

◆ Chapter 7

Metafictional Archive: Memory, *mise en abyme*, and the Atlantic in Miguelanxo Prado's *Ardalén* (2012)

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“Unha maneira perturbadora de definir Galicia sería falar dun país produtor de emigrantes e náufragos.”

(A disturbing way of defining Galicia would be speaking of a country producer of emigrants and castaways.)¹

Back cover of Manuel Riva's *A man dos pañños* (2000)

Miguelanxo Prado's graphic novel *Ardalén* (2012) opens with an extended list of epigraphs about memory. Among these quotes, there is one that has been significantly truncated in order to provide it with a new meaning. It comes from Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), from the scene in which Tyrel talks to Deckard about the replicants: “[i]f we gift them with a past, we create a cushion or a pillow for their emotions” (3). The remainder of the statement—“and consequently, we can control them better”—is omitted. The quote provides an opportune starting point for this analysis because the epigraph, according to Derrida, “serves to stock in anticipation and to pre-archive a lexicon which, from there on, ought to lay down the law and *give the order*, even if this means contenting itself with naming the problem, that is, the subject” (12). In this case, the quote anticipates the concept of memory, arguably one of the main tropes in Prado's oeuvre, and its truncation calls attention to memory as a construct that affects the individual's psyche while it

simultaneously excludes the potentially challenging ideological consequences the rest of the quote evokes.

Ardalén presents its characters lingering in a constructed past mythicized through nostalgia, a past that is linked to a collective memory identified with the experience of migration to the Americas. Prado's graphic novel narrates the friendship between Sabela Rego, a 42-year-old unemployed woman who is going through a divorce, and Fidel, an old loner with memory problems who lives in a remote unnamed village in the mountains of Lugo. Sabela believes that Fidel may know something about her grandfather, an emigrant who left to "do the Americas."² In a moment of personal crisis, knowing more about her grandfather can help her understand more about herself, and her own identity.

This connection between memory, identity, and emigration has become a common trope in Galician cultural production and studies. Eugenia R. Romero, when analyzing Manuel Rivas's *A man dos paños* (2000), characterized "the emigrant's life as a perpetual state of nostalgia or *saudade*," referencing Roberta Rubenstein's ideas about how "the imposition of physical distance increases the emotional detachment the immigrant suffers" (118).³ The emigrant appears in this tradition as the bearer of the pain (*algia*), the longing for a return home (*nóstos*). The same could also be said about the nostalgic tone of *Ardalén*. However, the innovation in Prado's work is that America is also identified with this longing; not only is there a nostalgic "looking back" by the emigrant when far from home but also after their return. The *nóstos* is reterritorialized.

This article will explore how *Ardalén*, simultaneously published in Galician and Spanish, pushes aside the universalism of Prado's previous works to create a more local model through its focus on Galicia's history of emigration to the Americas. In this instance, Prado adopts the strategies of metafiction and intertextuality to articulate the construction of an Atlantic Galician identity through the revision of its relationships with its past. The critical and academic approach to Miguelanxo Prado's oeuvre has focused thus far on the use of several common devices such as metafiction and intertextuality, strategies which have permitted Prado to construct a ludic referential framework that evidences the influence of Latin American literature from the Boom. He uses the magical realism so closely associated with Boom authors to reflect on issues of identity and mythification of the past in his own community.

Throughout his career, Prado has developed a discourse that is emphatically Atlantic. In his works, the Atlantic Ocean is more than a mere element of the *mise-en-page*: it constitutes the rhizomatic geopolitical space where Galician mobile identity is displayed. This interconnected space is intimately linked to the mythicized and nostalgic construction of the past which leads to a collective memory. The past is introduced in *Ardalén* as a mystery to be unveiled. Characters try to shed light on past events to learn not only about

themselves but also about their community. The protagonist's search to learn more about her emigrant grandfather leads to the understanding of the collectivity's experience of displacement, as the graphic novel juxtaposes historiography and memory through the use of different paratexts. The Atlantic and the past are revisited, and ancient Celtic traditions get intertwined with the 20th-century narrative of emigration to the Americas in order to recreate Galician identity.

Sarah Dibble Harris has discussed this graphic novel as part of a "group of Spanish comics that represent, recover, and mourn the loss of historical memory" in relation to the socio-political trends which surrounded the Ley de la memoria histórica (2007), though *Ardalén*'s contribution is not so much a discussion of Spain's relation to its Francoist past but a reflection on Galician identity (39). Francoism is undeniably present via specific allusions, such as the judicial ruling regarding Fidel's aunt's inheritance, which carries the official symbol of the Regime, the Eagle of Saint John (117–18), and the more explicit reference to Francoist repression in the decision about Dr. Arturo Pazos Vila's purging file (154). However, the reconstruction of the absence of memory is oriented toward the continuum of the Atlantic and to a national reconstruction that brings back the diasporic community. Considering the story of Sabela's grandfather, it is important to note that his emigration occurred in 1932, during the Second Republic, as confirmed by his boarding pass and promissory note (54, 56).

Prado utilizes *mise en abyme* and intertextuality to reformulate memory, articulating a model that transcends the individual experience to reach the collectivity and reflect on the construction of Galicianness (*galeguidade*), which appears in opposition to the archive. In "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," Derrida develops an analysis of the concept of the archive, starting from the etymological notion of the *arkhê* as commencement and commandment (9). For Derrida, this archive is a "place" of domiciliation, a place where documents—not always discursive writings—are only "kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*" (10). There is a meaningful connection between this concept and the physicality of space. "There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition and without certain exteriority. No archive without outside" (14). The archive is also linked to "the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded," the holders of the political power (9). Consequently, there is a connection between the archive and the official story and *Ardalén* presents this tension between archive and memory. The graphic novel itself, as an artifact, constitutes an alternative archive, a new place of commencement and commandment in which the model for Galician identity is projected, an identity that seems rooted in the inherent conflict between memory—understood as the spontaneous, alive, and internal experience—and the archive which, according to Derrida, "takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of . . . memory"

(14). In this work, the archive appears in the form of official documents inserted into the narrative, while memory and its alternative recreation of history are represented through the Atlantic Ocean as “a rhizomatic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation” (Gilroy 4).

Space and geography have occupied an important place in Galician studies. According to Kirsty Hooper and Manuel Puga Moruxa, due to “Galicia’s ambiguous geographic and cultural position and its recent social and political history, what it means to be Galician—the question of *galeguidade* (“Galicianness”)—is constantly up for discussion” (1). The authors described Galicia as a “crossroads between land and sea, Europe and America, the Atlantic north and the Mediterranean south, *hispanidad* (the Spanish-speaking world) and its Portuguese counterpart, *lusofonia*,” thus emphasizing the importance that geography holds in the construction of the *galeguidade* (1). This sense of place is an important element in Galician national and cultural identity, which according to Romero, “is framed between two planes that coexist and operate simultaneously: one rooted in a concrete physical space (A Coruña, Ourense, Santiago, Vigo, Galicia, etc.), the other anchored in the movement and displacement of emigration to and from Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Switzerland, England, and so on” (104). This physical space has also been one of the elements underlined by Miguel-Anxo Murado who, in *Outra idea de Galicia* (2013), dedicates his early chapters to geography and landscape. For Murado, the Atlantic has marked Galicia and its people in the eyes of foreigners and, more importantly, in Galicians themselves. He affirms that “the perception of the landscape is both the cause and consequence of history” (40). As a result, this form of Atlanticism differentiates itself from the trend which so strongly affected Galician historicism in the early years of the 20th century. It does not appeal only to a mythical past (used to create distance from Spanish national history) but to a current Galician diaspora, especially in the Caribbean and the Southern Cone. “[G]ran parte de Galicia ten sucedido fóra de Galicia. Gran parte de Galicia está fóra de Galicia” (117) (A large part of Galicia has happened *outside* of Galicia. A large part of Galicia is *outside* of Galicia), Murado states. An important part of the construction of Galician identity has taken place in Havana (the first performance of the Galician anthem, the publication of Rosalía de Castro’s *Follas Novas* and the creation of the Academia da Lingua Galega), and Buenos Aires (the publication of Castelao’s *Sempre en Galiza*). When exploring the specific case of *Sempre en Galiza*, Alonso Nogueira affirms: “Being out of place generates a space to think [of] Galician history in a reflexive way, since it has lost the natural frame that made it evident, although this out-of-placeness does not determine the melting of the national narrative” (40). For that reason, recovering the Atlantic memory would be recovering a crucial part of Galicia’s history and identity.

Prado's graphic novel embraces this undoubtedly stereotypical geographic construction by setting the story in an interior village, hidden in a valley in the mountains. "Ardalén" [air from beyond] is a neologism to signify the wind from the Southwest which brings the rain and the smell of the sea as many as several miles inland to landlocked areas. According to popular myths, the wind comes directly from the American coasts. The tropes of Atlanticism—symbolized by the wet wind of the Ardalén—and isolationism—the village surrounded by mountains—are explicitly introduced in the *mise-en-page* of the four-page prologue to the graphic novel (see fig. 1). The first page is a single panel showing the mountains upon the arrival of the Ardalén, the second and third pages imitate a filmic aerial shot to illustrate the movement of the wind spreading through the mountains. The readers follow the wind as they read Fidel's "voice" reflecting on the presence of the ocean in the mountains. The poetic soliloquy merges with the images connecting Atlanticism and isolationism conceptually. The prologue concludes with another splash page. Fidel is shown at the bottom of the ocean comfortably sitting on a stool, surrounded by fish. This image foreshadows the neighbors' beliefs about him being the survivor of three shipwrecks. The fantastical and unrealistic quality also anticipates the doubt as to whether these beliefs and memories are a construct. From the beginning of the work, the Ardalén wind is linked to Fidel's memory, establishing the notion of the Atlantic as a space of history, and the ocean as a *lieux de memoire*. A color palette of different shades of blue, green, and a dominant turquoise in the prologue (and in the rest of the graphic novel) reinforces the continuity between the mountains and the ocean. Blue fades into the green of the forest every time Fidel feels the presence of the Ardalén. Yet, according to Murado, if this image of Galicia cannot escape from the primordial elements of the green grass, the blue ocean and the transparent rain, this is a result of writings by authors who are not Galician (47).

However, the trend of historical constructions of Galicia does not only focus on geography and landscape. Lourenzo Fernández Prieto has discussed other aspects to describe the institutional view of Galicia that dates back to Francoism. Demographically, the region is a land of poverty-stricken emigrants streaming abroad in order to live. Culturally, it was considered a land of ignorant peasants who insisted on speaking in dialect because that was all they knew and they had too little education for anything else. Anthropologically, Galicia was seen as a land of witchcraft and the *morriña* (homesickness) of weeping emigrants, just as it was for the Castilians back in the 17th century (33).

As with previous notions of Galicia as an Edenic land, this reductive construction again leaves Galicia out of modernity. It was founded on historical power relations established long before Francoism and became a blueprint for the narrative in which the discussion of national identity took place. Some

of these tropes are present in canonical and foundational works by Castelao, Rosalía or Curros Enríquez, evidencing how narratives at both sides of the Galician Massif have been feeding each other. While Galician nationalist authors used these tropes as a way of reinforcing an essentialist pre-industrial identity construction, these same tropes were used later from more centralist positions to question the area's modernity. From its opening pages, *Ardalén* inserts itself into this dialogue. However, this is not only the repetition of certain tropes but more, the reconstruction of a discourse in which memory and history appear in opposition to each other, in order to rethink the archive. Both Sabela and Fidel, the former as she tries to learn about her grandfather and the latter as he attempts to order his memories, suffer the archive fever which propels them to search their past. In Derrida's own words, this archive fever is

to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. (57)

For Derrida, the *arkhé* is the starting point for an understanding of the archive. It names the two principles of the archive according to nature and history: commencement and commandment (9). Sabela's search for her grandfather's past and Fidel's exploration of the origin of his memories both reflect a nostalgia for the return to the absolute commencement, the *arkhé* as an ontological principle. In *Ardalén*, two types of "memory" are introduced: an inner one represented by the stories Fidel tells Sabela, and an external one represented by the paratexts included in the graphic novel. Prado's use of intertextuality and metafictional narration to introduce the plot has been identified frequently as one of the constant elements of his oeuvre from his early *Fragmentos de la enciclopedia délfica* (1982–1983) and *Manuel Montano* (1988) to his best-known work, *Streak of Chalk* (1993). Nevertheless, the use of these narrative strategies has evolved to become something more than a *mise en abyme* construction, a mere framework of referentiality that favors an active reader.

After every chapter in which the graphic novel is divided, the reader finds different documents such as maps, photos, legal documents, articles, poems, and songs. The use of the *mise en abyme* technique in the graphic novel contributes to a metanarrative that calls attention to memory as a construct. These different paratexts are not mere devices to provide additional information.

Sometimes they amplify themes and storylines—like the articles about memory and time; others challenge the veracity of what we have been told— such as the forensic reports about Fidel’s mental health. Some play an important counterpoint role in the construction of Fidel’s narrative, such as the verdict related to Fidel’s doctor friend accused of opposing Francoism; others provide an official point of view about it, like the judge’s verdict on Fidel’s inheritance or the official documents about one of the shipwrecks.

The graphic novel as an artifact reconstructs the place of consignment of the archive, compiling as puzzle pieces documents about the drama of emigration, but as Derrida mentions, “this archiviolithic force leaves nothing of its own behind,” comparing it to the death drive for being also “an aggression and a destruction (Destruktion) drive” (14). Paratextual elements interrupt Fidel’s narrative, who frequently insists on his memory problems. This driving force

not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mnēmē* or to *anamnēsis*, that is, the archive, consignment, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnēma*, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum. (14)

As has been mentioned, some of the paratexts in *Ardalén* question Fidel’s narrative. For example, the end of chapter 4 reveals the ruling from a court in Lugo about the inheritance that Fidel got from his aunt. This official document describes him as “mentally weak” (117). The accumulation of paratexts serves to evidence the distance between the official discourse and Fidel’s vision. While the paratexts try to bring order to the narrative, Fidel’s memories spread rhizomatically through time and space. “Because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience” (Derrida 14). The reader witnesses the archive strive to take the place of originary and structural breakdown of memory. If replicants in *Blade Runner* held onto the fake pictures, *Ardalén*’s protagonists do the same thing with these artifacts of memory, precisely to hide its absence.

Returning to the epigraph, Scott’s film is not the only intertextual dialogue established by the quotes which open the graphic novel. Prado uses references to Bioy Casares and Ernesto Sábato, confirming the influences that these and other Latin American authors had in his oeuvre. After all, *Streak of Chalk* was a narrative in the shadow of Bioy Casares’ *La invención de Morel* (1940), but

also influenced by Borges's and Cortázar's oeuvre. The type of memory that is separated from the physical recipient of consignment (of the *hypomnēma*) is introduced in the graphic novel following two important strategies developed by these Latin American authors: the immersion of the narrative into the parameters of magic realism and the emphasis on orality. Both strategies appear intertwined as the only way of reflecting on Galicians's identity and past.

Prado's attempt to use fantastic elements within the metafictional realism of the graphic novel is similar to the way in which Latin American novelists used magic realism and the marvelous real as a way of constructing a new type of (national) identity. In the prologue to his novel *El reino de este mundo*, Alejo Carpentier criticizes the "marvelous" when "obtained through prestidigitation" and rejects its use as a formula (1):

Pero es que muchos se olvidan que lo . . . maravilloso comienza cuando surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad (el milagro), de una revelación privilegiada de la realidad, de una iluminación inhabitual o singularmente favorecedora de las inadvertidas riquezas de la realidad, de una ampliación de las escalas y categorías de la realidad, percibidas con particular intensidad en virtud de una exaltación del espíritu que lo conduce a modo de "estado límite." (2)

(But many are forgetting . . . that the marvelous begins unmistakably when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly flavored by the unexpected richness of reality, from an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity by virtue of exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state.)

Carpentier found the "marvelous real" on a daily basis in Haiti, but he could not avoid thinking that "esa presencia y vigencia de lo real maravilloso no era privilegio único de Haití, sino patrimonio de la América entera, donde todavía no se ha terminado de establecer, por ejemplo, un recuento de cosmogonías" (3) (this presence and currency of the marvelous real was not a unique privilege of Haiti, but the heritage of the whole of the Americas, where, for example, a cataloguing of cosmogonies is still a work in progress). For that reason, the story of this novel would be impossible to place in Europe (4). For Carpentier, the marvelous real was the way of translating Latin America's

reality. Gabriel García Márquez expressed a similar perspective when he noted: “En América Latina y el Caribe, los artistas han tenido que inventar muy poco, y tal vez su problema ha sido el contrario: hacer creíble su realidad” (“Fantasía”) (In Latin America and the Caribbean, artists have had to invent very little, and maybe their problem has been the opposite: making their reality credible). In his frequently-quoted article for *El País*, “Viendo llover piedras,” García Márquez identifies his grandmother Tranquilina Iguarán Cotes with Galicia: “Sólo entonces entendí de dónde había sacado la abuela aquella credulidad que le permitía vivir en un mundo sobrenatural donde todo era posible, donde las explicaciones racionales carecían por completo de validez, y entendí de dónde le venía la pasión de cocinar para alimentar a los forasteros y su costumbre de cantar todo el día” (Only then did I understand where grandma had gotten that credulity which allowed her to live in a supernatural world where everything was possible, where rational explanations were utterly lacking in validity; and I understood where she got her passion for cooking to feed foreigners and her habit of singing all day). In his conversations with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, García Márquez admits:

Mis abuelos eran descendientes de gallegos, y muchas de las cosas sobrenaturales que me contaban provenían de Galicia. Pero creo que ese gusto por lo sobrenatural propio de los gallegos es también una herencia africana. La costa caribe de Colombia, donde yo nací, es con el Brasil la región de América Latina donde se siente más la influencia de África. (72)

(My grandparents were of Galician descent, and many of the supernatural things they used to tell me came from Galicia. But I think that taste for the supernatural, typical of Galicians, is also an African legacy. The Caribbean coast of Colombia, where I was born, together with Brazil, is the Latin American region where African influence can be felt the most.)

Antón Risco saw a clear relation between the oeuvre by Gabriel García Márquez and Galician authors such as Álvaro Cunqueiro (“En torno” 367). In his analysis of Galician realism, he distinguishes between realist and unrealist fiction, challenging the use of terms such as magical or marvelous realism. Accordingly, for Risco, these Latin American authors worked with elements from Native American and African American religions and beliefs, reinforcing their social reality and stressing a referent totally different to their urban European counterparts. He suggests calling them mythical texts precisely to

reinforce the purpose of ensuring that certain mythologies fall in a relational system different than the duality of realism-unrealism:

Mais para evitar o paradoxo destes termos que dan lugar a tantas polémicas, ¿por qué non chaman mellor a tales textos “míticos”, co que quedaría ben máis clara a súa finalidade revalorizadora xustamente de certas mitoloxías e co cal entrarían noutro sistema de relacións, á marxe da oposición realismo-irrealismo co que entran xustamente en conflito coas tradicións de lectura europeas? (“Notas” 338)

(But in order to avoid the paradox in these terms that originate so many controversies, why not call them both “mythic” texts; making clear its rightly revalorizing goal of certain mythologies and by which they would enter in another system of relations, at the margin of the opposition realism-unrealism with which they enter into conflict with European reading traditions?)

Risco suggests the term “mestizaxe” (hybridity) to talk about works of magical realism, indicating the paradoxical relation between the source and reception cultures of these myths (“En torno” 366). He undeniably defines as fantastic the literature that confronts the prodigy of the region’s natural space as it is perceived by readers within the community. In contrast, the marvelous mode serves to exile that community from the world (368). In the marvelous, the *mestizaxe* will appear resolved, overcome, and mythicized; in opposition to what happens in the fantastic, in which it would engage in an intimate struggle. As for the realist manifestation, it could present both possibilities indifferently (369).

The use of the marvelous or magical realism by Galician authors responds to a goal of idealization and revalorization of a differential past. As Silvia Gaspar reminds us, “se a fantasía é subversión e mesmo revelación, non pode sorprender que o relato fantástico coincida no discurso literario das nacións en proceso de afirmación” (315) (if fantasy is subversion, and even revelation, it cannot be a surprise that the fantastic tale coincides with the literary discourse of nations in the process of affirmation). These characteristics may be applied to the construction of Galician reality that Prado creates by approaching this mythic marvelous geography.



Fig. 2. Miguelanxo Prado, *Ardalén*, 70 (© El Patito Editorial, 2012).



Fig. 3. Miguelanxo Prado, *Ardalén*, 198 (© El Patito Editorial, 2012).

Fidel enjoys sitting in the middle of the forest when the Ardalén blows so he can see the whales. The first time the readers see them is in the splash page in which Fidel stands with Rosalia (see fig. 2). The insignificant human shapes overwhelmed by the size of the cetaceans indicate the relevance of the oceanic wind. In contrast, for the scene in which Sabela sees them for the first time, Prado avoids repeating the same strategy (see fig. 3). Instead, the focus on the epiphany of overcoming the tension between the fantastic and the real—the moment of hesitation that Todorov talked about—is produced through ellipsis (19). Fidel turns to call Sabela as she leaves. The readers do not see the whales, just Sabela’s gaze before the chapter ends opening the way to a book chapter on sea mammals. Sabela acquires Fidel’s view; she represents the next generation. The uncertainty is fulfilled through the paratext. Later, after Fidel’s death, she goes to his house and finds all the spirits that have been visiting him. They lead her to see the whales (see fig. 4). The communion between geography, memory, and the individual is reinforced by the use of the *mise-en-page*, which Prado utilizes to develop his discourse of *galeguidade*. There is a community formed by the characters in this double-page spread. Precisely, these characters are going to be another key element to understand the relation between *galeguidade* and the past in the graphic novel.



Fig. 4. Miguelanxo Prado, *Ardalén*, 248–9 (© El Patito Editorial, 2012).

Ardalén maintains several parallelisms with Prado’s most renowned work, *Streak of Chalk* (1992), such as narrating the arrival of an outsider to a closed and isolated environment, the presence of supporting characters with similar

structural roles, and the use of fantastic elements. However, the marvelous elements in *Streak of Chalk* were mostly related to question the space-time rules, as well as to universalize the story by keeping it outside history. In *Ardalén*, the fantastic lies in the presentation of characters that do not belong to the realm of the real, who also contribute to recreate a more local narrative. These “marvelous” characters are Ramón, Rosalía, and Xana. Ramón seems to be one of Fidel’s friends from the past; Rosalía is his former lover who used to be a prostitute in Cuba; Xana is a mysterious and extravagantly dressed blonde girl who does not seem to fit in the emigrational narrative. These characters are joined later by Sabela’s grandfather. All these individuals are difficult to locate in Fidel’s past. Fidel himself admits: “Os recordos, que son moitos, van e veñen, sen que eu consiga colocalos. Nunca estou seguro de que sucedeu antes ou despóis, báilanmen os nomes, as caras” (37) (Memories, which are plenty, come and go, and I cannot manage to organize them. I am never sure of what happened earlier or later, names and faces dance in my mind).



Fig. 5. Miguelanxo Prado, *Ardalén*, 104 (© El Patito Editorial, 2012).

Every time any of these characters appear, reality seems flooded by the ocean. For example in Figure 5 we see Xana and Rosalía. The characters seem sunk in the water and surrounded by fish. Nevertheless, later we learn that Fidel was never on a ship, and the farthest from the village he has been is the “city,” and everything he owns related to the ocean was inherited from his aunt (145–46). Ramón, Rosalía, and Xana do not belong to his past. These scenes hearken back to the image of Fidel at the beginning of the graphic novel (see fig. 1). There is a use of blue and green tonalities when Fidel perceives the Ardalén and these visual elements are present when the three characters interact with him. Xana explains to Fidel:

Hai ventos que traen nostalgias, que deixan na alma un pouso melancólico . . . Outros parecen limpar a vida, e logo de soprar deixan o día seguinte máis claro e luminoso . . . E este vento, o Ardalén, que ven do outro lado do océano, chega cargado de recordos doutras vidas doutras mortes (164)

(There are winds that bring nostalgia, that leave a melancholic sediment in the soul . . . Others seem to clean life, and after blowing, leave the following day clearer and lighter . . . And this wind, the Ardalén, which comes from the other side of the ocean, arrives filled with memories from other lives and other deaths.)

These memories do not belong to Fidel but to the imaginary community of Galicia. Ramón and Rosalía represent the Galicia in the diaspora. Xana—even if later she is identified in the past of Antonio, another emigrant whose memories Fidel seems to recall—resembles a “moura” or a fairy, and embodies the Galicia rooted in the ancient Celtic myths. Both are linked to the two transatlantic relations that Galicia has with the Americas and the Celtic world. In a way, both are a recreation of memory through orality. Their development in Fidel’s narrative is different to the one present in the official transcripts and documents.

Orality is precisely the second connection with the Latin American Boom authors. Carlos G. Reigosa has discussed Gabriel García Márquez’s statement recognizing the influence of his Galician grandmother in *Cien años de soledad* “en la forma de contarlo” (in the way of telling it), referring to the fantastic ghost stories that she used to tell him with deadpan face (14). Orality is crucial to understand the process of construction of identity in the work of these authors. María Eugenia González Ricaño has emphasized the importance of this type of narration, saying that it has to do not only with biographical episodes but also with specific ancestral ways of narrating events. Out of their natural environment, these events may surprise readers lacking experience with Latin America and its cultural expressions (258). Fidel’s narration is the inheritor of this approach to storytelling.

The Galician diaspora is not only represented by Sabela’s grandfather, Ramón, and Rosalía. When Sabela arrives at the village for the first time, the neighbors explain the consequences that the two main emigrational waves to Latin America (Cuba and Venezuela) had on the inhabitants of the village: “Dos que foron, volveron cinco ou seis, non máis. E os que volveron, fixérono pobres, para morrer . . . Foron pantasma antes de morrer” (14) (Out of those who left, five or six returned, no more. And those that did return came back poor, to die . . . They were ghosts before dying). Emigration also dominates

the narrative from an extra-diegetic perspective. Mercedes Prieto Dunwald, interviewed in one of the paratexts included in the graphic novel, is a Chilean professor of quantum physics with Galician roots (she is the daughter of an emigrant) working for Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Significantly, this granddaughter of Galician emigrants asserts that there are three time categories—past, future, and everything that is neither of them—introducing the notion of simultaneity (126).

The use of paratexts makes of *Ardalén* a metafiction that calls attention to the narrative process creation, not only of the graphic novel as an artifact, but also of Fidel's memories, or at least the simultaneous perception of the past. Fidel is a medium that invokes the collective memory of the Galician people. In Sabela's notebook, we can read some words about Fidel's role: "Ao mesmo tempo que Fidel reconstruía a historia do meu avó, reconstruía a súa propia. Ou a de alguén que se chamou Antonio e que, por camiños estranos e inexplicables, acabou formando parte da súa propia memoria" (244) (At the same time that Fidel was reconstructing the story of my grandfather, he was constructing his own. Or someone else's called Antonio and who, by strange and unexplained ways, ends up being part of his own memory). Interestingly, Prado decides to use a particular font for Fidel's dialogues, one very similar to the "Gallaecia Castelo" or the "Uralita," a Galician model inspired by old stone inscriptions. In Figure 6 we can see the contrast between this font and the one used for Sabela. Although it is true that the fonts vary for the different characters, Fidel's in particular evokes a vernacular feel. He defies the archive, as *hypomnēma* which moves the storyline, and the stereotype, transforming it into a fluid sign of cultural and historical difference.



Fig. 6. Miguelanxo Prado, *Ardalén*, 38 (© El Patito Editorial, 2012).

Fidel channels the voices of the diaspora disseminated throughout the Atlantic, spanning decades of migratory movements. Thus, the Atlantic is presented as a space of history and foundational myth. In a postscript situated after the final notes and acknowledgements, Prado brings Fidel back from the dead with two different scenes. One is the typed script of a dialogue between the protagonist and Ramón in which they discuss the ownership of the memories they share. Once again, the graphic novel as an artifact reinforces its metafictional aspect. The second scene precedes that page and epitomizes the author's view of the Atlantic as a symbol of identity (see fig. 7). The narrative of the graphic novel subverts the presence of the official documents which contradicted his testimonial. The archive is substituted for oral memory. Sabela takes Fidel to the Torre de Hércules, which despite its Roman origin, occupies an important place in the collective imaginary as part of the Celtic myth. It is at this moment, that Fidel finally sees the ocean and Sabela tells him that beyond it lies America (255). Recent and mythical pasts are brought together at the sight of the Atlantic.

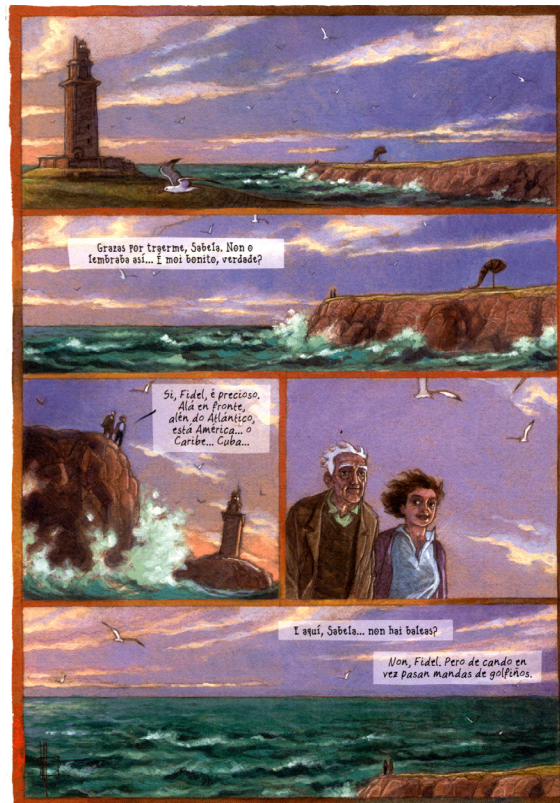


Fig. 7. Miguelanxo Prado, *Ardalén*, 255 (© El Patito Editorial, 2012).

Ardalén maintains a paradoxical relation with the archive. On the one hand, it questions the archive as the place of domiciliation that “marks this institutional passage from the private to the public” (Derrida 10). The official documents which constitute official history are subverted by the presence of oral memory (the anamnesis, the spontaneous and alive memory). On the other hand, if the archive is a place of commencement and commandment, the graphic novel also questions the ontological and nomological nature of official history; but only to construct an alternative one, through a series of metatexts that attempt to recreate the past of a diasporic community. While perhaps more diffuse and difficult to discern, the construct may represent more accurately Galicia’s identity. This identity is not located in one single space but in a diasporic community that spans both shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

Notes

1. All translations are the author’s unless stated otherwise.
2. “Hacer las Américas” is an extended colloquial expression in Galicia to refer to emigrating in order to improve the economic status.
3. This connection between emigration and memory is not only present in contemporary authors such as Manuel Rivas and Suso de Toro, but has been a constant in Galician cultural history that can be traced back to Rosalía de Castro’s foundational *Cantares Gallegos* (1863) and later Castelao’s rethinking of Galicia from his exile in *Sempre en Galiza* (1944). It was also a crucial element in the first Galician film, *Sempre Xonxa* (Chano Piñeiro, 1989). Within graphic narratives, in addition to the representations of emigration in Castelao’s work, we can see early examples in the inception of Galicia’s modern comics such as *O emigrante* (1971) by Xaquín Marín and “Carta do pai” (1973) de Pepe Barro. More recently, this connection has been made even clearer in the *Castelao* series (2012-) by Inacio and Iván Suárez.

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