a Galician people bound by a social contract, but a collective grouping united by a common culture and heritage: 'o pobo folclórico, en plena posesión da súa conciencia cósmica e eterna e da súa lingua' (EH, 200).<sup>10</sup> Otero's historicist concept of 'people' is quite different, for example, from Castelao's 'pobo' as politico-economic grouping, an ideological community somewhat synonymous with 'proletariat'.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, and firmly within the parameters of Spanish political history, 'pobo' or 'pueblo' recall the declared emphasis within the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 upon the sovereignty of the 'people' and its political connotations, radically different from the traditional evaluation of *das Volk* formulated by Herder. I have constantly stressed how Otero presents the Galician 'pobo' as united by a collective cultural hypothesis and as an *imaginative* subject, in Herderian terms a natural division of the human race:<sup>12</sup> this formula owes a singular and direct debt to the German thinker. Otero however does employ another term

---

<sup>8</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 117.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Otero's religious discourse typifies in this respect Spanish reformulations of Herder, which invariably attach religion as an element of national organic identity.

<sup>11</sup> However, they strongly coincide in their identification of the agricultural and fishing communities as the common denominator of the Galician 'folk'. Flitter elucidates the distinct position of Otero's colleague: 'Castelao's understanding of the term "popular" is ideologically anchored in notions of collective solidarity in which "the people" figure as political subject: the proletariat of our post-1847 world. More than this, his figuration of the Galicia *povo* as the subject of political consciousness and collective protagonist of defined ideological struggle rather than as the mysterious recipient and dynamic imaginative projection of a sacramental collective spirit leads to what may be read as a calculated revision of the icons of cultural nationalism in the name of specifiable political imperatives and hard-headed ideological pragmatism'. Flitter, 'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', 304.

<sup>12</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 58.

to refer to the Galicians as a predominantly cultural grouping, a term whose wider nuances in history have extended beyond the generally tolerant realms of German historicism.

Throughout his work, Otero uses 'raza' almost exclusively as a synonym for 'pobo' to refer to the Galician people as a national entity. He appears to have arrived at his definition of these terms partly through his reading of Spengler, who had lost popularity with the German reading public and had been separated from the National Socialists after criticising the Nazis' racial theories. However, the legacy of Murguía's historiographical discourse and the vogue of the term 'race' during the late-nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century must also be taken into account. Those 'race' ideas that are influential in the emergence of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism stem largely from Darwin, Chamberlain, Gumplowitz and Gobineau. With the exception of Darwin, these thinkers postulated the notion of racial purity and superiority. Otero's interpretation of 'raza' does not draw from these sources, however, and differs enormously from that of his colleague, Vicente Risco: 'raza' has no attached meaning of authoritarianism, xenophobia or anti-Semitism for Otero; instead, it is intended to reflect organic cultural identity and differentiation, such as in the nationalist reference to the Galicians as 'raza de Breogán'. This idea is present in *The Decline of the West*, where Spengler appertains more to the definition of 'race' than just ethnic origin: 'in race there is nothing material, but something cosmic and directional, the felt harmony of a Destiny, the single cadence of the march of historical Being'.<sup>13</sup> Spengler argues that it is often quite justifiable to align peoples with races, but 'race' in this connection must not be interpreted in the present-day Darwinian sense of the word; it cannot be accepted,

---

<sup>13</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, II, 165.

surely, that a people was ever held together by the mere unity of physical origin, or, if it were, could maintain that unity even for ten generations.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Spengler's work mediates between Herder and Otero in terms of what exactly constitutes a 'people':

Peoples in the style of their Culture we will call Nations, the word itself distinguishing them from forms that precede and what follow them. It is not merely a strong feeling of "we" that forges the inward unity of its most significant of all major associations; underlying the nation there is an Idea. This stream of a collective being possesses a very deep relation to Destiny, to Time and to History, a relation that is different in each instance and one, too, that determines the relation of the human material to race, language, land, state, and religion.<sup>15</sup>

In affirming that 'the "people" is a unit of the soul',<sup>16</sup> Spengler is paraphrasing the historicist concept of *Volkgeist*, and incorporating much of the Herderian championing of the incommensurability of cultures into his own portrait of Faustian identity on which Otero's vision of the broader context of Galician identity hinges. As Fischer observes, Spengler was too good an historian to classify races physically or even linguistically and to deduce qualitative racial differences as the Nazis insisted on doing. He recognised the differences between national groups, but believed national differences to stem from cultural rather than biological facts; German, Frenchmen or Italians might differ, but they shared certain similarities as bearers of the Faustian spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Although Otero is familiar through his own erudition with Herder's works and ideas, the importance of Spengler's transferral of these as well as other concepts during the chrysalis period of his formulation of Galician cultural identity should not be underestimated. It represents the affirmation of historicist ideas by the vanguard of European thought that could only have reinforced Otero's adoption of those original

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 170.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 165.

<sup>17</sup> See Fischer, *op. cit.*, 75.

philosophical coordinates. The issue as to whether or not Herder's organic conception of *das Volk*, with its attention to 'genetic' national characteristics, contributed to modern racialist doctrines has been addressed.<sup>18</sup> However, his comments regarding the 'wild mixing of entire nations' and use of the term 'genetic' may be quoted out of context or interpreted through the discourse of modern biology, thereby leading to some distortion of their contextual meaning.<sup>19</sup> Herder regarded language, and not blood, as the fundamental characteristic of a *Volk*, which was in turn considered a cultural rather than a racial community.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, he denied that mental differences between national groups are attributable to race, and thought of mankind as biologically undifferentiated; importantly, he saw no cause for employing the term.<sup>21</sup> Once more, this points towards Spengler and the vogue for his writings during the 1920s and 1930s as being the contemporary source for Otero's employment of the term 'race' as a synonym for an ethnic and cultural grouping rather than a body whose membership is contingent upon racial distinction and consanguinity.

Herder associates *Volk* with a language community. Otero's adoption of this model is clearly visible in his definition of Galicia's 'pobo' as the peasantry, the fishing and farming classes who exemplify national virtues: 'a rumorosa e non nomeada moitedume, traballadora do eido e da mar, na Galicia e fóra dela, na que loita arestora domeando a rocha da idea para lle dar o perfil nativo na alma de cada un, na alma galega de cada galego' (MR, 107). As Vicki Ann Spencer states, the *Volk* represents an organic unity which is more than the sum of its constituent parts, bound together by a sense of

---

<sup>18</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 70

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

common good; as a cultural community, it is not simply an attribute that its members possess, but in part constitutive of their self-identity; it arises out of virtue of birth and education rather than a voluntary association.<sup>22</sup> Otero's Galician *Volk* is the recipient of those values that are the fulcrum of Galician identity and equated vaguely with 'todo o que a Galicia teimou ser nas épocas craras da súa hestórea, todo o que nos fai no mundo un pobo individualizado, unha persoalidade inmorrente' (EDA, 110). Driving such descriptions is the European vogue for the pure, simple and uncorrupted peasantry, the folkloric rediscovery of 'the people' and their vernacular languages, a fundamentally cultural and tolerant tendency in spite of the later movements that it helped to shape.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, Ernest Gellner's assessment of the development of nationalism and its interpretation through the myths of nation and class corresponds completely with the methodology of the entire *Nós* generation. Ethnography is irrelevant to nation-building when a centralised culture is established against peasants and not on the basis of their culture; here, peasants have to be turned into real citizens, rather than being used for the definition of a new national culture, since there is no impetus to record that which a centralised culture seeks to destroy. However, it is only when a new national culture is being constructed on the basis of an existing, unselfconscious peasant mode of life that the latter becomes of absorbing interest for nationalist scholars.<sup>24</sup> This is the moral regeneration of the historic community, the re-creation of their distinctive national civilization. Since a civilization is a spontaneous social order, it cannot be constructed

---

<sup>22</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, 118.

<sup>23</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (CUP 1993), 103-104.

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Gellner, 'The Coming of Nationalism and Its Interpretation: The Myths of Nation and Class', in *Mapping the Nation*, 98-145 (128).

like a state from above but only resuscitated from the bottom up.<sup>25</sup> For the cultural nationalist, the ethnic remains of the folk, remote from the great metropolitan centres, are the last repository of national traditions.<sup>26</sup> Ethnicity is, in E.J. Hobsbawm's words, one way of filling the empty containers of nationalism, a readily definable way of expressing a real sense of group identity which links the members of 'us' because it emphasizes the differences from 'them'.<sup>27</sup> This defines and explains Otero's obsession with the denomination of Galicia and Galicians as Celtic.

In this respect, the 'Atlantic' influence on the *Xeración Nós* is worth recalling briefly, as a contemporary affirmation and stimulation of Galician nationalist aspirations and goals. Tim Robinson, in his study of Synge's *The Aran Islands*, describes how the Islanders also found themselves elevated to a literary, and even a metaphysical, status by the romantic nationalism that transformed Ireland's image of itself. Successive generations of Irish thinkers founded their separatist claims on the rediscovery of the Celtic soul, essentially at odds with the mundane progressivism of the Anglo-Saxon. And this ancient, mysterious, spirit guide of the nation was to be called forth from the humble cottages of the last living representatives of Celtic purity, the Irish-speaking farm- and fisher folk, and pre-eminently those of the western seaboard. It was the impoverished and remote Aran Islands that were to become one of the chief shrines to this Ireland of the mind.<sup>28</sup> Otero's susceptibility to find parallels with this model is alluded to in his article on 'Irlanda políteca no século XIX': 'agora é preciso lembrarse de como dende 1893 creceu a receltización da illa, como se complementou o sentimento nacional con un

---

<sup>25</sup> John Hutchinson, 'Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration', in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (OUP, 1994). 122-131 (124).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>27</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today', in *Mapping the Nation*, 255-266 (258).

<sup>28</sup> Synge, *op. cit.*, xv.

idioma e unha cultura propia, e teremos a chave da presente posición de Irlanda' (IRL, 16). The *Xeración Nós* saw this as one of the keys to Galicia's national definition too.

The influence of the German geographer F.W. Ratzel, outlined in a previous chapter, should also be considered briefly with regard to the nature of national structure presented by Otero. As with Spengler, there are clear historicist elements within Ratzel's political geography, a cardinal principle of which is the organic union of man and land.<sup>29</sup> For Ratzel, every state is a piece of humanity and a piece of soil.<sup>30</sup> 'When we speak of a state,' Ratzel asserts, 'we mean (...) always one piece of humanity or one human work and at the same time one piece of earth. The state must live from the soil'.<sup>31</sup> Herder's *Volkgeist* concept imbues Ratzel's description of a unique phenomenon which takes place, where the state becomes an organism, and where a spiritual connection arises from the inherited custom of living together;<sup>32</sup> the state is a functional union of three primary parts that cannot be separated: people, land and a political or state idea.<sup>33</sup> In keeping with Otero's selection of ideas from recent or contemporary thinkers, it is the ascertainable historicist undercurrent that predominantly appeals. Otero associates the concepts of 'pobo', 'lingua', 'natureza' and 'nación' within a notion of socio-political association that is unswervingly Herderian in origin.

Otero's writings on the Galician *Rexurdimento* deserve further consideration here, in that they demonstrate his application of German historicist values to Galicia and the question of her status as nation, and his evocation of an ideological transmission or 'historical transference' of nineteenth-century Galician Romantic nationalist tendencies

---

<sup>29</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, xxii.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-206

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 432.

to the activities of his own generation. '¿Cales son as causas d'iste rexurdimento?' Otero enquires before hypothesising that 'Galiza volvéu a sentir a presenza da súa persoalidade, sostantiva e inmorrente' (ROM, 46). The impact of Romanticism in Spain led to a heightened awareness of the authentic, individual folk culture present in Galicia: 'os despertares nacionais do XIX alumbraron os diferentes manantiais de vitalidade galega: a lingua e o estilo, o sentido filosófico e o esforzo ledo do traballo, do agro e da mar' (MR, 107). It allowed the intelligentsia to rationalise and respond to these new areas of cultural address: 'cando o Romantismo afondou as perspeutivas, os homes de sentimento descubríronse a sí mesmos o decatarse do seu ser galego' (ROM, 46-47). 'O Romantismo extranxeiro,' Otero remarks, 'fíxolles atopar un sentido galego do vivir' (ROM, 26). The writers of the *Rexurdimento* were 'todos eles románticos no sentido máis amplo e vital da palabra' (EH, 234). This allowed the universalisation of the local and stimulated moves towards cultural revival; the *Rexurdimento* was 'unha interpretación universalista das esencias galegas que inspiran a aqueles escritores faros, hoxe e sempre, da Galicia redimida e en marcha' (EH, 236), 'unha nova conexión de Galicia co mundo' (EH, 235). In political and cultural terms, the *Rexurdimento* signifies for Otero the beginning of Galicia's modern extrication from a prejudicial, historically-imposed system: 'o que o centralismo quixo illar volve agora a respirar nunha atmósfera universal' (EH, 235). The cultural consequences of this are the foundations for a progressively fortified national sense of self: 'recrearon a conciencia galega, ergueron a lingua caída, ligaron o pasado glorioso e descoñecido co futuro agardado' (EH, 234-235). Hence Otero directs the cultural historian unequivocally towards the *Rexurdimento* as a manifestation of Romantic historicism and nationalism within Galicia that serves as an emotive and

ideological foundation – in addition to prior, long-standing sources – on which to base his personalised vision of Galician history and reality. His description and framing of this period demonstrate the important position that these ideas occupy in his worldview. I leave the concluding word here to Vicente Risco, who comments of his colleague that ‘coma romántico, o seu espírito quer vivir tamén o pensamento dos Precursores’.<sup>34</sup>

### *Original historicism and Manuel Murguía*

Otero’s identification of an initial Celtic ‘national spirit’ in Galicia originates in the Romantic historiography of Manuel Murguía. This adheres to a general pattern that we can establish as founded upon the relationship between Otero, Murguía and German historicism. J.G. Beramendi and X.M. Núñez Seixas detail fully the Murguían concept of Galicia and its effect upon subsequent formulations of nationalism within Galicia. On the one hand, during the phases of *provincialismo* and *rexionalismo*, it is Murguía who most contributes to the construction of a concept of Galicia as a national entity that differs completely from the Spanish (or Castilian) nation.<sup>35</sup> From his ‘Discurso preliminar’ in 1865 to *El Regionalismo gallego* (1889) and his *Discurso nos Xogos Florais de Tui* (1891), Murguía reconstructed Galicia’s past under the aspect of liberal historicism and established the bases of what became the canonical definition of the Galician nation:<sup>36</sup> the principal historical subject, the result of the communion between a people (in his lexicon, race) and a given territory, from which springs a *Volksgeist* during the course of a unique

---

<sup>34</sup> Vicente Risco, ‘Resposta’, in *Romantismo, saudade, sentimento da raza e da terra...*, 209-216 (212).

<sup>35</sup> Beramendi and Núñez Seixas, *op. cit.*, 35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

history.<sup>37</sup> Murguía formulates this conceptual nucleus definitively between 1885 and 1893; subsequent nationalist activists, above all Vicente Risco, inherited this intact.<sup>38</sup> Language occupies an important place in the range of attributes that Murguía associates with Galicia's identity and status as nation, as do the reference points of negation (Castile), reintegration (timid allusions to Portugal) and analogy (Ireland, Catalonia).<sup>39</sup> These are all clearly postulates that are encountered in the national ideal of Otero, which denotes Murguía as a notable influence if not a benchmark for ideological emulation.

However, there are as many discrepancies between the accounts of nationhood of the two Galician scholars as there are common features, not least of all where the issue of 'race' is concerned. For Murguía, racial ethnicity is the common denominator of nation, whereas for Otero the emphasis lies on language. Murguía evokes Galicia's intact racial purity on the basis of the theoretical impact in Europe of evolutionism and racial and geographical determinism; he compares nations with living organisms that struggle for survival.<sup>40</sup> On this premise, he allocates to race complete predominance over other constitutive and generative elements of nationhood, not only as a determinant of *Volksgeist*, but also of basic socio-political inclinations.<sup>41</sup> In short, race holds priority over language as a national imperative, an order of preference absent from Otero's outlook; however, the Ourense scholar does draw on the comparison with other peninsular peoples and the impact of the Moorish incursions upon their cultures, if not from a specifically racial-qualitative perspective. In regard to geographical determinism, Otero's admiration for Ratzel indicates his preference for these ideas, although they do

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

not suffice as a medium by which nationhood may be defined.<sup>42</sup> Galicia as a whole, Otero notes, 'mostra caracteres xeográficos inconfundibles, pero non temos que atribuír a tal determinismo o tema principal da cultura galega' (EH, 13-14). Instead, Otero relies as ever on the direct application of historicist thought to the question of Galician nationhood, where the historical evolution of a people attached to a given habitat leads to the emergence of a specific, unique culture and a mysterious, immeasurable quality of distinction: 'a presenza dunha raza que soubo adaptarse a este medio moral e incorporarse nel, creou a rexión, o círculo cultural, e, de tal maneira se confunden ámbolos factores, o natural e o humano, que nun avanzado grado de evolución é xa difícil distinguilos empregando a análise' (EH, 13-14).

Nationalist discourse regarding Galicia as a discrete entity is another area of differentiation between Murguía and Otero. According to Murguía, Galicia abounds with those characteristics and conditions that constitute nation and nationhood, yet he refers to it as 'región'.<sup>43</sup> This terminology reveals some ambivalence towards the authenticity of his own definitions. He employs 'pueblo', 'país', 'patria' and 'nacionalidad' in an interchangeable fashion, whilst with the term 'nación' Murguía refers exclusively to Spain, which on occasions he also calls 'madre patria'.<sup>44</sup> 'Patria' refers to a historical and political denomination of Galicia, whilst 'nacionalidad' is used ambiguously, referring to a past or historical state where specific ethnicity and autonomous political power

---

<sup>42</sup> Once again the original Herderian influence prevails in Otero's rejection of geographical determinism in favour of the concept of 'natural' regions: 'o determinismo xeográfico tivo o seu tempo, como principio metódico e como interpretación da realidade contribuíndo para creba-la aparente eficacia dos sistemas demasiado abstractos. Propiciou unha necesaria base de vitalidade á ciencia da historia humana. Pero caendo no abuso sistemático, levaba a un fatalismo simplista demais para conte-los variados aspectos e os camiños insospeitados da fisionomía histórica. Hoxe o concepto de rexión natural reduciuse e achegouse á realidade' (EH, 12)

<sup>43</sup> Beramendi and Núñez Seixas, *op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

prevail.<sup>45</sup> There is no such ambiguity for Otero, for whom 'nación' equates only with Galicia and 'pobo' with its people. These are Herder's terms, and on the whole the original, unmediated historicist influence is that to which Otero reverts above all others in his account of a national history: this is evident in Otero's evaluation of language over racial qualification, and in his nationalist discourse. Murguía's historicist tendencies accompany his adoption of evolutionism, and racial and geographical determinism, in addition to the various European influences of Augustin Thierry, H. Martin, H. Taine, Mancini, Mazzini and Gioberti<sup>46</sup> (who themselves appropriate and adapt original historicism.)

Finally, apart from recognising 'irmandade racial' and the close linguistic and cultural relationship between Galicia and Portugal in earlier historical periods, Murguía makes few allusions to Galicia's neighbour.<sup>47</sup> This contrasts with the fraternal attitudes of the *Xeración Nós* towards Portugal, a facet of their own ideological formulation, *atlantismo*. In his speeches delivered to the Spanish Cortes as a *galeguista* politician, Otero addresses Unamuno in order to convey the importance that Portugal holds in terms of the definition of Galician nationhood for pre-Civil War nationalists: 'Galicia, tanto etnográfica como geográficamente y desde el aspecto lingüístico, es una prolongación de Portugal, o Portugal es una prolongación de Galicia: lo mismo da' (DP, 83). An authentic Galicia understands Portugal on an altogether more transcendent plane; given their shared history of emigration, Otero envisages a 'spiritual' empire that binds them together:

Galiza será pastor de xentes, con Portugal, ó que lle dá o nome patriarcal, de familia, pois sabe que vos de sangue xunta os dous pobos, fillos do ideal. Os cornos de lus do faro

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

fulan as tebras e ningún fillo deixará de ser salvado pola lanzada, animadora, da súa lus. Canto de forte seguridade, fórmula do eixe de ética salvadora que guiará os destinos de Galiza. (EE, 24)

Otero depicts Galicia's view of Portugal as an older sibling, 'cheo de maravillosa forza e audacia' (EH, 180); Galicia derives sustenance from this imagined relationship ('o grande outimismo da galegitude abrangue as esenzas criadoras de Portugal', MR, 69) which dispenses of 'conqueridos' and 'conqueridores' in favour of a Herderian-tinged 'fraternidade dos hirmans que se atopan ledamente despois de ter equivocado o camiño das mesmas arelas' (MR, 69). Otero alludes to episodes in Luso-Galician history of Spanish imperialism when he espouses 'o renacemento paralelo da comunidade céltiga e portuguesa con Galiza' (SUL, 238). Galicia and Portugal, he opines, 'son dous eixes da liberadora angueira' (SUL, 238). Before 1936, Otero advocates further Galician integration with Portugal in line with the *Xeración Nós*' quest for a federal Iberian republic by affirming that 'o noso galeguismo (...) debe reitificar o feito dooroso do arredamento de Portugal' (MR, 69), and in his appeal to a like-minded collective historical memory when recollecting 'a integridade da Galiza antiga no ordeamento civil, sempre vivente na sistemáteca íntima das concéncias' (MR, 69). The definition of Galician nationhood alongside that of its relationship with Portugal allows Otero to bestow historical legitimacy on the former's status as nation, to invoke a sense of common ground between the two countries on the basis of language and grievances caused by Castilian expansionism, and to bolster the optimistic portrayal of Galicia during the heyday of neo-traditional cultural nationalism. Let us now look at Otero's proposals for a Galician political structure within a wider Spain.

### *Galicia within an imagined Spain: Hespaña*

The specifics of this national postulate entail, predictably, an extension of Otero's historicist allegiances into the field of political speculation, and a confirmation of further transmission of cultural nationalism via the *Rexurdimento*: 'trátase dende os Precusores de recriar unha Cultura. Da Cultura virá a verdadeira Políteca' (SUL, 238). This ideological inheritance also bolsters Otero's emphatic use of the term 'nationalism' in his affirmation of *galeguista* political objectives ('¿como nós, galegos do Rexurdimento, imos a discutir a verba nazionalismo?', NAZON, 241) and surfaces in his reiteration of the peaceful nature of *galeguismo*'s nationalist affirmations:

non podemos nin por un instante pensar en esquecer iste nome: nazionalismo. Porque a moitos pon medo e porque hoxe todos se chaman federales. Aínda aqueles que o chatan de calquer relaceón co nazionalismo desviado e imperialista de algúns pobos da Europa habería que lles decir: «¿E logo, sería un mal pra nós, pra Hespaña, pro mundo enteiro, o que algún día a cultura galega batera as áas dun imperialismo do espírito...?» Pois outro xénero se non pode agardar do xenio moderno e pacífico dos galegos. (NAZON, 240)

Otero addresses the issue of terminology out of a perceived need to specify, 'porque hoxe se chaman moitos federalistas, porque hoxe se chaman moitos autonomistas' (NAZON, 240). He proceeds to provide definitions of these alignments: 'a autonomía, pode ser unha concesión. O federalismo pode conxugar individualidás pouco desenvoltas, pouco estesas no fondo e na superficie das rexións. E sinón pensemos no caso da Hespaña, ou na da Francia pra non fuxir do país – do Estado – máis crasicamente unitario' (NAZON, 240). Otero's objectives in insisting upon a precise term and explaining the motivation behind his choice are twofold. Firstly, he wishes to make a pointed reminder of Galicia's category of nation, and a nation without political sovereignty at that. Secondly, he seeks

to attach this to the notion of a federal body encompassing a broad grouping of members existing in the present as mere geographical regions of the Spanish state, in contrast to the unfavourable scenario of an autonomous Galicia existing outside such a pan-Spanish confraternity. This corroborates Otero's recollection of this period during the final year of his life: 'nós nunca fomos separatistas, pero hai que afondar cada un na súa terra que é onde están os problemas, onde está a lingua, o espírito particular'.<sup>48</sup> Otero therefore selects and employs the word 'nationalism' not as an open declaration of separatism normally associated with the term when it is applied to the political sphere, but on the basis of his own interpretation of its ability alone to signify and span 'a verdadeira realidade galega en tódolos tons e grados e matices' (NAZON, 240). Any other word would be 'cativa ou falseira ou equivocada' (NAZON, 240). The term conveys the practical and abstract requisites of an embryonic national entity: 'pra o sinxelo orgaísmo administrativo na Hespaña nova, e pra manter i eisaltar a psiquis e a fisis, e pra a economía, e o senso do pasado e a conquista do porvir, incluso pra unha conceición artística i estética, se non pode pasar sin a palabra nazionalismo' (NAZON, 240). Nationhood is the lowest common denominator.

Nationalism in the purely political sense for Otero translates as decentralisation, as does economic amelioration, modernisation and cultural revival. Decentralisation was the magic wand that once waved, would banish all restrictions and impediments for a fuller national consolidation of identity, culture and political administration. Condemning 'a indignidade de un Estado centralista' (GAL, 159), Otero professes the true unity of a state to be 'consorcio, acordo, simpatía' (PUPG, 160) as opposed to 'o mando nunha rexión privilexiada nas outras, o mando dunha cidade que ruga as millores capacidades

---

<sup>48</sup> Outeiriño, *op. cit.*

das rexións da Hespaña sin comprender os problemas e os estilos da cada unha delas, impondo lei inxusta e tiránica' (PUPG, 160-161). This recourse to Herder's belief in the incommensurability of individual cultures rather than informed scientific or political criteria drives Otero's demands: 'as arelas polítecas e os problemas económicos galegos soilo poden ser guiados e resoltos na Galiza, por galegos que ó tempo, coma compre a homes do século XX, saben da Galiza, da Hespaña e do mundo' (PUPG, 161). This entails an end to *caciquismo* and political nepotism seen as fostered by the centralised system,<sup>49</sup> and devolution of administrative powers on the premise of universal suffrage and public accountability. Galicia, Otero asserts, 'se quer deixar gobernar (...) polos seus concellos e representaciós ceibamente elexidas e diante o pobo responsabres' (PUPG, 160). The idiosyncratic nationalism of Otero carries with it attached notions of a resanctified Galicia able to hold up its head amongst other nations and of common ground shared with other members of supposed federal systems based on radically differing political regimes: 'unha autonomía administrativa pra Galiza quer dicir poñerse a tono co mundo culto onde cada rexión de terra, língoa, tradizón e fisionomía de seu, tan autónoma figura políteca, é igual nos Soviets comunistas que na católica e tradizionalista Austria' (PUPG, 161).

The counterpoint to a rural Galicia bereft of self-determined organs of power is an urban, imperialist Madrid or Mediterranean Castile, and Otero perpetuates the *Rexurdimento* binary opposition made up of Galicia and a negative other to ramify his historicist-based vision of a virtual political aspiration. He rallies against all that Madrid symbolises for him ('Madrid, tal como é hoxe, co seu sentido metropolitan e imperialista,

---

<sup>49</sup> '[Galicia] non se quer deixar gobernar polos covachuelas de Madrid, acougo e invernadeiro de toda vexetación caciquil', (PUPG, 160).

seródeo, inxusto e desacreditado, é o peor nemigo da Galicia', GAL, 158) and contrasts the city as an insular political entity with the alleged cultural distinctiveness, geographical quiddity and undogmatic openness of Galicia:

nós somos diferentes e Madrid quer a uniformidade, pois nós somos outros e Madrid quer que sexamos como il, pois nós criámonos ás beiras do Atlántico diante de todos os camiños do mundo, e Madrid vive diante da estepa enxoiata, lonxe dos mares e do mundo máis pechado e indefrente que Felipe o Taciturno na súa cela do triste Escorial. (GAL, 158)

The insistence on historicist criteria as a political agenda extends to a fuller comparison with Castile that culminates in an oratorical reference to slavery and a dramatic allusion to possible alternatives:

que eles canten a beleza do Guadarrama e o sol mudéxar de Toledo. Están no seu dereito. Mais cantemos nós as nosas serras nutricias e o espírito europeo de Compostela. Que a nosa relación sexa de pares, de iguais, non de amos e servos. E si non fora posible máis que esta relación de eles amos, entón calquer cousa dinantes de servidume. (GAL, 158)

The acerbity and direct tone of Otero's comments contrast sharply with his otherwise lyrical, perambulatory wistfulness, and testifies to the effect upon his outlook and practice engendered by the pact between the *Partido Galeguista* and the *Frente Popular* of the same year, 1933. It also denotes the marked difference of his journalistic register where topical political issues are at play and the forceful didacticism that he communicates.

Otero makes an important distinction early on in the *Ensaio histórico...* concerning relationship between geographical dispersal and separate identity: 'non pode sosterse que a cada rexión natural corresponde necesariamente unha rexión espiritual' (EH, 12). Natural regions may exist, in Otero's view, without being consecrated with *Volksgeist*, the mysterious synergy of the close, mutual influence of milieu and human

grouping. The extent of the proposed details for the federalisation of a new Spain is limited to a two-tier definition of membership, which recognises primarily three areas of Iberia as ‘unidades nacionales’ (NAZON, 240) possessing those distinctions of national uniqueness endorsed by Herder: ‘tres pobos na Hespaña disfroutan de língua, cultura, i espírito propios. (...). Euskadi, Cataluña, Galiza, precisan de unha chea liberdade, e soilo poden vivir armónicamente cas outras porcións da Hespaña, baixo a formula federal’ (GAL, 158). These nations, Otero demands, ‘entran na federación por dereito propio, sin discuseón, como un recoñecemento da realidade’ (NAZON, 240), whereas the remainder, defined as ‘regions’, may decide on what basis – administrative, practical or differential are suggested – they wish to enter freely: ‘as rexións, sinxelamente matizadas dentro dun tipo xeneral, entran por unha comenencia administrativa, por a necesidade dunha maor facilidade, ou por unha ansia de individualidade que ás unidades nacionales se non pode discutire’ (NAZON, 240). Otero draws on comparisons with national entities and regions that might constitute a hypothetical French federalist state<sup>50</sup> in order to reinforce his visualisation of a future Iberian political structure, to differentiate between ‘regions’ and ‘nations’ within Spain and ultimately to enhance the image he presents of Galicia as a organically sovereign nation from a Romantic, cultural nationalistic perspective:

todos desexamos que a Extremadura ou o Aragón teñan a autonomía propugnada polos seus intelectoás máis significativos. Mailo caso distas rexións se non pode medir co mesmo criterio que os de Cataluña, Vasconia ou Galiza. Nisas terras as variacións da facies xeográfica ou human non chegan a difrenzar o nó interno común a outras rexións. O dominio dunha estaxe xeolóxica, dunha acentoación, dun estilo social non pasan de variacións dun tema. O tema nacional, úneco, intransferíbele, eterno no vivir hestórico, da Vasconia ou da Galiza, non pode se contentare ca autonomía. (NAZON, 240-241)

---

<sup>50</sup> ‘A Bretaña, ou a Vasconia, collerían por dereito propio nun posibre federalismo francés no que o país de Orleáns ou Champagne ou a terra de Lyon serían pouco máis que circus administrativos’ (NAZON, 240).

His manifesto for the general political structure of a possible Galicia, neatly summed up by his own phrases as 'a Redenzón galega' (PUPG, 161) within 'unha Hespaña nova' (NAZON, 240),<sup>51</sup> coincides mostly with collective nationalist projections of political sovereignty summarised by Beramendi and Núñez Seixas.<sup>52</sup> The possibility of true independence is never posited; instead, the alternative to the Castilian-biased centralised state is 'autonomía integral', or the confederation of Iberian nations (Castile, Catalonia, Euskadi, Galicia and if possible, Portugal). Each federal state would possess a parliament and government, chosen by universal suffrage, and would legislate for all spheres with the exception of defence, international relations, currency, customs, international communications, penal and civil policy. A mutual economic policy would exist among these nations. Public life would be completely 'galeguizada': Galicia would be a bilingual state in which Galician culture itself is bolstered in all spheres of society.<sup>53</sup> These are the sketches for Galicia's political reality within a more federal Spain for which Otero and his colleagues campaigned before the outbreak of civil war. There is, however, an important 'foreign policy' element to Otero's conception of Galicia and its external relationships that extend beyond an imagined or real Iberia.

### *Galicia and a Europe of organic nations*

So far I have considered the internal characteristics of this distinct Galician country; in following sections, so as to probe the full implications of its external

---

<sup>51</sup> The 'H' in 'Hespaña' is no typographical or orthographical error, but yet another means by which a prejudicial past might be contrasted with a pliable future in the allusion not just to a 'new Spain', but also to a reformulated Iberia.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Beramendi and Núñez Seixas, *op. cit.*, 122-125.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

affiliations, we must consider the precise format of nationhood adopted by Otero, within the theoretical confines of his written work, and the practical realities to which his political activities respond, in relation to his vision of European reality. Galicia, Otero declares in the Spanish Cortes in 1931, 'tiene aquellas calidades características de las patrias que son la cultura, la tierra, la historia y la raza'.<sup>54</sup> For Herder, men congregate in groups because they are conscious of what unites them – bonds of common descent, language, soil, collective experience; these bonds are unique, impalpable and ultimate.<sup>55</sup> Rallying against Marxism, Otero evokes 'a inmortalidade das linguas', 'a primavera sempre nova dos pobos' and 'a necesidade de que triunfe a variedade sobre as máis intelixentes unificacións' (MARX). Nations are natural entities: 'as nacións, ó igual das primaveras, seguirán vivindo da terra, do sol, da lembranza, das fontes internas do espírito' (MARX). He combines Herder's famous metaphor of natural growth with the politically emotive image of the map:

se considerámo-lo mapa cos ollos do espírito, deseguida se esvaen as cores e outras máis fondas veñen xurdir en troques. Son as cores das almas étnicas, o xenio das terras que bota flores de seu indiferente á man do xardiñeiro. Cores que teñen vibración de falas, lembranza dos antergos e un aire de marcha cara un porvir en que a sistemática política non teña realidade, e as cores do mapa sexan as das almas ceibes e inmorredoiras dos pobos. (ELEM)

Herder employs the metaphors of the garden containing many flowers, and the plant rooted in soil, to convey this idea of compelling appeal to cultural nationalists: the world could be viewed as a garden of diverse national plants, each flowering according to its own nature and development.<sup>56</sup> This passage recalls Solovio's imaginative and emotional response to the map of Fontán, introduced to him by his dying uncle. Bernaldo, and

---

<sup>54</sup> *Discursos parlamentarios*, 151.

<sup>55</sup> Berlin, 'The decline of Utopian Ideas in the West', *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 20-48 (38).

<sup>56</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 59.

transfigured forever in Galician culture by Otero into an artefact of nationhood. Rather than the surface reality of geographical features, Solovio intuits

agras marelas de centeo, ermos vestidos de flores de toxo e de piorno, serras penedosas, campanarios barrocos, xente que vai polos carreiros aos muíños e ás ferias, verdeceres de camposantos, fuxir de augas, praias douradas, galgar de ondas nos cons, velas que saen roselando o mar, orballeiras sobre as arboredas mestas, rúas de vellas cidades, soidades de esquecidos mosteiros. (AS, 129)

What Derek Flitter describes as ‘a revelatory cultural projection of an entire essential reality’<sup>57</sup> supplies a programmatically symbolic whole, an *enxebre* distillation of Galicia’s intimate reality; this succession of cultural echoes structures within the mind the entire imaginative hypothesis that is Galicia, as the written word crystallizes cultural memory.<sup>58</sup> This sympathetic approximation to the organic, intimate reality of the Galician nation also indicates the standard by which to contemplate other places where a national consciousness may be discerned. Cultural diversity, ethnic origin, language and *Volksgeist* are therefore deemed more accurate criteria on which to judge the boundaries of nations than political reality, which does not necessarily correlate with ‘organic’ national frontiers: ‘non di ren a liña da fronteira que minte nos mapas polítecicos’ (SUL, 238). The nation, and not the man-made creation of the state, is a consequence of Nature. Central to Herder’s social and political thought is the notion that *Volk* and nation must be one;<sup>59</sup> a state without national character is a political machine without life, a phantom without organic existence. *Volk* is the natural and organic basis of statehood, a people with its own peculiar character that embodies the one and the only effective cohesive

---

<sup>57</sup> Flitter, ‘Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The “Xeración Nós”’, 302.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 73.

force in socio-political association.<sup>60</sup> This inner and essentially spiritual quality constituted for Herder the most vital and therefore 'organic' basis of nationhood and statehood; states which contained a mixture of ethnic communities lacked such a spiritual bond and are mere 'mechanical contrivances', devoid of life, doomed from the outset.<sup>61</sup> This underpins Otero's vision of nationhood on an international plane.

A Romantic, Otero is naturally predisposed towards the cultural relativism of Herder and the notion of peaceful diversity: 'sen esquece-lo mundo exterior, Galicia, a calada Galicia, precisa ser interpretada en función de universalismo histórico' (EH, 198). He sustains in purely Herderian terms that 'para vivir no mundo é preciso ter personalidade para alternar coas personalidades dos outros pobos e enriquecerse coa súa relación' (ACP). The organic-historicist format was of course the principal theory of nationhood adopted by Galician nationalists during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, often through mediatory sources such as those that condition Murguía's reception of these ideas. Yet in Otero's discourse and erudition, in his mapping out of the contours and borders of his model nation, there is every sign that his subscription to Herder's ideas is direct and unmediated. Otero's defence of variety and opposition to universalism is cultural, literary, idealistic and humane, all of those values that are associated with the historicist tendencies of the eighteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Throughout this chapter I make reference to the lack of political realism discernible in Otero's works that is a corollary of his essentially cultural approach to politics and the question of nation:

---

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>62</sup> Berlin, 'The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will', *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 207-237 (225).

given that this tendency can also be observed in Herder's writings, I see this as a further demonstration of Otero's reliance on the root ideas advanced by German historicism.<sup>63</sup>

Herder and his disciples believed in the peaceful coexistence of a rich multiplicity and variety of national forms of life, the more diverse the better; universalism reduced everything to the lowest common denominator which applies to all men at all times, denying cultures that specific content which alone gave them point.<sup>64</sup> There is also a transcendent, religious facet to this pluralism: Herder saw diversity, and not uniformity, as the design of the Almighty, the fundamental characteristic of the universal order where the world should include many nationalities.<sup>65</sup> In Otero's view, Castilian imperialism had sought to superimpose a foreign culture on Galicia, deny the qualitative and collective phenomenon that distinguished Galicia as a nation apart from others within the Iberian peninsula, 'a individualidade de Galicia dentro das culturas peninsulares' (EH, 15). Otero aligns the defence of this singularity with 'un europeísmo superior' (EH, 15-16), and employs historicist criteria in order to profile Galicia's distinction within the peninsula and its relationship with other nations of like historical and ethnic heritage:

se comparamos Galicia coas outras terras peninsulares, veremos que nada debe nin ás xentes nin ás culturas do Sur. Escapou a semitización. Non foi ibérica nin árabe. O carácter diferencial español e o mudexarismo non poden aplicarse a Galicia. De estirpe aria, atlántica e occidental, a estraña histórica galega pode clasificarse de insular, e tanto pola súa forza de conservación coma polo seu poder expansivo. Hai en España outras terras non mudéxares e tamén europeas: Vasconia, Cataluña, Cantabria, Asturias. Mais o seu destino foi ben diverso do galego. Ou pertencen a outro grupo europeo, ou non saíron dun estado inicial, ou se incorporaron na cultura avasaladora de Castela. (EH, 15-16)

The quest for nationhood based on a tolerance of difference was best expressed through the same application of historicist values to Europe in its entirety, and

---

<sup>63</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Berlin, 'The Bent Twig', *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 238-261 (245).

<sup>65</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 58.

particularly smaller nations without statehood.<sup>66</sup> In historicist terms, if statehood were to be 'natural', it had to coincide with an ethnic community.<sup>67</sup> The expediency of this method gains added weight in the aftermath of World War One: 'da fonda liquidación da guerra saíron máis fortes os valores apuntados no dezanove. E con máis razón cómpre non esquecer esta maneira de pensar cando meditamos no problema dos pequenos pobos, como a Galicia' (MR, 106). As Vicki Ann Spencer observes, the advantage of Herder's cultural approach is that it lays the foundation for the recognition of communities with certain entitlements irrespective of whether or not history has in fact resulted in their political autonomy.<sup>68</sup> No other philosophical format could provide a Galician nationalist of Otero's determined formation as a traditionalist cultural historian with the intellectual legitimacy, emotive expediency and ideological framework through which to express his designations for Galician nationhood past, present and future.

Europe is an indispensable reference point for Galicia and her culture: 'Galicia non pode vivir sen Europa; precisa de alentarse directamente na atmósfera occidental, nas súas formas superiores e inmorrentes' (PDE). 'A nosa alma europea e atlántica', Otero asserts, 'soamente na atmósfera europea topa o medio propio para o seu desenvolvemento integral' (MR, 113). The *Xeración Nós*' transition from culturalist to 'Atlantic' Europeanism correlates with their recuperation of identity and later promotion of this, and Otero foresees 'un novo estadio no que a mente e a man dos pobos céltigos sexan a guía da Europa renovada' (MR, 110). The burning question as ever remains the same: what does the subject in question mean by 'Europe', and what does this imply for nationhood? The ill-defined and much debated concept of *europaización* was a major

---

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, 115.

topic of intellectual debate for Spaniards during the nineteenth century, and particular attention was dedicated to this by the Generation of 1898. Addressing the topical theme, Otero insists that Europe ‘non ten para nós ren que nos adeprender. Somos Europa, traballamos no cerne europeo. Sen definilo nin expresalo a Galicia sempre desenvolveu o seu «leit motiv» de ceibe estilo europeo’ (MR, 109). For this reason Adrián Solovio is ‘por Galicia e na Galicia (...) europeo e planetario’ (AS, 185).<sup>69</sup>

During the two decades prior to the Civil War, it is by no means a passé issue for Galician nationalists, but an extra-Iberian projection that blurs with Galician *celtismo* as an alternative to the perceived political and cultural incomprehension of Madrid, Castile, or the symbolic centre. At the heart of Otero’s conception of European identity is Herder’s affirmation of universality through the defence and preservation of variety, of the particular; also, the belief that a culture’s universality depends on its degree of authenticity. Hence, in his forecast for future Galicians, for ‘os mozos galegos’, Otero affirms that ‘saben ser europeos por seren esenzalmente galegos. Teñen unha pátreas e por tela síntense cibdadaos do mundo’ (ES, 133). In this vision of a genuinely historicist national reality for all nations, Otero reveals his true Romantic colours ‘ainda está por escribir (...) a epopeia da nova Europa. Será porqu’inda se non rematou a guerra heróica. Os pobos contr’os imperialismos. O trunfo do mapa das nazóns espirituás na loita c’as nazós polítecás talladas en carne e sangue pol-a espada e pol-a diplomaceas’ (ROM, 189). Romanticism signifies ‘correición da hestorea, do mapa políteco, das conveniencias diplomátecas’ (ROM, 113); as for the historically imposed reality of imperialism, Otero predicts that ‘hai outra cousa por baixo. Non lle faltarán herois’ (ROM, 113).

---

<sup>69</sup> As Nicole Dulin Bondue has mathematically registered, ‘La palabra “europea” aparece mencionada 50 veces en *Arredor de si*. Cinco veces en una sóla páxina, la páxina 141. El adjetivo “europeo” aparece 9 veces’. Dulin Bondue, *op. cit.*, 368.

He suggests that the new post-imperial Europe will consist of 'a realización das esencias nacionais' (ARTE), of 'realidade nacional', rather than 'organismos artificiais', and should represent 'a verdadeira vida dos pobos' (SEN). Otero calls for 'a creación d'un novo mundo político sobre as indiscutibles bases naturaes i-eternas' (EMA, 4). This has a philanthropic and idealist goal: 'soilo co seu trunfo comreto pode aspirar a Humanidade a un ciclo de vida superior' (EMA, 4). The plain and simple legacy of Herder's cultural relativism pervades these statements and nowhere is there greater consistency between Otero's prose projections and his fictional designs for Galicia than in this aspect, especially during the thirties. Adrián Solovio, having realised his journey *arredor de si*, perceives 'o xurdimento de tódalas almas colectivas, nacionais' (AS, 186), where the future map of Europe would not consist of 'liñas de aduanas senón vitais zonas de transición entre as harmoniosas conciencias dos pobos' (AS, 186), and where 'mellor que Estado, cada terra era un ceibe conxunto de municipios' (AS, 187). Similarly, in *Devalar*, on the third night of his nationalist epiphany, Martiño Dumbria contemplates Galicia's place on the map of Europe: 'cordilleiras hercinianas froumosas, dondo morrer dos chans no mar, paixón, berro xeolóxico dos Alpes, colmea das zonas industriais, longo bruído xerminadoiro das colleitas da historia' (DEV, 169). This geographical diversity, attached to a historical perspective, leads to a revised political presentation of a plural and potential reality for Galicia within a Europe of nations whose identity and sovereignty rests on historicist precepts, as we see in *Devalar*:

o lirismo facíase a soa realidade. Contra política, economía, historia de ton, atreboada mestura das rúas, a Galiza xurdía cinguida ás outras patrias irmás no arelar. Estratificábanse no mapa as estaxes de historia. Lucían coa novidade eterna as paisaxes electas. O esencial pende do anxeio de cada terra. Todas teñen o seu, calado ou brillante, alagado ou aparente, consecuente ou non co destino. (DEV, 169)

There is no impression of superiority here, but the undiluted Herderian formulae of national and inter-national value in specificity, of different national purposes arising from discrete and incomparable circumstances.<sup>70</sup> Europe is seen to afford what Derek Flitter designates 'a transcendent cultural opportunity' and 'a catalyst for Galician self-realisation within a vibrant and diverse community of historical cultures, many of which had been subjugated by military conquest or political superimposition'.<sup>71</sup> This is the meaning elicited by Otero when he refers, through the developing thoughts of Adrián Solovio, to 'a novidade de Europa, a que ela agarda, a que xustificará para sempre no mundo'. By this, he does not allude to political formulae applied on a large scale as in the nineteenth century, nor science, but 'o descubrimento e maioría de idade de tódolos pobos que a compoñen, o xurdimento de tódalas almas colectivas, nacionais' (AS, 186). Otero envisages this through the medium of a novel and an alter ego who is little more than a literary representation of himself and a mouthpiece for his epiphanic, annunciatory *galeguismo*: he regards this as a practical blueprint, and not a fictional utopia.

Addressing the related issues of cultural nationalism and moral regeneration in cultures, John Hutchinson observes how the cultural nationalist affirms a cosmology according to which humanity, like nature, is infused with a creative force that endows all things with individuality. Nations are primordial expressions of this spirit; like families, they are natural solidarities; not just political units but *organic* beings, living personalities, whose individuality must be cherished by their members in all their manifestations. Unlike the political nationalist, the cultural nationalist founds the nation

---

<sup>70</sup> Berlin, 'The decline of Utopian Ideas in the West', *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 39.

<sup>71</sup> Flitter, 'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', 307.

not on 'mere' consent or law but on the passions implanted by nature and history.<sup>72</sup> This coheres with and explicates Otero's nationalist enunciations. Otero does not subscribe to notions of a wider federation of European countries based on what he considers abstract economic practicalities: any deviation from the organic norm, from those frontiers that result naturally from the coalescence of historical awareness, geographical singularity and discrete traditions and cultures, is an unnecessary alteration of national reality as predicated on Nature and therefore the design of God.<sup>73</sup> Otero shares Herder's scepticism about the much-acclaimed cultural advancement that is supposed to result from the merging of nations.<sup>74</sup>

In the novel he extols the meeting of national identities at natural frontiers rather than the transaction of goods at customs posts. In his newspaper articles, he espouses a Europe of 'nacións, fronteiras sebes de eidos e non cicatrices de feridas no chan' (EAC, 170). We must not read a nineteenth-century-schooled Galician nationalist's usage of 'Europe' – a term now as nebulous as 'Romanticism' – according to the conflicting definitions of current political currency. I concur with Derek Flitter's conclusion that the men of *Nós* were not prepared to exchange subordination to one centralized power for a far-flung tenancy in the fiefdom of another: 'terms like 'planetario' and 'universal' disclose a willingness to outreach any tendency to hermeticism, even within an entity as large as the continent of Europe, and a disposition to tread "todos os camiños do mundo"''.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, an imposed uniformity of whatever kind is alien to their generous

---

<sup>72</sup> Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, 122.

<sup>73</sup> 'National individuality alive and striving, was a divine manifestation with a special mission to fulfill', Kohn, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>74</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 100.

<sup>75</sup> Derek Flitter, 'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', 307-308.

vision of a desired harmony between peoples and their respective nations. Otero espouses 'nazóns espirituáis' and 'almas colectivas, nacionais'.<sup>76</sup> To a thinker profoundly versed in Romanticism and displaying an acute awareness of the shared spiritual and historical traditions of diverse European nations, any proposal of a tampering with natural national boundaries and sovereignty would be anathema. Once again, we must look to Herder in order to appreciate the cultural context of Otero's formulation. Herder treats with great suspicion all attempts to introduce more binding forms of unification, such as the formation of regional blocks, diplomatic alliances or international political authorities.<sup>77</sup> He scorns 'that dreadful fiction', the concept of a 'European Balance of Power', and regards suggestions for the creation of a world government as both impracticable and undesirable.<sup>78</sup> Herder is convinced that the founding of a supra-national government could only aggravate international antagonisms.<sup>79</sup>

Isaiah Berlin observes how Herder is not simply ignoring the aggressive potentialities of nation states or blindly assuming that there is no reason for conflict between various nationalisms when he imagines the world as a garden which can contain many flowers, and when he speaks of the possible and desirable harmony between all national cultures. Rather, he is deeply hostile to the growth of political, economic, military centralization, and sees no reason why culturally autonomous communities need clash.<sup>80</sup> The implications and restrictions of Herder's social and political thought apply equally to the Galician scholar who subscribed to that vision of the world:

---

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* Derek Flitter's italics.

<sup>77</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Berlin, *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, 183.

for Herder, then, it would appear, nationalism and internationalism were not currents that ran in opposite directions but rather successive stages of historical development. The particularist tendencies of nationalism and the universal tendencies characterizing internationalism were seen by him as complementary and not as contradictory forces. National and international 'humanization' was *one* single process. This belief in the natural harmony between the particular and the universal, between diversity and unity was, in a sense, the logical corollary of Herder's organic conception of the cosmic order.<sup>81</sup>

In this respect, Otero's adherence to original historicist co-ordinates is unswerving: the sort of international 'unity' in mind is essentially the consciousness of common interests, needs and purposes of diverse nations, each of which had a natural right to separate and independent existence.<sup>82</sup> Bernard's summary of these tendencies encapsulates equally well the idealist core of Otero's zealous outlook: 'it was an act of faith, a moral and religious conviction about man's social destiny'.<sup>83</sup>

If Otero harboured any detailed economic plan for Galicia's place within this virtual historicist Europe of organic nations, he does not divulge it. The cultural takes precedence over the practical, the idealist over the realist, especially during the era of the Second Republic. Otero is on far safer ground when talking about identity and anthropology, and seems much more credible when steering away from economic and political realities. The shared common denominator of the *Nós* group and their associated political allegiances was the establishment of a federal, pluri-national Iberian republic, with variations along these lines. X.G. Beramendi underlines how their 'democracia política' did not necessarily correspond with that which was represented in parliament, as is shown by the project elaborated by Otero and others, *Bases para la Constitución del Estado Federal Gallego*, which dates from the period prior to the discussion and

---

<sup>81</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

ratification of the 1931 constitution.<sup>84</sup> *Galeguistas* at this time believed that the Republic would be federal; traditional nationalists therefore sought the maximum adaptation of predominant liberal democratic values in the political circumstances of the moment.<sup>85</sup>

This is an appropriate area of my thesis in which to highlight the significantly different approaches and positions held regarding the realisation of an improved national reality for Galicia and the direction that this might take. Derek Flitter refers to the philosophical gulf between Risco and Otero on the one hand, and Castelao on the other, in his summary of the *Xeración Nós*' construction of Galician identity as comprising contrapuntal affirmations, assertions of singularity and of a distinctively Galician collective personality rooted in essentially different interpretations and formulations of historical experience.<sup>86</sup> The former advocate the recasting of the concept of nation, affirm its continuity at a more profound and transcendent level: they propound the transposition of the concept from the realm of what Otero designates 'hestórea aparential' to that of an inalienable spiritual core.<sup>87</sup> Castelao may allude to the *Volksgeist* theme, but this rhetoric is guided to specific political assessments and goals,<sup>88</sup> and represents a continuing need to 'concretarse' that sits uncomfortably with the more elusive but more flexible imaginative parameters of Risco and Otero, especially given the last and most all-embracing of Castelao's goals: an 'Estados Unidos de Europa para constituir a Unión Mundial'.<sup>89</sup> Otero's grounding in Romantic historicist tendencies disallows the plausibility of this idea as a viable proposal for the advancement of Galician interests. The various federal

---

<sup>84</sup> Beramendi and Núñez Seixas, *op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>86</sup> Flitter, 'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', 297.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

proposals that were current in Europe had little appeal to Herder: he is aware of Helvetius' proposal for the formation of a federal league in which the constituent member States would retain their national individuality, but would co-operate in a limited number of spheres of mutual interest; but Herder only succeeds in presenting a hazy adumbration of how this would work.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, Herder certainly suggests a loose association of autonomous nations, co-operating in matters of common interest on a basis of equal partnership, irrespective of size, economic development and other individual differences.<sup>91</sup> This certainly corresponds with Otero's aspirations, although unlike the idea expressed by Herder, this did require common political authority and formal agreements to bind them:<sup>92</sup> the doomed 1936 statute of autonomy is the foremost example. The peaceful nationalism of Otero derives from these aspects of Herderian thought; in the growth of common interests and purposes, Herder saw the groundwork for peaceful international co-operation and a moderation of purely nationalist tendencies;<sup>93</sup> patriotism that encompassed cultural relativism would taper nationalist excess.<sup>94</sup> The greatest common ground among nations in Otero's eyes is founded on a shared faith and pool of traditions that this relationship yields.

### *The national significance of Santiago de Compostela*

Historicism merges with ideological sympathies to form the basis of Otero's historiographical method for assessing the role of Santiago de Compostela and its associated pilgrimage in the definition of Galician nationhood; it is simultaneously an

---

<sup>90</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 106.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

opportunity for Otero to eulogise an important aspect of Galician history and to stress Galician nationhood within Europe by imposing historicist criteria on the past. The pilgrimage and its destination act as a means of cultural unification for the nations of Europe on the basis of their shared Christian inheritance:

hay que insistir en cómo bajo el Pórtico de la Gloria pasó la Cristianidad entera y que los largos caminos de Santiago maduraron un profundo sentimiento de solidaridad entre lenguas y étnicas diversas. Fue el camino y fue el hito celebrados por San Francisco, por el Dante y Miguel Angel, el gran fautor de la conciencia europea como lo fue el santuario apolíneo de Delfos para la íntima unidad de Grecia. (CDO, 104)

Otero echoes Goethe's affirmation that the pilgrimage to Santiago created Europe in his stress upon the transcendental - and not political or dogmatic - ties that bind given nations together in spiritual and cultural federation: 'esta Europa desartellada por fóra, vive un trascendente vivir no espírito baixo o Patriarcado ideal de Compostela' (DEV, 210). There is little difference between the register and discourse of his fiction and his articles regarding this issue. The *camión* motif so central to his account of Galician culture within a supranational context here takes on its fullest connotations for Galicia's universality through the spiritual medium of pilgrimage:

toda de luz, a estrada de Sant'Iago afeita ós infindo acentos da Cristiandade. Camións vibradores de dores e cantigas, de esperanzas e saudades. Calquera deles, por humilde que fose, símbolo do xénero humano. A estrada chegaba cansa, viña de moi lonxe, cinguindo á Galiza tódolos membros espallados da Catolicidade, igual a grave vila dos estudos fondos, as torres orgullosas de Aquisgrán, os portos enlazados do norte, os portos risoños do mar azul, molmente ecoante de ondas cadenciosas. (XEL, 119)

Otero's religious idealism governs his belief in Catholicism as a faith that binds Galicia and 'o orbe enteiro' (XEL, 120) in mystical unity, rather than contravene their organic category of nationhood that should also entail complete political sovereignty. The faith symbolised by the spiritual capital constitutes the cultural grounds for Galicia's status as

a nation and her alliance with peoples of shared beliefs: ‘o erguemento da cidade [Santiago] condensa o vivir máis fondo de Galicia, cinguida co mundo por finos itinerarios espirituales’ (GEG, 10). In the juxtaposition of *galeguismo* and Christianity lies ‘a gloria de Compostela e a razón de que sexa unha metropolí’ (DIA, 3). He goes on: ‘sen ela [Santiago] non se podería expricar a formación da conciencia europea no misterio fecundo da Edade Media. Sen ela non sería Galicia unha indestrutible individualidade’ (DIA, 3). Otero elevates Compostela - and therefore Galicia - above the European to the universal by applying the historicist criterion of diversity to the city and its spiritual importance:

ó mellor podría escribirse unha historia sintética do mundo citando unha soa cidade ibérica: Compostela. Ela sen forza política e sen autoridade dogmática dinamizou o Occidente; a peregrinación creou o camiño e o camiño ligando, elevando e afirmando ás diversas xentes de Europa e do Mundo, foi vieiro de perfección da conciencia europea. (EH, 166-167)

His discourse regarding Compostela and the pilgrimage rests on one of the pillars of historicism, that nations are first and foremost discrete cultures:

podía que o tipo [de toda gran vila universal] ideal teña sido un longo intre representado por a Compostela, galega e católeca en todos os sentidos da verba, persidindo un consorcio de culturas nacionais ca virtude de seu fogar enxebre (...). Capital de pobos ceibes foron Compostela e outras poucas vilas semellantes as que diron dereito a pensar nunha Europa onde non trunfe a nación imperialista nin se magoe a nación descida á baixa categoría de provincia. (EAC, 170)

Santiago epitomises the peaceful and tolerant regard for diversity found in historicism’s range of values: ‘garda a esenza da terra onde afinca sen a precisión de domear ningunha caste inferior’ (EAC, 170). This reminds us of his proposals for Galicia within a possible Europe whose nations would share the same format of nationhood in the post-imperial wake. The primary historicist base on which Otero conceptualises Galician nationhood

within a cultural and religious European context is that of unity in variety, variety in unity, of universality in authenticity. Compostela's quality of being 'a mais enxebre das cidades galegas' ensures its status as 'a mais universal' (DIA, 3). He describes the focus of the pilgrimage as 'Compostela de voz universal, torreada de esperanza, faro das xeracións, consolo e fito de leguas e vidas' (XEL, 119-120), ascribing religious and cultural significance to Galicia where there is a want of political consolidation. Otero reiterates the same theme in 'Temas Compostelanos':

Santiago tan penetrado pol-a vida da aldeia, cidade de pazos, de mosteiros, centro de paisanaxe, fogar das tradicións, xurde máis compreto e vivo contemplando o fincar das súas raíces no vello chán galego. Como total-as grandes creacións é universal sen deixar de ser da terra, e cicais precisamente por selo en mais outro grado que ningunha outra vila. (TC, 16)

He therefore proposes that 'a Galiza hai que sentila i-enxerga-la en si mesma, no seu cerne, mais tamén en función do mundo' (SE, 153), and idealises the Middle Ages as the exemplification of this universality:

a Edade Media, trazando o Camiño de Sant-Yago, acertou un símbolo non estático, dinámico; non individual, colectivo; non fixo, senón camiñante. O camiño sempre foi a millor propedéutica do espírito. O camiño purifica, ergue, cría posibilidades. Todo tende á riqueza da diversificación, camiñando. E a Galaxia e iso: unha moitedume de luciñas en camiñar, coma se cada un fose unha y-alma e todas elas xuntas as moitedumes de cristiandade, en procura da nova santa terra. Os antigos ouvían a múseca das esferas; os séculos do románico ouviron o roal da Galaxia, coral de pobos en camiño. (SE, 153)

Otero's fondness for the binary opposition of static/dynamic stands out here; in addition, the importance he places on diversity and the notion of collectivity through national uniqueness and spiritual preoccupation refers to his familiar source material of Romanticism and historicism. These elements of cultural history underpin his hagiographic, adoptive sketch of the apostle St. James, and the interrogative with which

he points towards the bases for Galician nationhood: ‘Sant-Yago foi galego e foi universal, atraendo a toda a cristianidade, sen escolma de liñaxes nin de línguas, ós portais floridos da súa igrexa. ¿Queredes unha mellor e máis exemplar definición da Patria galega?’ (PBC). The spiritual significance of Santiago during the Middle Ages denotes the moment when ‘a vida íntima dun pobo que adquire a plenitude da súa figura histórica’ (EH, 137), during which Galicia can be defined as ‘terra ecuménica e europea’ (EH, 134).<sup>95</sup> Hence Otero assigns these qualities to Galicia in order to counter the unsympathetic and stereotypical definitions from previous centuries. This selection and re-assessment of a chapter of Galician history that surpasses its own religious parameters represents one of the most decisive examples of direct, unmediated contact with the ideas of Herder. In the 1765 address composed in Riga, Herder explained that Christianity is a universal religion that embraces all men and peoples; it transcends all local and temporal loyalties in the worship of what is universal and eternal.<sup>96</sup> This is Otero’s guarantee of an extended, universal relevance for Galicia without compromising the nationalist need for autonomy. ‘A catolicidade cristiá fora moitas veces equivocada e crebada nas políticas dos Estados’ (AS, 187), he comments, recognising the historical dangers of an overarching religious authority, before advancing his vision of religious fraternity through the scope of historicism: ‘para ser verdadeira, eficiente, abranguería un mundo de clans modernos, xa superada a superstición da mécnica, da economía, do poder, nunha fraternidade de pequenos pobos ditosos’ (AS, 187). Universality through organic nationality, shared faith and mutual religious tradition therefore offers an authenticity of

---

<sup>95</sup> Castelao’s line is identical here: ‘nos camiños que conducían a Galiza crúzanse as culturas do mundo antigo e fórmase a unidade espiritual do Occidente. Por estes camiños entra Europa en Hespaña. Ao mesmo tempo xorde unha poderosa cultura galega, que adquire independencia e vida propia’. Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, 47.

<sup>96</sup> Berlin, ‘J.G. Herder’, 34.

identity that refutes abstract political imposition, as we see personified in the figure of Adrián Solovio: 'en Santiago, Adrián sempre se coidaba na Europa e máis galego que nunca. A sensación do Estado español estaba para el ausente da cidade' (AS, 187). This is a relationship that also conditions Otero's fictional portrayal of medieval Galicia.

His regard of the medieval period as being analogous to the political realities of Spain before 1936 influences the composition of *A Romaría de Xelmírez*. I concur with Carlos Casares in his summary of the novel as 'traspasada pola idea dunha Galicia europea, íntimamente ligada á cultura do seu tempo (...) a través das pelerinaxes, pero impedida políticamente polo peso do imperio toledano'.<sup>97</sup> In the novel, Xelmírez ponders upon the religious and political limitations facing his quest to secure an archbishopric for Santiago: 'aquí o prestixio do Apóstolo demanda un sentido de universalidade. Compostela é unha forza espiritualmente imperial e, como irmá de Roma, dela ha de ter a categoría, non de Toledo nin de Braga. ¿Non foi consagrada pola peregrinaxe de Carlos Magno? ¿Non é un poder esencial na Catolicidade?' (XEL, 103). Although Otero makes no attempt to construct obvious textual connections between both epochs and their contexts, the parallels are self-evident. Medieval Galicia seeks to expand its religious autonomy on the basis of its awareness of the universality of its spiritual role within a macro-national grouping, yet faces the political restrictions of a dominant and unsympathetic power: the religious establishment of Toledo. The Galicia of the first decades of the twentieth century seeks to expand its political autonomy and establish a self-standing culture in contradistinction to Castile (amongst other counterpoints), and presents an alternative grouping to the prevailing political and historical status quo: Celtic, Atlantic, European. However, there is another qualifier of the term 'Europe'

---

<sup>97</sup> Casares, *op. cit.*, 121-122.

which points once again to Oswald Spengler as a major influence where the cultural and ideological construction of nationhood is concerned.

***Oswald Spengler, Vico and Galicia: the resurgence of the 'Western' nation***

In *A Romaría de Xelmírez*, the bishop contemplates Compostela:

dentro do grave orbe da Catolicidade sentía o decorrer do futuro por novos vieiros. ¡Metropolitano de Occidente! Esta frase, chama inmorrente, subía acesa na cinza milagrosa da cova apostólica, queimaba e exaltaba a enerxía da terra e da xente galega, a chamada a gobernar nos lindeiros do mundo, a franqueada cara ó infindo alén do mar e da alma. (XEL, 260)

Wherever the adjective 'occidental' or noun 'occidente' appears in Otero's texts, it may be read as shorthand for those values that I identify in my investigation of the portrayal of landscape in Otero's works, where Galicia is deemed to be 'Faustian', or 'Western European' with added ideological baggage. For example, the cathedral at Santiago is 'un lugar único entre las naciones occidentales de la cristiandad' (PDC, 52). Describing the success of Xelmírez' mission during the twelfth century, he writes that 'a nosa terra, inspirada nos anhelos de Occidente, está madura para a expresión románica e lírica, as súas glorias máis altas' (EH, 120). Given the importance of Spengler's ideas to Otero, 'occidente' recalls the presentation of a 'Faustian' Europe in *The Decline of the West*, bound together during the Middle Ages by common spiritual heritage and values.

Spengler also employs, amongst many other philosophical snippets, aspects of historicism as a historiographical basis on which to cast a subjective eye over European history and culture. In Chapter Two, I analyse and place special emphasis on Otero's adaptation of this area of Spengler's work. The Galician writer's portrayal of the Galician landscape as Faustian dovetails with this section of my assessment of Otero's

presentation of Galicia's national structure, and Spengler's influence also extends to condition Otero's forecasts for the future of Galicia. The pervading influence of Spengler's civilisation designs can be found in the most unlikely of Otero's texts. In *Treinta y Tres Lecciones de Geografía General*, a work largely intended for use as a school textbook, we find the following evaluation of civilisations, unmistakably indebted to Spengler: 'toda civilización tiende a ser constante pero su fuerza creadora se agota y puede desaparecer. En el planeta han existido civilizaciones que han muerto después de largos siglos de existencia como la egipcia y la caldea'. Of the predominant civilisations, Otero highlights those of Asia and Western Europe; the latter, he comments, 'gracias a la superioridad de su técnica y también a la inspiración cristiana que la anima, se ha hecho cosmopolita' (TTL, 89).

Many of the ideas expressed in *The Decline of the West* are reworkings and interpretations of some of the main currents of European intellectual history, intermingled with doctrines and cultural allusions. This forms part of an extraordinary degree of referentiality that bears a striking similarity to that of Otero. In his portrayal of history as the incessant, organic becoming of things, Spengler clearly sets his own intuitive philosophy apart from orthodox historiography orientated by positivism, and echoes the debt, in part of his thought, to Hegel's conception of historical periods as the product of spontaneous development, as 'moments' and internal causes: 'I see world-history as a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvellous waxing and waning of organic forms. The professional historian, on the contrary, sees it as a sort of tapeworm industry adding on to itself one epoch after another'.<sup>98</sup> Otero favours such an intuitive and global portrayal of the historical process against conventional and more focussed

---

<sup>98</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 21-22.

methods of historiography: 'a "Decadencia do Ocidente" foi a derradeira obra sintética que arela eispricar a historia universal. (...) Os espezialistas, asegún ouserva Vicente Risco, son nemigos de Spengler. Moitos espezialistas – soilo espezialistas – d'hoxe, son nemigos, por cativa natureza, de calquer ensaio de interpretación universal' (LG, 27).

As with other aspects of his treatise, however, Spengler's vision of history rests most heavily on Herder's emphasis – as anticipated by Vico – on the organic nature of historical change and development, visible within the evolution of nations and cultures. This is clearly evident in one of Spengler's opening adumbrations of his theory, where rather than an 'empty figment of one linear history', he sees the imposing drama of 'a number of mighty Cultures, each springing with primitive strength from the soil of a mother-region to which it remains firmly bound throughout its whole life-cycle', each of which stamps its material, its mankind, in its own image, and each of which possesses 'its own idea, its own passions, its own life, will and feeling, its own death'.<sup>99</sup> This echoes Vico strongly.

The importance Herder attached to the incommensurability of cultures and epochs, to their infinite variety, organic-like pattern of growth and sense of collected value (as expressed through the plant metaphor), pervades *The Decline of the West*:

there is not one sculpture, one painting, one mathematics, one physics, but many, each in its deepest essence different from the others, each limited in duration and self-contained, just as each species of plant has its peculiar blossom or fruit, its special type of growth and decline. These cultures, sublimated life-essences, grow with the same superb aimlessness as the flowers of the field. They belong, like the plants and the animals, to the living Nature of Goethe, and not to the dead Nature of Newton.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 21.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

Otero employs similar organic metaphors in order to convey his preference for an idea of nationhood based largely on German historicism. However, it is in the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* where we find concrete links between source idea (the biological metaphor of Herder and Vico), mediation (Spengler) and reception (Otero): ‘as culturas nacen e morren na historia, coexisten e sucédense, interfírense mutuamente na superficie pero no fondo cada unha garda un sino de seu, propio, inalienable, como sostén o grupo inspirado pola doutrina de Spengler’ (EH, 12). This echoes Spengler: ‘cultures, peoples, languages, truths, gods, landscapes bloom and age as the oaks and the stone-pines, the blossoms, twigs and leaves - but there is no ageing “Mankind.” Each Culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression, which arise, ripen, decay, and never return’.<sup>101</sup>

The last sentence is virtually a paraphrase of the philosophical discourse that characterises Vico’s *Scienza Nuova*, and this is an appropriate juncture in my argument at which to sketch out the influence of the Italian philosopher on Otero, who refers to ‘aquil malencóneco e illado pensador, Giovanni Battista Vico’ (CORSI, 67), ‘el genio de J.B. Vico’ (PF, 51), and comments that ““Scienza Nuova” es una fórmula tal vez, el título de su obra maestra retardó el triunfo de Vico’ (PF, 430). In addition to the main channels of contact with cultural history that I have detailed throughout this thesis, Otero may have been prompted to consider Vico through his knowledge of the Galician historian and provincialista, Antolín Faraldo, to whom Otero refers in an article entitled ‘A “Pavoni”, o libro ruso e a “Scienza Nuova”’: ‘Antolín Faraldo, liberal, católico, romántico, amaba unha filosofía da historia i-espallouna na Galiza: a filosofía da historia de Giovanni Battista Vico’ (PAVONI, 1).

---

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 21.

The philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) anticipated the principal tenets of nineteenth-century historicism. He saw history as following a cyclical pattern of *corso* and *ricorso*, where epochs of high civilisation are followed by decline, fall and sometimes absolute barbarity, where change occurs in a way analogous to the development of a human being: birth, maturity, death.<sup>102</sup> This aspect of Vico's philosophy, the best known yet least valuable of his remarkable achievements,<sup>103</sup> was part of the wider, sympathetic approach to understanding societies on the basis of their incommensurability that he championed, a kind of historicism *avant la lettre*.<sup>104</sup> Given that Vico marks the beginning of comparative cultural history and cultural pluralism, his influence on the world-view of both Otero and Oswald Spengler is easily perceptible. On the one hand, Otero admires Vico's 'esfuerzo heroico, mal informado, procedendo millor por pulos de intuición que por análisis caleados' (CORSI, 67), and his appreciation of world history as 'ciclos de razóns na humanidade, outonos e primaveiras, ceos crítecos e mornos zodíacos' (CORSI, 67). On the other hand, there appears to be a criticism of Vico for being 'un home ó fin de ideas xeraes' (CORSI, 67) who lacks 'o conceito da rexión natural e padecía da presenza fantasmal dunha humanidade grande' (CORSI, 67). These clearly conflict with Otero's preference for all ideas Herderian where nationhood is concerned. As ever, he bypasses the impractical or incompatible in cultural history, and favours instead elements of Vico's thought, whose philosophy he summarises as 'adianto e retroceso. Creación e morte' (CORSI, 67-68). Directing the cultural historian not only

---

<sup>102</sup> Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 64.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>104</sup> Berlin comments that 'Vico is the true father both of the modern concept of culture and of what one might call cultural pluralism, according to which each authentic culture has its own unique vision, its own scale of values, which, in the course of development, is superseded by other visions and values, but never wholly so: that is, earlier value-systems do not become totally unintelligible to succeeding generations', 'Giambatta Vico and Cultural History', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 49-69 (59-60).

to the source idea but also to those implicative connotations that can be drawn from Vico, Otero summarises that 'súa idea da historia pódese simbolizar na Ave Fénix: as cinzas mortas agardan frolecer. Unha riola de mortes e resurreicións marca o camiño dos homes encol da cortiza da terra' (CORSI, 67).

The Galician scholar applies the discourse and philosophy of Vico to Galician history in order to convey the decline and crucially renaissance of cultural and political awareness towards Galician distinctiveness:

os dous «corsi» galegos o tempo céltico i o tempo románico foron, sobretudo o segundo seguidos por longos e mornos «ricorsi». O máis tristeiro de todos é redículo: recuar administrativo e servo de gran parte do século dezanove. Pois baixo a tiranía dos monarcas absolutos Galiza tivo polo menos forza pra falar na pedra frolecida. (CORSI, 67-68)

Furthermore, he does not hesitate to employ this as a means to express a belief in the imminent and inexorable triumph of Galicia and her culture. This occurs during the height of the *Nós* period, when Otero declares that 'agora estamos, dentro do sistema viqueano, no inicio dun «corsi» trunfal' (CORSI, 68). This refers specifically to Galicia, although during the same period Otero bases other commentaries on Vico's thought in order to present alternatives to established political realities. He refers to Vico's system as 'unha filosofía do pasar e do ficar. Fica a obra de Deus no traballo humilde e relixiosamente ledó dos homes. O outro pasa. Hoxe 'Vico ollaría xurdir na estepa mecanizada de Rusia a aldea libre, o eido petrucio' (PAVONI, 1). Otero also conjectures that 'si Vico vivise hoxe podería fuxir de Mussolini e contemplando a curva histórica de calquer pobo – Galiza no noso caso – prestaría ós «corsi e ricorsi» outra vitalidade concreta' (CORSI, 67-68). There is a relationship therefore between these imagined

scenarios where Otero places Vico's philosophy in the context of present political reality and the resurgence of Galicia's historical good fortune.

The ideas of Vico and Spengler on the nature of historical patterns are coupled with those of German historicism to inform an ideological approximation where nations without statehood poise to 'awaken' or 'rise from the ashes' to reclaim political and cultural sovereignty. In 1930, Otero blends Vico's theories with the language of Romantic nationalism in order to

condenar dun xeito rematado a tristeira esprenza da Galiza das catro provincias, do xuíceo servo dos xornaes de Madrí, do aldraxe da nosa inmorredoiro esenza. Sería millor un bárbaro «estado ferino» pra seguir a fraseoloxía do grande meditatismo do Nápoles barroco, que a cultura de imitanza que tanto tempo nos puxo en loita co noso verdadeiro espírito. (CORSI, 68)

Later, in 1965, the tone of his references to philosophy and its application is less euphoric: 'estase tentado a crear nun xénero de "corsi" e "ricorsi" ó estilo dun novo Giovanni Battista Vico enxergando o predomiño do bosque como nos días das trompas cinxéticas dos Altamiras e dos Montañor' (ALDEA, 149). It is from this notion of unique periods, through Spengler's adaptation of moments of self-expression in a culture,<sup>105</sup> that Otero articulates a portrayal of Galician history as being characterised by four decisive epochs in which distinct aspects of identity are expressed clearly but to differing extents: 'a Galicia chegou a esta mestría en catro momentos do tempo. No céltigo, no románico, no barroco, no romántico. Certamente, con diferente forza e intensidade en cada un, e en

---

<sup>105</sup> For Faustian culture, Spengler uses a seasonal metaphor. 'Culture' in Spenglerian discourse is the period of creative activity in a society, whereas 'civilisation' is its final epoch marked by material comfort. The spring of Faustian culture was the Middle Ages, the summer the Reformation. The eighteenth century is classed by Spengler as the autumn of the Faustian soul, winter being the nineteenth century, or the 'civilisation' era of Faustian culture. Fischer, *op. cit.*, 152.

todos dunha maneira incompleta, porque todas as obras dos homes son demarcadas e endexamais completas no tempo histórico' (MR, 99).<sup>106</sup>

Otero studies and assesses the Galician past from a perspective and set of cultural co-ordinates that rely heavily on Spengler's historical discourse and approach to historiography, as well as the underlying source philosophies of Vico and Herder. To recapitulate: the principal message that Spengler wishes to communicate through *The Decline of the West* is that the historian can not only study the past but also anticipate forthcoming patterns of history and culture. This partly conditioned the messianic, evangelical-toned political and cultural discourse of Otero and other members of the *Xeración Nós*, and allows Otero to re-assess and 'imagine' an allegedly neglected history of Galicia, to forecast a favourable immediate future, and, ultimately, to undermine the validity and contemporary legitimacy of the centralised Spanish nation-state. Spengler's emphasis on the historian's ability to forecast impending patterns of history and culture therefore contributes decisively to the didactic, prescriptive register of Otero's *galeguista* rhetoric. With two critical exceptions.

Firstly, Spengler's prognostication of socialism as the culmination of history. Otero the liberal, Catholic and nationalist intellectual opposed Marxism, which he considered to be the final expression of positivism and the antithesis of the traditional, liberal and religious sentiment at the heart of Galician life and culture.<sup>107</sup> He is therefore

---

<sup>106</sup> It is interesting to note that in the *Ensaio histórico sobre a cultura galega* Otero places Galicia firmly within the beginnings of the 'Faustian' epoch. The Romanesque period and Galicia's place in Western European culture is characterised by the rise in importance of Santiago as a religious centre and pilgrimage destination: 'Roma coñece a importancia de Santiago, os peregrinos veñen guiados pola Galaxia: a nosa terra, inspirada nos anhelos de Occidente, está madura para a expresión románica e lírica, as súas glorias máis altas' (EH, 120). All of this points towards a new and original reading of Otero's novel set in mediaeval Galicia and Europe, *A Romaría de Xelmírez* (1934).

<sup>107</sup> For Otero, Western civilisation had grown distant from God, a process he saw as deriving from the humanism of the Renaissance and culminating in positivism in the nineteenth century. His rejection of

naturally at variance with Spengler's diagnosis that socialism in the highest sense is logically the crown of world history.<sup>108</sup> Even when rejecting this aspect of Spengler's analysis by forecasting an ideological battle between his own Christian values and those of socialism, his discourse responds to that of *The Decline of the West* and his approach is one of historiographical anticipation in the vein of Spengler: socialism, he states, signifies throughout Western society '[una] lucha en diversos frentes desde la guerra material hasta la enérgica afirmación espiritual de los eternos valores'; out of this struggle against socialism 'la civilización saldrá exaltada, purificada y triunfante en sus inmortales aspiraciones' (LGH).

In Otero's opposition to these egalitarian political philosophies, the envisaged Galicia becomes a microcosm of everything perceived to be in danger of erosion; the founding of the U.S.S.R. was 'la mayor organización posible contra la cultura europea' (LGH), a threat to Western European culture and its 'Faustian' tradition. Again, when discussing 'civilisation', Otero alludes to the underlying source philosophy of Vico,<sup>109</sup> as well as referring directly to Spengler:

o sentimento moderno foise queimando nunha lampa crecente chegando ás tristes furias (positivismo, socialismo, anarquía) ben coñecidas. [...] O home, ledamente liberado ó principio, chegou a afundirse no informe dos elementos inferiores (marxismo, comunismo, imperio do Estado). A civilización (no senso xa clásico de Spengler) que fuxiu de Deus e ergueu tantos veos de ilusión, caeu na guerra e na revolución. (LETRAS, 18)

Secondly, there is Otero's reluctance to adopt Spengler's vision of the forthcoming decadence of Western culture and civilisation. Spengler saw the future of the

---

Socialism is also rooted in the social and cultural elitism of *modernismo* and the *Cenáculo Ourenán*, as well as his status of *fidalgo*.

<sup>108</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*, I, 363.

<sup>109</sup> That is, Vico's ideas on the abandonment of civilisation to barbarous elements in society.

West as being characterised by decline, the natural phase to follow its alleged plenitude in the present. In his articles, essays and fiction, Otero seeks constantly to inscribe Galicia within a 'Northern', 'Faustian' or re-emerging Celtic tradition: an absolute subscription to Spengler's theory does not concur fully with Otero's position as a nationalist or as a defender and 'resuscitator' of Galician cultural identity. In Otero's eyes, Galicia, with its supposed Celtic heritage and world-view that does not recognise conventional boundaries between life and death, is a nation that is still 'young', vital, and yet to reach the full potential of a Spenglerian cycle: 'Galicia no seu convenio coa Morte consérvase nena. Non perdeu a capacidade da maravilla criadora. Non se gastou endexamais en esperanzas esgotadoras como outros pobos' (MR, 107). Galicia is only just emerging from several centuries of political, economic and cultural marginalisation and repression. The entire ethos behind the *Nós* generation's extraordinary energy and cultural fecundity was based on the conviction that Galicia would attain greater political autonomy and more dynamic cultural expression under the reformatory climate of the Second Republic: 'no decorrer das ideas vai presuposta unha actual resurrección da Galicia, verba e pensamento condicionado polo modo como a outra verba e concepto irmán de morte deber ser interpretado cando se trata da Galicia' (MR, 110). Otero attributes this imminent 'resurrection', unsurprisingly, to the activities of *galeguismo*, which he depicts as a form of cultural expression historically evolving in Galicia: 'será galeguismo toda idea ou forma de interpretación da vida, nada na Galicia e propia pola forza e polo fito de ser considerada como un elemento, un factor, unha forza na historia universal. (...). Hoxe, a hora histórica sinala fatalmente o triunfo do galeguismo' (MR, 107).

Even after the rupture of nationalist aspirations with the outbreak of civil war, and the internal exile of *galeguismo* during Franco's dictatorship, Otero's vision of the rebirth of Galician culture shows no apparent change in its reliance on Spenglerian designs, suggesting that its roots go beyond the nationalist rhetoric of the thirties, to Otero's intellectual formation and broader world-view. This is succinctly evident in an interview from 1955: when sked '¿cal foi o período máis outo do noso país?', Otero replied: 'coido que "é". Antre nós, a historia remanece en aitualidade'.<sup>110</sup> But Otero's application of Spengler's model is not restricted to Galicia during this period. His mammoth four-volume work, *Geografía de España: presencia y potencia del suelo y del pueblo español* (1955-56) is one of many sources that have not been adequately assessed to date, yet which offer numerous original perspectives on the political and cultural evolution of the author during the post-war period. Echoes of the *Nós* discourse still reverberate through these pages as Otero digresses in habitual fashion to impart some opinion or make an allusion regarding cultural connections. For example, *atlantismo* meets Faustian longing in a characteristic differentialist definition of the Galicians: 'siempre el bretón, el irlandés, el gallego, el cántabro y el portugués, vivirán el poniente, la tarde, el Occidente, en la poesía y en el anhelo, con intensidad y diario comercio, intuitivo o consciente, al margen del hombre de la Europa central o del contorno mediterráneo' (GDE, I, 4). Spengler's thought still plays its role in Otero's approach to Galicia that often pivots on the contrasting of Castilian culture with its greater Moorish influence. However, he applies the same model of cyclical civilization and values considered as occidental to Spain in its entirety:

---

<sup>110</sup> See Salvador Lorenzana, 'Otero Pedrayo fala da Galicia e da súa cultura', *Galicia Emigrante* 15 (November 1955), 3-14 (3).

el optimismo es, al fin y al cabo, virtud y vigoriza el sentido de fuerza. Y España, venturosamente, vive de cara a un porvenir mejor. La puesta en activa función de sus amplios recursos naturales en un coincidente resurgir de otras muchas energías, con sus plantas enraizadas en la tradición y abierta la mirada hacia las inquietudes ecuménicas de la inteligencia y del espíritu, hace que la simbólica “piel de toro” en que finaliza el Antiguo Continente, ventanal abierto hacia el Mundo de los Valores Nuevos, sea uno de los bastiones más fuertes en defensa de la Civilización Occidental, guardadora de todo lo bueno que ha conquistado el Hombre en su ruta a través de la Historia. (GDE, I, 48)

Spain, rather than Galicia specifically, is regarded as part of ‘el amplio concierto de pueblos que aún no han perdido la fe en los destinos ni en el porvenir de Europa’ (GDE, I, 48). It is interesting to juxtapose this with the only direct reference I have come across in Otero’s works to Franco. This comes at the end of a section that summarises recent Spanish history, and is conspicuous for its brief and unavoidable mention of the dictator:

un golpe de Estado del capitán general de Cataluña, Miguel Primo de Rivera, significó, con su triunfo, un remedio pasajero (época de la Dictadura, 1923-1930). La caída de la dictadura arrastró la de la misma institución monárquica, mientras la Segunda República (1931-1936) se mostraba impotente para encauzar los destinos del país. La lucha entre derechas y izquierdas ahondó el abismo entre los españoles y desembocó en una sangrienta guerra civil (1936-1939), en la que se forjó el Nuevo Estado bajo los auspicios del Movimiento Nacional acaudillado por el general Franco, que logró, con su rotunda victoria, reanudar la trayectoria histórica de España y encauzar la vida del país por caminos de amplio progreso y fructífera paz. (GDE, I, 226)

To hypothesise as to Otero’s thoughts behind this fascinating, rarely discussed fragment of his writings is far from a straightforward task. On the one hand, Otero has no option but to make some kind of assessment of the events and their causes that saw the loss of many of his colleagues, the suspension of dynamic nationalist activity in Galicia, as well as the loss of his profession and livelihood. However, Otero does not overly dwell on heaping praise on Franco. His work during the post-war era abounds with critical allusions to the Franco regime, especially when recollecting exiled or executed *galeuistas*. On the other hand, like Risco, Otero shared common enemies with the

rebels: the cities and the lay urban classes who supported the Republic and a reduction in the power of the Church. He was never a supporter of Franco, but it is clear that he would not have found all of its doctrine repugnant, especially where this coincides with a perceived resurgence, continuation and defence of Western culture in the Catholic tradition.<sup>111</sup>

Focussing once more on Galicia, Otero in fact follows closely Spengler's programme when depicting Galician culture as possessing 'its own new possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen, decay, and never return'. Whilst employing Spenglerian imagery and discourse in his account of Galician history and culture, Otero does 'anticipate' although such anticipation is limited and divergent from the extent and model of prognosis that Spengler had established. The reason for this is fundamentally one of nationalist ideology; there is conclusive evidence that Otero did not entirely agree with Spengler's prediction of a decline for the 'West' to which, after all, Galicia belonged, and that he was also critical of this pivotal aspect of not just Spengler's thought but that of other members of the same generation of philosophers. In an article from 1926, Otero uses a bankruptcy metaphor to describe the negative forecasts of such thinkers for Western culture:

agora collemos os libros de Spengler, de Keyserling, de Max Scheler, i-ollamos o tráxico naufraxio da cultura do Ocidente. [...] Hoxe assistimos á liquidación d'un-a cultura coma si se tratar d'un concurso de acredores. No sigro dazanove temos adiantado moito no xeito d'ollar as cousas ouxetivamente. Cicais a verdade sexa que a cousa non vai tan costa abaixo. (NB, 2)

---

<sup>111</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of this topic, see Claudio Rodríguez Fer, 'Servidumes franquistas de Ramón Otero Pedrayo', *Acometida atlántica (por un comparatismo integral)* (Sada, A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1996), 223-227.

The principal tenet sustained in *The Decline of the West* is ironically that which he chooses not to appropriate. Similarly, when assessing the very aspect of Spengler's discourse that concerns the decline of civilisations and cultures, Otero could not have made his rejection of this part of Spengler's philosophy any clearer: 'Spengler escolmou a verba *fellah* pra sinalar un instante na evoluceón – derradeira, cansa, sentenciada – das civilizacións. Trabucamento de pensador demasiado occidental, soilo atento ô xogo das enerxías supreficiás' (NLDO, 3). Otero accuses Spengler of being 'demasiado occidental' precisely where this concerns the 'death' of civilisations, a position that is highly ironic given his otherwise abundant enthusiasm for portraying Galicia as being as occidental as possible. Indeed, if Otero had been working on a solely intellectual plane, then there is every indication that he would have shared Spengler's anticipations of decline and identification of the symptoms: the lessening of human individuality in the face of modern economic society; the seemingly unbridled rise of capitalism and unrestrained commercialism; the growth of cities at the expense of the countryside; mass taste overcoming cultured taste; spiritual values waning in the face of materialism; and the fall of long-standing social hierarchies with the rise of abstract egalitarianisms. These are changes in society that Otero – the last Romantic in Spain and one of Galicia's last *fidalgos* – felt all too acutely, and to which he responded in all areas of his writing. In abandoning Spengler's historical schema where human destiny is contained within inexorable biological cycles in favour of faith in a providential hand of God guiding humankind onwards towards gradual perfection and fulfilment, Otero reveals the immutability of his religious and historicist formation.

Such discrepancies stem directly from the ideological imperative of Otero's *galeguismo*; it encapsulates Spengler's emphasis on anticipation, whilst placing the onus of nationalist aims on the 'moral' contribution of Galicians: 'ser ou non ser: asina prantéase o problema tráxico e fermoso da Galiza. ¿Qué fillo será xordo? ¿Cal terá valor pra mirar a nova primaveira si non compre o seu deber?' (OUT, 3). Otero the ideologue attempts to shape the future in accordance with ambitious *galeguista* aspirations; Spengler was more of a realist, as Fischer emphatically underlines: 'escape into the past may give us some solace but it is the coward's way out; the same is true, Spengler argued, of an escape into an ideal future'.<sup>112</sup> Otero wants Galicia to see herself and to be seen as part of the 'West', but not of any design for occidental decline predicted by Spengler in his new interpretation of Western history. Hence the irony in Otero's rejection of the core message of Spengler's text, from which he draws otherwise a wide array of ideas, adapted and put into varying degrees of theoretical and practical use. By far the most intellectually important of these is Faustism, yet another cultural recourse employed by Otero in order to affirm Galician distinctiveness in contrast to the predominant Castilian tradition. *The Decline of the West* offers us a fascinating insight into how an intellectual criterion goes comfortably in tandem with a nationalist agenda, and how source ideas are manipulated, altered and made to conform to political expediency. The most immediate significance of this for pre-Civil War *galeguistas* was the de-Castilianisation of all things vaguely held to be Galician, and the inscribing of an ethnic and historical claim to Celticness as Otherness in the revised history and anticipated future of Galicia that was attempted by the *Xeración Nós*. The Faustian Galicia of Otero Pedrayo was Celtic and European, forming part of a historical and

---

<sup>112</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.*, 200.

cultural tradition whilst not ceasing to draw from the vanguard, far from Spengler's prophecy of doom for Western culture. It was also yet another response from the periphery to the cultural and political reflections upon end-of-empire malaise made by another intellectual grouping, the Generation of 1898.<sup>113</sup>

Criticism has yet to explore the links between Galician literature, Galician nationalism and wider European nationalism, especially during the twenties and thirties. In spite of the essentially benevolent and ingenuous form of nationalism we associate with the pre-Civil War *galeguistas*, there are deeper implications and a darker side to Otero and his fellow nationalists' tinkering with emotive intellectual ideas, and this should be explored and considered. There is a broad gulf but arguably not insignificant point of contact between Otero's rejection of the 'decline' thesis and National Socialism's approach to Spengler's message as a small setback that would be overcome by greater 'triumphs'. Again, Otero's euphoric, optimistic expectations of Galicia's impending future are not dissociated so easily from contemporary events in Germany. As Fischer underlines, Hitler's reaction to Spengler was representative of the way Germans felt about the 'prophet of doom'. Rather than Spengler's 'manly pessimism', Hitler promised the Germans a glorious future; where Spengler lamented the decline of the West, Hitler exalted the rise of a 'Thousand-Year Reich'. The overwhelming majority of Germans, Fischer points out, would opt for Hitler's optimistic vision.<sup>114</sup>

There is no need to elaborate on the much more sinister forms of nationalism that eventually strangled the pacific decision taken in Galicia by an overwhelming democratic majority for autonomy in 1936. Yet the Galician nationalists' ingenuous flirtation and

---

<sup>113</sup> As John Rutherford has pointed out, perhaps so conscious a response that the Galicians used the same term ('generation') to describe themselves.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

toying with the powerful motifs and hardened rhetoric of larger nationalist movements in Europe must be seen in context. Although their nationalism was rooted in historicism's tolerant appreciation of diversity, and any of their written excesses pale in comparison with the physical events that took place during and after 1936, their dabbling with the same Pandora's box of ethnic theory and imagined histories does not and should not cease to bear upon criticism of Galician literature, particularly where objectivity may be compromised by well-meaning but subjective political sympathies.

### ***The national hypothesis and a governing intellectual elite***

Before my conclusion, I wish to consider two remaining areas of Otero's thought that qualify our comprehension of his demarcation and definition of Galician nationhood, beginning with his attempts to promote the role of the intelligentsia in the realisation of Galician national identity.

In both his articles and fiction, Otero proposed the idea of a governing elite for Galicia, 'a creación de fortes e extensas minorías intelectuais, vitales e esperanzadas, conscientes e firmes (...) polo reflexo da súa autoridade na masa difusa do pobo' (LAB).<sup>115</sup> This was by no means a new idea in nationalist movements, and as cultural leader and anthropologist of the *Xeración Nós*, Otero was the most likely candidate to outline such a thesis, although Risco advocated similar ideas along more political lines.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> This also points towards the possible influence of Ortega y Gasset whose works – and one thinks particularly of *España invertebrada* (1921) and *La rebelión de las masas* (1930) – may have acted as a further means of transmission of Spengler's thought

<sup>116</sup> See Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 48; 69. See also V. Risco, 'Verbas acesas', *A Nosa Terra* 88, 5/05/1919; 'A ideoloxía do nacionalismo exposto en esquema', *Céltiga* 154, 25/05/1931; *Teoría do nacionalismo galego*.

As we know, Otero was of *fidalgo* stock, and criticised as well as idealised this social class in his work. X.G. Beramendi has documented how Otero,

no ano 1926 aínda seguía a exercer de fidalgo en tódolos sentidos, como proba a certificación da sentenza que atopamos entre os seus papeis e segundo a que logra que o xulgado municipal de Amoeiro obrigue os tres irmáns Rodríguez e Rodríguez, veciños de Fondo de Vila, parroquia de Trasalba, a lle pagaren os 72 ferrados de centeo e 3,5 mollos de viño polas vendas forais impagadas do 1921 a 1925.<sup>117</sup>

Otero was a social *fidalgo* in the sense that he lived his life as part of the dwindling *fidalgúa*, in spite of campaigning in the Cortes for the abolition of the *foros* and of joining the *Irmandades da Fala* in 1917 to help improve the general conditions in which the peasantry lived: an imaginative *fidalgo* in that his model Galicia would be guided by a rejuvenated, intellectual elite. He did not forgo a penny of rent in spite of his essentially liberal outlook, and his idealist and pro-peasant views: here lies one example of the contradiction and dualism contained within his complex point of view.

Otero proposes an intellectual qualification, more than social or hereditary, for such a grouping. The notion of a neo-squirearchy, an intellectual minority guarding tradition and guiding a rural-based Galician society, has echoes of a Platonic Republic and aspects of Nietzschean thought in its assumption of a natural command over and intuitive understanding of the fishing and farming classes. For him, 'a obra da nova Galicia ten que ser feita por unha minoría dirixente capaz, polo seu ideal, responsabilidade e sacrificio, de representa-las arelas escuras do pobo' (PG). There is an elitist depth to his paternalistic vision of an idealised national psyche, such as we see in his statement that 'os labregos, deixados a si mesmos, non saben garda-la tradición' (XE). This vision is at radical odds with that of his friend and colleague, Castelao.

---

<sup>117</sup> X.G. Beramendi, 'O nacionalismo de Otero Pedrayo', 58.

Otero idealised the peasantry in that intellectually distant manner that has its immediate predecessor in the work of Unamuno and other members of the Generation of 1898, and definite cultural roots in Romanticism's vindication of the 'authentic', Rousseau's 'noble savage' and Virgil's *Georgics*,<sup>118</sup> all of which echo throughout nineteenth-century expressions of Galician identity. This is comprehensible if we recall that in Otero's worldview the cultural is always prevalent over the political criterion. Nevertheless, as early as 1922, Otero advocates the necessity for *galeguista* politicians to represent the opinion of the *labrego*, a partnership he saw as crucial for a future and prosperous Galicia (EDA, 7), even if such a partnership was one-sided. 'El pueblo que trabaja y canta en nuestros campos,' Otero had commented three years earlier in one of his earliest nationalist writings, 'espera la palabra alentadora y la mano amiga de los intelectuales y los elegidos' (UA). He evokes the romantically rooted image so ubiquitous with the men of *Nós* of 'o pobo labrego e mariñeiro' as a repository of Galician values and identity during the previous centuries. However, if it was the fishing and farming class that 'gardábase fiel ó espírito' (SE, 153), then that spirit – namely tradition and Galicia's Celtic heritage – was now to be guarded by the Galician rectorial class that he blueprinted in his utopian vignettes. Modernity was also best mediated in this way, since, according to Otero, 'a función das clases que se chaman dirixentes será darlles forma moderna á forte espiritualidade dos labregos, para que non se atopen desamparados e inferiores' (ACP). 'Forma moderna' does not mean for Otero the free influx of modernity or progress, but what his benevolent, paternalistic and cultural priorities of the time wished to see prevail, such as the defence of 'unha lingua digna,

---

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, 'A cultura dos paisanos', *A Nosa Terra*, 01/V/1929, where Otero declares that 'ser labrego, antes de significar desprecio e aldraxe representa o traballo humano máis respetado polos homes'

fermosa, rica' ACP), to prevent in the *labregos* the same cultural amnesia that they, the intellectuals, had suffered in previous generations.<sup>119</sup>

Otero's political and cultural writings coincide to some extent with his fiction on this aspect of his early thinking. His *Contos do camiño e da rúa* (1932) abound with utopian formulae for the preservation and salvation of a genealogical *fidalgúa*. These were presented through fictional depictions of the alliance - or rather unequal partnership between *fidalgo* and *labrego*, and the preservation of Otero's traditionalist past by 'A serea', or some vague outside influence, an Atlantic *deus ex machina*.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, in the novels *Os camiños da vida* and *Arredor de si*, proto-nationalist and nationalist *fidalgos* embody even more imaginative potential for his notion of a governing elite both hereditary and intellectual - guiding Galicia through 'modern times'. Here too Herder may prevail as an influence. Having little faith in the enlightened rule of monarchy, Herder felt that social and political improvement would have to come 'from below'; he visualised the emergence of 'popular leaders', or 'aristo-democrats' who were to undertake the task of helping the *Volk* to attain a more developed sense of social and national consciousness and political responsibility.<sup>121</sup>

It is more than just coincidence that the twenties and thirties saw the definitive end of the squirearchy in Galicia. There is also some irony in this respect, given Otero's depiction of the peasantry that I have just detailed, in that the cause of the final stage in the squirearchy's demise was 'la eliminación de la renta de la tierra, mediante el proceso

---

<sup>119</sup> Or as Otero states, 'para ser cultos e considerados non deben perde-lo seu carácter galego' 'A cultura dos paisanos', *A Nosa Terra*, 01/V/1929.

<sup>120</sup> See the short stories 'A serea', 'A criada', and 'O pazo dos cinco chagas', in *Contos do Camiño e da Rúa* (Galaxia: Vigo, 1995).

<sup>121</sup> Barnard, *op. cit.*, 144.

de redención de foros, protagonizado por el campesinado'.<sup>122</sup> Otero was very much responding to changes as they were happening, largely by seeking refuge in idealised, impractical and imaginative plans. This is crucial for understanding his scattered notes for an imagined Galicia that espouse the rural nature of Otero's national ideal, and the distillation of national values through the symbolic community of the village.

### *Village values – the national ethos and ideal in the face of modernity*

Otero identifies in Galicia what he deems to be an aspect parallel with others in Europe and Spain: 'a incompreñsion do pobo folclórico (...) polas cidades ou polo menos a casta distinguida delas, sobre todo o estrato administrativo e oficinesco' (EH, 200). Once again Otero relies on a perennial dichotomy in order to define and enhance his conception of Galician identity; although Classical in source, the town/country opposition in this context of Otero's writings owes its intended connotations to Romanticism and its precursors. Otero presents from a historical perspective the implications of urban and rural custodianship for Galician culture:

cando a cultura se tivo por patrimonio dos cidadáns, crebouse a unanimidade galega e a cultura verdadeira soamente foi gardada polos labregos e polos mariñáns. Polas xentes que non sabían ler nin escribir, mais que estaban postas no centro do devir espiritual da raza e da súa psique. Namentres os cidadáns, a pesares de tódolos seus libros e das súas maneiras de imitanza e de progreso non pasaban da tona da alma e da tona da natureza, os homes do agro e do mar afondaban, etnicamente, nos vastos mundos do alén-aparencia. (MR, 90)

The country is therefore spiritual by dint of its proximity to and understanding of Nature and all the more authentic because of these virtues. One writer who demonstrates the modern sources of this idea is Rousseau, for whom agricultural districts form the country,

---

<sup>122</sup> Villares, *op. cit.*, 161.

and the country people make nations.<sup>123</sup> Rural life is the most peaceful, natural and attractive to the uncorrupted heart;<sup>124</sup> over-crowded city life signifies the corruption of men, and their exposure to disease and vice,<sup>125</sup> whereas the nearer a nation lay to Nature, the more benign its character.<sup>126</sup> For Otero, the epitome of Galician national benevolence is the village.

Starting out from the image of the *castro*, Otero proposes that the village is the model Galician settlement in the landscape, a standard derived directly from Celtic patterns of habitation: 'os celtas non crean cidades. Aínda hoxe a cidade galega non é a fórmula definitiva do país. Quen non coñeza máis que as cidades, non coñecerá Galicia. É preciso sentir este tecido de pequenas células vitais, de clans ou parroquias segundo os tempos' (EH, 28). The village lies at the centre of Otero's ideal Galicia, epitomising a system of values and the safeguard of rural culture: 'garda a aldea o senso do tempo humano, histórico, de tradición, de continuidade' (SHD, 26). The village is the nucleus and microcosm of any Oteran musing on *galeguidade* or an idealised Galicia, but evolves as an idea throughout the entirety of his life and works. There are three general periods that I consider relevant to a diachronic evaluation of the role of the village in Otero's nation idea. Firstly, the late twenties and thirties until the outbreak of Civil War, and the period in which every prominent *galeguista* was engaged in the promotion of their preferred ideology or version of Galician reality. Secondly, the post-Civil War period and the end of the free-for-all nationalist conjecture on a possible Galicia during *a longa noite*. In particular, 1965 and 'A aldea galega no seu decorrer histórico', an essay largely

---

<sup>123</sup> Rousseau, *Emile, or Education*, 433.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

overlooked by criticism, in spite of the importance which it holds for understanding Otero's earlier work and the light it sheds on his later thinking during a crucial time of change in Galician society. The final period focuses on 1976, and Víctor Freixanes' revealing interview with Otero carried out shortly before his death.

During 1926-1927, there is a clear tone of reserve underlying Otero's assessment of the effect of modernity on rural life. 'Se aínda se gardara a enteireza do vivir antergo,' he sustains, 'a cousa, (...) non estaría mal. Mais non é posible' (PROGRESO). He is sceptical about progress, and equates it with 'anuncios funerarios polas congostras, (...) cimiterios afastados das igrexas', and 'paisanos [que] levan estilográfica' (ESQUEMAS). This is the standard sound of traditionalist nationalism and its insecurity and feeling of exclusion before radical changes in society, often expressed through lamentations on the peasant class. New money was coming into the Galician economy at this time, especially in the coastal industry, and with it new capitalists, more often than not from outside Galicia. At this stage, he is less flexible where modernity and the preservation of standing social patterns are concerned; there is an antithesis between what he wishes to maintain (the traditional) and what he considers evolution. Otero wants to have his cake and eat it, but his position reveals a latent disposition towards the possibility of reconciling both factors. We can already see the emergence of a pattern in Otero's outlook: misgivings about the changes in Galician society brought about by external forces, and at the same time a certain curiosity as to what possible benefits they can bring for Galicia without infringing upon those characteristics that he sought to preserve and maintain. The benefits of progress, Otero maintains, 'óllanse e oense desde lonxe (...). O Progreso camiña, máis aquí non chega' (PROGRESO). This position seems irrational unless we

take into account the origins of Otero's worldview. Otero's youth and his ever-present nostalgia for quintessential Romanticism show the intellectual formation of the writer to be indicative of a reaction against anti-metaphysical and anti-theological strands in cultural history. However, Herder had emphasised the need for interaction between progress and tradition. As well as the obvious factors of inherited wealth, privilege and de facto control of the old economic system, it is this basic cultural inheritance, and the blatant need for an improvement in the conditions of the mainly rural reality of Galician life, that explains Otero's willingness - as seen in his curiosity regarding progress and modernity - to dialogue, if only tentatively, with these factors.

This paradoxical and seemingly contradictory standpoint becomes more evident towards the 1930's. Otero sees the introduction of financial commerce into the goods and exchange-based economy of rural Galicia as a *fait accompli*, although in his view its effects imply a negative outcome.<sup>127</sup> 'Hoxe', he laments, '[a economía do diñeiro] manda nas aldeas como nas vilas. Os paisanos non se compoñen sen diñeiro (...). Cada un vive de por sí' (DFC). Otero's principal resistance, therefore, is to modernity's effects on 'a constitucional cultura do labrego' (ACP) that had largely remained unaltered for centuries. 'O movemento do mundo cada día leva ós paisanos nun tolo remuíño fatal, un pouco máis fóra do seu centro histórico', Otero affirms, whilst he sees their traditional lifestyle as being undermined by what he refers to as 'as formas máis superficiais e valeiras do vivir moderno' (ACP). Some of the effects of this include the decline in the

---

<sup>127</sup> The problem of profit, wealth and finance was seen as embodying the 'mal de non se adaptar (...) ós tipos verdadeiros do vivir' (OLMOS). I have already underlined what Otero considered to be the 'tipos verdadeiros do vivir'

self-sufficient nature of village life, and long-standing, family-orientated relationships within the organic community and its main activity, agriculture.<sup>128</sup>

Otero's position seems to shift regularly during this period. On the one hand, he presents tradition and modernity as irreconcilable opposites, particularly where the 'pobo' is concerned: 'entre un pobo labrego ben mantido e luxado, mais de todo materialista e pragmático, e un pobo labrego que come e vive mal, mais animado polo sentimento do inmorredoiro, calquera, todo amante de Galicia, escollería o segundo' (ADTL). On the other hand, he also shows a strong tendency to conjugate the two. Emigration is one issue where he clearly sees the need to accept change. By improving lighting, roads, and hygiene, Otero believes that the tide of emigration can be stemmed.<sup>129</sup> This would also help preserve the *enxebrismo* of rural Galicia, since he believes that returning Galicians bring back the trappings of Latin American culture and a diluted sense of their own identity.<sup>130</sup> Although bemoaning some of the effects of change, Otero nevertheless is aware, during the era of the Wall Street Crash and chronic political instability, of the beginnings of what we loosely term today as globalisation, and attempted to map out hazily Galicia's place in this macro process.<sup>131</sup> He suggests that 'polas condicións naturais, Galicia pode ser ata economicamente un país non só moderno senón ultramoderno (...)' (XE). However, this forecast is predicated on an

---

<sup>128</sup> 'Toda a xente viste de tenda. Mércase regularmente a carne e o peixe. Hai moitos fogares que compran o pan cocido. A bica vai sendo unha larpeirada anacrónica, ó igual que o liño, a estopa, os traballos de axuda entre os veciños e a autoridade dos pais de familia' (DFC).

<sup>129</sup> 'Cando as aldeas estén dotadas de luz, de camiños e de hixiene, ningún fuxirá delas' (XE).

<sup>130</sup> See 'A cultura dos paisanos': 'Abonda lembrar como na influencia de América levan a peor parte os nosos labregos. Eles dan sangue, brazos, forza, raza, e reciben, en troques, produtos de imitación - casas de estilo che, perda de sentimento relixioso, desprecio pola riqueza do espírito herdado, cursilería social, falares tristeiramente cómicos, etc.-, privados de vida, ofensores da incomparable fermosura, moral e natural, de Galicia'.

<sup>131</sup> 'Cruzamos un tempo de incorporación da Galicia no mundo, no vivir planetario (...). Hoxe a economía fíxose planetaria' (XE).

underestimation of the global wave of capitalism and the appeal of its associated system of values, and on a Romantic, Horatian-tinged belief that the world was now ‘canso das grandes vilas, da concentración do vivir e das grandes neuroses bancarias’ (XE). Nowhere could Otero be more out of touch with the direction of modernisation and modernity; at other times, he shows some intuitive foresight and perception concerning the path that the world was taking.

Otero’s economic formation, like that of Risco, was deficient.<sup>132</sup> A great deal of Otero’s perspective on modernity and Galicia’s economic backwardness can be explained in terms of his ideological and nationalist attitude towards the political structure of Spain. For the *Xeración Nós*, as Francisco Bobillo has observed, ‘las causas del atraso económico estaban en el centralismo y en sus consecuencias que, entre otras, significaban una colonización regional. Desparecido el centralismo desaparecería el atraso. Quizá hubiera que hacer alguna reforma, pero, desde luego, ésta no debería afectar a la estructura económico-social’.<sup>133</sup> Hence the ingenuous and ill-informed nature of their approach to economics.

Within the confines of fiction, Otero’s national idea was a rural Galician ideal. In *Arredor de si*, there are two examples of that paradigm. Its blueprint is in the moribund Don Bernaldo’s ‘nación soamente presidida por Xesús (...), toda labrega e mariñeira, inimiga da riqueza, (...) que cantase na fermosa lingua dos campos, coa gloria do traballo, a gloria de Deus’ (AS, 82). Its proposed realisation is embodied in Adrián Solovio’s return to the village and benevolent management of the lands. This idyll shares

---

<sup>132</sup> Bobillo, *op. cit.*, 193.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

much with the vision of Alfredo Brañas and goes further back to Antolín Faraldo,<sup>134</sup> in its delineation of a community of small landholders and peasants with rural values, seemingly content under the guidance of a wise rectorial class. However, Otero's traditionalism, although highly nostalgic for the vanished Galicia of the previous centuries, is not dogmatic or reactionary and, unlike Brañas, Otero did not inherit anti-Liberal tendencies or Carlist sympathies. Otero was born into and brought up in the Ourense liberal tradition, and was not a Carlist sympathiser since Carlism had not incorporated Galician identity into its defence of the ancien régime. It must be noted here that the idea of monarchy is absent from Otero's dreamy visions of a Galician Arcadian republic. This owes as much to his local liberal heritage as it does to Herder.<sup>135</sup>

The cultural agenda takes precedence over the practical, the idealist over the realist. This is probably for the better: as we have seen, Otero was on far safer ground when talking about identity and anthropology, and seems much more credible when steering away from economic and political realities. There is no trace of any mainstream economic system as we would understand it today in Otero's writings. He seems to espouse components of other, well-known systems such as co-operativism (not collectivism) and individualism and juggle them all together in an idealistic, but economically contradictory way. His projection was a product of his formation and

---

<sup>134</sup> Of these figures, Otero comments that 'Antolín Faraldo descubre un pobo e traza para el o esquema da "Grande Obra". Non é un político de imitación, nin un doctrinario. Sabe harmoniza-las esencias da Galicia coa revolución das nacionalidades. Quer edifica-la "Grande Obra" sobre os cimentos eternos. O máis rexo de todos, a relixiosidade. Faraldo exprésase neste punto con claridade completa. Lonxe do fanatismo e do fariseísmo, el católico e liberal, comenza a laboura redentora que ó longo dos anos cumea na política de Alfredo Brañas e Losada Diéguez' (COM).

<sup>135</sup> Hereditary rule conflicted with principles of Christianity and human equality for Herder: 'Herder's aversion to hereditary rule and to the existence of an hereditary aristocracy was deep-seated. (...). Herder never tired of questioning the principle of hereditary rule as a method of political government. It appeared to him not only senseless but also pernicious. (...) That those as yet unborn should be destined to rule over others not yet born, simply by virtue of their blood, seemed to Herder the most unintelligible of propositions that human language could devise and the most blatant example of unreason in the history of human reason'. Barnard, *op. cit.*, 75-76.

disposition. On the surface, Otero gives the impression that he has read a number of prevailing economic theories (communism, liberalism, co-operativism), understands what they look like, but does not know how they work in reality. He is certainly more successful in predicting that future Galician prosperity would lie 'na harmonía da beiramar coa Galicia puramente labrega' (XE). Yet behind the bold utopian statements there is a genuine desire on Otero's part to see an improvement in rural infrastructure, agricultural techniques and organisations, to avoid enclosing Galicia within 'outra muralla da China para conservar un pobo folklórico e pintoresco' (ACP).

Organic societies are convenient myths employed by nationalists as a critique of modern industrial capitalism, and Otero certainly inherits the Romantic protest against capitalism's mechanical wage-slavery: there is a definite trace of Ruskin in Otero's view that 'o industrialismo bota un malfado encol do mundo' (PROV), and his clear distaste for 'o medrar monstroso e contra natura das grandes cidades' (AS, 187). Nevertheless, for a thinker of his particular formation, Otero displays an unusual disposition towards the possibility of adapting his nationalist idea to the burgeoning reality of capitalism. Like Castelao, Otero sought above all agrarian modernisation for Galicia, in the same style as the Danish co-operatives,<sup>136</sup> rather than 'latifundio' or 'grande explotación industrial' (SER). As for the political personality of this structure, Otero opposes Spanish conservatism as much as Marxism within the political spectrum of the Second Republic. These political and ideological tendencies are seen as incompatible with Galician

---

<sup>136</sup> 'A nosa economía campesá e mariñeira, a función das nosas vilas íntimamente cinguidas co vivir dos agros e mariñas, precisa ser exaltada no seu estilo propio fundado na pequena propiedade, na comunidade de certos bens hoxe deixados, na cooperación das industrias labregas, na circulación dos produtos galegos conforme a sistema natural e adaptado do tráfico, na protección intelixente, pero endexamais nas concepcións de tipo comunista que matarían non só a economía senón a felicidade de que é mercante o noso pobo. Cultura de senso relixioso, economía individualista, familiar e cooperativista, han ser gueiros esenciais para a redención da Galicia' (ECON).

identity: Otero asserts that 'o pobo galego dos agros (...) endexamais se acompañará ó tipo espiritual americano ou soviético' (ADTL), and expresses his resistance to '[os] grandes conxuntos organizados da economía que anulán a personalidade do home e do seu traballo e do disfrute del' (ECON). Otero was outside of the main competing ideological camps of thirties Spain – much of his perspective can therefore be explained in terms of exclusion, or simple pragmatism. I will return to this point in my conclusion to this thesis.

All of this underscores the limitations of Otero's approach during a crucial period of transformation in Galician society. Cultural nationalism (particularly given its late adoption in Galicia) is a regressive force according to John Hutchinson, a product of intellectuals from backward societies, who, when confronted by more scientifically advanced cultures, compensate for feelings of inferiority by retreating into history to claim descent from a once great civilization. It is functional for the formation of nations in such backward cultures, but in itself cannot shape their path to socio-political modernization.<sup>137</sup> Gellner also seizes upon the paradoxical relationship between cultural nationalism and modernization as the creation of intellectuals who, threatened by the advance of an exotic scientific-industrial culture with which they find it difficult to compete, advocate a nostalgic return to the pristine integrated world of the folk and engage in linguistic and cultural reconstruction. Their effect, however, is almost the opposite of what they promote: what they seek is a revived folk community, but what results is rather a modern science-based culture with native idioms.<sup>138</sup> This is what has happened in Galician society from the *Nós* epoch to the present. Whilst concurring with

---

<sup>137</sup> Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

Kohn and Gellner regarding their evaluation of cultural nationalism as a defensive response by educated elites to the impact of exogenous modernization on existing status orders, which may result in a reassertion of traditionalist values in the community, Hutchinson differs in his assessment of the celebration of the folk as a retreat into an isolated agrarian simplicity free from all the disorders of civilization.<sup>139</sup> Hutchinson refers to a dynamic vision of the nation as a high civilization with a unique place in the development of humanity as lying behind the vague evocation of the folk; and, secondly, a corresponding drive to recreate the nation which, integrating the traditional and the modern on a higher level, will again rise to the forefront of world progress.<sup>140</sup> This is descriptive of the more complex nature of Otero's approach. Cultural nationalists therefore call on the rising educated generation to break with traditionalism and to restore their country to its former standing in the world, by constructing a modern scientific culture.<sup>141</sup> This model may certainly be applied to Otero less than other members of *Nós*, but it is nonetheless valid. There is a didactic, sometimes pleading tone in Otero's appeal for a collective, 'national' effort to bring Galician affairs to greater fruition: 'asistimos a unha loita trágica desenvolta e planteada na alma de cada galego, no escenario moral da raza e do pobo. A traxedia de conquistar ou non conquistar a nosa propia e única realidade' (MR, 112). Otero is very much Hutchinson's 'moral innovator', who seeks by 'reviving' an ethnic, historicist vision of the nation to redirect traditionalists and modernists away from conflict and instead to unite them in the task of constructing an integrated, distinctive and autonomous community, capable of competing in the modern world.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-129.

<sup>142</sup> Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, 129

Otero certainly wants this, but with no accompanying sacrifice of the sacred, traditional tenets of an already fading period of Galician reality. Like the generic cultural nationalist that Hutchinson profiles, Otero seeks to introduce into the community a new nationalist ideology in which the accepted meanings of 'tradition' and 'modernity' are transformed.<sup>143</sup> The 'modern' (or, as it is frequently designated, the 'West') is particularized to its adherents as a local manifestation of a universal drive for progress found in all peoples.<sup>144</sup> The true matrix for both traditionalist and modernist is, the cultural nationalist proposes, the nation, in whose inner drive for realization all must find their individual and collective meanings.<sup>145</sup> This encapsulates Otero's method for rhyming modernity with the preservation of all that he esteemed about Galician society. It is a dogged retention of past social formats and idealised models that is prepared to cede little and is complicated by a non-specialist understanding of economics and a poor anticipation of what we might today refer to as the global process.

To briefly recapitulate, in the twenties and thirties, Otero's traditionalist defence of an idealised rural Galician society was not hermetically sealed from the capitalist system; his Catholic and traditional position did allow for limited adaptability and dialogue with modern structures and tendencies in society. This was more notable towards the end of his life, and the essay 'A aldea galega no seu decorrer histórico' (1965), exemplifies this. We have moved on thirty years: the tone of the article is not one of projection and idealist optimism, but more realist reflection by an ageing thinker coming to terms with the ultimate incompatibility of his national schema – past and present – with the vicissitudes of social reality.

---

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

Otero is also intuitively responding to significant economic and social changes that would alter Galicia completely. These consisted of a considerable increase in industry, vastly improved communications, growing urbanization and an important agrarian transformation. In his essay, Otero underlines that he does not wish to 'estabrecere unha aldea vedraia e histórica' (ALDEA, 136) with 'a súa conquerida fórmula social, xa desconcertada i espaventada' (ALDEA, 134). He recognises and accepts the now definitive disappearance and irrelevance of the squirearchy, although still making clear his own preference for the ideal social strata of the Galician village: 'a parroquia pode vivir sen o señorío', he concedes, 'mais o consorcio das raíces das duas estaxes na terra daba a millor versión do esquema da aldea' (ALDEA, 143). He implies that he is one of 'os apaixonados de un patriarcalismo e unha democracia moderna' (ALDEA, 150), binding the idea of a directorship of a now unspecified nature to that of the modern democratic process, an openly critical reference to the Francoist regime.

In contrast with his approach thirty years before, he now acknowledges the decline of long-standing agricultural work-patterns in Galicia and the end of their predominance as the main source of employment and social nexus. It appears therefore that he accepts the end of that retabule-like sense of village life, a plastic analogy with which he brilliantly projects his vision of past traditional reality. However, he does not adopt a fatalist approach to the future so often found in traditionalists whose cherished model of society is rendered impractical, unwanted or obsolete by the pace of historical change. He accepts that 'no fondo temos o abandoo crecedeiro do traballo do campo', whilst retaining the hope that with the reality of such change, Galicia might be 'un moderno e verdadeiro fogar dos galegos' (ALDEA, 148).

He believes that the powers of change and their effects on Galician society as perceived from the aldea ‘non son maiores dos do medio XIX. Pro xurden máis craros, e sucédense moi axiña’ (ALDEA, 146). It is the rapidity of change that now alarms him, rather than its late arrival, since ‘hoxe o xénero de vida trócase na aldea moi de presa’ (ALDEA, 148). Otero draws upon the binary opposition of town and country to validate his belief that village life is still a relevant paradigm for Galician national destiny. He transmits his faith as a believer in the *Volksgeist* concept to the idea of the permanent importance of the village as a reference point for Galician reality: ‘pensamos ser o eixe e cerne da aldea, da parroquia galega, unha rexa, unha adamantina forza enxamáis esgotada [...], sempre viva, potente nas súas mesmas pousas’ (ALDEA, 136-137). Nevertheless, he laments that ‘na aldea se impoñen os folgos da cidade, con verdadeira tiranía’ (ALDEA, 147), and that ‘cada día se estreitan máis en modas, e conversas, as distancias da aldea e a vila’ (ALDEA, 148). Yet in the wake of the massive migration of Galicia’s younger generation of workers to cities during the momentous changes of the sixties, and the new dynamics that this imposed on the relationship between city and village, Otero finds only positive signs for the relationship between village and villager, observing that ‘pola facilidade das comunicacións e os outos precios das mantenzas, o labrego aveciñado por traballo ou emprego na cidade se non desartella da súa parroquia no grado que poidérase temer. E hastra coidamos que medra a súa estimanza por ela’ (ALDEA, 147). In short, change is not as Otero might have liked it, or imagined, but it does offer some unforeseen advantages that he, more importantly, is capable of acknowledging. He recognises the definitive change in lifestyle that the consolidation of bourgeois commercialism – so often lambasted by him in his work – has brought to village life.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>146</sup> ‘É evidente o trunfo da tenda e do vivir da tenda na aldea...’ (ALDEA, 147).

Furthermore, emigration is still an evil for Otero, who comments that 'na aldea as tentacións de hoxe, incruindo a regoada emigración a Mittel Europe, son menos noxentas do que as antigas' (ALDEA, 149). However, he no longer seems to concentrate as much on the displacement of people as on the effects it has on the characteristics of rural identity. Galicians emigrate, he bemoans, 'pra en pouco tempo outeñer unha riqueza que nos máis dos casos fai medrar as cidades' (ALDEA, 148). He notes, as in the pre-war period, the rise of the 'chalet', 'o xardín' and 'a arquitectura de tipo individualista, mediterrán, enxoito' (ALDEA, 148-149) with the return of emigrants from the Americas within the changing village panorama. Again, there is a degree of irony here of which we should be aware. Agrarian improvement was largely possible because of emigration from the countryside to the cities, Europe or more industrial areas of Spain, and the industrial developments within Galicia itself.

Otero seems an interested, but nevertheless helpless, observer before the changes taking place before him. His overall position as outlined in 'A aldea galega...' in the mid-sixties - is one of calm acceptance of those social patterns he did not find suitable for his emotive, subjective vision of Galicia, mixed with lingering hopes that trends and global tendencies may somehow return to favour a village-centric economy and society.<sup>147</sup> Galicia is now no longer isolated, although not exactly as the *atlantistas* had anticipated in the 1930's. Otero's defence of the particular, his historicist bent for cultural relativism, furnishes him with the hope that technological progress and changing global patterns will favour smaller nations and that rather than global uniformity, universality in

---

<sup>147</sup> 'Suceden as cousas na Galiza en función de todo o mundo. I en todo o mundo rexurden axudadas polas riquezas e a facilidade de movementos proporcionadas pola técnica, as pequenas patrias. Cando máis creza un senso a feitío universal nas formas de vida ha ser meirande o gosto do particular, do xenuíno' (ALDEA, 149).

variety will accommodate Galicia in a way not possible in the past. As he expresses it in 1965,

Hoxe, gracias a moitos trocamentos, de tipo e senso universal, a aldea galega un “hoxe” de dentro de algúns anos, si bondosos númenes xusticieiros presiden os nosos destinos semella millor disposta que nos días da “Campana de Anllons” ou dos “Aires da miña terra” pra recibire a sementeira de unha cultura remanecida das fondas raíces da aldea e frofida cas primaveiras de Europa. (ALDEA, 149)

This is resigned optimism founded on an indissoluble idealism, and Otero’s Romantic belief in the particular is not daunted by developments he saw in the latter stages of his life. If anything, such processes reinforced his worldview and his focus on the village. Rather than the imperative optative and propagandistic promises of the *Nós* epoch, Otero’s discourse now pivots on ‘if’s’. ‘Si unha (...) alianza confesional e un xeito novo de patriarcalismo económico trunfaren no mundo’, Otero conjectures, ‘a Galiza ha ser, e precisamente pola suas condicións que hoxe semellan negativas, unha das patrias favorecidas’ (ALDEA, 150). Otero ends the essay, therefore, by reverting back to his vague and ill-defined economic theories, opting for the very nationalist hope in misty national prosperity at some unspecified point in the future, in those ‘bondosos númenes xusticieiros’, as well as affirming his faith in a possible future harmony between the villager and an outside world whose influence grows increasingly dominant. Nevertheless, Otero does attempt to explore the burgeoning relationship between macro economic change and smaller, peripheral nations that now dominates a large part of our own discussion of modernity.

In the early 1970’s, Otero was in his late eighties, and still reading his Chateaubriand, but in his library there are also texts on cybernetics from this period.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> D. Aurel, *La cybernétique et l’humain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).

Although he referred to himself as a 'fantasma do século dazanove',<sup>149</sup> his thirst for knowledge was as undogmatic and up to the minute as ever. However, Otero links changes in rural life to his own infirmities. 'Eu sofro moito', he confesses in private correspondence from 1973, 'polas mermas da ancianidade, pola morte do agro galego que tanto ameí' (15/08/1973). Yet he suggests that rural values will remain a relevant point of reference for society when a year later in 1974 he declares that 'la aldea es inmortal' (CDO, 99). Otero also recognises that the distinctiveness of the Galician village has diminished, particularly in terms of the traditional feminine roles:

hoy, exteriormente el cuadro de las costumbres de la aldea gallega no difiere mucho del de otras regiones de España (...). Se escucha la radio, abundan los televisores, hay tertulia «de tienda» y hasta de «bar» en mínimas aldeas. Las mujeres labriegas ya en muchas comarcas han olvidado la cocción del pan, la preparación del caldo y no digamos el hilado de los cándidos linos. Es inexacta la consideración acostumbrada ante estos problemas de ser los pueblos aislados de las zonas altas los más conservadores de la tradición. (CDO, 147)

Otero presents a revised notion of the Galician village that seeks tentatively to couple practicality with his own concepts of Galician ethnic and religious culture; in all, it is essentially the co-operatist village that he had championed before the Civil War:

o senso verdaeiramente social da aldea galega, anovada pola técnica e o espírito moderno, só pode ser un patriarcalismo alumado polo senso do deber, desenvolto e aplicado polo traballo, no que a podente e fina enerxía do home galego se cumpra coa axuda de máquinas axeitadas ó seu estilo e ás condicións do chan; e que a aldea sexa unha comunidade de traballo e de amor, non esquecida endexamais da presenza do castro e da igrexa. (GEG, 9)

In 1976 Otero gave one of his last interviews, to Víctor Freixanes as one of *Unha ducia de galegos*. The interview ends with Otero's frank but lyrical admission:

---

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Outeiriño, *op. cit.*

doume conta de que falo dunha Galicia lonxana, que hoxe as cousas teñen que ser de outro xeito. A min gustaríame unha Galicia grande e campesiña, cos seus fillos na terra, vencellados á terra, vivindo prá terra; gustaríame unha grande república campesiña pra o meu país, verdecida, nova, agromando como a primaveira.<sup>150</sup>

The words of the elderly Otero are almost the same as those of his character, the dying Don Bernaldo in *Arredor de si*, his novel from 46 years before. Whereas the ending of the novel advocated the realisation of this not just within the parameters of fiction, Otero now explicitly recognises the impossibility of that vision ever becoming reality. Rather than present this dream of a possible Galician country as a model, he creates distance between it as a personal preference and the political and social realities in which he no longer played an active role. Like the other interviews in Freixanes groundbreaking book, it is a fascinating testament of a key figure in recent Galician history and culture, and an honest epitaph to his life, career and vision of Galicia. Otero's wife had died shortly before, and at such an advanced age he could not have been more aware of his own mortality and the now largely incongruous nature of his ideas on Galician society. Time and circumstance allow him to forgo the nationalist rhetoric, and he reverts back to what was always the basis for his vision of Galicia: emotion, subjectivity, intuition, religious sensibility, and imagination. His frank but lyrical admission of the incompatibility of his model Galicia is a credit to his intellectual integrity, to his liberal open-mindedness and ultimately to his humanity, given that few involved in strongly ideological causes for so long a period, and with such an expenditure of intellectual energy, are capable of accepting the defunct nature of their ideas with good grace.

The theoretical construction of this didactic ideal is realised primarily by the assumption of the values of German historicism and specifically the thought of J.G.

---

<sup>150</sup> Freixanes, *op. cit.*, 37-38.

Herder; other sources of ideological or cultural import, often themselves elaborations and hybrids of the historicist outlook, contribute to the presentation of Galician nationhood that we find in the works of Otero. Upon the historicist foundations, Otero layers differing nuances in accordance to those prevailing cultural ideologies and imperatives such as *atlantismo* and *celtismo* favoured by him. This Herderian format, based on an emphasis on the interaction between progress and tradition, and the philosophy of cultural relativism, informs the Galician scholar's preoccupation with Galician national identity as a philosophical, spiritual and cultural reality legitimized by its very existence alongside other discrete units of demonstrable geo-cultural distinction from an historical perspective. It is also the basis for his speculative political hypotheses, where Otero's intention is twofold: to convey a paradigm of Galicia as a nation and to campaign for the official recognition and federal sovereignty of as faithful a version of this archetype as possible. 'A redenzón da Galiza' and a new Europe are mutually sustainable endorsements. A consenting fellowship of organic and cultural nations, as opposed to an amalgamation of abstract nation-states that were remnants of an imperial past, served as a dignified but hypothetical alternative to a supposedly Castilian-biased Spanish state. The basis of this confraternity was spiritual and cultural rather than political in nature, the natural consequence of centuries of shared history and faith: an assumption of common interests and heritage rather than a signed treaty. Like his fictional other, Solovio, Otero imagines the future map of Europe and envisages a purely organic basis of statehood, within which Galicia forms part of a radically re-structured Iberia, 'Hespaña', comprising individual nations and largely self-governing regions. The 'national spirit' of the Galician nation is Celtic in origin and directs the course of historical development; the

unselfconscious culture of the peasantry is transfigured by Otero into the *sine qua non* of national authenticity and collective values, the cornerstone of tradition and guarantor of identity through change, the irreducible national core that is abiding and sacrosanct and based upon folk culture. Otero's dream of a rural Galician republic, liberal in political tone and Catholic in faith, democratic and free of petty political tyranny yet guided in an unspecified fashion by a paternalistic intelligentsia, and free to govern its own affairs whilst remaining part of a greater Iberia as a whole, never truly diminishes in idealistic zeal.

.

## Conclusion

Ramón Otero Pedrayo never ceases to astonish the historian of ideas with his vast command of cultural history, and with the originality of his interpretation, appropriation and indeed manipulation of influences so that these comply with and shape his subjective, sentimental vision of what Galician identity is and should be. According to the leading cultural anthropologist of the *Xeración Nós*, Galician cultural identity is indivisible from an innate land-love that acts as a social, religious, ethnic and national cohesive force. The relationship between the Galician and the surrounding (Galician) world is one of artistic, spiritual and physical interaction: a sense of history and time comes from the contemplation of landscape that complements the religious sensibility of the Galician observer. The Galician faith draws from pagan polytheism and a telluric Christianity rooted in peasant culture and containing elements of previous religious outlooks. Galician cultural identity is inconceivable without the active agent of the Galician tongue: it unites the Galician cultural community that in turns projects that culture, and acts as a manifest qualification for national status. No other aspect differentiates Galicia on a wider plane than its language, and in the idealised vision of Otero, these traits of national personality are understood in terms of a broader conception of Galicia's place in the world. This Otero envisages as a diversity of nations gauged by a Herderian criterion of organic identity comprising history, folklore, religion, language and geography. Within this possible Europe, Spain or 'Hespaña' would consist of individual nations (Galicia, the Basque country and Catalonia), and self-governing regions. Galician national identity

centres on a folk republic and culture, liberal and democratic in personality and Catholic in faith.

Otero's presentation of Galician cultural identity reveals to us the nature of the mind of the man and the specific circumstances in which he sought expression. The intuitive, spontaneous thrust of his writings amidst the identified responsibilities for intense production during the *Nós* epoch, and selective expression beyond, result in scattered notes for an envisioned, dreamed-up Galicia that the cultural historian must locate as well as decode. This need for a greater degree of analytical evaluation on the part of the critic should not detract from the significant achievement of Otero's contribution. Instead, it should act as a reminder of the discrete and specific circumstances in which Otero worked, and the tremendous intellectual scope at play in favour of a forgotten corner of Spain long ridiculed for its backwardness. In spite of long-term disadvantages encountered by Galician artists and intellectuals prior to and during his lifetime, he posited what is still the broadest of notions of identity within Galician culture: a version of Galician reality both perceived and imagined that represents the first endeavour of its kind in terms of scope, depth and authorial commitment. In this respect, Otero's contribution is unique. Whereas Risco dwelt primarily on theoretical nationalism, Castelao specifically on a fictional presentation less self-consciously concerned with the theme of identity, and Ramón Piñeiro later on a philosophy of *saudade*, Otero presents us with a multi-faceted account of Galician reality perceived, imagined and promoted across several genres. The degree of cultural history referred to by Otero ultimately lends the totality of his ideas on Galician identity an anthropological dimension that shares an affinity with the approach of the Generation of 1898.

Otero and the *Nós* generation register in their biographical writings a profound reaction to the significance of 1898 equal in concern and contemplation to that of the Madrid grouping. Their labour is in part the long-term historical response to that event, its wider significance, and the like and unlike response to the same by the Generation of 1898. On the one hand, the two generations share Romanticism's stress on the recovery of intimate history, *intrahistoria*, and the recuperation of language, customs, legends, traditions and ways of life, and the remembrance and idealisation of the past. Their insights are underpinned by the marriage of innate spiritual awareness with romantic values. However, Otero engages with philosophy and shows a greater familiarity with philosophical discourse and method than many of the members of the Generation of 1898. To present an interpretation of what it is to be Galician by using the raw material of European cultural tradition and philosophy is arguably the most telling achievement of a *Nós* member. By its versatility, endeavour and sheer imaginative ambition it surpasses similar quests for identity by members of the Generation of 1898. Otero consolidates the singularity of the Galician perspective in practical terms through his proposals for a Galician political structure within a wider Spain, the likes of which was far more 'modern' in imagination than the sketches of his contemporaries centred in Madrid. As a writer and thinker in all senses he attests to the presence - outside of the then established organs of power and intellectual reflection - of a contemplation of the modern condition of humanity from a firmly European, but nevertheless fully universal perspective through the preoccupation with a given corner of Spain. This is his greatest achievement and contribution to Iberian culture – the fulfilling of the principal aim of his generation, that of realising high intellectual activity on one's own local and national terms that looks

both inwards and outwards and thereby defends diversity against uniformity as an embodiment of higher universal values.

We might therefore see Otero's work as a huge compendium of scrapbook comments inviting our attention and review. These commentaries by Otero *are* notes for an imagined Galicia, since, to paraphrase the oft-quoted words of Benedict Anderson, Otero never knew, met or heard of most his fellow-members of the small nation of Galicia he envisaged, yet in his mind and work there lived the image of their communion.<sup>1</sup> By examining them, I hope to have shown the subtler, complex reality of a thinker and writer too often pigeon-holed simply as a conservative traditionalist. Instead, I regard Otero as a closet ideologue inextricably bound by the confines that his origins, faith and cultural formation imposed. Otero Pedrayo was against Enlightenment rationalism, positivism, Marxism and Freudian theory: the very aspects of cultural history and social thought that led to and define modernity. Nevertheless, we find in his brand of cultural re-evaluation an attempt to harmonise tradition and progress, to have his piece of modernity's cake and eat it: to couple the impossible.<sup>2</sup> His erudite interpretation and formulation of Galician identity is anti-socialist as much as anti-capitalist, and his idealist dialogue with change has as its criterion a minimum of alterations. Rather than simple rejection, his liberalism allowed a degree of adaptability in his approach to those forces that he knew could only distort the Galicia he preferred as it was, or had been, rather than what it was becoming. Otero used the past as the model for a future and played this off against major elements of capitalist development, the overriding discourse of his age and

---

<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> 'Estar nas orixes é estar no futuro', declares Otero, and *galeguismo*, he maintains, 'sufínase na tradición, na historia e sabe enxerga-lo futuro' (MNE).

our own. There is nothing unusual about this, and it confirms Otero's status as a writer and thinker of European stature at the very least. We need only consider De Valera's more successful imposition of a rural national arcadia in the Irish Republic, or British responses to an altered national state from the end of the First World War to the 1960's, to place Otero in his pan-European context.

Since the collapse of the communist block and its binary opposite, right-wing dictatorship, some time before, we have been left in a political and philosophical void which, in conventional religious terms, is spiritually defunct and without surrogate belief systems such as political ideologies. Religion has declined since the Enlightenment, and political ideology (as developed from the advances in humanist philosophy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) died with the death of the conflict between the great ideological constructs that were the USSR and USA. Material and political pragmatism combined with spiritual and philosophical individualism now predominate. On this premise, I would like to propose the view that Otero, although it may at first seem ironic and unlikely, was an improbable precursor in this respect; firstly, because he refused to be classified by the mainstream ideologies of the day. Secondly and above all, he espoused and lived by a political and philosophical pragmatism. Criticism in Galicia has been dominated by ideology until very recently, hence his isolation and sometimes negative representation. However, we have far more in common with Otero for the reasons I have suggested, and are therefore equipped to understand him better. Furthermore, even if our intellectual and cultural formations differ from those of Spain's last Romantic, today we share some of the concerns he raises about the preservation of tradition and national identity in the daunting face of linguistic and cultural uniformity.

The pace of global, technological and economic change, and its effects on local patterns of community and association – the cornerstone of any cultural identity – form as much a part of our agenda of world affairs and concerns as it did for that of a late Galician nationalist's programme for an imaginary nation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a select bibliography which includes all those works which proved of use in the preparation of this thesis. The majority have been cited in the text.

### PRIMARY SOURCES

All primary sources are listed in the section entitled 'Abbreviations'.

### SECONDARY SOURCES

Adler, H., and Menze, E.A., 'On the Way to World History: Johann Gottfried Herder', in J.G. Herder, *On World History*, ed. Hans Adler and Ernest A. Menze, trans. Ernest A. Menze with Michael Palma (London, 1997).

Álvarez Blanco, R., 'Escribir en galego: Otero Pedrayo', in *Otero Pedrayo na revista Nós: 1920-1936 (Escolma)* (Departamento de Filoloxía Galega, Universidade de Santiago, 1988), 9-23.

Amador de los Ríos, José, *Historia crítica de la literatura española* (Madrid: Impr. de J. Rodriguez, 1861-65), 7 vols.

Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

Arauxo, M.A., 'A relixiosidade de don Ramón', in *Nuestro amigo Ramón Otero Pedrayo* (Vigo: Gráficas Alpima, 1979).

Baliñas, C., 'Otero Pedrayo, intelectual', *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos XXXI* (1978-80), 25-94.

'From provincialism to nationalism: Galician political and cultural movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,' *The Blue Papers 1* (Oxford: Centre for Galician Studies Publications, May 1997), 37-50.

Barnard, F.M., *Herder's Social and Political Thought. From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

Barreiros, C., 'Parladoiro', in *Ramón Otero Pedrayo: a súa vida e a súa obra. Homaxe da Galicia universal* (Caracas, 1958). 25-29.

Bauer, O., 'The Nation', in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 39-77.

- Beramendi, X.G., *Vicente Risco no nacionalismo galego, Vol. I. Das orixes á afirmación plena* (Santiago de Compostela: Col. Minor. Ed. do Cerne, 1981).
- Beramendi, X.G., and Núñez Seixas, X.M., *O Nacionalismo Galego* (Vigo: Edicións A Nosa Terra, 1996).
- Berdyayev, N., *Christianity and Class War* (London, 1933).
- The Bourgeois Mind* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934).
- The Meaning of History* (London, 1936).
- The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (University of Michigan Press, 1961 [1935]).
- Bergson, H., *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (London: Macmillan, 1935).
- Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: MacMillan, 1964 [1911]).
- Berlin, I., 'J.G. Herder', in pamphlet series, *Men and Ideas* (1965).
- The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: Fontana Press, 1991).
- Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1992 [1976]).
- The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and their History* (London: Pimlico, 1997 [1996]).
- Blanco, C., 'A muller en *Arredor de si*', *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX* (Santiago de Compostela: Consello da Cultura Galega, 1990), 227-251.
- Blanco Aguinaga, Carlos, *Juventud del 98* (Madrid: Taurus, 1998 [1970]).
- Bobillo, F., *Nacionalismo gallego. La ideología de Vicente Risco* (Madrid: Akal, 1981).
- Brañas, Alfredo, *El regionalismo* (Barcelona, Jaime Molins, 1889).
- Breuilly, J., 'The Sources of Nationalist Ideology', in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (OUP, 1994), 103-113.
- Bromage, M.C., *De Valera and the March of a Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1956).
- Carballo Calero, R., 'Ramón, príncipe de Aquitania,' *Homaxe a Otero Pedrayo no LXX aniversario do seu nacemento* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1958), 27-45.
- Cardinal, R., *German Romantics in Context* (London, 1975).

Cardwell, R., 'A traducción de Ulysses de Ramón Otero Pedrayo: a Xeración Nós e a rexeneración cultural galega', *Actas do simposio internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX* (Santiago de Compostela: Consello da Cultura Galega, 1990), 15-26.

Casares, C., *Ramón Otero Pedrayo* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1981).

*Vicente Risco* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1981).

Castelao, A. R., *Cousas* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1994).

*Os dous de sempre* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1993).

*Sempre en Galiza* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1994).

*Retrincos e un ollo de vidro* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1994).

*Os vellos non deben de namorarse* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1988).

de Castro, Rosalía., *Cantares gallegos* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989 [1863]).

*En las orillas del Sar* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997).

*Follas Novas* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1993 [1880])

*Obra completa* (Madrid: Akal, 1992), 3 vols.

Chadwick, H., *Priscillian of Avila* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

Charlton, D.G., *New Images of the Natural in France. A Study in European Cultural History, 1750-1800*, (CUP, 1984).

Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion*, trans. Charles I. White, (London: Charles Dolman, 1857 [1830]).

*The Memoirs of Chateaubriand*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961).

Chesterton, G. K., *St Francis of Assisi* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1996).

Coogan, T.P., *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London, 1995).

Crouter, R., 'Introduction', Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans., ed. Richard Crouter (CUP, 1996).

Dobson, A., *An Introduction to the Politics and Philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset* (CUP, 1989).

Dulin Bondue, N., *El granito y las luces*, 2 vols. (Vigo: Galaxia, 1987).

Egleson Dunleavy, J., and Dunleavy, G.W., *Douglas Hyde. A Maker of Modern Ireland* (University of California Press, 1991).

Dwyer, T.R., *De Valera, The Man and the Myths* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1991).

Edwards, J., *Language, Society and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

Elías de Tejada, F., 'Ramón Otero Pedrayo y el tradicionalismo cultural gallego', *Homaxe a Otero Pedrayo no LXX aniversario do seu nacemento* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1958), 173-181.

Fernández Freixanes, V., *Unha ducia de galegos* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1976).

Fernández del Riego, F., *O señor da casa grande de cima da vila* (Edicións do Patronato Otero Pedrayo, 1988).

Filgueira Valverde, J., 'La lírica de Otero Pedrayo', *R. Menéndez Pidal. R. Otero Pedrayo. Simposio celebrado en Madrid. Actas editadas por Manuel Mourelle de Lama* (A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1991), 151-166.

Fichte, J.G., *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (Chicago and London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1922 [1808]).

Fischer, K.P., *History and Prophecy. Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

Flitter, D.W., 'The Poetic Image in Pondal: Recollection and Premonition', *1st Oxford Conference on Galician Studies. Oxford 1991* (Xunta de Galicia, 1991).

*Spanish Romantic Literary Theory and Criticism* (CUP, 1992).

'Ramón Otero Pedrayo e a "transferencia histórica" do rexurdimento galego', *Donaire* 3 (October 1994), 22-26.

'Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The "Xeración Nós"', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2000), xxxvi, 3, 296-309

Fox, I., *La invención de España: Nacionalismo liberal e identidade nacional* (Cátedra: Madrid, 1997).

St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare of Assisi, *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works*, trans. and ed.. R.J. Armstrong and I.C. Brady (London: SPCK, 1982).

Franco Grande, X.L., 'A galicidade da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', *Homaxe a Otero Pedrayo no LXX aniversario do seu nacemento* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1958).

Friedman, J., *Cultural Identity and the Global Process* (London: Sage Publications, 1994).

- Furst, L.R., *Romanticism* (London: Methuen, 1979).
- Ganivet, Ángel, *Idearium español* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1964 [1897]).
- Gaskill, H., 'Ossian in Europe', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, XXI, no.4 (December 1994), 643-678.
- Gellner, E., 'The Coming of Nationalism and Its Interpretation: The Myths of Nation and Class', in *Mapping the Nation*, 98-145.
- Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (London: Penguin, 1989).
- Gómez Antón, P., *A derradeira dimension de Otero Pedrayo* (A comisión de cultura da Diputación de Ourense, 1980).
- Griffin, J., *Virgil* (OUP, 1986).
- Gullón, R., 'Relacións intertextuais en *Arredor de si*', *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX*, 201-214.
- Hale, W.H., *Challenge to Defeat: Modern Man in Goethe's World and Spengler's Century* (New York: 1932).
- Hamlyn, D.W., 'Idealism', in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (OUP, 1995), 386-388.
- Herder, J.G., *Selected Early Works (1764-1767)*, ed. Ernest A. Menze and Karl Menges, trans. by Ernest A. Menze and Michael Palma (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).
- Herrero Pérez, N., 'Ramón Otero Pedrayo e Henri Bergson: notas para unha filosofía galega', *Agora 2* (1982), 171-181.
- Hobsbawm, E.J., *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (CUP 1993).
- 'Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today', in *Mapping the Nation*, 255-266
- Hughes, H.S., *Oswald Spengler, a Critical Estimate* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962).
- Humboldt, W. von, *Essays on Language*, ed. T.Harden and D. Farelly (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997).
- Hunter, J.M., *Perspective on Ratzel's Political Geography* (London: University Press of America, 1983).
- Hutchinson, J., 'Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration', in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (OUP, 1994), 122-131.

- Jens, W., and Küng, H., *Literature and Religion*, trans. P. Heinegg (New York: Paragon House, 1991).
- de Jongh-Rossel, E.M., *El Krausismo y la generación de 1898*, (Valencia: ediciones Albatros Hispanofila, 1985).
- Kohn, H., *The Mind of Germany* (London: MacMillan, 1960).
- Kolakowski, L., *Bergson* (OUP, 1985).
- Lacey, A.R., *Bergson*, (London: Routledge, 1989).
- Lamartine, A., *Méditations poétiques* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993).
- Lewis, B., *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: 1975).
- López Caneda, R., 'Prisciliano. Su pensamiento y su problema histórico', *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos XVI*, Santiago de Compostela, 1966, 1-201.
- López Morillas, J., *The Krausist Movement and Ideological Change in Spain, 1854-1874* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Machado, A., *Campos de Castilla*, ed. Geoffrey Ribbans (Madrid, Cátedra, 1989).
- MacPherson, J., *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh University Press, 1996).
- Martínez Pereiro, C.P., 'Introducción ao teatro de Otero', *Cadernos da escola dramática galega* 72 (A Coruña, May 1988).
- McEachran, F., *The Life and Philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder* (Oxford, 1939).
- Méndez Ferrín, X.L., 'Otero Pedrayo e a política', *O Faro de Vigo*, 11/11/1996.
- Monteagudo, H., 'Introducción', in Otero Pedrayo, *A Romaría de Xelmírez*, 87-64.
- Montiel, I., *Ossián en España* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1974).
- Murguía, Manuel, *Galicia* (Vigo: Xerais, 1982), 2 vols.
- Historia de Galicia* vol. I, Lugo, 1865; vol. II, Lugo, 1866; vol. III, A Coruña, 1988; vol. IV, A Coruña, 1891; vol. V, A Coruña, 1911.
- Los Precursores* (La Coruña: La Voz de Galicia, 1976 [1865]).
- Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. by Margaret Mahoney Stoljar (State University of New York Press, 1997).
- Hymns to the Night. Spiritual Songs*, trans. G. MacDonald (London: Temple Lodge, 1992).

Outeiriño, M., 'Conversación con un "Fantasma do século dazanove', *La Región*, 13/12/75.

Pardo Bazán, Emilia, *Obras completas* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1963-1973), 3 vols.

Pastor Díaz, N., *De Villahermosa a la China*, in *Obras Completas*, III (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores españoles, Ediciones Atlas 1970).

Patterson, C., 'Landscape, philosophy and identity: a Galician response to the legacy of 1898', *Galician Review* 2 (1998), 62-72.

'North and South and The Decline of the West: Galicia, Spengler and Otero Pedrayo', *Galician Review* 3-4 (1999-2000), 52-76.

'1929, 1965, 1976: notas oterianas para unha Galicia imaxinada', in *Actas da conferencia 'Os camiños da estirpe: a literatura galega no seu devalar' 16-17/06/2000* (University of Birmingham, forthcoming).

'Otero Pedrayo e a *Decadencia de Occidente*: morte, resurrección, manipulación', *Anuario de estudos galegos 2000* (Santiago de Compostela: Editorial Galaxia), 43-68.

Pensado, J.L., *Opúsculos lingüísticos gallegos del siglo XVIII* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1974).

*La Educación de la Juventud de Fray Martín Sarmiento* (Xunta de Galicia, 1984).

Pérez Prieto, V., *A Xeración "Nós": Galeguismo e relixión* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1988).

Pfefferkorn, K., *Novalis. A Romantic's Theory of Language and Poetry* (Yale University Press, 1988).

Pondal, E., *Queixumes dos pinos e outros poemas* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1985 [1877-1935]).

Quintana X.R., and Valcárcel M., *Ramón Otero Pedrayo. Vida, obra e pensamento* (Vigo: Ir Indo, 1988).

Ramos, F., 'Unha tarde inédita con Otero Pedrayo', *La Voz de Galicia*, 27/05/1982.

Reymont, L., *The Peasants* (London: Jarrolds, 1938).

Río Barja, F.J., 'A personalidade xeográfica de Otero Pedrayo', *Homaxe a Otero Pedrayo no LXX aniversario do seu nacemento* (Galaxia: Vigo, 1958), 269-274.

Risco, Vicente, *Leria* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1990 [1961]).

*Mitteleuropa* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1992).

'Nós, os inadaptados', *Nós* 115 (1933), 115-123.

- Obra completa, 1: Teoría nacionalista*, Francisco J. Bobillo (ed.), (Madrid: Akal, 1981).
- O porco de pé* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1995).
- Ríos Panisse, M. do Carme., 'A visión da paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo', *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX*, 87-127.
- 'Introducción', in *Devalar*, (Galaxia: Vigo, 1992), 7-76.
- Rousseau, J.J., *Reveries Of The Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France (Penguin: 1979).
- Émile, or Education*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Dent, 1911).
- Rousseau J.J., and Herder, J.G., *Two Essays On The Origin of Language*, translated by John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (University of Chicago, 1986).
- Russell, B., *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Unwin, 1979).
- Santoveña Setién, A., *Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo*, Revisión Crítico-Biográfica de un pensador católico (Universidad de Cantabria, 1994).
- Sarmiento, M., *Catálogo de voces y frases de la lengua gallega*, edición y estudio por J.L. Pensado (Universidad de Salamanca, 1973).
- Estudio sobre el origen y formación de la lengua gallega* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1943).
- Schama, S., *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana Press, 1996).
- Schleiermacher, F., *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans., ed. Richard Crouter (CUP, 1996).
- Scruton, R., *Spinoza* (OUP, 1986).
- Shaw, Donald, *The Generation of 1898 in Spain* (London: E. Benn, 1975).
- Shelley, *Adonais. An Elegy on the Death of John Keats* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1994).
- Spencer, V.A., *Herder, Culture and Community. The Political Implications of an Expressivist Theory of Language* (Oxford: Unpublished D.Phil, January 1995).
- Spengler, O., *The Decline of the West* 2 vols. (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*), trans. C.F. Atkinson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928).
- Spinoza, *Ethics* (London: Penguin, 1996).
- Stafford, F., *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1988).

- Synge, J.M., *The Aran Islands* (London: Penguin, 1992).
- Tarrío Varela, A., 'Otero Pedrayo e a renovación da novela no século XX', in *Otero Pedrayo na revista Nós: 1920-1936*, 25-46.
- Literatura Galega: aportacións a unha Historia crítica* (Vigo: Xerais, 1998).
- Teixeira de Pascoaes, J., *Obras Completas*, 12 vols. (Lisboa: Livraria Bertrand, 1967).
- Thomas, K., *Man And The Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England (1500-1800)* (London: Penguin, 1984).
- Thomson, J., *The Seasons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
- Unamuno, Miguel de, *En torno al casticismo* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1998).
- Various authors, 'Afirmación católica dun grupo de nacionalistas', *Logos*, 1931.
- Nuestro amigo don Ramón Otero Pedrayo*, ed. Severino Cardeñoso Alvarez (Vigo: Gráficas Alpima, 1979).
- Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes – 1931* (Madrid, Rivadeneira, 1933), III, 1533-1534.
- Castelao, Otero Pedrayo, Suárez Picallo, Villar Ponte. Discursos parlamentarios (1931-1933)*, ed. X.L. García (A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1978).
- Homaxe a Otero Pedrayo no LXX aniversario do seu nacemento* (Galaxia: Vigo, 1958).
- Ventura, Joaquim, *El Grupo Nós: autoretrat d'una generació* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidad de Barcelona, 1997).
- O nacionalismo kármico de Vicente Risco* (Santiago de Compostela: Laiovento, 2000).
- Vilavedra, Dolores, *Historia da literatura galega* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1999).
- Villares, R., *Historia de Galicia* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1991).
- Virgil, *The Eclogues. The Georgics. The Aeneid*, trans. Cecil Day Lewis (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1990).
- Whitman, W., *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (Cambridge, 1982).