



Land of Women

María Sánchez

Curtis Bauer, Translator

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María Sánchez's memoir concerns the inequalities that women face in the Spanish countryside, even as rural communities fade away.

Sánchez works in a field that's dominated by men: just 2.2% of field veterinarians in Spain are women. She was the first woman in her family to hold the job, and is fascinated by the absence of women's history before her. And she writes about how her communities are changing: she travels between towns, witnessing as rural languages and practices fall away. People move to cities, she says, as corporations exploit natural resources, and as governments refuse to acknowledge climate change. A sense of history dissipates.

The book also forwards feminist critiques, as about how women are expected to work in the field while also taking care of the house, chores, and children. And it cycles back to its thoughts on the "rural problem": women farmers are silenced, young people flee their roots, and everyone loses their ties to land, agriculture, and animals. Thus, Sánchez shares her stories with the hope of guiding people to be more in tune with the land that surrounds them.

Sánchez's prose is both lyrical and nebulous, resulting in a deep, personal cultural history that digs into areas not often discussed. Evocative black-and-white photographs come between her chapters, depicting a person hugging a goat, a hand holding a basket of flowers, and a hand touching a gnarled tree trunk. Their subtle beauty is a calming balm between charged arguments. Nuanced Spanish terms that have no direct English translations are covered in the book's helpful glossary, which also contains words that ceased to be used as rural cultures died.

Land of Women is a moving feminist account of women's historical roles in rural communities.

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