

# Miro Villar



## BIOGRAPHY

Miro Villar was born in Cee, province of A Coruña in 1965. His thesis, *A poesía galega de Antón Zapata García, Edición e estudo*, earned him a doctorate in Galician Philology.

He is now a professor of Galician language and literature in secondary school. He is a poet, prose writer, literary critic and translator for various magazines and periodicals. He formed part of the *Batallón Literario da Costa da Morte*, of the Board of Directors of the poetry magazine *Dorna*, and on the Consejo Editorial of the poetry collection *Abativo Absoluto of Ediciones Xerais de Galicia*.

As a poet his books include; *Ausencias pretéritas* (1992), *42 décimas de febre* (1994), *Abecedario da desolación* (1997, Tívoli-Europa prize, 1998), *Equinoccio de primavera* (1998; finalist for the Tívoli-Europa prize

1999) and *Gameleiros* (2002).

His poetry has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Russian, Albanian and, to Serbo-Croat in volume *II cammino di Santiago. La giovane poesia d'Europa nel 1997* (1998).

His poems can also be found in various literary magazines and in the collective *Ao mar de adentro* (1989) and *A rota dos baleiros* (1991), as well as in the anthologies *Para saír do século* (1997), *Rio de son vento* (1999), *dEfecto 2000* (1999), *A tribo das baleas* (2001) and in the collectively authored *Nós. Batallón Literario da Costa da Morte* (1997), *Mar por medio* (1998), *Ourense, craro río, verde val* (2001) and *47 poetas de hoxe cantan a Curros Enríquez* (2001).

His prose won the 1985/87 *Modesto R. Figueiredo del Patronato Pedrón de Ouro short story prize* for *Augas de silencio* and *Verbas cruzadas con Amaranta* (1987/88) and the *Curuxa Literaria do Museo do Humor* de Fene. He also published for children and young adults,

*Carlota, a marmota* (2000), *Carlota e a bota perdida* (2002), *Carlota e a gaviota patiamarela* (2006), *Noel o rico verme de vereia* in *Contos de vermes, libros, princesas e parrulos* (2006) and *O nariz de Fiz* (2008).

As an essayist he has participated in numerous conferences and literary events, with papers published in the respective minutes and he published various critical essays and commentaries like the *Antoloxía poética de Gonzalo López Abente* (1995), *Unha lectura de O soño sulagado* (1998), *Roberto Blanco Torres, Orballo da medianoite* (1998), *A poesía galega de Xervasio Paz Lestón* (1998). In addition, he is coauthor of the volumes of *Publicacións periódicas y Obras* in the *Diccionario da Literatura Galega* (1997/99) and, with Xesús Alonso Montero, of *Textos e documentos para o congreso sobre García Lorca* (1998), *Guerra civil (1936-1939) e literatura galega* (1999), *Indo para máis perto. A señardade no puño* de Alexandre Criebeiro (2004), *A roseira da soidade* by Antón Zapata García (2005), *Poesía galega completa e textos en prosa* of Emilio Álvarez Blázquez (2005).

## AUTOPOETIC

*I hate poetic statements.*

Just like Luisa Castro<sup>1</sup>, I also totally condemn any kind of statement on poetics, probably because in my verses there is a generous presence of meta-literary elements. And because I believe it should be the critic from his distance, the one with more of the proper tools, who should carve that wood without the bias due to the belief that there are many “critics” who, having the necessary tools, are not familiar with their labor. In any case, and to give them a hand, here goes a reflection in an elevated voice.

The poetic word is one of the most powerful weapons in the act of communication, even though it is not the only one, and not even the most important, and is used, at least in my case, at the service of introspection and, in the search of often finding myself. In this sense then, it would be at the service of the most natural expression of feelings and the revelation of the enjoyment of the senses for those who, when reading, linger within the verses.

In no way do I aim to transform anyone or anything, a cause that belongs to the man that is inside me, and never the poet. This does not mean that my poetic word hasn't been put on some occasion to the service of various causes, recently with the rant, “*Nunca Más*” to the *Prestige* or the “*No to war*” (actually, my first book *Ausencias pretéritas* offers the rights of the author, like my grain of corn, to break the economic blockade in Cuba). Even so, I don't believe in its potential to induce a metamorphosis that is not strictly individual. This is why I don't agree much with our poet Celso Emilio Ferreiro —greatest representative of social-realism in Galician poetry, and a great reader of Salvador Quasimodo— when he wrote that poets: *Have to re-twist the neck of the nightingale of weepy, nostalgic, old-style lyricism. On the other hand, they must plunge with desperate effort into the social world of our land; in the problems of our time; in the anguish of our people.* On the contrary, I am very close to the Celso Emilio Ferreiro who poeticizes: *investigate the truth of your time / and you will find your poetry.*

Nevertheless, on a day already distant, after a public reading of my work, a stranger approached me to tell me that he had lived, many times, through some of the situations I spoke of in my verses, but he could never express it in those words. That day, already distant, I understood that even poetry could be, sometimes, painfully or happily useful.

*Poetry is the supreme fiction, Madame.*

I appeal to Wallace Stevens to establish that fictionality presides in the assemblies of poetry, because even the most autobiographical texts become ductile imaginaries for each reader.

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<sup>1</sup> Luisa Castro is a novelist, poet, and essayist in both Galician and Spanish. Born in Foz, Lugo, in 1966. Among her most important work it is worth noting: *Los versos del eunuco* (Prize- Hiperión de Poesía, 1986), *Los hábitos del artillero* (Prize- Rey Juan Carlos I de Poesía, 1990), *El somier* (finalist for the Prize- Herralde, 1990), *El secreto de la lejía* (Prize -Azorín, 2001) and the book of stories *Podría hacerte daño* (Prize -Narrativa Torrente Ballester, 2004). Currently she resides in Santiago de Compostela, and is a regular contributor to *La Voz de Galicia*, *El Mundo* and *El País Semanal*.

Actually, I have observed how perfectly defined personal experiences have turned into mysterious interpretations, which demonstrate the uniqueness of each reading, or what ends up being the same thing, that the text, after being written, no longer belongs to the poet, and it becomes a universe of decodifications.

*“The poet is not the one who names things, but the one who dissolves their names, the one who discovers that things have no name, and that the names we call them are not theirs”*

I turn to Octavio Paz to justify that the poet is like a firewater maker who distills the bagasse of the words in the poem still, so that, after sedimentation, it can be served in clay bowls to wet the reader’s feelings.

*“En sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poème”.*

Finally, I appeal to Boileau to defend myself from the harassment of certain prejudiced critic which judges the inopportuneness of making sonnets at this time, a stanza which represents the most perfect architecture in poetry and which is still alive in all near cult languages and literatures.

## **CURRENT GALICIAN LITERATURE & GALICIAN POETRY IN PARTICULAR**

In my opinion, the —scarce— recognition there is of Galician poetry on the outside, whether it be on the peninsula —because I include Portugal— whether it be in Europe or in America, is almost always due to chance brought on by the personal interests of someone who comes to our poetry and decides to promote this poetic discourse because it speaks to them. It’s not strange that it happens this way, because the same thing happens among ourselves in respect to other languages that are, for whatever reason, on the margins, on the periphery, of the literary system.

I am not a publicist. And in addition I don’t trust marketing when it comes to the promotion of poetry, because such publicity makes the poems of Antonio Gala or the anthology of love poems edited by Anson become bestsellers, even here in Galicia, eclipsing other poetic expressions that I consider more rich, more fortunate to have...

Even so, the Internet opens up a field of unexplored possibilities and we don’t yet know what it will bring. Young poets like Yolanda Castaño, Marta Dacosta, Estúbaliz Espinosa, Eduardo Estévez, María Lado, or Rafa Villar, among others, who maintain ongoing web pages, can perhaps explain better where we are headed in this terrain.

On another hand, Galician literature (like other peripheral literatures of Spanish states: like Catalan or Basque), are rarely translated and there are very few authors, almost always fiction writers, that are known outside our borders. As poets we are rarely translated and almost always it is in anthologies like, *La tribu de las ballenas* (2001), that brings together thirteen Galician poets from the 90s in a trilingual edition of Galician/Spanish/English. But this is an initiative of Galician publishers. Foreigners don’t dare publish us. Therefore, the difficulties are immense, when it comes time to publish our literature. In the Galician press (made in Galicia, but with

almost all of its pages in Spanish), any editorial novelty in Spanish ends up taking up more space than the appearance of a book in Galician. So it happens that Galician literature is invisible in its own country. The 17<sup>th</sup> of May (Day of Galician Letters) a manifesto signed by writers, editors and Galician booksellers denounced this situation of vulnerability and the unequal struggle.

## **GALICIA AND ITS FUTURE**

On the educational, social and economic situation I give my opinion as a citizen, or as person, but I can't give it as a writer. It is usually said that poets are visionaries, but I am incapable of seeing the other side of this time I have been destined to live in. In the future, Galicia as a country and its language will have the vitality that the Galician village decides in the coming generations. On us only lies the labor of working in the present, in defense of our signs of collective identity.

## POEMS<sup>1</sup>

### ADAM WANTS TO DIE IN EVE'S PARADISE

In the orange your arms filter  
when you make me enter your dominion  
in the pears where my intention flows  
hidden like the sea and its sargassos.

In apples of evil, in the embraces  
I long to be Adam without reason,  
in the jointly sipped fruit,  
I want to die, become a thousand pieces,  
in the liquid sugar you emanate from me  
which I drink bit by bit, with pleasure  
since it reminds me of the scent of begonia,

in the oranges, pears and apples,  
in the fruit and sweetened liquid  
I crave your flavor of macedonia.

from *Equinoccio de primavera*<sup>2</sup> (1998)

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<sup>1</sup> Translation to Spanish by the poet himself.

“DIONI”

In each fisherman a mythological being sleeps,  
with two strong arms, extremities  
branching out into eight tentacles with suckers,  
and if danger is foreseen on the horizon  
eight arms awaken to embrace life

“CHE”

In this wasteland that we are any fisherman  
multiplies the fish and the bread for his own,  
in complete silence he reinvents the gospel  
in the voice of Matthew. And there will never be chroniclers  
to give the news of this daily miracle.

STONE BED

The ready eagle eyes of a seaman never  
will have read Stevenson, Melville, London, Verne,  
but his fingers bubble on the ink pages  
where the marks of the sea were written,  
hidden treasure chests that open the keys to the net of life

QUINÓN

The clouds of doubt hurtful as the sun,  
you are always Ulysses, there is always a Penelope  
who waits with weavings. And Ithaca is distant,  
even though it was just a tide of hours  
Ithaca is distant even though you always return.

from, *Gameleiros*<sup>==</sup> (2002)

UNPUBLISHED POEMS FROM: *BRETAÑA-BREIZH*

PONT-AVEN

Fifteen houses  
and fourteen mills.  
Hands of wheat.

PONT-AVEN (1886-1894)

Nothing lasts  
savage and primitive.  
Paul Gauguin flees.

PONT-AVEN (2007)

Art market  
Paul Gauguin stuffs crepes,  
strange atmosphere.

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<sup>=</sup> *Spring Equinox*

<sup>=</sup> *Gameleiros* are the fishermen who use the traditional Galician fishing boats called *gamelas*. They are made for fishing in shallow and rocky waters. A *gamela* is made entirely of pinewood and is three to four meters long by one and half to two wide. It is characterized by its flat edges on both ends of the boat. Decades ago they were propelled by sails, today by motors. The first *gamelas* were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Corujo, coastal parish near the city of Vigo. [http://gl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Gamela\\_79eue.JPG](http://gl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Gamela_79eue.JPG)