

pataca” [Tear of the Potato] is the best example of the new hybridity in Galician music as Xoán “achégase as posibilidades dos obxectos do cotiás como instrumentos válidos para a música. Curiel investiga nas sonoridades das copas, das tixolas, coitelos, potas, táboa de lavar, pucheiros para concibir con elas esta oda a pataca [approaches the possibilities of everyday objects as valid instruments for music. Curiel investigates the sonority of glasses, pans, knives, pots, washing board, stockpots to conceive through them this ode to the potato]” (M.B. 38). The incorporation of all of these cookware utensils gives this short poem, written by Antía Otero, a contagious rhythm as it places the action within a typical female space: the kitchen. The potato cries, thus the song’s title, as a non-identified subject peels it. The personification of the potato gives new meaning to the tuber: “Pela as patacas do mesmo xeito / que se arrincaría pel dos dedos [Peels the potatoes in the same way / that skin would be pulled of fingers]” and the sound of a sharp knife cutting through the air offers a “visual” and auditory image that co-relates to the lyrics (Otero and Curiel “Bágoa de Pataca”). The use of the conjugated third person of verb “pelar” [to peel] “[él/ella] pela” [he/she peels] does not identify a subject and provides ambiguity to the scene; that is, it is impossible to know the gender of the one that peels the potato.

Nevertheless, being an ode to the potato, the idea of a man peeling potatoes can be a metaphor of inflicting pain to a female body that continues through the images of a “baldosa que esvara / a mente perdida / aceite que ferve / tixola de lúa [slippery floor tile / lost mind / oil that boils / pan of the moon] (Otero and Curiel “Bágoa de Pataca”). On the other hand, if the woman would be the one peeling the potato, then the message of the song is one of rage and anger that points toward a sense of agency within a feminine space (and against the male, like in *Non volvas* by Suso de Toro). The fact that this particular song (and poem), with a very strong criticism to gender abuse, is followed by the intervention in Portuguese of the Brazilian poet Gisneide Nunes Ervedosa and her “A face feminine de deus” [The Feminine Face of God], where the poetic voice “prays” to a feminine God (represented by nature and Mother Earth), once again, empowers the female figure. While the entire album maintains the metaphor of Mother Earth as symbol of womanhood, procreation, and protection, reinforcing the undoubted connection to Galicia as *Terra Nai*, the diverse musical influences allow us to discover a Galician universe within a wider global space. Likewise, in the song “Nai” Xoán adopts a feminine voice “Eu son nai, son terra Edún / Só demando o amor / Para alguen dentro de min / Que só quere ser feliz [I am mother, I am Earth Edún / I only ask for love / for someone inside me / that only wants to be happy]” that is not specific to Galicia. This song offers “unha visión do mundo na que a protección do medio natural e a mudanza de determinados sistemas de valores preséntanse como fundamentais [a view of the world in which the protection of the natural environment and the change of specific value systems are presented as fundamental],” incorporating this musical production into a global discourse on human rights, environmental issues, and more (M.B. 38). In this sense, this mother-

earth gives “sangue quente para os teus pés [warm blood for your feet]” that will nurture the soil as she claims: “son nai, deusa, don e dor / son sostén e son tesón / o teu manto cor marrón / son semente, lar, paixón [I am mother, goddess, gift and pain / I am support and I am tenacity / your brown cover / I am seed, home, passion]” (Curiel “Nai”).

Xoán Curiel not only crosses the borders of gender by giving voice to the feminine but also recovers the image of sailing without direction (like in Luar na Lubre’s song “Nau”), and conjures earth’s ghost as she has her “ollo aberto, man mirando / onde van as soidades / onde medran as saudades / late o río a cantramán-e [open eye, looking hand / where loneliness goes / where *saudades* grow / the river beats in the wrong direction]” (Curiel “Nai”). The image of sailing in the wrong direction through a river represents the struggle against external forces to protect the land, but this is a Galician land inhabited by solitude and *saudade*. While the album is “the result of a process that comes from listening to rhythms and sounds from all around the world (Galician, Arabic, Saharan, Afro-Brazilian . . .),” emphasizing the global influence of music, it is also a local product, and undoubtedly has a Galician feeling (www.xoancuriel.com). From the very beginning, the album is centered on the cycle of life, and the entire production is wrapped in the natural elements (wind, water, land and fire) that are interconnected with his Galician homeland. While the first song in the album is entitled “Orixe” [Origin], and the last song, “Fonte Sagrada” [Sacred Fountain], suggests a return to that origin since the town of Fonsagrada is Xoán’s birthplace. Xoán Curiel’s is the most polyphonic and versatile of all the artists already mentioned since he clearly trespasses all possible borders between musical rhythms, instruments, places, people, and cultures and even gender to offer a musical style that eludes identification and localization. This “glocal” characteristic of Xoán’s work shows a new direction of Galician music, perhaps in a bolder way than any other group or artist, placing the new Galician music at the margins of traditional folk music but in virtual spaces with access to wider audiences.¹⁴

Genre Hybridity: Music and Literature as Windows into *Galeguidade*

As we had seen, music has an indisputable role in Galicia’s “glocal” identity. Indeed, such role is doubly emphasized when music finds its way to literature, like in the novel *Peaxes* (2009) by Santiago Lopo. Music then has the power to open up new spaces of cultural representation that focus, on the one hand, on a position of *Galeguidade* that goes beyond the global and the local. On the other hand, the transmigration of culture and music produces a hybridity of literary genres and musical styles that is more in tune with the fast-paced and virtual present times. In his first novel *Game Over* (2006), which won the VI Premio de Novela por Entregas *La Voz de Galicia* [6th Novel in Installments Award by *La Voz de Galicia*], Lopo explores

the virtual world of video games, of fast images and the engagement and interaction of gamers, as well as their detachment from reality. Although *Peaxes* seems to be more in touch with reality, because there are no “virtual worlds” involved, it still revolves around the narrator’s assumptions of the lives of others, in a fast-paced world where people drive past the tollbooth where the narrator works. The weaving of fifty-six songs through the narrative has granted Lopo’s novel the description of “Banda sonora da autoestrada” [The Soundtrack of the Highway] (Domínguez Mallo). Certainly, the function of music in this short novel is twofold. First, it provides the reader with a “document” of Galicia’s present day “glocal” society; second, music is intrinsically connected to the characterization of the people who cross the “metaphoric” border between the urban and rural space, between the new and the old.

Central to the function of music in *Peaxes* as “document” of a “glocal” Galician society is, the recognition that contemporary musical preferences “encompass a number of musical styles disseminated through one or more mass media that are produced within capitalist and late-late capitalist modes and that are easily accessible to the public” as Bermudez and Pérez have argued (129). The access to a varied musical repertoire reproduced in the narrator’s notebook points to the rich (and perhaps easy) access to music that people have these days as the result of virtual media. As the narrator attempts to do something constructive during his shift in the toll-road booth—although he has a degree in English philology—he writes down in a notebook his “psychological” analysis of the different (and frequent) travelers that pass through the booth:

trás darlle voltas a primeira semana, crin que sería unha boa idea observar os conductores, analízalos. Os que pasan todos os días prefiren a telepeaxe, é una mágoa porque neses daría reparado facilmente. Aínda así, acadei o meu obxectivo. Os que repiten o itinerario con frecuencia xa me son familiares. (9)

[after thinking about it in the first week, I believed that it would be a good idea to observe the drivers, analyze them. Those that pass through every day prefer E-Zpass, it is a shame because I would have paid attention to those. Nevertheless, I reached my objective. Those that repeat their itinerary frequently are already familiar.]

As if he was a psychologist or counselor, the narrator writes down, in a special blue notebook, everything he sees, listens to, thinks, or interprets of some of these drivers by listening to the music they are playing on their car radios as they approach to pay their toll.¹⁵ The musical structure that plays throughout the novel allows the narrator to interpret the moods of the drivers based on the particular song he gets to hear. In other words, the music he overhears functions as a window through which the narrator “sees” into the lives of the travelers and of Galicia’s everyday life. Each song has special meaning for the narrator in the context of his own interpretation and imagi-

nation. Therefore, the narrative is situated, from the beginning, in a space that confuses reality with fantasy as much as it fuses a wide musical variety.

Furthermore, the distance between the narrator and the other drivers denotes the dehumanized nature of present day relationships created by a fast-paced life in the city. He does not know the identities of these travelers, thus in order to keep his log he is often “obrigado a facer escritura automática, enlace as primeiras ideas que me veñen á cabeza e plásmoas no papel. No me dá tempo a máis, o próximo cliente chegará a enfadarse se non estou áxil. Non podo cometer erros. Non podo trabucarme no cambio. Ningunha moeda debe caer ao asfalto. Á noite, refuxiado na miña casa, repaso as notas e complétoas [forced to write automatically, I tie the first ideas that come to my mind and put them on paper. I do not have time for anything else, the next client will get upset if I am not quick. I cannot make mistakes. I cannot mix the change. Not a single coin should fall on the asphalt. At night, sheltered at home, I go over the notes and complete them]” (10). The booth operator’s peripheral condition is obvious as he is ignored by most of the drivers, yet he finds a way (through his observations) to claim his own space within the society he is a part of by showing the reader the make-up of his society and culture. Nevertheless, his peripheral condition is reiterated by the narrator’s social comment on issues like “underemployment” and the fact that although he finished his bachelor’s degree in English fifteen years back and that he also speaks French “pero aquí me tedes, cobrando na autoestrada” [here I am, collecting the fee in the highway] (13). Chambers proposes that world music “offer[s] a space for musical and cultural differences to emerge in such a manner that any obvious identification with the hegemonic order, or assumed monolithic market logic, is weakened and disrupted by the shifting, contingent contacts of musical and cultural encounters” (79). Galicia’s present day society is described mostly as urban (everybody is going to the city and driving cars). It is a plurilingual culture as the songs the drivers listen to are in different languages like English, French, Catalan, Spanish, and Galician (including a song by Narf). This is a society with access to modern communications like Internet, film, radio, etc., and it is a society where the “musical and cultural encounters” provide a space for identification and de-identification. At times, the narrator admits to not having a broad musical knowledge, but he is not bothered because he has access to Internet, and to the information it provides him. For example, the narrator comments on not knowing the song he overhears in female Matiz’s radio, but he memorized the song’s refrain and will look it up on the Internet later (12). In all truth, Lopo’s is not a “light” novel. On the contrary, he is offering a representation of present day fast-paced lives where there is not much time to establish tight personal connections because everybody is in a hurry: “Non teño moito tempo de seguir matinando nas andanzas de Grand Cherokee, porque acaban de aparecer Matiz e Golfiña en paralelo. Matiz optou por que lle cobre eu e a impaciente de Golfiña escolleu a cabiña veciña, será condenada! [I do not have that much time to keep thinking about Grand Cherokee’s adventures, because Matiz and

Golfiña have appeared side-by-side. Matiz decided that I would be the one to charge her, and impatient Golfiña chose the neighboring booth. Damn her!]" (12). The novel also offers some insights into other social issues like immigration as the narrator "realizes" that the passengers in a very banged and rusty car listening to Tiken Jah Fakoly's reggae ("Le pays va mal") are from Africa and comments that "[o]s que atravesan o mar para chegaren ata nós non pertencen a ningunha tripulación mitolóxica, aínda que sofren probas que espantarían a calquera héroe clásico [those that cross the sea to come to us do not belong to any mythological crew, although they suffer from tests that would scare any classical hero]" (40). His view on emigration seems ironic and stereotypical when he says that the reggae perhaps eases the immigrants' nostalgia of "Mamá Africa" and how their exhaust pipe "exhala unha densa bafarada de fume negro, negrísimo [exhales a dense puff of black smoke, very black]" (40). Nevertheless, he recognizes that their migration drama is more of "[unha] traxedia africana, negra como a alma de moitos brancos [an African tragedy, black as the soul of many white people]" (41). In this sense, then music functions as a tool to establish in-group/out-group dynamics by positioning Galicia as the hegemonic power and the African immigrants are the "other."

This "otherness" turns inward, as Lopo explores two other topics in regards to Galicia's culture: the presence of other Spaniards (non-Galicians) and issues of bilingualism. The first one is represented in a very significant scene when a couple listening to R.E.M.'s "Shiny Happy People," arrives at the booth and makes negative comments about Galicia:

—*Qué frío tienen ustedes por aquí, parece Madrid—di o home—. A este paso vamos a tener que vender el apartamento que acabamos de comprar en su región e irnos al de Benidorm. Allí por lo menos, tienen más sol y campos de golf.*

Sorrió cortesmente e doulle o ticket.

—Boa viaxe.

—*Ay qué maja, Francisco, nos lo ha dicho en gallego.* (32)¹⁶

—*It is so cold here; it feels like Madrid—says the man—. At this rate, we are going to have to sell the apartment that we just bought here in your region and go to the one in Benidorm. At least there, they have more sun and golf courses.*

He smiled courteously and gave him the ticket.

—Have a good trip.

—*Oh, how nice, Francisco, he just said it in Galician.*

The narrator's reaction to this "conversation" is a subtle comment on a "colonizer/colonized" relationship between Spain and Galicia: "Eu sei que para el as siglas R.E.M. evocan algo diferente, simbolizan a rede de emisoras dunha época amada [I know that for him the acronym R.E.M. evokes something different, they symbolize the network of radio stations of a beloved time]," not the group's name (32).¹⁷ In other words, the narrator interprets both the man's negative view of Galicia and the woman's exoti-

cized view of the region as a form of discrimination (he is now the "other" in relationship to Spain). However, he turns to irony and *retranca* by making a "parodical" comment through reference to the song "L'home light" by La Trinca and to repeat the name of their famous social and political comedy show on the Catalan television "Non passa res" [Nothing Happens], which was an anti-political, anti-Spanish TV show in the mid-1980s.¹⁸ In her analysis of Manuel Rivas's oeuvre, Isabel Castro Vázquez defines *retranca* as an ambiguous humoristic device that allows the one that uses it to say something to against the hegemonic system but without direct confrontation. In essence, it is a game of double meanings, but usually by putting himself (or herself) down in relation to the one with power. Castro-Vázquez says that *retranca* implies self-control as a form of "acción defensiva y desbocada al mismo tiempo que una represiva y de freno. Es una forma arraigada (tan arraigada como que ha adquirido nombre propio) de auto-expresión evitando la confrontación que tan complicado pero tan necesario es en situaciones coloniales y de contacto con otras culturas [defensive and untamed action but also a repressive and stopped one. It is a rooted form (so rooted that it has received its own name) of auto-expression preventing confrontation that is so complicated as much as necessary in colonial situations and in contact with other cultures]" (42). By recurring to *retranca* the narrator positions himself "under" hegemonic power.

Likewise, the narrator has a very interesting position on language debates in Galicia. On the one hand, he seems to have a very open mind when it comes to the languages of music or even to the fact that he knows several languages; and on the other, he seems to reject bilingualism (Galician-Castilian). When one driver greets him in Castilian and asks him how much they charge in "A Coruña," instead of just "Coruña" which would be normal to do when using Castilian, the narrator reacts with sarcasm: "Dixo 'A Coruña'? Increíble, isto é auténtico milagre. Respóndolle e súbolle a barreira abraído, deixando escapar unha peza única, a rara avis da autoestrada [Did he say 'A Coruña'? Incredible, this is an authentic miracle. I answered him and lifted the gate astonished, letting escape a rare piece, a *strange bird* of the highway]" (24). All of these examples clearly show that the novel is much more than just a simple telling of what the narrator sees or thinks. Indeed, Lopo offers the reader a true reflection of Galicia's contemporary society by offering reflections on social issues that are not only relevant to the social and cultural context but also emphasize the hybrid nature of the novel and of *Galegidade*.

This novel is not a biographical text, although the reader has access to the protagonist's inner thoughts. It is not a diary since the narrator writes down everything, not about himself, but about the "lives" or what he thinks might be the lives of others. It is not a musical catalog, although the narrative is contextualized through the musical references. This hybridity allows Lopo to use music as a tool for characterization to describe the personalities as well as the emotions and specific moments in the lives of the drivers because "a música forma parte de nós memos, desvela o noso estado de áni-

mo, os nosos gustos [music is a part of ourselves, it uncovers our moods, our tastes]" (26). In reality, the narrator creates a story in a particular time frame (based on the narrator's shifts during the week). He also focuses on some specific drivers who he analyzes mostly through the cars they drive (Golfiña, Grand Cherokee, feminine and masculine Matiz, and Ibiza), the perfume they wear (Clío) and the music they all listen to when crossing to the toll-booth. For example, "[a Grand Cherokee gústalle o reggae e o dub" [Grand Cherokee likes reggae and dub], and always drives by with two big dogs in the back seat of the car. "Grand Cherokee" is a young man that normally pays with small change and ignores the booth attendant, as the narrator tells the reader. On the Thursday that begins the narration, the narrator explains how Grand Cherokee is listening (at a lower than normal volume) to "Police and Thieves" by Junior Marvin and Lee Perry while waiting for the narrator to count the money and open up the gate. The narrator notices that Grand Cherokee is cursing over the phone about some guy that already owed him money from a previous "business" transaction and who wanted to do more business. The narrator then connects the song's topic "police and thieves" with the conversation fragment he overhears and concludes that Grand Cherokee must be some kind of dealer, possibly a drug dealer, and that he should keep an eye on him (12). Likewise, Golfiña is a young and rebellious art major characterized as a modern *hippie* that does not respect authority (her choice of the Sex Pistols's *God Save the Queen* and *Wild Thing* by The Troggs are hints) and is always in a hurry, which he attributes to her youth (21). Ibiza, on the other hand, is a man closer to sixty, whose car is full of cardboard boxes, likes to party hard (based on his choice of "A Hard Day's Night" by the Beatles and the dark circles under his eyes), and is a womanizer (23). From the very beginning, (and by her name) Clío is presented as a sophisticated woman who likes the optimistic music of Louis Armstrong, Breton bagpipes, and the music of Boris Van. Furthermore, the narrator believes that female Matiz and male Matiz are married, and one day when she drives up listening to "Crying Won't Help You" by B. B. King the narrator gets concerned about female Matiz who confides in him and tells him that her husband has been cheating on her. Meanwhile, male Matiz, is described more as a *yuppie* who likes the products of *Operación Triunfo* (the Spanish version of American Idol) like David Bisbal's famous "Ave María" and is "un tipo frío. A version femenina estaba desfeita ou outro día, pero el, coma se nada [a cold guy. The female version was devastated the other day, but he acts like nothing is going on]" (63).

Music then, opens a door to the narrator and the reader into the lives of the characters; however, most of the narrator's assumptions turn out to be false. For instance, Grand Cherokee is not a drug dealer, he is a veterinarian who needs to buy a lethal injection for a very sick bull, and female and male Matiz are not married, they are siblings, Ibiza plays in a rock and roll band and invites him over to a night club to hear him play. This is precisely the event that causes the narrator to meet face to face with all of "his" charac-

ters. He invites all of the girls (Golfiña, Clío, and female Matiz) to meet him at the bar. The English title of the chapter "Saturday night" situates the reader in an already different space and time: it is the weekend and they all are in a bar. As the narrator meets with every one of his "vellos amigos [old friends]" the music overwhelms the space and the crowd make the conversations difficult, but this only emphasizes the anonymity of present day society. In fact, the narrator does not want to know his character's names, not even Clío's name. The ending is idyllic: the narrator ends up dancing all night with Clío and wakes up the following day in her bed; however, that is not the reason it creates a sense of disappointment. The problem is that, after all of this, the narrator has decided not to write anymore because:

Este caderno xa non ten sentido. Os meus personaxes fuxiron das follas cuadrículadas, agora existen no mundo e eu existo para eles. Tomei una decisión. Vou procurar outro traballo. Fuxirei da cabina e correrei espido pisando o asfalto, cruzándome con vehículos en dirección contraria. Son libre e teño ao meu carón, núa, a persoa que me ceibou esta noite. (91)

[This notebook has no more sense. My characters ran away from the squared pages and now they exist in the world and I exist for them. I made a decision. I am going to look for another job. I will run away from the booth and will run naked stepping on the asphalt, passing vehicles going in the opposite direction. I am free and I have by my side, naked, the person who liberated me tonight.]

It is obvious that the contemporary reader enjoys the relation that he or she has established with the narrator. The reader has lived through him the mystery of all the other characters, and even his own, but most importantly, the reader loses a small window into the lives of others in a dynamic and innovative way in which the role of music was intrinsic to the narrative. In Lopo's *Peaxes*, the displacement of contemporary Galicians emphasized through the displacement of music functions as a "virtual window" within and beyond Galicia's borders.

Conclusion: Music as a Glocalized Cultural Practice

Music, as a socio-cultural product, has an identitarian function. That is, music is the result of particular idiosyncrasies and as it represents a culture. Yet, as I already discussed, music is also permeable and flexible to the different attitudes in an increasingly globalized world. In fact, music is everywhere. As Arnold Perris explains,

We are indefatigably addressed by music, though we are often barely aware of its presence. Music reaches us from the home stereo and in our cars, it is piped into banks, office buildings and supermarkets, and it sounds behind the action of films and television plays, playing subtly with