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Narrating the Galician Diaspora: Lino Novás Calvo's "Un encuentro singular"

DAVID B. HOOPES

The short story "Un encuentro singular" (1932) by Lino Novás Calvo tells the tale of Carlos, a Galician-born Cuban who returns to Spain after twenty years in America. Specifically, the story presents the protagonist as he flees his ancestral home beneath the cover of night, too much haunted by the ghostly memories of his childhood in Galicia. Early in the narration, just as he is leaving the city behind him, he reflects: "A mi regreso a la aldea volví a oír hablar de las apariciones. Lo había olvidado, lo había negado durante veinte años" (250). Much is revealed about Carlos in this short statement. He reports that upon returning home, he began to hear again about ghosts, a traditional presence in the Galician cultural imaginary.¹ The evocation of the mysterious and magical seems structurally and thematically appropriate here given the later arrival of a character who very much seems to be a ghost. On the other hand, the dichotomy presented between denial and forgetting has a more allusive function. Notice how in the same breath the fleeing narrator says that he had forgotten the ghosts and that he had denied the existence of the ghosts for twenty years. It is the juxtaposition of forgetting and denying –especially denying for twenty years – that results so puzzling. Which is it? Did Carlos forget about the ghosts only later to be reminded of them upon returning to Galicia? Or, on the other hand, had he always remembered the ghosts, remembered insofar as he denied their existence?

This paper argues that the second supposition is accurate, that the specter of Carlos' Galician past has indeed haunted him since his departure from Galicia, despite his attempts to forget. This brief quote from Carlos exemplifies clearly the main theme that I will be tracing in this paper on "Un encuentro singular." That is, the theme of denial as it relates to ethno-cultural identification in the context of the Galician diasporic experience. Nancy Abraham Hall has said that this story is able to "navegar el enorme espacio atlántico y deslindar ese mundo." While she means this quote to reflect the transatlantic ties between Spain and America, I argue that this story narrates the Atlantic in a different way. Using the emerging field of diaspora criticism as well as the critical tools provided by

transatlantic literary analysis, I will argue that Carlos' unsuccessful twenty-year denial, along with other examples of denial from the story, render artistically and critically the identity politics that occur in the making and remaking of diasporic cultures.

Denial is a topos that populates this story in myriad ways, both textually and metatextually. Indeed there are three principal articulations of this sentiment that will be treated in this study: (1) the aforementioned case where the narrator denies his past and refuses to recognize his Galician cultural roots, (2) the denial made manifest when Carlos fails (refuses) to notice the uncanny resemblance between himself and a mysterious horseman who accompanies him out of town and (3) the very mysterious case of a prologue written by the very Lino Novás Calvo in 1970 to accompany the reprint of "Un encuentro singular" wherein the author warns against a biographical reading of the story. In this prologue, Novás Calvo denies that there is any resemblance between him and the principal character in the story. These three sites of denial, analyzed in what follows, will be the basis for a theory of the Galician diaspora that places ambivalence, hybridity and uncertainty concerning cultural identity at the heart of what it is to be Galician in the twentieth century.

To understand both the context of the protagonist and that of the author it is important to recognize the extent to which emigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century affected Galician culture. Although exact figures are not available, there are many studies that allow an approximation of what Galician emigration looked like in the first half of the twentieth century, the time when Novás Calvo and his protagonist Carlos immigrated to America. Between the years 1901 and 1930 over one-million Galicians crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life in America, a figure that accounts for over 40 percent of the total number of Spanish emigrants who left the Peninsula for the new world in the same time period (Eiras Roel 249). While many other regions of Spain were in the throes of a booming period of modernization in the early twentieth century, "prosperity did not reach the subsistent farmers of Galicia . . . whose only escape from the grinding poverty, as in Eastern Europe and Ireland, was emigration to the New World . . ." (Carr 237). This mass-Galician migration changed the country's cultural and literary landscape in significant ways. Novás Calvo is only one of a multitude of Galician writers who have attempted to represent in literature a crisis that has pervaded the entire Galician culture.

Novás Calvo was born in 1905 in the small Galician village of Grañas del Sor. At the age of 7 his mother sent him along with an uncle to La Coruña where he would embark for Cuba. This period of emigration that surround Novás Calvo's exodus is especially significant when one takes into account that during the previous 60 years only 600,000 Galicians had left for America (Eiras Roel 248). We can conclude therefore that in the first half of the twentieth century Galician emigration roughly doubled in volume. Another interesting characteristic of this period is that around half of all Galicians who left for America later returned home. Again, this general historical model is applicable to Novás Calvo's specific experience (and the experience of Carlos, his protagonist). In 1931, at the age of 25, Novás Calvo returned to Galicia as a correspondent for the Cuban literary journal *Orbe*. He arrived in La Coruña, the exact place of departure years earlier, and remained in Galicia for two weeks after which time he left the region for Madrid. Right about this time he wrote "Un encuentro singular" and published it in *La gaceta literaria*. The reader is correct if they notice the striking similarity between the life of Novás Calvo and that of his protagonist, Carlos. This similarity, along with the denial of it by the author, is one of our sites of denial and will be discussed further on.

The component aspects of diaspora are important for understanding the ways in which diasporic cultures operate. While it is problematic to apply to diaspora any fixed definition for the obvious reason that any typology of such a multiform social phenomenon could result either too limiting or too all encompassing, subsequently stripping the term of its analytical utility, it is important for this study to clarify its terms. In his 2003 book, *Diaspora Politics*, Gabriel Sheffer crystallizes his theories from the previous twenty years by positing that

an ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in those countries, but to maintain a common identity, diasporans identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. Among their various activities, members of such diasporas establish trans-state networks that reflect complex

relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands, and international actors. (10)

Sheffer's definition is helpful to this study because while it is analytically sound, it does not limit too much the applicability of the term diaspora to social phenomena that indeed pertain to this category. If we analyze the activities of Galician emigrants abroad, it is clear that, instead of adopting the cultural traits of their host countries, they formulated and supported a vibrant and active diaspora. The founding of numerous Galician societies in many Latin American nations, the remittances sent home from Galicians abroad, the publication of journals and newspaper in the Galician language and the movement between homeland and host country are all testaments to the presence and longevity of the Galician diaspora.

While Sheffer's model of diaspora is useful for, if nothing else, helping one recognize diasporic social formations, it has come under poignant attack from the work of thinkers such as Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Korbena Mercer. This group (not a group in sense of collective) has criticized Sheffer's view of diaspora for its dependence on the duality of territory between homeland and host nation. They also view Sheffer's focus on diasporan's "solidarity" with their homeland as problematic. For these more poststructuralist thinkers, the facile binary between homeland and host country does not represent accurately the complexities that are involved in the production/evolution of diaspora. Paul Gilroy disavows the necessity or even the existence of a homeland or any origination territory in his 1993 book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Similarly, Stuart Hall identifies diaspora not by its physical location or social solidarities but rather by its psychical manifestations and iterations. He sees diaspora not as a fixed entity to be analyzed or located but rather as the negotiation of cultural identity in a zone of non-fixed spatial and psychological borders. In his article, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall posits that:

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (235)

For the purposes of this paper, we will adopt an understanding of diaspora that is, perhaps, a mixture of these two schools of thought. Along with Gilroy and Hall, diaspora will be considered a multi-nodal network of people who share in a common (although never fixed) culture. More in line with Sheffer, however, the Galicians who reside in multiple host territories, in this case Cuba and Galicia, will be understood as participating in the production and maintenance of the Galician diaspora. So while a Galician cultural identity may never be understood as a finished project, we are able to locate spatially the scenes of these attempts at articulation.

At first glance Carlos' denial of his Galician past, as discussed above, would seem to contradict what it means to pertain to a cultural entity termed the Galician diaspora. Indeed under Sheffer's criteria, Carlos would not be considered part of this group, for in denying his connection to Galicia he breaks the requisite emotional and economic solidarity with the homeland. However, reading Carlos' denial as a twenty-year negotiation of identity ("lo había negado durante veinte años") allows for a reading of Carlos that, according to Hall, would align him with a different notion of diaspora where transformation, difference and hybridity define his social experience.

Carlos himself defines his migrant experience as a life of denial. Specifically, he views the last twenty years of his life, every moment since he left for America, as a moment saturated with, in his words, "negación." "Un encuentro singular" begins *in medias res* with Carlos already on the road out of town. He comments that the mountain behind him feels as though it is weighing down his back and he then relates how as a boy his family had sent him to Cuba. Following this revelation Carlos states: "Entonces comenzó en mí esa vida de negaciones que no les voy a referir a ustedes. Lo cito porque en esta nueva fuga juega una parte principal desde la sombra" (249). Each sentence in this story is layered with double meanings and ironies. For example, while Carlos begins by saying that he will not speak of his *vida de negaciones*, the story is a veritable treatise on the very act of denying. What is more, Carlos is completely aware of this fact for he states that denial plays a large role in the *nueva fuga* and the story "Un encuentro singular" is nothing less than the representation of Carlos' latest flight. Again, early on in the story, Carlos references the way in which he has always rebelled against what he terms "lo que soy" and what we may understand as a person caught between two cultures. He states that "[e]sta insistencia a rebelarme siempre contra lo que soy, a no

querer ser nunca lo que soy, me ha conducido siempre a muy funestos resultados” (252). Although these disastrous results (*resultados funestos*) are never revealed to the reader, one could imagine that they reference the way in which Carlos’ rebellion against his identity has been, to say the least, a constant and difficult struggle. Together, these various moments where Carlos denies his past or rebels against it paint for the reader a picture of a subject torn between two realities. The fleeing man can neither escape his past nor accept it. Indeed it appears that his escape from his native village is only the latest in a series of attempts to avoid coming to terms with his cultural heritage.

As mentioned above, the second instance of denial occurs when Carlos is joined on the road out of town by a lone horseman who is, as it so happens, also a Galician-born Cuban who has recently returned to Galicia and is now fleeing his homeland. Raymond Souza explains that this scenario was common to Novás Calvos’ early fiction. Specifically, Souza discusses the theme of the chase as a favorite frame for Novas Calvo to structure his early stories. He writes:

The chase may take place as an actual event or it may be presented in psychological terms when a character feels or senses he is being pursued. In some of his works, the characters are hunted by external forces they cannot control, but in others they become the victims of a distorted reality fabricated by their own fears and terrors. (227)

This theme of the chase is very present in the interaction between the horseman and Carlos. After their initial meeting, the story progresses and the two men begin to talk and find themselves in an all but empty tavern sharing a jug of wine. Soon, the reader begins to suspect that Rafael, the man who was on horseback, is in reality not a living breathing person but rather the ghostly double of the fleeing Carlos. Again we see the way that this story shares many themes with other early writings from the author where characters are pursued not physically but psychologically by figments of their distorted reality. What is perhaps most intriguing in the exchange is the fact that Carlos never makes this connection himself. Indeed the reader suspects that there is no real Rafael but Carlos is seemingly never bothered by the eerie similarity between himself and the mysterious horseman.

The rider appears very early in the story just as Carlos has passed by a grave digger, silently working through the night, and has

revealed that he still feels haunted by the *apariciones* of Galicia, mentioned above. The gravedigger's exploration of bowels of the earth and the evocation of ghosts thematically prefigure the arrival of spectral horseman who will cause Carlos to figuratively explore the depths of his own person. Suddenly, while Carlos is idly remembering his home town that he has just left, he states that "[p]or una de esas lombrices de caminillos que salen por una muesca a la carretera, ha salido un jinete que, en la sombra, me parece muy voluminoso" (251). Although in the next breath Carlos realizes that his eyes had played a trick on him, making the horseman only seem larger than is normal, the jarring effect has been achieved both in the reader and in Carlos. Rafael arrives as would a ghost, looming from a shadow, when least expected and in the middle of a thematically unrelated paragraph. Rafael comes up alongside Carlos and says that the night is dark: "negra noche, ¿eh?" (251). Carlos does not respond. Next, Rafael, contemplating the night, states that "[l]os niños cogen estos gusanos de luz y los deshacen para ver lo que tienen dentro" (251). While Carlos is not able to comprehend this statement and dismisses it by saying that the rider is "hablando de cosas sin sentido ni relación" (251), the reader might recognize in the horseman's opaque reference to the disemboweling of the fireflies another reference to interiority that, in turn, alludes to the way that Carlos will have to come to terms with what he carries inside him. At this point, the second site of denial begins.

When Rafael asks Carlos how long he has lived in the area, the latter lies, responding that he has spent much time there, indeed that he is from there. With this statement, Carlos effectively denies the Cuban aspect of his identity. This is an ironic twist in the story because up to this point Carlos has vehemently denied any cultural connection to Galicia. At this moment then, Carlos becomes a character torn between multiple cultural associations, a subject whose identity is very much in crisis. The result, for this narrative, is that Carlos' denial becomes not so much an outright rejection of cultural heritage but really the negotiation of it, that is, each rejection is accompanied by an unconscious association. Carlos has both rejected outright his Galician heritage and he has hidden his Cuban background. Indeed the diasporic subject pertains neither to the culture of the host land nor to that of the home country. Cultural identity for the diasporan is a process that realizes itself through shifting loyalties and temporary alliances, through a constant negotiation (negation) of identity.

As the pair continues down the road out of town, Rafael begins to share his life story with his new companion. It is significant that

while we know relatively little about Carlos, we learn that Rafael has left Cuba for political reasons and is only returning home as a way of avoiding the troubled island nation. Upon arrival, his mother welcomes him with open arms, calling him by the name that he left behind the day he left Galicia, Cosme. She feeds him, offers him the only bed in the house, makes plans for their financial future and begins to contemplate which of the available village girls he should marry. All this occurs within a day. When over the next few days Rafael feels that he can no longer pretend to be interested in village life (he is, after all, an educated writer with a wife in Cuba) he steals his mother's savings and flees. His hope is that his mother will think that he was not really her lost son Cosme but rather an opportunistic *indiano* playing off the emotions of the heartsick mother. Rafael reveals all of this to Carlos while they sit in the tavern. Despite the revelation of Rafael's past, the characters resemble each other to a shocking degree.

Carlos first notices something strange in the horseman when the latter lights a cigarette and reveals for a brief moment the features of his face. Carlos thinks: "Era un rostro pálido que yo había visto en alguna parte" (252). While this first moment of recognition only supposes a possible social connection between the fleeing man and the rider, later, upon their arrival to the tavern, the association between the two characters is expanded and problematized. As they sit to share a jug of wine Carlos reflects internally that looking at Rafael "[e]ra como si lo hubiera visto en un espejo" (254). Next, during their conversation together, Carlos realizes that their voices, his and Rafael's, "tenían una tan semejanza en el tono, que el diálogo hubiera parecido desde afuera un soliloquio" (257). While this physical resemblance is uncanny, the circumstances that have brought these two together are even more fantastic. Carlos realizes that Rafael is also a Galician-born Cuban who has also recently returned from Cuba and who is also fleeing his home town beneath the cover of night. Another similarity that will be explored later is that both men are writers although Carlos never reveals this fact to Rafael.

As if these biographical and circumstantial similarities were not enough to establish a ghostly analogy between the traveler(s), there is one more level of connection: the narrative. In the opening paragraph of the story Carlos reveals, in a way, his reasons for fleeing his recently arrived to town. "Salí de nuevo por temor a que su laguna me absorbiera. Iba sintiendo que mis pies se hundían en la niñez, que mi ser ahondaba en algo que llegaría a cubrir muy pronto mis veinte años de pugna interior contra la aldea" (249). This

passage is telling for it once again references the idea that the past is a space that must be excavated, dug up or turned inside out in order to be interpreted. The imagery is not unlike the scene in the graveyard that follows, or the image of the gutted firefly. However, Carlos has no desire to explore the depths of his past and the most that is ever revealed to the reader about Carlos is what we learn by way of his association with Rafael. For example, near the end of the story, when the pair is about to part ways, the most eerie similarity yet is revealed. Rafael, agitated at this point and pacing the floor of the tavern, relates to Carlos: “*Siento que la aldea se iba ablandando bajo mis pies: que mis pies se hundían en la niñez, que mi ser ahondaba, por minutos, en algo que llegaría a cubrir muy pronto mis veintitantos años de pugna interior contra la aldea*” (261).² The similarity between these two passages, and the fact that the latter is represented in italics, makes it clear that the reader is intended to recognize the repetition. However, Carlos does not seem to be bothered by the fact that Rafael is narrating back to him his very thoughts from earlier in the evening.

At this point in the story the reader suspects strongly that Rafael is merely a ghostly reflection of Carlos, the manifestation of all of the fears and anxiety that he has been experiencing since his arrival back home. Raymond Souza says of the scene: “The inner tension created by Carlos’s return results in a separation of the self into subjective and objective entities” (22). However, while the reader works through this split, it is never explored by Carlos. He never recognizes that Rafael is a fantasy and blindly accepts that Rafael is real. Within this context, the fantastic element of this story emerges. We will remember that Todorov describes the fantastic in literature as the subtle appearance of a supernatural phenomenon in a work that creates a sense of confusion about whether the happening is real or not. Indeed this is the effect of “Un encuentro singular”. While Carlos accepts the supernatural as natural, the reader is left to wonder if what occurred was real or, on the other hand, an experience of the supernatural. Much like Gilroy and Hall’s definition of diaspora, the fantastic operates through ambiguity and uncertainty. While the story creates a sense of vertigo for the reader as they try to distinguish between the solid spaces of reality and the mythical spaces of the fantastic, Carlos remains unaffected. His diasporic experience – the shifting between one physical space and another and between unfixed cultural allegiances – is reflected through the fantastic element of the story where neither Carlos nor

Rafael seem entirely real and Carlos never truly identifies himself as either Galician or Cuban. Carlos and Rafael are, in effect, one man represented by two subjects; they are the product of the cultural hybridity that is inherent in diasporic cultures. Again, Souza: “This emotional disorientation, which in this story is associated with a lack of roots, is a motif that appears in many of Novás Calvo’s stories” (22). While Souza’s observation is correct insofar as the trauma has to do with roots, it might be better in the case of Carlos to refer not to the lack of but rather to the proliferation of roots and routes that have affected Carlos and that define his diasporic experience.

The third annunciation of denial that occurs in “Un encuentro singular” is certainly the most difficult to tend to critically. Here it is important to remember that after being published in *La gaceta literaria* in 1931, “Un encuentro singular” was forgotten by the author and by fans and critics until its discovery by Dr. Raymond Souza some thirty years later in archives in Madrid. The story was then published in *Maneras de contar* in 1970 and was given a prologue by Novás Calvo. This prologue is the third site of denial where the writer states explicitly that readers of the story should not look for autobiographical elements in the narrative. Although when read in tandem with the story the prologue appears to be an ironic metatextual commentary that plays off of the dominant themes of the story, it is clear that Novás Calvo did not intend for his foreword to have this effect. Indeed, Novás Calvo wholeheartedly denies the biographical connection between himself and the story and even states that he remembers having been told the story years before he traveled back to Galicia. Criticism has until now completely accepted this prologue without question. Likewise, “Un encuentro singular” has traditionally received very little critical attention. Alberto Gutiérrez de la Solana, in his only mention of the story, writes in his book on Novás Calvo: “[E]l cuento ‘Un encuentro singular’, en que se relatan las reacciones emocionales de un joven que regresa a su pueblo, en Galicia, para ver a su madre después de veinte años de ausencia, no tiene ningún elemento autobiográfico, según afirma Novás Calvo en *Maneras de contar*” (199). Although Novás Calvo’s return to Galicia in 1931 mirrors almost exactly the dramatic action of the story, he tries to distance himself from the protagonist, a move that all too closely resembles the attitude of the protagonist toward the ghostly horseman.

Below, the prologue from 1970 is produced in its entirety.

Un profesor Americano, Raymond Sousa, encontró este cuento, por mí olvidado, en una colección de La Gaceta Literaria. Creo que fue el primero o segundo que escribí en Madrid, recién llegado de Cuba, en 1931. El tema me lo había dado, años antes, en La Habana, un emigrante español. No se trate de hallar, pues, ningún elemento autobiográfico en esta historia. En cuanto a la calidad literaria, creo merecer alguna indulgencia: se trata, efectivamente, de la obra de un principiante. Les gustó, sin embargo, mucho a Félix Lizaso y a Chacón y Calvo. (247)

Although Novás Calvo denies any semblance between his life and the scene depicted in his story, the similarities are clear. Both Carlos and Novás Calvo were sent away from a rural town in Galicia as young boys and both returned twenty years later as writers. The fact that Carlos is a writer in the story and narrates the tale in the first person from a time posterior to the events related further solidifies the eerie resemblance between Novás Calvo and his protagonist. Indeed, Novás Calvo was also the writer who wrote the story in first person some time after leaving his home town for Madrid where he published the story. While we must take into account Novás Calvo's claim that the story is not autobiographical, we are under no obligation to treat it as something separate from the story proper. In fact, this prologue contains many literary elements that add to the richness of the story and the depth of our interpretation of it.

In the first case, the opening sentence of the prologue contains very strong resonances of a classic literary trope, namely, the theme of the found text or *el manuscrito hallado*. From *Don Quixote* to *Pepita Jimenez* and including *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, the theme of the found text has served to complicate and enrich narrative fiction. In this case the effect is the same. The narrator (not to be confused with Novás Calvo now that the prologue is being treated as part of the narrative) first states that the text was found by a prestigious academic (note also that Souza's name is misspelled in Novás Calvo's text as *Sousa*). Later, he adds that the inspiration for the tale came in the form a story told him in Havana by a nameless immigrant. The avid reader will not be surprised by this triple distancing by the narrator. The realist technique serves to complicate the origins of the text to the point where authorial power is dissolved and the story stands alone not as a work of fiction but as a cultural document. While the theme of the *manuscrito hallado* in the prologue indeed aligns it to fiction, perhaps it is the denial of the biographical aspect of the story that most links this first section to the story proper.

In a move that Novás Calvo perhaps unwittingly made, he has aligned himself almost perfectly with his narrator, Carlos. Carlos is a Galician-born Cuban writer who denies that his mysterious double is a reflection of him. Novás Calvo is likewise a Galician-born Cuban writer who denies that his double, in this case Carlos, bears any likeness to him. One must wonder whether or not Novás Calvo was being ironic in making such a move. The prologue works so well as literature that it is surprising that critics have never pointed it out. Whenever the prologue is mentioned, it is never included as a new layer to the fictional dimension of the tale. In fact, no one has ever mentioned to what an extreme extent the prologue complicates and enriches the story as a whole.

When the prologue is included in the narrative frame, this third site of denial becomes eerily representative the way that the diaspora is constructed and reiterated within and against cultural associations. While the author denies his Galician allegiance, others have accepted and explored this cultural affiliation. Lorraine Elena Roses writes in her *Voices of the Storyteller: Cuba's Lino Novás Calvo* of the author's return to his homeland and states that "[t]he renewed tie to Galicia suggests that Novás Calvo's inclination to motifs of sadness and the supernatural may be linked to his Galician heritage" (13). Indeed, Novás Calvo himself has discussed in another context the extent to which his cultural heritage has affected him as a man and writer. In a letter the American writer Sherwood Anderson Novás Calvo writes: "[Y]o también soy un 'small town man,' y por tanto, tienen que gustarme sus escritos, su *Winesburg, Ohio* – que he elevado espiritualmente a la categoría de mi biblia privada . . . En mi vida de emigrante, guardo esos preciosos regalos como consuelo de aquella, ya perdida para siempre vida de aldea."³ In this brief statement the author reveals that his past is still with him to the extent that his tastes are formulated largely by his self identification as a Galician 'small-town man.'

Novás Calvo's denial of the autobiographical in his prologue, along with the other two sites of denial explored herein, are significant examples of how the diasporic subject can be represented critically in literature. Historically, Galician writers and writers of Galician descent have represented Galicia's turn-of-the-century mass emigration in much more material terms, relying on realist and often naturalist narrative techniques. These stories will often focus either on the harsh economic hardships of local Galicians who are forced to leave their homelands for America or on the stories of those migrant workers who return to Galicia, broken by their experiences abroad. However, "Un encuentro singular" is not a simple

recounting of Carlos' return home to Galicia and his subsequent distress upon arrival. Rather, Novás Calvo writes the Galician experience through the exploration of the psychological crisis incurred by the Galician diasporan. Novás Calvo (and Carlos) is marked by diaspora, by that condition that forces his identity and that of some of his characters to be only and always a negotiation of identity and never a realized whole. Because diasporic identities are defined by their shifting and temporary loyalties, it becomes clear that with each denial on the part either Novás Calvo or Carlos, there is a simultaneous alliance formed with another group. When Novás Calvo alludes to his Galician past in his letter to Sherwood Anderson, he is effectively denying his Cuban past. However, when the author denies the fact that Carlos resembles him, he is, paradoxically, denying his Galician past. Likewise, Carlos is represented by two subjects: one who openly accepts his mixed Galician and Cuban roots (Rafael) and one who obfuscates his Cuban side (Carlos). While it is so hard to locate diaspora in writing because of its understandable unstable manifestations, this is a story that truly renders artistically and critically the way that cultural identity is articulated and then reworked in diasporic cultures.

NOTES

¹ For more information on Galicia and the supernatural, see Luis Moure Mariño's "La Galicia prodigiosa: las ánimas, las brujas, el demonio" (Santiago de Compostela: Galicia Editorial, 1992).

² Citation appears in italics in the original publication.

³ This letter is reproduced in Arnold Chapman, "The Spanish American Reception of United States Fiction, 1920-1940" (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 175-80.

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