Migrancy, Memory and Transplantation in Manuel Rivas's *La mano del emigrante*

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In this article, I explore Manuel Rivas's construction of Galician identity through an analysis of his *La mano del emigrante*. I argue that Rivas establishes as a common cultural attachment among Galicians the impossibility of grounding their identity on a sense of belonging tied to a geographic boundary. To illustrate this, Rivas reconstructs the lives of Galician migrant workers in London and shipwrecked fishermen rather than writing about those who have never left their homeland. I discuss how he includes an ethical consideration in his theorization of Galician identity: he proposes the remembering of Galicians who died outside Galicia as a moral duty of those who have survived through an allegory of transplantation. To dismantle the ways in which Rivas envisions Galician cultural distinctiveness, I examine the relation between the first short story of the book and the album of twenty-four photographs that reflect the story. In particular, I consider the photographs that bring forth the social invisibility of migrant workers and the function of postcards included in the book. I also interrogate how the notion of transplantation serves to explain the displacement of Galician immigrants and the necessity of hospitality towards the displaced.

Manuel Rivas's *La mano del emigrante* (2000) draws on several genres and multi-layered stories that can be read autonomously and yet are connected to each other. This Galician writer and journalist gathers, for this book, two short stories previously published in Galician — 'La mano del emigrante' and 'Los naufragos' — and a collection of twenty-four photographs — 'El álbum furtivo' — which are interspersed between the two stories. Despite an apparent mutual autonomy, the three parts are linked by the theme of border experiences and, read as a whole, they render memory an ethical responsibility of those who survive the dead. Additionally, the leitmotiv of the hand sustains the narrative coherence throughout the book. It connects the characters of the two stories — Galician immigrants in London and Galician shipwreck survivors. The narrator who attempts to recuperate the memory of his deceased friend Castro, believing he has Castro's transplanted hand in the first story, resonates with the testimony of Juan Jesús Piñeiro in the second narrative. Because of the strong hands with which he held onto a piece of a flotsam from the ship in which he was sailing, this fisherman survived a shipwreck. 'El álbum furtivo' is more closely related to 'La mano del emigrante' than to 'Los naufragos', since the photographer traces the life of Galician immigrants in London.

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showing the places they have or may have visited. Rivas resorts to the photographs as ‘another way of telling’ the stories of Galician migrant workers in London, to borrow John Berger’s definition of photography (Berger & Mohr 1975). In this article, I will focus on how the album and ‘La mano del emigrante’ collaborate to communicate what it means to be a migrant and the importance of memory for displaced subjects who inhabit simultaneously more than one culture, one sense of location and one temporality. Of particular interest is the notion of transplantation Rivas employs both literally and metaphorically in ‘La mano del emigrante’, and its relation to ‘El álbum furtivo’. I will also discuss how Rivas explores the border experience that binds migrant workers with shipwreck survivors and demonstrate his evocation of this in his use of photographs and six postcards that are included in the Alfaguara edition. I will explain how these added visual media come into dialogue with the book’s primary idea of migrant identity.

Two key concepts that serve as the theoretical framework of this study are Iain Chambers’s ‘migrancy’ and Ross Chambers’s notion of ‘foster’. Iain Chambers defines ‘migrancy’, in his Migrancy, Culture, Identity, as a state of continuous flux and destabilization in which one comes to live as a result of geographical displacement: ‘[Migrancy] calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming — completing the story, domesticating the detour — becomes an impossibility’ (Chambers 1994: 5). The notion of ‘migrancy’ is useful in understanding what Rivas describes as border experience — the foundation of Galician identity, as well as the experience of African immigrants who risk their lives to come to Europe. In the author’s note, ‘El apego y la perdida’, Rivas makes a timely and socially conscious comparison between African immigrants who often get shipwrecked during their cross-continental travel from Africa to Europe and the Galician migrant workers and fishermen facing a similar situation, creating an affiliation between the two groups based on common migrant experiences. He states: ‘La de los emigrantes y los naufragos son experiencias extremas en esa ruta fronteriza. A veces, en la vida real y de forma trágica, coinciden esas circunstancias en las mismas personas, como vemos que ocurre ahora entre el norte de Africa y España, y en otros escenarios’ (Rivas 2000: 8). For Rivas, the border crossing produces such border experiences that involve attachment and loss, the struggle for survival and the anxiety for another life.

If Iain Chambers considers ‘migrancy’ as the basis of the contemporary social composition, Ross Chambers contemplates one’s duty to those whose memories are negated in the public sphere. ‘Migrancy’ facilitates the understanding of Rivas’s construction of Galician identity as both particular and universal, and grounded on the sharing of pain and affection for ‘home’, constituted only through a transitory self-adjustment to changing cultural and spatial landscapes. Ross Chambers’s theoretical contribution to my analysis lies in its relation to survivor’s guilt — an idea explored by the narrator in Rivas’s first story. Chambers (2002: 101) specifically draws on the two meanings of the word foster — a ‘surrogate’ and ‘to encourage’: ‘It [foster] is a surrogate, offering a form

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1 In ‘Los naufragos’, Rivas gathers interviews of Galician fishermen who tell their tragic experiences of losing their friends in the sea, their tough survival, and why some of them have decided to abandon their jobs.

2 The reference to John Berger here is intentional. Like Rivas, the English writer and painter considers the collaboration of both visual and verbal media to be crucial in the representation of migrant workers. In his A Seventh Man, Berger draws on photography and narration to tell the stories of Turkish, Portuguese and Spanish migrant workers in Germany and Switzerland during the 1960s and 1970s.
of hospitality or pseudo-home to that which is culturally homeless and agencing a phantasm cultural existence for it. But thus it fosters, that is, encourages, the entry of the culturally homeless into culture, albeit in the uncanny form it owes to the highly mediated act of its presencing.’ Chambers’s theoretical insight of ‘foster’ echoes the very idea of transplantation forcefully portrayed by Rivas. In ‘La mano del emigrante’, the narrator offers himself as the foster home for Castro’s memory, even after realizing that he does not have his deceased friend’s transplanted hand.

Transplantation and Migrancy

‘La mano del emigrante’ begins with a hand’s observation of the Old Crow, a bar frequented by Galician migrant workers, who drink, play billiards and darts. Soon we realize that the unnamed narrator and the owner of the hand/witness, like Castro, is a Galician working as a hospital porter in London. The reconstruction of conversations among the compatriots paints Castro as someone who loathed Margaret Thatcher’s conservative policies and who used to tell stories that reveal an irrepressible nostalgia. As the narration weaves through the stories of other Galician migrant workers such as Ruán, Rosalia and Regueiro, it leads us to the day when the narrator and Castro met in front of the Trellick Tower in London to share a taxi to the airport. Their plan to visit their families in Galicia during a Christmas vacation in the 1980s was interrupted by the traffic accident that resulted in Castro’s death and the narrator’s loss of a hand. From then on, the narrator believes he is the recipient of Castro’s hand and his transplanted hand, in turn, becomes a testament to the survival of Castro: ‘La mano es un ser vivo. Es el lugar donde Castro se encuentra ahora, donde laten sus vísceras, sus ojos al acecho, sus bocas boqueando’ (Rivas 2000: 17–18). The narrator, feeling indebted to Castro as someone who carries part of him, transports the ashes of the dead Castro to Galicia where the latter’s mother, Chelo, awaits her son’s return home. While spreading Castro’s ashes onto the ocean, the narrator learns about Castro’s past from Chelo who recounts her family tragedies such as his father’s lengthy separation from his mother as a fugitive, the death of Castro’s sister, Sira, and other family members’ migration to Germany and Argentina.

The commemoration of Castro is important because the narrator begins to recuperate the tactility of the transplanted hand, which until then was not functioning properly. Prior to the visit, the narrator noticed an improvement in his reasoning and language ability, as if these skills had been transferred from Castro with the operation. However, he was puzzled by the absence of the tattooed small birds, paños, on the transplanted hand and its malfunctioning: ‘No entendían por qué no se movía, por qué no sentía, si todo estaba perfecto, si la circulación de la sangre había revasculado desde el primer momento’ (Rivas 2000: 47). The hand becomes gradually revitalized as the mother’s narration unfolds, revealing Castro’s past. The narrator pinches his hand under the table while the mother tells the story of the letters her brother in Argentina used to write to Castro in the name of his father, Albino, who was hiding from the Civil Guard during the Spanish Civil War. The narrator, who could not feel pain in the bleeding hand, now perceives the restoration of the senses in the hand: ‘me pareció notar que la mano resurgía, punzada por la verdad’ (Rivas 2000: 63). As the mother’s narration comes to a close, the narrator observes the hand coming out of its hiding place to reach his chin in a gesture of curiosity, and finally feels the warmth produced by a bird’s coming to rest on his hand when he shakes Chelo’s hands to say goodbye. Thus, memory is what completes the hand’s successful transplantation.
'Me vino a la cabeza un pensamiento aterrador. ¿Se podrá también transplantar la cabeza con los sueños y la memoria dentro?' (Rivas 2000: 41). The narrator poses the question to himself when Doctor Lemmon explains to him the latest perfection in transplantation techniques. The narrator’s meeting with Castro’s mother furnishes him with a positive answer to this question. Only when he learns of Castro’s past does the narrator come to realize that his friend recycled and transplanted his memory of Galicia to his new migrant life in London. The narrator finally understands why Castro caressed dogs in London, always naming them ‘Karenina’ after his childhood pet. Upon hearing the mother’s recollection of Ramón’s invitation to migrate to Germany, the narrator is able to connect Ramón’s comment on free heat in Germany with Castro’s humorous excuse for visiting the British Museum where the heat was free. The same names and excuses return, collapsing the temporal distance between the past and the present. Although the reality Castro faced in London is different from that in Galicia, his memories stay alive in a deferred time. Only when he learns of Castro’s past does the narrator come to realize that his friend recycled and transplanted his memory of Galicia to his new migrant life in London. The narrator finally understands why Castro caressed dogs in London, always naming them ‘Karenina’ after his childhood pet. Upon hearing the mother’s recollection of Ramón’s invitation to migrate to Germany, the narrator is able to connect Ramón’s comment on free heat in Germany with Castro’s humorous excuse for visiting the British Museum where the heat was free. The same names and excuses return, collapsing the temporal distance between the past and the present. Although the reality Castro faced in London is different from that in Galicia, his memories stay alive in a deferred time. The narrator’s decision to tattoo his hand displays his determination to keep Castro’s memory alive. It also exemplifies the narrator’s view of memory as something embedded in the body, as if the body has its own memory. Although the narrator did not know much of Castro’s past, he claims to share common memory of London with his friend and goes on to theorize memory as a sensorial force that transcends our dominion: 

Pero los recuerdos nos perseguían, olfateaban el rastro, al acecho durante años, rondaban en la noche, trepaban por las hiedras y los desagües, gorgoteaban en los sumideros, se deslizaban como medusas por las visceras grasientas de la ciudad. Se les olía, con su jadeo bronquítico, en las viejas chimeneas tapiadas de los cuartos de alquiler, en los rincones húmedos de las viviendas sociales con nombres edénicos. Nos perseguían en los trenes de cercanías, por el cubil del metro, o en las marquesinas de los buses de la madrugada, hasta encontrarnos de nuevo. Los recuerdos siempre daban con nosotros. Y ordenaba: Acompáñenos, suba a esa carroza. ¡Caballos, caballos! Los caballos del memorial, cataclop, cataclop, Ladbroke Grove abajo, con su penacho de plumas de avestruz. (Rivas 2000: 59–60)

Memory dictates, as the narrator states, because it is ingrained in all the corners of the city. Memory is an inescapable thrust since it exists everywhere. What type of memory of Castro does the narrator wish to transplant by tattooing the birds in his hand? The first question the narrator asks Chelo is for the time when Castro tattooed *pañios* on his hand. Her answer is delayed until she reveals that Castro considered his hand the embodiment of his guilt for not having been able to rescue Sira from being swept away by the waves. She also says that when Castro returned from the sea after six months of absence, he had his hand tattooed and told her it was his wish to offer a home to the *pañios*. In this sense, Castro’s act of tattooing his hand can be construed as his wish to transform guilt into hospitality.

The actual transplantation of Castro’s hand never occurs in the story. Rather, the narrator’s initial belief that he has his friend’s hand and, despite knowing that it is his own, his decision to offer himself as a surrogate body to house Castro’s memory, are
what stand in for transplantation. Thus, Rivas’s use of the notion corresponds to an
ethical responsibility one is willing to assume for those who are to be forgotten. In this
scheme, remembering is an ethical act that is not limited to a single physical entity. In ‘La
mano del emigrante’, along with Castro, lives of many others are commemorated. There
are many characters who are displaced subjects in Castro’s world with whom the narra-
tor becomes familiar through the collective reconstruction of memory between Castro’s
mother and himself. They adopted and transported themselves to new realities for sur-
vival: Castro’s father, Albino, for example, whose migration to Argentina was fabricated
through letters for his children, was, in fact, hiding in a cave near his home in order to
escape the surveillance of the Spanish Civil Guard. Uncle Ramón, who pretended to be
the father of Castro’s sister, Sira, migrated eventually to Germany as a miner. The former
vocalist Ruán — Castro’s friend in London — vanished after having had an instrument
transplanted into his throat to safeguard his voice and even a dog named Karenina was
picked up by Albino from Sayón.

Transplantation in Rivas not only serves as a surrogate, an act of hospitality, but also
as a gesture that sets an example for others, a type of encouragement. As Ross Chambers
would put it, it ‘fosters’ the lesson of hospitality. This is evident in Rivas’s application
of the Galician experience to African immigrants in Spain and in his use of postcards that
accompany the purchase of the book. Although the reference to the current situation of
African immigrants to Europe is brief, it is an important one because Galician identity
is constructed as a model to rethink the future of Spain’s relationship with those born
abroad, in terms of affiliation rather than through an exclusive, hegemonic and rigid
notion of difference. In other words, ‘Galicianness’ is conceptualized as a productive
cultural engine that can generate civic values indispensable in an era of cultural and
political transnationalism. This position is possible because the author views Galician
identity as founded on an emotional disposition to adopt the experiences that accompany
a long history of migration rather than something that draws purely on cultural essen-
tialism confined within a territorial boundary.° Cristina Moreiras-Menor (2001) points
out the openness of Galician identity; she suggests that the cultural history of migration
installed at the core of Galician identity often serves as the resourceful point of departure
in contemporary Galician literature, and allows for a reworking of various axes of
identities:

[a partir de Rivas] la literatura gallega contemporánea reflexiona y narra una noción de
diferencia y de cultura ‘nacional’ a través de la recuperación de memorias desplazadas,
traumáticas, y una de cuyas consecuencias es la partida de sus sujetos, marcando desde
ellas las tensiones fundamentales que fundan lo nacional y lo europeo, lo local y lo global
en un momento histórico caracterizado por la experiencia de la globalización y
transculturación. (Moreiras-Menor 2001: 2)

In other words, Galician identity is essentially global and ‘transcultural’ (a culture in
transit), and capable of finding a ‘home’ in unfamiliar cultures and places. In turn, the
notion of difference shifts, because of the cultural force that underlines one’s adaptability

° Emigration as the bedrock of the Galician identity is discussed in Galicia y América: Cinco Siglos de
Historia (Rodríguez Galdo 1992), for which Rivas writes a prologue. Manuel Ferrol’s 1957 photographic
collection, Emigración, is another attempt to reconstruct the history of Galician emigration. The two exhi-
bitions of Ferrol’s collection in La Coruña and Madrid in 2000 and 2002, respectively, attest to the recent
interest in revitalizing the discussion on Galician identity through diaspora.
to different settings, from what must remain separated from the self into something that needs to be embraced.

The three parts of *La mano del emigrante* are connected by the sense of displacement. Rivas makes sure that many elements come into play to evoke a sense of linkage in spite of structural disconnection. For example, two epigraphs that consist of dictionary definitions of *paños* and a painting in which a dozen fishermen strive to survive a shipwreck in the rough ocean appear at the beginning of the first story, reinforcing its relation to the second story. The four-page-long text that precedes the first story — *‘El apego y la pérdida (nota del autor)’* — casts doubts on whether the narrative voice that identifies itself as the author’s belongs to the fictional realm or to reality. Although the text claims to be a prologue in which the author explains how the book was conceived, his remembrance of the ‘Caimán’ — the nickname for the Civil Guard who represented an evil for many children in his town during his childhood — obliges the reader to follow a trace back to Castro in the first story. His father was in a cave hiding from a Civil Guard named ‘Caimán’ during the Spanish Civil War. Continuing the compositional linkage, the first Alfaguara edition of the book is decorated with a cover that resembles an old postcard and includes six postcards that reproduce photographs of *‘El álbum furtivo’* — a point to which we will return after examining the relation between the first story and the photographs.

**Migrancy and Photography**

The twenty-four photographs in the album provide a visual grounding to the preceding fictional narrative as well as an imaginary memory the photographer attributes to the Galician migrant workers. In general, they portray places in La Coruña and London where the characters have or may have visited or lived. Many of the pictures can be easily related to the first short story. Yet, creating a documentary of the lives of the immigrants is not the photographer’s primary objective. Instead, he fuses the desire to be seen in an unfriendly urban setting, or in isolated places near the ocean where people go without being noticed, with his project of tracing the constant self-translating and self-transforming efforts to make sense of localities. In this sense, *‘El álbum furtivo’* operates prosthetically to the narrative, complementing the text. The photographs capture what the narrative does not tell. If the text documents the stories and events related to Castro’s relationship with other Galician immigrants, British co-workers and his girlfriend, Irene, the photographs depict what could have been Castro’s (and other Galician workers’) daily routine through a visual rendition of work, housing, amusement and neighbourhood.

As the author confesses in his note, his photographs are taken with disposable cameras and an old broken camera he cherishes, and do not embellish objects through any degree of technological sophistication or aesthetic experimentation. Rather, they simplify the complex and vibrant life of an urban metropolis through a series of plain and restrained images. The photographs are produced in the amateurish style of a tourist, but are not typical tourist pictures since they do not memorialize the glamorous historical sites of the English capital. Furthermore, stylistic manipulation through artificial lights, zoom lenses and focus is absent. Even variation in the climate is not disguised through different light exposures. Most pictures are shot from close range and are visually compact. The overriding angle used is either slanted or frontal. The slanted angle communicates the act of looking by stealth, as the title explains.
People are not the nucleus of the photographic frame. Rather, the photographs reveal an interior vision of migrant experiences by visualizing their relation to the surroundings. The photographer makes efforts to unravel, among other things, invisibility and solitude that migrant workers feel in unfamiliar surroundings. In order to visualize the feeling of being unnoticed, he photographs, for the most part, the corners of walls and a coastline, successfully evoking a sense of incapacity that extends to the visual field. The result is that the viewer, whose vision is limited and blocked, experiences a reciprocal frustration to that suffered by migrants who are erased through invisibility. Thus, the viewers are ‘fostered’ to share the daily lives of migrants in London.

The adjective \textit{furtivo}, used to describe the album, has several connotations. First, it implies the idea of taking something from someone else, which resonates with transplantation. Second, derived from the act of stealing, the word underlines the photographer’s prudence not to claim full understanding of migrant life since he did not experience it. He can only project such a vision by stealing it and by briefly participating in it. Thirdly, it implies one’s awareness of being watched and being othered. These three points in unison indicate the self’s marginalization in order to take part in a totality that can only be measured through incomprehensibility. Therefore, the album attempts to create and recreate what Iain Chambers calls, the ‘oblique gaze’ of migrants who are at the crossroads of different systems, languages and cultures. Chambers (1994: 14) considers this gaze as the byproduct of ‘migrating across a system that is too vast to be our own, but in which we are fully involved — translating and transforming what we find and absorb into local instances of sense’, and thus can only exist through metaphor rather than in a physical sense.

Rivas inscribes several metaphors of the oblique gaze into his album. The repeated inaccessibility to spaces and inanimate faces, in the few images of people, constitute both the visual practice of displaced subjects and metaphors for their emotional displacement. Before analysing this point further, we will first consider the composition of the album to better understand the backdrops chosen by the photographer to represent migrant life. The photographs consist of the seascapes of La Coruña and the cityscapes of London: one group relates to nature and the other to urban sprawl. The images of both locales produce a rhetoric of marginality, evoking the presence of a lonely traveller who gazes into the world of isolation and exclusion. Two images of the Tower of Hercules represent Galicia, photographed from a distance and encompassing the sky, the sea, mountains and clouds. A picture of a provincial cemetery and another of a prison (where Castro might have been imprisoned) also portray the northwestern region. Two photographs that imply train rides and eighteen images of the city, concentrating on advertisements that paint walls and storefronts, sum up the photographer’s experience of London. Topographic features in the photographs are highly structured and repetitive, something that reinforces the symbolic quality of photographed spaces as always perceived through the phenomenological perspective of landscape.

Gazing into surroundings, whether a natural landscape or a cityscape, is the key concept with which the photographer tries to capture the visual world of migrants. As Christopher Tilley reveals (1994: 13), there are ‘ontological characteristics of the relationship between inhabited space and social Being-in-the-world’. The importance of landscape in the development of a sense of the self resonates with Castro’s belief that landscape produces memory and cultural attachment in the text. He challenges his compatriots who routinely recall Galicia with nostalgia, around the pool table at the Old Crow bar, by saying that the sources of his nostalgia come from specific scenery such as the house with
a fig tree and the ocean of Orzán nearby. He states: ‘Quiero a mi madre, que es lo que me queda allá, quiero a mis muertos, quiero a la casa de la higuera, que ya no existe, quiero al mar del Orzán, quiero a los recuerdos, buenos o malos, pero no me pidas que ame a mi país’ (Rivas 2000: 20). He rejects all abstract ideologies regarding patriotism, preferring, instead, individual links with concrete people, things or landscape as a means of forging a sense of belonging. In a similar way to Castro’s consideration of landscape as one’s connection to interiority, the album draws on the pictorial images of the sea and the city, providing a migrant’s visual conceptualization of space that transcends the conventional sense of belonging in which human beings take supremacy over backdrops or in which places are explained through their properties. The surroundings are always subjectified rather than separated out to the extent that the invisible viewer/photographer is implicated in the photograph without showing his or her face. In other words, the images of the ocean and the city translate one’s marginalization and yet involvement in those places.

The photographer/viewer’s participation in the surroundings is represented through the closedness of a corner instead of the openness of a metropolitan city. In the seascapes, the openness is complicated either with overcast weather or a fig tree. More importantly, the frequent visualization of spaces where people are incarcerated such as prisons, cemeteries and a lighthouse (The Tower of Hercules) embody forcefully the kind of relationship the Galician immigrants like Castro, the photographer and the viewer construct with their environments — one that is simultaneously confined and deprived of a sense of place. As Michel Foucault declares (1986: 22), prison and the cemetery are ‘heterotopias’ — spaces designated for the socially Othered, disrupted from conventional spatiality where culture, time and space are organized hierarchically. A lighthouse can also be placed in this category of the interstitial since it implies a temporal intricacy that differentiates time inside and outside the space. There is a sense of temporal flow that operates within a space separated from the outside world.

While individual photographs do not generate a story or a message, the totality of the photographs in sequence can be viewed as a reconstruction of migrants’ travels. The album opens with an apparent journey from La Coruña to London, from the sea to a metropolis, and ends with a return to the Galician hometown. Having arrived in the city, the photographer moves his locations within the boundaries of north-west London: from Ladbroke Grove to Kensal Rise, Kilburn, Portobello, Soho, West Hampstead, Willesden Green, back to Portobello and Kilburn. The trajectory covers both underprivileged areas (Kilburn and Willesden Green) as well as affluent zones (West Hampstead, Portobello and Kensal Rise). Some areas like Soho and Portobello are tourist destinations and the latter, in particular, is known as an area where Spanish and Portuguese immigrant communities live. Movement is represented through railway transportation (both train and underground) as indicated in the two photographs that appear immediately after those of Galicia, ‘Camino de Victoria Station’ and ‘Tren de Epsom’. At the same time, the viewers witness a walk through the city as they follow the photographic hopping of locations. The penultimate picture in the album, ‘Escalera de Kilburn’, reinforces the idea of a walk by simply showing stairs.

No photograph in the album draws on a stereotype of Englishness or is a typical image of London. Places the photographer/migrant stops to photograph in the British capital include an image of the hospital where Galician migrants worked, taken from the underground station, a funeral home, a tattoo salon, a travel agency that serves Portuguese and
Galician immigrant communities and a Salvation Army centre adjacent to the tattoo salon — the places that are featured in the first story. There are also photographs taken to show the Milenio Bar, a barbershop, the shop window of an undergarment store and a kiosk. The locations associated with migrant workers/walkers connote urban marginality through a tone of isolation and abandonment. Even places like Soho, Portobello and the Trellick Tower that symbolize a cosmopolitan lifestyle and bustling commercialism seem gloomy and empty. In case of the Trellick Tower, this gloominess reflects its role in the narrative: it is where Castro and the narrator met a moment before the traffic accident in a taxi they were sharing to the airport. In the photographs portraying London, inanimate automata rather than the effervescence of shopping and business districts capture the eyes of the viewers: storefronts are decorated with advertising billboards, unornamented shop windows and mannequins. The only space that creates a sense of excitement is the Milenio Bar where immigrants indulge their hobby of playing table football. But both the camera light and room lights focus on the game table instead of the people, melding faces into the darkness.

Whether as individuals or a public mass, the characters in these photographs are relegated to complete anonymity, to a group of subjects without cultural and historical memories. The few passers-by in the picture of the Trellick Tower do not show their faces, and are not conscious of being photographed. The middle-aged male vendor in the photograph of the kiosk in West Hampstead stares at the camera, and indicates his surprise and disapproval of the photographer’s random photographing. This picture gives the impression that the photographer/migrant startled the vendor by trying to photograph him by stealth, but it falls short of generating any interaction between them. The barber and his client in ‘El barbero de Kensal Rise’ fade into a double reflection produced by the shop window and a mirror. The image of a van reflected on the window overlaps with that of the barber, and disorientates his physical presence. Other faces that decorate the photographs appear on advertisement billboards, magazine covers, photo displays in a tattoo salon, a mural and a underground poster in ‘Labios de Kilburn’, ‘Puños de Kilburn’, ‘Quiosco de West Hampstead’, ‘Tatuajes de Portobello’, ‘Música de Portobello’ and ‘Playa del Underground’. The majority of these faces are either anonymous or unrecognizable due to the size of the photographs and a fragmentation caused by deliberately staged angles and frames. When recognizable, as in the case of Muhammad Ali in ‘Puños de Kilburn’, a decontextualization renders subjective meaning impossible.

The deliberate inclusion of advertisement images in several photographs is significant. Photographs that contain commercial images arrange the angle in such a way that product information is covered. The photographer does not provide any semiological analysis of commercial imagery or examine the relationship between the product and its social and cultural references. However, the use of advertisement photographs is crucial in configuring the migrants’ oblique gaze, which Rivas projects throughout the photographs. He embodies migrants’ desire gaze by drawing on the primary aim of advertising images — the induction of fetishism through voyeurism. Although advertisements demand to be seen, they are often reduced to invisibility through ubiquity. The purpose of commercial displays is to capture pedestrians’ gaze, something that the photographer deploys to parallel inversely the migrant desire to be seen, to escape from his or her invisible status in the metropolis.

Close-up glamourized portraiture of individuals in commercial images configure urban migrant reality through their symbolic (and often idealized) representation of dislocation. In general, commercial photographs create social fantasy by detaching and
freeing individuals from social constraints and contexts: photographic images in advertisements always need to contradict the reality in which they are advertised. For instance, an American Express advertisement, normally included in magazines, projects the image of a middle-aged couple enjoying their vacation in the sapphire-blue Caribbean and is deemed to attract urban consumers who lead a stressful work-oriented lifestyle. Many mobile phone advertisements accentuate familial intimacy by emphasizing their services’ promise to make possible uninterrupted and geographically unrestricted communication between family members, while concealing a solitary modern lifestyle that, in fact, stimulates its consumption. Susan Sontag (1989: 178) goes as far as to claim that commercial photographs produce a desire to consume by concealing social wounds caused by the hegemonic organization of power: ‘A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anaesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex.’ The numbing of social wounds is a prevalent strategy in commercial photographs and is often achieved through dislocating and ahistoricizing subjects from their social contexts. However, Rivas’s use of advertisement photographs discloses the concealed wounds of the marginalized immigrants. They simultaneously beg for attention and reveal the status of immigrants relegated to a complete invisibility and spatial displacement.

The advertisements included in Rivas’s photographs attempt to visualize dislocation: the image of a zebra captured within a window frame of a fast-moving train dislocates the African animal into the heart of the cityscape; the photograph of a mother and a daughter, picking clams, on a peaceful beach visually disrupts the dark and hermetic space of a underground platform where it is exhibited. The image of a well-sheared sheep in a fragmented advertisement parallels that of a Spanish barbershop in an urban corner where a man is being shaved, erasing the difference between the rural and the urban, between the human and the animal and, more importantly, juxtaposing the space occupied by an image created by British capitalism with an immigrant space — that of Galicia.

Other commercial images included in Rivas’s photographs project human faces that replace real human beings. The image of Muhammad Ali, cut above his chest, in a fragmented advertisement, is hung right beneath a small window, which forms part of an extension of brick walls in Kilburn. Despite Muhammad Ali’s fame and wealth in real life, the scene evokes a desolate and underprivileged ghetto. The image of a half-naked black man throwing a fist in the air, set against the brick walls unevenly mounted, implies extreme poverty. The photographed faces of the singer Eminem, the Prime Minister Tony Blair, and less known public figures and models that decorate the magazine racks in a kiosk in West Hampstead substitute a complex web of social realities, reducing them to mere images. In the same photograph, a billboard advertisement behind the kiosk, also in a fragment, exhibits two women, dressed like professionals, with their arms crossed. This commercial photograph includes an incomplete phrase in the right-hand corner, which reads ‘We want to’. The very fragmentariness of the phrase indicates that any desire or claim is disjointed in the midst of and because of the profusion of images. The inanimate faces in advertisement photographs, which replace real human beings with empty signifiers, encapsulate the otherness of migrants. The persistence of faces puts forward a presence that resorts to absence — the visibility that encodes invisibility. Furthermore, the thwarted visual interaction between the photographic models and the viewers represents migrants’ social alienation since the faces in the photographs are deprived of sight: they invite others to look at them but are unable to return a gaze.
In the photographs that contain commercial images, Rivas includes windows that are never open. They are either shut or covered with wooden panels, as in ‘El barbero de Kensal Rise’, ‘Labios de Kilburn’, ‘Púños de Kilburn’, ‘Mensaje en Willesden Green’, ‘Agencia de viajes de Portobello’, and ‘Ejército de Salvación en Portobello’. The windows in these pictures are not only shut but also opaque. Commonly, windows connect the interior with the exterior through their visibility. In this case, however, they block the viewer’s visual penetration into the interior. Once again, the photographer inverts visibility with invisibility by turning what is visible conventionally into a metaphor of invisibility. Similar to the ways in which migrants’ social invisibility is represented through commercial photographs — the most visible urban markers along with buildings — windows that are supposed to symbolize transparent visibility obstruct inward vision.

Given Rivas’s efforts to visualize the migrants’ search for a place amidst indifference and invisibility, the city of London where the Galician migrants lived (and where innumerable postcolonial migrants from different countries claim their new ‘home’) receives much attention. The city in contemporary society marked by the growth of the global diaspora, as Jacques Derrida heralds in his *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001), constitutes the ideological agency through which a symbolic resolution of the colonial and traumatic past needs to be sought. He adds that the city under the inviolable rule of state sovereignty is inadequate for accommodating the stateless or displaced person because his or her right to exist is politically scrutinized. Derrida proposes the construction of ‘cities of refugees’ that transcend existing international legal models to prevent people unprotected by their states from being victimized by treaties between states. In order to create an ideal city of refugees that can reconcile the ideological conflicts of the past and their current ramifications, Derrida emphasizes the importance of cultivating hospitality in our way of being, our way of relating self to others, while limiting the state’s political and legal governance over the city:

> Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the ethos, that is, the residence, one’s home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, ethics is hospitality; ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality. (Derrida 2001: 16–17)

In other words, the self is constructed upon being hospitable towards others and the city needs its inhabitants to be conscious of this process.

The city of London Rivas portrays points precisely to a lack of hospitality. It precludes the provision of residences or homes for migrants. The migrant photographer repeatedly captures images of housing in various districts of London and raises the issue of the ‘homelessness’ of migrants through a series of images of different types of housing. Rivas interrogates the issue of their social inaccessibility and ‘homelessness’ by juxtaposing the humble brick apartment buildings in Kilburn with a rather luxurious gated community residence in Willesden Green, which is guarded by a wall of high advertising billboards constructed against fences. A commercial photograph decorates the wall of the Kilburn housing, but it does not evoke a sense of protection. On the contrary, an image of the naked torso of Muhammad Ali, as I have pointed out, accentuates deprived living conditions. Two commercial images in the Willesden Green housing photographs,

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4 Francisco Ramón Durán Villa addresses this issue in his *La emigración gallega al Reino Unido* (1985).
though apparently unrelated, provide a social critique of corrupted wealth and contrast with the image of immaculately maintained abodes. One includes an image of the back of an obese woman thrown on the floor that reflects a state of complete disorder in her domestic space, suggesting slovenliness; the other projects the curtailed interrogatory phrase — "... y compromise?" — almost certainly, deriving from a question steeped in selfishness, 'Why compromise?'. That truncated question juxtaposed with the image of the slovenly woman triggers contemplation about a link between the unequal distribution of wealth and a state of unhappiness.

The lack of open gates or windows that could facilitate entry represents the lack of welcoming homes — the 'homelessness' — of migrants. It symbolizes the difficulty in gaining access to space. As Neil Smith argues (1993: 106), having access to places is the sign of power in the classist structure of society: 'It is not just that the rich express their freedom by their ability to overcome space while the poor are more likely to be trapped in space; differential access to space leads to differential power in constructing the spatial scale of daily, weekly and seasonal life.' The monotonous trajectory that the photographs project in a cyclic mode, through the departure from Kilburn and the return to it, demonstrates that accessibility to space for geographically displaced subjects like migrants is limited and often repeated within the same confined area.

Rivas's album offers a 'foster home' for the migrants whose spatial movement and access to the social reality of the host country are restrained. It is a space where the comfort of being seen and understood is sought. The same idea is applicable to the postcards that come with the purchase of the book — replicas of the photographs included in the second part — 'Puños de Kilburn', 'Futbolín del Milenio', 'Escalera de Kilburn', 'Camino de Victoria Station', 'Labios de Kilburn', and 'El Faro de Hércules desde Visma (A Coruña)'. The postcards can simply be interpreted as a promotional gift to the readers from the publisher. However, one cannot help but notice how well this gift works to underpin a theme that recurs throughout the book. The inclusion of the postcards is a gesture of invitation to the viewer to participate in extending the album’s moral message — the imaginative sharing of the invisibility and indifference felt by Galician immigrants in London and the consequent practice and request for hospitality — since postcards are meant to be sent out and to share experiences with others. Furthermore, it unifies other ideas explored in the book — the extending of a network of affiliation, founded on the embracing of the other's partiality into one's own body. Postcards are one of the most common souvenirs through which one shares and 'transplants' one's memory to others. As Susan Stewart points out (1993), the souvenir replaces a part for a totality and, in so doing, erodes the boundary between authenticity and imagination of memory:

The photograph of the Trellick Tower (the only city landmark included in Rivas's album) further explores the question of the hospitable/inhospitable, that of home and homelessness, centring on the problem of housing since it represents the place reserved for a group of economically underprivileged people by a public housing project, later transformed into an icon of wealth. Many of the units were privatized under Margaret Thatcher's controversial and highly successful 'Right-to-buy' policy. Council house tenants were given the opportunity to purchase the public housing in which they lived on extremely favourable terms. The idea was to empower working-class voters, and turn them into homeowners. The policy proved popular, particularly when these new homeowners sold their homes at a large profit in central locations. Previously run-down areas suddenly became extremely expensive, yuppified zones, that only the most affluent could afford — a betrayal of the declared intent behind Thatcher's original policy.

Unlike the book, two of the photographs are coloured: 'Futbolín del Milenio' and 'Camino de Victoria Station'. I do not think this suggests any critical difference in content.
The substituting power of the souvenir operates within the following analogy: as experience is to an imagined point of authenticity, so narrative is to the souvenir. The souvenir displaces the point of authenticity as it itself becomes the point of origin for narrative. Such a narrative cannot be generalized to encompass the experience of anyone; it pertains only to the possessor of the object. It is a narrative which seeks to reconcile the disparity between interiority and exteriority, subject and object, signifier and signified. (Stewart 1993: 136–37)

In other words, like transplants, souvenirs, a partial double, challenge the authenticity and purity of a totality.

The book's front cover adds a metafictional quality to the reader’s experience. It is in the form of an airmail envelope with a stamp on, transforming the book into a letter posted by an unknown sender. The picture of a ship on the stamp alludes to the story of a shipwreck in the book. Although cigarette burn marks on the book cover simulate that the letter/book has been preserved for a while, the undated stamp disregards a temporal frame. The name of the author and the title of the book are positioned tactfully to turn the author into the addressee who is then assumed to have gathered and transcribed someone else’s stories in his book. In turn, Rivas becomes the transmitter and ‘transplanter’ of memory rather than an authentic storyteller. This narrative strategy plays with the book’s principal idea of transplantation since it blocks a rigid sense of ownership. Like Castro’s transplanted hand and the postcards, Rivas renders himself a partial component of an entire book.

Both the narration and the photographs in La mano del emigrante exploit the idea of transplantation to explain what it means to be a migrant subject as well as explaining a ‘Galicianness’ based on being displaced everywhere on the globe. Transplantation in a rhetorical sense, as Rivas draws on it, points to a transformation of the self into a flexible, transferable and performative entity rather than a pure, essential state of being. At the same time, it seeks to incorporate the other into one’s body, not as a mode of recovering the completeness of the body but with the clear intent of sharing. Rivas draws on transplantation as a metaphor of displacement, migrancy and an encouragement of hospitality. Thus, the author never seeks a completeness or totality but, rather, makes repeated efforts to inscribe multiple partialities that are related in one way or another. The voice of the narrator fuses with the tattooed hand that observes the surroundings, as if it had an eye, creating a deliberate confusion about whose vision is narrated. An invitation to experience migrant life in London is extended to the readers through the six postcards made of the photographs that form part of the album. Ultimately, La mano del emigrante ‘fosters’ the reader to reflect on its message that relating — connecting as well as telling — the detached partialities constitutes a memory act and is an ethical position one needs to assume.

WORKS CITED

En este artículo, estudio la construcción de la identidad gallega de Manuel Rivas a través del análisis de su La mano del emigrante. Primero, discuto cómo Rivas establece como un apego cultural común entre los gallegos la imposibilidad de fundar su identidad en un sentido de pertinencia geográfico. Para ilustrar este punto, Rivas reconstruye la vida de los emigrantes gallegos en Londres y los marineros naufragos en vez de escribir sobre los que nunca han abandonado su tierra natal. Además, muestro cómo Rivas incluye una consideración ética en su teorización de la identidad gallega: él propone recordar a los gallegos que murieron fuera de Galicia como una obligación moral de los supervivientes a través de una alegoría del trasplante. Para desmantelar los modos en que Rivas visiona la diferencia cultural gallega, examino la relación entre el primer cuento del libro y el álbum de veinticuatro fotos que refleja el cuento. En particular, estudio las fotos que destapan el sentimiento de invisibilidad social hacia los emigrantes gallegos y la función de las tarjetas postales incluidas en el libro. Interrogo también cómo la noción del trasplante sirve para explicar el desplazamiento de los emigrantes gallegos y la necesidad de hospitalidad hacia los desplazados.