

National Poets and Cultural Saints of Europe: Galician (questionnaire)

Literary culture: Galician

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Date: July 31st, 2017

Place: Santiago de Compostela

1. Which individual poet (male or female) is generally considered to be the greatest poet in your literary tradition? (Give the first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death.)

Rosalía de Castro (1837–1885)

2. Are there other poets that come near or even reach such a status? If yes, name up to two, give their basic information (first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death), and assess their stature in relation to the greatest poet (scale 1–5; 5 = “equally important,” 1 = “marginal in comparison to”).

Eduardo Pondal (1835–1917) [4]

Manuel Curros Enríquez (1851–1908) [3]

3. Is there a (single) poet that is considered the “national” poet? (Give the first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death.) Is the notion of “national poet” (NP) widespread in your literary culture? (Assess on a scale of 1–5; 1 = “irrelevant,” 5 = “very common.”)

Rosalía de Castro (1837–1885); the notion of a national poet is very common [5].

4. Were there many rival poets to the position of national poet during the canonization process that were later marginalized? If yes, name up to three, give their basic information (first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death), and assess the decade of their utmost presence in the canonization processes (e.g., 1880s). (If there is no NP, answer for the “greatest” poet.)

The contemporary poets that could have competed with Rosalía de Castro (Eduardo Pondal and Curros Enríquez) belong, together with her, to the so-called triad of the *Rexurdimento* (Galician literary renaissance in the nineteenth century), but to a much lesser degree of canonization.

5. Which period of canonization of the NP (or the greatest poet in case of no NP) was most important? (State the year or decade.) Name up to five of the most important canonization events (state the year and type; e.g., 1860: crucial textual edition; 1905: unveiling of an important memorial). Assess the current stature of the national (or greatest) poet compared to the most intense period (scale 1–5; 5 = “equally important,” 1 = “marginal in comparison to”).

Most important was the period from 1890 to 1910:

May, 1891: transfer of the mortal remains of Rosalía de Castro to the Pantheon of Illustrious Galicians (*Panteón de Galegos Ilustres*) at Saint Dominic’s Monastery (*Convento de Santo Domingo de Bonaval*);

1884–1909: Critical text edition: *Obras completas de Rosalía de Castro* (Complete Works of Rosalía de Castro), Manuel Murguía ed., Madrid, Librería de los Sucesores de Hernando.

6. *Who were the individuals, institutions, and interest groups (cultural factions, political parties) that played major roles in the promotion of the canonization process? State the names and assess the most active decade(s).*

Manuel Murguía, husband and then widower of Rosalía de Castro (1880–1910)
Galician Regional Association (*Asociación Regionalista Gallega*, 1890–1920)
Royal Galician Academy (*Real Academia Galega*, 1880–1910)

7. *When were the works of the national (or greatest) poet fully integrated into the education system? (Name the decade; e.g., 1910s.) Assess the overall presence of the national (or greatest) poet and his or her works in education (scale 1–5; 5 = “excessive,” 3 = “not particularly strong,” 1 = “marginal”). If there were unusual shifts or breaks (due to politics, etc.), add a brief comment.*

The 1970s and 1980s; as an author of Spanish literature (she wrote in both Spanish and Galician) her presence in the secondary and university education system dates further back. However, the cultural policy of the Franco regime, disinclined to recognize the literary expression in Spain’s peripheral languages, limited the presence of subjects related to the Galician language and literature in primary and secondary education until the approval of the Statute of Autonomy of Galicia (1981).

8. *Are there other literary writers (prose writers or playwrights) in your literary culture that come close to the canonical position of the national (or greatest) poet? If so, name up to three, give their information (first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death), and assess their stature in relation to the national (or greatest) poet (scale 1–9; 9 = “much more important,” 5 = “equally important,” 1 = “marginal in comparison to”).*

Manuel Antonio (1900–1930); poet [7]
Álvaro Cunqueiro (1911–1981); novelist, poet, and playwright [8]
Xosé Luís Méndez Ferrín (born 1938); writer and poet [6]

9. *Are there other artists (composers, musicians, painters, architects, etc.) in your literary culture that come close to the canonical position of the national (or greatest) poet? If yes, name up to three, give their basic information (first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death), and assess their stature in relation to the national (or greatest) poet (scale 1–9; 9 = “much more important,” 5 = “equally important,” 1 = “marginal in comparison to”).*

Mestre Mateo (c. 1150 – c. 1200/1217); sculptor and architect, creator of the Portal of Glory (*Pórtico da Gloria*);

Alfonso Daniel Manuel Rodríguez Castelao (1886–1950); he was very influential in his political role (the author of *Sempre en Galiza* [Always in Galicia], the canonical text of political nationalism; see below), but also as a painter, cartoonist, and graphic designer (he was the creator of the typeface most commonly linked to Galician cultural expression).

10. *Name up to three other individuals (in politics, military, scholarship, etc.) that were most venerated in the nation-building context and remain highly canonized today. Give their basic information (first name, last name, year of birth, and year of death) and assess their stature in relation to the national (or greatest) poet (scale 1–9; 9 = “much more important,” 5 = “equally important,” 1 = “marginal in comparison to”).*

Manuel Murguía (1833–1923); historian and journalist [4]
Alfonso Daniel Manuel Rodríguez Castelao (1886–1950); politician and artist [5]
Ricardo Carballo Calero (1910–1990); philologist and writer [2]

11. *Briefly describe the main reason why the chosen poet was considered “national” (or greatest in the case of no NP).*

The canonization of Rosalía de Castro is mainly due to the way she represents peasantry and the territorial identity of Galicia in her book *Cantares gallegos* (Galician Songs, 1862), as well as her direct approach to the consequences of emigration to America; the migrant community financed some of her books and a substantial number of monuments are dedicated to her. Since the mid-twentieth century, she has been increasingly regarded as a metaphysical poet; this is mainly due to the new interpretations of her book *Follas novas* (New Leaves, 1880). More recently, a crucial reason for her canonization is the fact that she was considered the pioneer of feminism in Galicia.

12. *Speculate briefly on reasons why the concept of NP did (or did not) gain ground in your literary culture.*

The Galician literary culture is one whose golden age is linked to poetry (Galician-Portuguese medieval poetry), which is its most revered and ancient expression. During the *Rexurdimento*, poetry continued to be the most popular genre and the one that guaranteed the revival of Galician in written expression. On the other hand, following a process of discursive naturalization that has its roots in the romantic theory of lyrical poetry, Rosalía de Castro’s poems were considered the “voice of the people.” In spite of subsequent and more nuanced interpretations of her work, collective thinking still links her poetry to popular songs, as if her *Cantares* were not poems based on a previous popular tradition, but were the tradition itself. Her gender also seems to be a key factor in her canonization process from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. It consolidated the identification of Rosalía de Castro with Galicia itself; from 1985 (the hundredth anniversary of her death and a very important year for the studies on her), she was retrospectively considered the first feminist writer in Galician.

13. *Speculate briefly on the reasons why the position of a national (or greatest) poet was either occupied by a single poet or shared by a number of poets.*

The distinctive character of Rosalía de Castro’s position as the Galician national poet is greatly due to the fact that, almost since her death, she was traditionally considered the “mother” of the literary community, and, as a popular saying has it, “You only have one mother.”

14. *Do you notice any interesting connotations regarding the canonization of a national (or greatest) poet that resemble the veneration and cults of religious saints? What about other artists? Specify briefly.*

Rosalía de Castro quickly became a myth surrounded by religious connotations. A good example is the fact that the interpretative tradition most closely linked to Catholic tradition nicknamed her “The Little Saint,” a moniker still related to the period classification of the *Rexurdimento* in *Historia da literatura galega contemporánea* (History of Contemporary Galician Literature) by Ricardo Carballo Calero (1963). Identifying Rosalía with “Galicia as a martyr”—partly based on important parts of her literary works, such as some of the most popular poems in *En las orillas del Sar* (On the Banks of the Sar, 1884)—even created a symbolic comparison of the writer with Jesus. This was derived from metaphors such as that of the incarnation (Rosalía as the core of the Galician people) or the Passion. The latter is based on an interpretative tradition linked to her biography, which highlights the painful and sacrificial aspect of her person and would even be referenced in Valle-Inclán’s early writings. Also to be taken into account is the fact that some of the places most closely related to her life and work were the origin of a pilgrimage called the Rosaliana Route (*Ruta Rosaliana*, which includes a visit to the house where she died) or that, even nowadays, some physical remains of Rosalía de Castro, such as a lock of her hair, are displayed in museums and are almost considered relics.