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Galicia desde Londres desde Galicia:
New Voices in the 21st-century Diaspora

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Galicia desde Londres desde Galicia:New Voices in the 21st-century Diaspora

When, in the spring of 2005, Galician politicians began to make a steady stream of visits to the many Galician communities in Latin America, it did not elicit much surprise at home. They were canvassing support for the upcoming Galician elections, in which the emigrant vote, as in previous years, was expected to go largely to the incumbent Manuel Fraga and the PP. As is the case with another net exporter of migrants, Haiti, which “cartographically and legislatively includes its citizens in the diaspora” (Braziel & Mannur 10), the relationship between expatriate Galicians and the homeland is enshrined in law.¹ Over 300,000 Galicians resident overseas are entitled to vote in regional elections,² and in 2005 around 30% did so (“El voto emigrante”). In fact, going simply by number of eligible voters, Buenos Aires is the fourth biggest “Galician” city after Vigo, A Coruña and Lugo, leading some to refer to it as the “quinta provincia gallega” (“El decisivo”).

While the overseas vote had not in previous years had any great impact on the eventual result, the close contest of June 19th 2005 meant that the ballot boxes – due to arrive the following week – came under intense scrutiny. The PP’s activities in the Americas had already raised suspicion among political opponents, particularly during the local elections of 2003 when they were accused of exploiting their control of social and cultural institutions for political ends (“Emigrantes”). The period between the election and the final count of the overseas vote on June 27th saw unprecedented controversy about the role of such voters. The debate was

intensified because, for the first time, the outcome of the entire election was dependent on Galicians who were resident thousands of miles and, often, one or more generations away from Galicia – a distance that only intensified what the Galician academic and commentator Dolores Vilavedra has called Galicia’s “voto xerontocrático” “gerontocratic vote” (“Entrevista”).

In the event, as La Voz de Galicia put it, “la emigración le falló a Fraga” (“Galicia optó...”); the PP did not gain the 16,000 votes needed to take Pontevedra and thus win an outright majority. Nevertheless, the debate continued, centering on two principal questions: firstly, the right of expatriate Galicians to vote, and secondly, the legitimacy of the democratic process by which they do so. Underpinning all of the discussion is the question of what it means to be Galician at all. The writer Xulio R Trigo drew attention to a glaring anomaly between migrants overseas and within Spain when he pointed out that while second- and third-generation Galicians overseas had the right to vote, he – as the son of Galician migrants to Catalunya – did not: “se o fillo dun galego que vive na Arxentina pode votar nas eleccións galegas, eu tamén o quero facer” “if the son of a Galician who lives in Argentina can vote in the Galician elections, then I want to vote as well” At the same time, however, he was ambivalent about the possibility: “¿Quen son eu, corenta anos emigrado, para condicionar quen goberna en Galiza?” “Who am I, after forty years away, to decide who governs in Galicia?” (F Iglesias).

There is clearly a great deal riding on such questions, from not only a political, but also an ideological point of view. Behind the tensions, we can perceive the continuing repercussions of the bitter struggle that took place during the Franco

years, between Galician nationalists at home and in exile. According to Xoán González-Millán, this struggle was over the question of “quén tiña a lexitimidade para construír e instituír unha cultura nacional galega” “who had the legitimacy to construct and establish a Galician national culture” (21). As González-Millán goes on to suggest, it was a struggle in which the exiles ultimately seem to have had the upper hand:

É tan importante a experiencia do exilio para a conformación dunha cultura nacional galega que quizais sexa esta [the postwar exile] a primeira ocasión que ten a Galicia ‘imaxinada e desexada’ de constituírse e instituírse en cultura ‘nacional’

The experience of exile is so important for the formation of a Galician national culture that the postwar exile may have been the first opportunity for the “imagined and desired” Galicia to construct and establish itself as a “national” culture (22).

The result, as Eugenia Romero argues in “Las dos Galicias”, is that migration (which includes, but is not limited to, exile) has been a key trope – if not the key trope – in the imagining of modern Galician identity (277-78). In consequence, it is perhaps not surprising that the more wide-ranging discussion of Galician identity should be focalized through the increasingly contentious relationship between the Galician communities at home and overseas.

In truth, this is very far from being a uniquely Galician debate. It reflects a broader shift in the relationship between nation, territory and identity that arises from our attempts to make sense of the effects of what Jana Evans Braziel and Anita

Mannur, in their introduction to Theorizing Diaspora, call “the discordant movements of modernity, the massive migrations that have defined this century” (3). In the light of these movements, the naturalized link between national identity and the national territory comes into question. As scholars begin to moot the disappearance of the nation-state as a unit of organization, the concept of diaspora appears to offer a productive alternative, although it too is a focus of debate and discussion. The way we understand diaspora has expanded, as Braziel and Mannur put it, “from essentialist notions of homeland, national or ethnic identity, and geographical location, to deployments of diaspora conceptualized in terms of hybridity, métissage, or heterogeneity” (5-6).

My intention in this essay is to examine the shifting relationships between identity and diaspora (broadly understood) in Galicia within this critical framework, not only to point out the limitations of the dominant discourse around migration, but also to propose an alternative model that may provide a way out of the tensions experienced in the summer of 2005. The first part of the essay argues that the conservative political agenda has sustained the traditional approach to the Galician diaspora beyond its natural life, limiting its development further through its overwhelming focus on a concept of diaspora rooted in a bilateral movement between Galicia and the Americas. My contention is that Galicia’s position at multiple crossroads, not only between Europe and America, but also between land and sea, Northern and Southern Europe, Hispanidad and Lusofonía, brings into existence multiple deterritorialized spaces of identity, both symbolic and material. Such spaces go far beyond the historical figure of “as dúas Galicias” “the two

Galicias” – “home” and “abroad” – which Romero shows to have been a central organizing motif of Galician nationalist thought for much of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The second part of the essay proposes that bringing these spaces into the discussion about identity and migration may provide alternative possibilities for modeling the relationship between the national space and the national identity, given that, as Braziel and Mannur put it, “diaspora forces us to rethink the rubrics of nation and nationalism, while refiguring the relations of citizens and nation-states” (7). I focus my discussion on one particular corpus of texts: the small but significant body of imaginative work emerging from movement between Galicia and the British Isles. This is the influential, but largely unstudied, space whose origins have been so carefully recuperated by Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos in his study of the BBC’s Galician-language radio service of the 1950s, *Galicia desde Londres* (1994), from which this essay takes its name.

In the weeks following the resolution of the electoral process at the end of June 2005, a significant number of media outlets, politicians, and cultural commentators continued the debate about the “voto emigrante”. This debate has proved very revealing, not only in terms of the issue immediately at hand – the right of Galician migrants to vote – but also in its exposure of the radically different concepts of Galician identity circulating in Galician public discourse today. I concentrate for the purposes of this essay on one illustrative debate, organized by the Galician local newspaper, [El Faro de Vigo](#), published on July 2nd 2005, and archived on the web by

Planeta Galego under the title “¿Hay que mantener el voto emigrante?” The participants in the debate represent Galicia’s three main political parties: Marisol Soneira, the socialist (PSdeG-PSOE) spokesperson for migration issues, and a member of the Comité Nacional Galego; Diego Calvo, PPdeG diputado and president of the conservative youth movement Nuevas Generaciones de Galicia, and Carlos Aymerich, law professor and diputado for the Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG).

Asked to comment on the “vieja discusión” about the extent to which those living outside Galicia should have a say over the nation’s political process, the three speakers reveal their contrasting views not only on the emigrant vote, but also on questions of nation and identity. The Socialist representative, Soneira, takes an inclusive view on both matters, arguing that it should be possible to choose one’s nationality (as opposed to one’s birthplace), for example, by choosing to migrate:

Insisto: el pasaporte no es un mero trámite. Nadie escoge donde nace, pero los hijos de los emigrantes eligen la nacionalidad, y desde el punto de vista de la relación eso es clave. ¿Es gallego quien vive y trabaja en Galicia? Sí, pero lo democrático es también que pueda elegirlo.

As perhaps befits a politician whose brief is “migración” rather than “emigración”, Soneira’s words seem to be aimed as much at those migrating into Galicia (historically, a tiny proportion of the population) as at Galicia’s own migrants, as she considers the possibility that it is possible to become Galician, even if one was not born on Galician soil. This issue has become particularly pressing since the second half of the 1990s, when “the incoming flow of Latin American, African and even East

European migrants attracted by the flourishing Spanish economy caused a spectacular increase in the percentage of immigrants” (Núñez Seixas 230).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Calvo perceives Soneira’s to be a dangerous path to follow, warning that “No se puede decir que son gallegos los que trabajan y viven aquí y limitar los derechos a los que nacieron aquí y tuvieron que marcharse”. Instead, he turns the debate back towards a more nebulous invocation of nostalgia and Galicia’s historical debt to those for whom it could not provide in the past: “creo que han contribuido decisivamente a la construcción de este país durante muchos años y es un derecho que se tienen ganado, si bien no se lo pudimos dar con el derecho al trabajo en su momento y por eso emigraron.” Calvo’s position is strategic in its appeal to the innate conservatism that is generally held to typify migrant communities, not least with regard to their understanding of nation as “a singular ethnic group’s placement within a particular geographical location” to which they must somehow maintain their increasingly fragile physical links (Karim 2-3). The comforting rhetoric of what Yasemina Nuboğlu Soysal calls “naturalizing metaphors of roots, soil and kinship” (149) that characterize traditional discussions of diaspora answers this need. As Nuboğlu goes on to point out, however, “lacking analytic rigor, [diaspora] is destined to be a trope for nostalgia” (149). One effect of the widespread uncritical acceptance of the traditional understanding of diaspora, as we have seen in Galicia, is to favor conservative political and intellectual groups. In the light of this, the BNG spokesperson Carlos Aymerich recognizes the danger (for his party) of leaving such rhetoric unexamined. Aymerich calls for a redefinition of terms, stemming from a more nuanced understanding of what is meant by the term

“emigrante”: “¿Qué se entiende por emigrante? ¿El nieto de una persona que emigró hace cincuenta años...?” This question, of course, remains unanswered by the Estatuto de Autonomía in its current form. Furthermore, Aymerich’s argument that such people should not have the right to vote in Galicia “porque ya está[n] votando en Argentina, o en Uruguay o en Venezuela” illustrates the extent to which the debate is focused on America.

This exchange serves to highlight the degree to which conservative concepts of identity, nation, and diaspora drive the debate in Galicia. This understanding of identity, as something static and inherent, has unsurprisingly proved attractive to large numbers of Galician migrants, especially in America, as the election results show (“Elecciones Gallegas”). The central argument put forward by those concerned by the sudden shift of electoral influence to the expatriate community is therefore somewhat ironic. They contend that this mass exercise of suffrage by second- and third-generation Galicians is a relatively recent phenomenon and that far from reflecting a natural state of affairs, it has been manufactured for political ends:

O voto emigrante semellaba non ser tido en conta ata a chegada de Manuel Fraga á Xunta en 1989. Daquela, apenas seis mil galegos do exterior votaran nunhas eleccións autonómicas onde podían facelo 45 mil. En 2005, o CERA galego ascende a un total de 304.660 electores, cifra equivalente ao 13,23% do total galego.

The emigrant vote seems not to have been taken into account until Manuel Fraga arrived at the Xunta in 1989. Back then, barely 6,000 expatriate Galicians had voted in the autonomic elections, although

45,000 had the right to do so. In 2005, the number of expatriate Galicians with voting rights has reached a total of 304,660, equivalent to 13.23% of the Galician population (“¿Por qué...?”).

The difference between the concepts of identity embodied in, on the one hand, the PP discourse, and on the other (broadly speaking) that of the PSODEG and BNG, is one that, following Stuart Hall, we might conceptualize in terms of the difference between “being” and “becoming”. In his influential 1990 essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Hall argues that traditional ways of looking at identity as “being” (236) – that is, as something static and homogenous, “one shared culture [...] which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (234), are no longer sustainable. While he acknowledges that a concept of culture and identity as “stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of references and meaning” can be comforting (234), he argues that to adhere to it unquestioningly is to give up one’s power over the way one is represented and, more importantly, represents oneself (236-37). This understanding of identity has customarily underpinned, too, the traditional concept of diaspora, defined by Braziel and Mannur as “exilic or nostalgic dislocation from homeland” (4) and which Monika Fludernik labels “victim diasporas” (xii) – a concept that we can see reflected in Calvo’s emotive references to the past suffering of Galicia’s “residentes ausentes” (“¿Hay que...?”).

Hall’s strategy for overcoming the inequalities of power that characterize traditional concepts of diaspora and identity is to turn to an alternative way of thinking about what we call cultural identity, where, rather than a repository for hidden or suppressed continuities, “cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as

well as of 'being' [which] belongs to the future as much as to the past" (236). Hall rejects the idea of a homogeneous – or homogenized – diaspora (238), and consequently the traditional definition of "diaspora" as a facet of "the old, the imperializing, the hegemonizing form of 'ethnicity'" (244). Instead, he posits a new definition of "diaspora" as "the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity [...] Diasporic identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (244). This concept of diaspora and identity can be seen, to a limited extent, in Soneira's affirmation that one can choose one's nationality and also in Aymerich's acknowledgment of the need to define what exactly we mean when we talk about an "emigrante". I recognize, with many other scholars (e.g. Aksoy & Robins; Nuboğlu), that this alternative way of thinking about identity and diaspora as a dynamic state of "becoming" is not without its problems. Even so, it seems to me to offer an alternative to the limitations of the traditional understanding of the Galician diaspora that gave rise to such bitterness in the summer of 2005. To reframe the question in more pragmatic terms, the question that the PSODEG and BNG delegates might have asked themselves, as they struggled to make an impact on the suddenly crucial overseas electorate, is this: if expatriate Galicians could embrace, rather than fear, the dynamic power of a changing cultural identity, would they be less likely to be swayed by the nostalgic historicism of Fraga and the PPdeG?

The remainder of this essay develops this question. It proposes the small but significant body of work emerging from movement between Galician and the United Kingdom as a source for alternative models of diaspora and identity in general and

of Galician cultural identity in particular. Relocating our discussion of diaspora and migration outside the colonial framework and the inevitably tangled linguistic, racial, cultural and historical ties within which Galician migration to the Americas has taken place, may serve as a productive means by which to continue the discussion. Since the mid-twentieth century, Galicians have migrated in ever-greater numbers beyond the borders of the Hispanic world, most notably to Northern Europe, and in particular, to Switzerland, Germany, France and the United Kingdom (Núñez Seixas 229).³ At the same time, the increasing ease of access to Galicia since 1975, coupled with Spain's entry into the EEC in 1986, means that those from outside the Hispanic world, in particular from Northern Europe, are finding it easier to live and work in Galicia.

This movement, unprecedented since the medieval high point of the Camino de Santiago, creates new spaces of identity that remain largely unperceived and, consequently, outside of Galician discussions about migration and identity. It is of some significance that in many of the works arising from these spaces – among them the works under discussion in the second part of this essay – the experience of migration is documented by writers who are self aware and, often, familiar with academic and theoretical discourses on cultural identity, migration, and diaspora. In their use of the Galician language, they are also demonstrating their commitment – to a greater or lesser extent – to the traditional vocabulary of Galician national and cultural identity. The tensions arising from this situation drive the small but significant body of imaginative and intellectual work that has been emerging from movement between Galicia and the United Kingdom since the mid-twentieth

century. The authors of these works are principally Galicians living in the UK, but continuing to publish in Galician, for a Galician readership, and although more information about them is gradually becoming available, much recuperative and interpretative work still remains to be done.

The first public forum for Galicians in the UK was the BBC's Galician-language radio service, which ran from 1947-56, and provided an outlet both for UK-based Galician exiles and for those who remained at home (A. De Toro). After its demise, the next documented intervention is that of Carlos Durán – a founder member of the Grupo de Traballo Galego de Londres (Galician Working Group in London), whose novel Galegos en Londres was published in 1978.⁴ More recently, Xelís de Toro has published the novel Os saltimbanquís no paraíso “Jugglers in Paradise” (1999), which deals with questions of cultural identity arising from two-way movement between Galicia and London, and also London-set children's stories such as A máquina contacontos “The Storytelling Machine” (2004). Poets, too, have treated the experience of Galicians living in the UK as a valuable subject, among them Ramiro Fonte – a long-time resident of London and now director of the Instituto Cervantes in Lisbon – and Xavier Queipo. Queipo's recent collection Glosarios (2004) contains a section called “Londres e abril”, in which the poet's bi-/multi-lingual playfulness consciously destabilizes the “fatal junction” of language and culture and in doing so, raises exciting questions about the potential of poetry to reflect (and drive?) new, transnational realities.

This remarkably interesting body of work deserves far greater attention than I can give it here, and so my intention in this essay is to focus on two of its most

recent manifestations: the novel As frechas de ouro “The Golden Arrows” (2004), by the Galician-identified British academic and writer, John Rutherford, and the short story collection A-Z “A to Z” (2003), by the London-born Galician writer and journalist Xesús Fraga.

The first of these texts, As frechas de ouro, was written and published in Galician by Edicións Xerais (Galicia’s principal publisher of contemporary fiction), although its author, John Rutherford, is of British origin. In his first-person account of a middle-aged British man undertaking the historic Camino de Santiago (traditionally marked out by the “golden arrows” of the title), and in doing so, hoping to swap his British identity for the sense of “Galicianness” he has been chasing for over thirty years, Rutherford dramatizes the process that Hall called “becoming”. The question at the heart of the novel is the question that underpins Hall’s discussion: if cultural identity is a constantly negotiated process, rather than a static repository of cultural symbols, then is it something that can be acquired, taken or left? That is, can one choose one’s cultural identity, rather as Marisol Soneira claimed that one can choose one’s national identity? While Galician studies of migration and diaspora have traditionally focused on the experience of Galician migrants abroad, and the maintenance of links with the homeland, Rutherford’s narration explores the newer phenomenon of Galicia as a destination for migrants (albeit, in this case, temporary ones), asking whether it is possible for outsiders to choose to “become” Galician and, if so, on what terms. In so doing, he not only addresses issues at the centre of contemporary critical debate about migration and

identity, but also opens up more specific questions about the nature of Galician identity and the relevance of traditional narratives of Galicianness in 21st-century Europe.

The novel is the story of a single journey, told through multiple parallel narrations. As in *A-Z*, the principal narrator shares many characteristics with the named author, but himself remains nameless. He is a middle-aged British man whom we know only as “Eu”, or “I”, undertaking the historic pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in the company of another British man, “O outro”, or “the other (one)”. As he journeys through Navarre, Castile, León and, ultimately, Galicia, Eu reflects on the events of his life that have brought him to this point – a sweaty, blistered, often comic figure. Through his meditations, it gradually emerges that Eu’s journey to Santiago, which takes place over a month, is a microcosm for another journey that he has been pursuing for almost a lifetime, ever since he first arrived in the Galician town of Ribadeo as an 18-year-old language student:

¡Que duro se fai entrar en Galicia! No meu caso fixeron falta uns trinta anos para ir desenguedellando os misterios da comunicación ou incomunicación galega e ir inscribíndome como membro adoptivo, penso, creo, espero, daqueloutra gran sociedade secreta que se chama galeguidade.

How hard it is to enter Galicia! In my case, it took some thirty years gradually to untangle the mysteries of Galician communication – or incommunication – and to

inscribe myself as an adoptive member, I think, believe,
 hope, of that great secret society called *galeguidade*
 (21).

This journey, to “become” Galician, is “un acto da vontade” “an act of will” based on Eu’s belief that “ser galego é máis ca nacer en Galicia” “being Galician is more than being born in Galicia” (137). Echoing Soneira’s belief – and the Socialist position – that “un pasaporte no puede ser un mero trámite administrativo” (“¿Hay que...?”), Eu argues that “eu o máis galego de todos os galegos aínda que teña pasaporte británico, mellor dito porque teño pasaporte británico” “I, most Galician of all Galicians even though I have a British passport, or rather because I have a British passport” (137). However, his motivation has changed. At eighteen, Galicia represented for Eu an escape from the blandness of post-war Britain. Now, thirty years later, its significance for him has shifted. From providing the life and color the teenage Eu was seeking, Galicia, “protexida e illada dos males do mundo moderno” “protected and isolated from the evils of the modern world” (64), has become an escape from the “estandarizado, centralizado, cocacolonizado, miquimouseado, masificado, globalizado, deshumanizado país do meu pasaporte” “standardized, centralized, cocacolonized, mickeymoused, mass-marketed, globalized, dehumanized country of my passport” (64-65).

A constant temptation for migrants, as we have seen, is to maintain a nostalgic, static vision of the homeland that comforts them as they confront new and frightening situations in their new place of residence. Frechas de ouro shows that immigrants, too, often subscribe to a kind of inverse nostalgia. Eu starts out with an

idealized vision of the Galicia he hopes to find – a land of “millo, verzas, exuberantes castiñeiros, soberbios carballos, rexos toxos, xestas, lousas, auga abondosa, terra cor terra, zocas ...” “corn, cabbages, exuberant chestnuts, proud oaks, bushes of haughty gorse and broom, flagstones, abundant water, earth-colored earth, clogs...” (22-23). At the same time, however, he recognizes that this “visión romántica e idealizada” (64) bears little resemblance to reality, and will ultimately prove unobtainable: “as miñas peregrinaxes tamén serían, serán, son, buscas de algo que nunca poderei alcanzar, algo que sempre retrocederá segundo eu avance, o cabo do arco da vella” “my wanderings would also be, will be, are, in search of something I will never be able to reach, something that will always recede as I draw near, the end of the rainbow” (64). This is as true of the pilgrimage narrated in the novel as of his life’s journey: “A fin do arco da vella é inalcanzable. Eu peregrino nunca chegarei a Compostela” “The end of the rainbow is unreachable. I, pilgrim will never reach Compostela” (65). Nevertheless, Eu continues to hope that he might obtain the unobtainable, and the novel charts the conflict between his desire to idealize Galicia, and his recognition that such idealization is no longer possible in the real world.

As Eu discovers increasingly throughout his journey, Galicia is far from being immune from the modernization he dreads, which begins gradually to encroach on his journey. Its first appearance is in the person of the “funcionarios de San Caetano” who represent the conservative politics of the Xunta de Galicia, based at San Caetano. Their approach is characterized by the official sign welcoming the pilgrims to Galicia, with its “xélida oficialidade, que a súa tecnicolor non logra disimular” “chilly formality, which its technicolor appearance can’t quite conceal” and its

“linguaxe, o máis correcto e enxebre castrapo normativizado” “language, the most correct and ‘authentic’ Hispanicized Galician” (22). The Xunta’s impulse towards modernization is embodied in the brand new mascot their marketing men have proposed for the Camiño. As Eu walks and ponders, he begins to imagine that this mascot, whose name is Pelegrín, a hypercorrect version of the standard Galician “peregrino” “pilgrim”, is by his side, forcing him to defend his Romantic narrative of Galician identity. Although Eu wants so much to believe in Galicia’s resistance to modernization, Pelegrín’s arrival forces him to acknowledge its vulnerability:

Eu que sempre gabara a Galicia rebelde por ser un modelo da heroica resistencia céltica á cocacolonización global acollida con ledicia ovelluna polo país do meu pasaporte: alá en Galicia as hamburguesas non che teñen aceptación ningunha, non ho, que hai bo caldo. E logo sacan a relucir o pijo Pelegrín, irmán menor de Mickey Mouse

And I had always praised rebel Galicia for being a model of heroic Celtic resistance to the global cocacolonization welcomed with sheep-like delight by the country of my passport: over in Galicia nobody will go near a hamburger, no sirree, not when there’s good *caldo*. And then they go and promote that poncy Pelegrín, Mickey Mouse’s baby brother (131).

The question this raises, of course, is how far “Galician”, for Eu, simply means “not English.” He argues that he must divest himself of his Englishness, that is, undergo a process of “desinglesamento” (59, 113), in order that he might “become” Galician. In other words, his vision of cultural identity is as a choice between two diametrically opposed opposites: modernized Britishness and traditional

Galicianness. However, the journey he undertakes throughout the novel, and Pelegrín's arguments, force him to confront his understanding of culture and nationality as hermetic and static. The Englishness that Eu is trying to escape is a constant presence throughout the novel, in the ironically-named character of "O outro": "o inglés que eu empecei a deixar de ser, penso, creo, espero, cando cheguei a estas terras hai trinta e moitos anos" "the Englishman I began to cease to be, I think, believe, hope, when I arrived here thirty-something years ago" (113). The extended passages from O outro's journal that are interpolated in the text provide a counter to Eu's narration, revealing an alternative view of both Galicia and the journey that ironically punctures Eu's romantic ecstasy. For example, towards the beginning of their journey, Eu breathlessly encourages O outro to share in his passion for Galicia: "¡deixa que as túas dores se espallen polos verdes vales de Galicia! ¡Están afeitos a tragar as penas! [...] ¡Ábrete, ábrete home, ábrete ao marabilloso mundo que te rodea!" "Let Galicia's green valleys soothe away your sorrows! That's what they do, swallow up sadness! [...] Open yourself my friend, open yourself up to the wonderful world around you!" (28). However, O outro sees things rather differently.

Remembering Eu's advice, he says, he stopped and looked back, but instead of the idyllic scenery Eu had extolled, "Vin unha fábrica moi grande, de magnesita creo, no medio do seu inmenso deserto de cinza" "I saw a rather large factory, a magnetite factory I think, amid an immense desert of ash" (29). Eu initially identifies O outro as completely "other", the stereotypical representation of Englishness, from which he is separated by "un mar por medio" (29): "Ao meu amigo coñéceselle que é inglés nada máis divisalo na remota distancia. Irradia inglesismo coma o arco da vella

irradia cores coruscantes. É unha vantaxe que teñen” “You can tell my friend is English as soon as you spot him on the horizon. He radiates Englishness like a rainbow radiates coruscating colors. It’s an advantage they have” (36).

How far, then, does Eu succeed in his original mission: to divest himself of his Britishness and turn himself into an “authentic” Galician? Is such a transformation even possible? Pelegrín suggests that it is not: “por moito que o negues e por pouco que che guste sempre serás inglés” “however much you deny it and however little you like it, you will always be an Englishman” (137). Despite Pelegrín’s warning, however, Eu is rarely if ever recognized as English, and never as Galician, but rather as Spanish, Portuguese, or emigrant Galician (17). That is, his interlocutors, in seeking to categorize him, are able to draw from the reservoir of existing “part-Galician” identities, even when they cannot identify his particular provenance. This suggests an absence of discomfort with compound or hybrid identities and thus, by extension, easy acceptance of hybridity that is echoed in O outro’s reaction to Eu’s very un-British lateness: “Moi bo home, pero tan pouco puntual, parece mentira sexa inglés. Posible teña algo sangue español” “Very good chap, but so unpunctual, surely not English. Perhaps has some Spanish blood” (20). Eu too comes to query the possibility of exclusive, authentic identities, as when he recognizes of himself that “non teño centro ningún” “I have no centre”(63), or when he realizes that if O outro was as purely English as he had thought, he would not be undertaking this journey (137).

Ultimately, *As frechas de ouro* raises as many questions as it answers, both about the construction of cultural identity in general, and of Galician cultural

identity in particular. It is significant that the novel – and thus the story of Eu’s pilgrimage – does not end in Santiago: instead, we leave Eu sitting on the bed in the last hostel on the journey (246). It seems that as he had feared, Eu is destined never to reach the “end of the rainbow”, either on his pilgrimage to Santiago or in his quest for authentic Galicianness. Nevertheless, the novel’s conclusion remains open to interpretation. On the one hand, Eu’s failure to complete his pilgrimage can be read as an attempt to avoid facing up to the modernized nightmare he believes he will find when (if) he reaches Santiago. That is, by deliberately not completing his journey, he may somehow be able to delay the inevitable encroachment of the modern world and retain his comfortingly idealistic vision of Galicia, despite Pelegrín’s warning that if he tries this, “serei o teu eterno acompañante” “I will be your eternal companion” (234). The question, of course, is how far such a conclusion is sustainable. After all, just as Eu cannot sit on his bunk bed forever, so the traditional narratives of Galician cultural identity he clings to cannot (and, on the evidence of the narrative, do not) remain uncontested. On the other hand, the suspension of Eu’s narrative before he has completed his pilgrimage supports Hall’s assertion that cultural identity is a question of “becoming” rather than of “being”, and that it is the journey, rather than the destination, which matters. Ironically, it is Pelegrín – in his final speech – who encourages Eu to embrace this possibility: “[deixa] dunha vez de intentar enganarte: o único fin da busca é a busca mesma, ¿non lembras?” “[stop] once and for all trying to deceive yourself: the only objective of the search is the search itself, remember?” (243). Eu’s response – “É certo” “That’s

true” – suggests some acceptance of Pelegrín’s world view, and the dynamic, shifting identities it represents, even if he cannot bring himself wholeheartedly to accept it.

Frechas examines the possibility of “becoming” Galician from the perspective of one born outside Galicia, but whose attitude nevertheless echoes the nostalgia of the middle-aged migrants of the 1960s. Our second case study, Xesús Fraga’s short-story collection A-Z, explores a similar question, albeit framed differently in terms of both geography and generation. Published in 2003 by Xerais, A-Z was marketed (in a line taken from one of the stories) as a “guía sentimental de Londres” (Fraga 135). In an interview given at the time of publication, Fraga explains how the concept embodied in the title shaped the project: “O título está tomado dun libro, co rueiro e mapa de Londres, que é imprescindible para a vida na cidade e eu creo que algo dese espírito de guía permanece” “The title is taken from a book with a street guide and map of London, which is vital if you’re living in the city, and I think something of the spirit of that guidebook remains” (M Iglesias 1). As well as a sentimental guide in the mould of Bryce Echenique’s Guía Triste de París, however, Fraga hopes that the work might provide a practical guide for Galicians in London: “A min faríame ilusión que alguén fose a Londres e que o meu libro o convidase a percorrer os parques, ver o ‘Vanitas’ de Steenwyck na National Gallery o comer kebabs” “ I’d be thrilled if someone went to London and my book invited them to roam through the parks, see Steenwyck’s ‘Vanitas’ in the National Gallery, or eat kebabs” (M Iglesias 2). More than this, however, he claims the book as “un intento de recuperar a miña condición de londinense” “an attempt to reclaim my condition as a Londoner” (1), and thus the

experience of emigration that “está moi presente desde as miñas lembranzas e [...] marcou a miña familia” “is very present in my memories and [...] branded my family” (1).

A central aspect of A-Z, then, is its creation of a space where these two perspectives are not only juxtaposed, but intrinsically intertwined. On the one hand, the ten stories that comprise the collection proper narrate a variety of experiences – those of Galician migrants in London – that have remained largely under the radar, especially in comparison with the better-known stories of migrants in the Americas. Interwoven with these narratives is Fraga’s own: the story of a child born in London of Galician parents, who returned to Galicia shortly after starting school, which is told through a series of six untitled, autobiographical fragments. The volume thus illustrates a key consideration in contemporary debates about migration, diaspora and identity: the need – as Braziel and Mannur put it – to move away from the traditional understanding of migrants as simply “imitations of the real citizens in the home state” (8). Instead, they go on, we must ask what happens when younger generations “are born and raised in diasporic contexts” and, in response to the resulting “problematic dynamics”, look not at how their identities are “constructed and consolidated”, but rather how they are “practiced, lived, and experienced” (8-9).

The opening pages of A-Z provide an immediate anchor to Fraga’s experience as a child of the diaspora: a double-page scan of the author’s (Spanish) passport, clearly showing his birthplace as “Londres (Inglaterra)” (10-11). Interestingly, however, only pages two and three of the passport are included, so that no name or personal details appear other than the date and place of birth, and a photograph of a

small boy. The effect of this is to legitimize the narrative we are about to read, but only up to a point: the lack of a specific identity for this child facilitates the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction, autobiography and narrative, which Fraga claims as his central aim (M Iglesias 1). This aim is made clear in the “Limiar”, or introductory essay, in which Fraga/the narrator sets out the rationale for the collection: his attempt to come to terms with his awareness ever since childhood that his family’s links with England make him different from his peers. His youthful strategy for coping with this is to translate things that he does not understand into his own experience, so that, for example, his classmates who leave the city each weekend for their family’s “aldea” – or native village – “emigraban cada cinco días” (14, emphasis mine). Asking them what the “aldea” is, he is told that it is “where your grandparents live” and, interpreting this response through his own experience, comes to the conclusion that underpins the collection: “Ah. Sinxelo. Claro coma a auga, Eu tamén tiña aldea. A miña aldea era Londres” “Ah. Simple. Clear as ice. I too had a village. My village was London” (14).

This sense of difference does not long survive the return to 1970s Galicia: “Dura pouco máis que a estadía londinense; unha vez de regreso, vaise perdendo ...” “it lasts little longer than the stay in London; as soon as you return, it begins to disappear” (15) until all that the boy has left of his experience is a Big Ben snow dome (16). According to a recent paper by the Grupo de Traballo Galego de Londres (GTGL), this was a common experience for migrants returning to Spain from Northern Europe in the 1970s: “Deses emigrantes se esperaba que volveran e calaran (e que mandaran cartos). Axiña que voltaban tiñan que esquecer aquel

pasado fóra do país e asegurar aos que quedaran dentro de que fóra non viran cousa mellor nen aprenderan nada que valera a pena” “These emigrants were expected to come home and stay quiet (and send money). As soon as they returned they had to forget their foreign past and assure those who had stayed at home that while abroad they hadn’t seen anything better or learned anything worthwhile” (“Os novos emigrantes”). The narrator of *A-Z* concurs with this assessment: “a vida na aldea tamén fai que moitas veces queiras esquecer e borrar o que che fai diferente” “village life also means you often want to forget and erase what makes you different” (16). This homogenization is institutionalized: the narrator comes up against it when he corrects his teacher’s English pronunciation, and “non ía saber máis que o mestre, mesmo no inglés” “I wasn’t to know more than the teacher, even in English”; when he comes to type up a homework assignment on a typewriter brought back from England “e o eñe e o til non aparecían por ningures” “and the ñ and tilde just weren’t there”; and when his mother is berated by the doctor because the boy speaks only English and not Galician. He feels it, too, when people wonder at his habit of taking milk in his tea, or receiving parcels of English books (16). It is for all of these reasons, he says, that this book is a quest to recover that part of him that was repressed, and the memories it brings with it: “a luz de Kensington”, where he was born and spent his earliest years; his first best friend; the snow – “co desexo fondo de que algún deixe de ser unha mentira” “with the profound desire that one of them will turn out not to be a lie” (16).

This reading of the *Limiar* seems to align the collection with what Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin call “the anamnestic power of diaspora” (24). That is,

the narrator appears to be evoking his experience of diaspora nostalgically, as a means of “creating ties through memory” (24). However, to read it only in this context is to do Fraga a grave disservice. Running throughout the collection is the possibility of a new rhetorical framework for discussing Galician migration, one that has emerged in recent years from the new, post-1960s European diaspora. This is hinted at in the *Limiar* in the narrator’s evocation of a uniquely migrant experience, that of working as a cleaner “ó pé dos cadros da National Gallery, como no fermoso poema de Ramiro Fonte” “beneath the portraits in the National Gallery, like in Ramiro Fonte’s beautiful poem” (15). By citing Fonte, rather than, say, Rosalía de Castro, Ramón Cabanillas, Curros Enríquez or any of the other Galician poets whose names conventionally crop up in connection with the cultural manifestations of migration, Fraga draws our attention to the existence of a diasporic culture whose axis is centered on Northern Europe – and on Britain in particular – rather than on the Americas. Furthermore, he specifically acknowledges its history in the opening of the penultimate story, “Luvas de raposo” “Fox Gloves”. This story, which Fraga has described as “un pequeno homenaxe a quen fixeron as emisións en galego na BBC nos anos cincuenta” “a little homage to those who made the BBC broadcasts in Galician in the 1950s” (M Iglesias 2), is a sensitive tribute to the Galician/British cultural collaboration recuperated by Antonio De Toro in *Galicia desde Londres. A-Z*, then, together with Fonte’s works and those of other expatriates such as Durán, Xelis de Toro, and Queipo, forms part of a small but growing body of work that serves to recuperate an experience that according to the GTGL has been

marginalized, or even delegitimized, by the hegemonic national discourse (“Os novos emigrantes”).

The challenge A-Z proposes to the status quo becomes apparent from the opening story, “Últimos días de Faustino Caínzos”. “Últimos días...” brings the two generations of Galician migrants in London face to face and, in so doing, exposes the limitations of traditional concepts of exile and emigration. The story tells how Mateo, a young man recently arrived in London, is brought in to act as translator for an elderly compatriot from the same village: Faustino Caínzos. Caínzos, well known in the Galician expatriate community for his learning and his books (22), evokes the familiar, romanticized stereotype of the exiled intellectual that is, as the GTGL suggest, a generation – and a world – apart from the economic migrants of the 1960s and 70s (“Os novos emigrantes”). Caínzos’ generational link to the exiles is supported by others, such as Mateo’s friend and mentor Montero, who describes him as “máis ben un exiliado ca un emigrante” “more an exile than an emigrant” (22), when he is really no more than a degraded version of this stereotype. The truth is that far from being a political exile, Caínzos is in fact a petty thief who was forced to flee his village after being recognized by one of his victims. That is, although his “exile” was provoked, as Montero tells Mateo, “non por política nin leas de Guerra, coma outros, senón porque tivo que liscar” “not by politics or the laws of War, like others, but because he had to scarper” (22-23), the – perhaps mistakenly? –romantic connotations of that generation of exiles mean that Caínzos is celebrated as a fascinating hero, rather than scorned as a petty criminal.

When Mateo is summoned to Caínzos' bedside, he discovers just how great the distance is between the experiences of his and Caínzos' generations. While Mateo has worked hard to learn English, Caínzos, even after many years in London, still speaks none. Instead, like others of his circle, he has existed for years in a world hermetically sealed off from the London that Mateo has come to know in just a few months. Lacking even a basic sense of direction (the kind that might have been supplied by an A to Z?), their disorientation, and their isolation, is total. Mateo realizes this while traveling by taxi to Caínzos' house with the old man's equally monolingual assistant. He observes the man with some pity: "[o]llaba pola xanela do coche como se albiscase ó fondo dun abismo, coma se aquel xeroglífico de rúas carecera de total significado para el, illado nunha cápsula de luz que avanzaba rápida ferindo a escuridade da noite" "he was looking out of the car window as if inspecting the bottom of an abyss, as if that hieroglyphic of streets lacked any meaning for him, isolated in a capsule of light tearing rapidly through the darkness of the night" (30). Mateo is further amazed, when they arrive, to discover Caínzos being examined by a British doctor, and to realize that none of the Galicians present understand a word the doctor is saying: "Asaltouno de novo unha dúbida. ¿Como puido vivir tantos anos neste exilio sen aprender o idioma, ou, alomenos, verse forzado a empregalo?" "He was once again assaulted by doubt. How could somebody live in exile for so many years without learning the language, or, at least, being forced to use it?" (32). Mateo's task is to translate the doctor's diagnosis, which is effectively a death sentence: "Temo que a estas alturas pouco se pode facer [...]" "Vostede precisaba axuda médica desde hai moito tempo, señor" "I'm afraid at this

point there's little we can do [...] You needed medical attention long before now, sir" (32). The story ends as Mateo travels away from the old man's gloomy suburban house, full of Spanish and Galician books, back to the bright lights of the city (32-33). The implication is clear: Caínzos' death, so easily avoidable, is the result of his inability to adapt to his surroundings, to learn even the basics of the English language or to try to decipher the "xeroglíficos" of life in Britain.

"Últimos días...", then, charts a generational shift in the coping strategies of the diaspora, where Mateo's way – adaptation, integration – is presented as the only way to avoid the fate suffered by Caínzos, whose death thus becomes the symbolic death of the old generation. This shift is a key theme in the collection. In every case, it is the younger generation (and to an extent the older women) who have adapted successfully, while the older generation (especially the men) remain wedded to the homeland. We see this in Eddie's assimilation into London drug culture in "Saint George's Rd, W4", in the works of the graffiti artist in "Estilo salvaxe", and most notably in the story which, not coincidentally, occupies the central position in the collection: "Cuestionario". "Cuestionario" is, as its name suggests, a collection of responses to a questionnaire, posed to seven members of an extended migrant family. Their vastly different responses to the same questions highlight the variations not only of generation, but also of gender, social class, and even – with the inclusion of the British partner of one of the migrants – of ethnicity within the diasporic community, and thus the impossibility of generalizing about a single, "authentic" experience of diaspora.

The collection can, thus, be read in part as a response to Braziel and Mannur's call to explore the way the diasporic identities of younger generations are "practised, lived, and experienced" (8-9). Central to this response is the narrative of the narrator's own experience, which is resolved when the fragments of memory, or "fotogramas", which have been "imaxes illadas, fóra de contexto" "isolated images, out of context" (63), interspersed among the stories, merge in the final story, "Faragullas de chocolate" "Chocolate Flakes". The title echoes the first of the fragments, the narrator's memory of eating an ice cream in the park with chocolate melting down his hand (17). Beginning in the third person, like the majority of the earlier stories, the narrative suddenly stutters to a halt on the second page: "Un momento. ¿Son eu? Non pode ser..." "One moment. Is it me? It can't be..." (174). But it is true: the narrator has succeeded, at last, in splicing the individual stills of his memory into a coherent, mental film – a narration that brings together the fictional and autobiographical elements of the collection and thus recovers the lost experiences of that little boy, newly arrived from England.

In fact, that little boy – the nameless child in the passport photo – now has a name: "Tony. De Antonio, por un avó" "Tony. From Antonio, after a grandfather". Reflecting the division between his two worlds, his given name, "Xesús polo bisavó" "Xesús after my great-grandfather", was used only in Galicia, because "ninguén se chama Xesús en Inglaterra" "nobody's called Xesús in England" (174). The discovery of his "English" name, in a notebook kept by his parents, is a moment of revelation: "¿Tony son eu?" "Am I Tony?", and then, suddenly, recognition. His mother still calls him Tony; the Christmas cards the family received every year from their English

friend, Father Knowles, always say “Give my regards to Tony” (174). He realizes that “Tony debe de estar vivo por algures,” “Tony must be alive somewhere”, that he has survived “os berros de “Fóra, inglés” que tivo que escoitar nos novos colexios...” “the cries of ‘Clear off, English’ that he had to listen to at his new schools...” and the other indignities described in the *Limiar* (174-175).

The conclusion of “Faragullas,” and thus of the entire volume, seems to suggest an alternative solution to the choice – Galician or English – enforced by the hostile society to which the narrator returned. Recovering the name of his English self allows the two to be reunited: “sinto a Tony remexerse [...] Foi como poñer dúas fotografías unha por riba da outra e dar a mesma imaxe” “I feel Tony stir [...] It was like putting two photos one on top of the other and getting the same image” (175). It is a vivid representation of the dilemma that R. Radhakrishnan has identified as central to the experience of the new generation of migrants: “How could someone be both one and something other? How could the unity of identity have more than one face or name? How do these two selves coexist and how do they weld into one identity?” (120, emphasis Radhakrishnan’s). The narrator’s rediscovery of “Tony” leads to the recovery of his memories, now united in a single narrative: feeding the ducks, playing Robin Hood, visiting the Natural History Museum (176). He realizes that Tony has been there all along, and that “Eu sempre me fío de Tony” “I always trust Tony”, because even when he seemed to have disappeared, “seguín a me guiar por Tony” “I was still guided by Tony” (177). The end of the story, and of the collection, sees Tony and Xesús sitting side by side, eating ice cream and exchanging

stories of their very different lives in England and Galicia (177). For this citizen of the diaspora, at least, the problem seems to have a satisfactory solution.

A-Z may initially seem simply to recover the stories of a forgotten group of migrants. However, while this is indubitably part of its appeal, it is also a serious meditation on the need to push discussion about migration and diaspora in Galicia, beyond the politically and culturally conservative, idealized model that continues to dominate discussion of the subject. As Fraga himself explains:

tampouco quería dar unha visión idílica de emigrantes
galegos tolerantes e cultos, porque tamén atopei
paisanos que eran refractorios e mesmo hostís a todo o
que significase o abrirse ó cosmopolitismo da cidade.
Vivían como na aldea, no mal sentido da palabra.

I didn't want to give an idyllic vision of tolerant,
sophisticated Galician emigrants, because I also found
countrymen who were reactionary and even hostile to
everything that opening themselves up to the
cosmopolitanism of the city might mean. They lived as if
in the village, in the worst sense of the word (M Iglesias
2).

The perspective that informs the collection is the perspective of the returned migrant, which, as Marjorie Harper has recently suggested, is “a crucial theme that has been largely neglected [but is] worthy of serious investigation as an integral

part of the global diaspora” (1). Furthermore, it is the perspective of the young returnee, which has hitherto been largely missing from the debate. Its overt criticism may initially provoke discomfort among those at home who, as the GTGL have observed, wish to limit the impact of the returnees, asking only that they came home, shut up and sent money (“Os novos emigrantes”). At the same time, however, its conclusion – while fulfilling the reader’s desire for resolution – may ultimately prove unsatisfying to those for whom “the messy complications of social diaspora” (Boyarin and Boyarin 27) are less confusing than they are inspiring.

The debates of summer 2005 demonstrate the pressing need to reframe discussions of migration and diaspora in Galicia. However, owing to the long and bitter history of the subject, and the degree to which so many people remain invested in it, revision is problematic within the existing rhetorical framework. Because they are located outside this framework (in both a symbolic and a material sense), the stories of migrants traveling both to and from the UK may provide both a rhetorical and an imaginative alternative. This is especially true of the stories of younger migrants, who – as we have seen – are often the first to reject the nostalgic conservatism of their parents’ generation, and embrace a novel and dynamic understanding of identity. Underlining this, the works discussed in this paper throw into sharp relief the theoretical questions that concern many of us today, not least in their navigation of the fine but blurred lines between fiction and autobiography, which reveal the intrinsic connection between the stories we tell ourselves and the stories we tell about ourselves.

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[Word count: 9158]

NOTES

1. Artigo 3.2 of the Estatuto de Autonomía de Galicia reads as follows: “Como galegos, gozan de dereitos políticos definidos neste Estatuto os cidadáns españois residentes no estranxeiro que tivesen a súa última veciñanza administrativa en Galicia, e acrediten esta condición no correspondente Consulado de España. Gozarán tamén destes dereitos os seus descendentes inscritos como españois, se así o solicitan na forma que determine a lei do Estado” “As Galicians, Spanish citizens residing abroad whose last official residence was in Galicia, and who accredit their status at the corresponding Spanish Consulate, will enjoy the political rights defined in this Statute” (“Estatuto”).

2. The figure was 305, 017 in 2005 (“Elecciones al Parlamento”).

3. According to the Oficina del Censo Electoral figures for the 2005 elections, Switzerland was the European country with the most resident Galicians (32,971), followed by France (16,760), Germany (14,254), and the United Kingdom (10,606). Holland, Belgium, Portugal and Andorra all followed with totals in the 2000s (“Elecciones al Parlamento”).

4. The founder members of the GTGL in 1970 were: Teresa Barro, Fernando Pérez-Barreiro Nolla, Manuel Fernández Gasalla, Xavier Toubes and Carlos Durán. For more information on the group, its history and its work, see their webpage:

<http://www.grupotraballogalego.uk.net>

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