

*Australia and Galicia: Defeating the Tyranny of Distance/Australia e Galicia:
vencendo a tiranía do afastamento* María Jesús Lorenzo Modia & Roy C. Boland
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edition

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'*Australia and Galicia: Defeating the Tyranny of Distance*' aims to fill a niche in scholarship of Australian and Galician relations. It includes contributions from authors from both antipodes, focusing on a variety of themes, in order to demonstrate their common past, present and future. The prologue, by Secretary of Immigration Manuel Luiz Rodriguez Gonzalez highlights a primary goal of the book, to inspire further conversation and knowledge. The historical and contemporary perspectives attempt to highlight the extensive relationship between Galicia and Australia, to demonstrate that despite great distances and differences, collaboration between cultures is possible. Together with the literary views, they highlight common experiences, values and characters, despite their contradictory and shifting identities and contexts.

Historical

Boland's historical contribution focuses on the expeditions to Australia from Spain through a 400 year period while emphasising their impact on modern Australia. While an overview of shared commonalities such as the eucalypt tree highlights obscure facts and trivia, these connections are strained at best, particularly when their limited implications are viewed in respect to modern Australia. Despite lacking the fluidity and rhythm of words possessed by other contributions, Osegueda effectively emphasizes the Spanish presence and impact in Australia, highlighting that it has not been a terra incognita for over 300 years. The most poignant element of the contribution is the insight into the reality of early Australian immigration, women brought as potential wives and the struggles of individuals such as Juan Batista Arrieta for whom which Australia was not the 'lucky country'.

Central to Australian Galician relations is Galician monk Rosendo Salvado. With three contributions dedicated to the monk, he is an integral character yet this attention is often misdirected or excessive. Barry focuses on the unpublished correspondence, giving painfully meticulous attention to detail of Salvado's letters which are not likely to interest a general readership, especially as it is overshadowed by the following submissions. However, while attempting to demonstrate that New Norcia remained in the hearts and minds of the Spanish people, it best demonstrates the powerful relationship developed between men through their faith, in spite of a system of communication impossible to fathom in modern times. Bouzon's contribution is likely to be of more interest to a general readership as it gives a personalised view of Salvado including his interests, experiences and views on colonial Australia, creating almost an image of an early 'Aussie battler'. Yet, to those with knowledge of Australian history, this is unsavoury when considering his goal of evangelising the local indigenous community. A major flaw is that while Salvado forms a central element in many historical perspectives, his evangelism is often looked upon sympathetically as a symptom of his context, despite the obvious cultural genocide. However, when speaking of his encounters with indigenous groups, Salvado's diary is refreshingly honest and humorous making it particularly appealing to both a specialised audience as well as those unfamiliar with such interactions. Buzon succinctly summarises the integral elements of Salvado's personal and professional life making it a well rounded contribution that is not weighed down by the excessive detail found in many other contributions. Esposto uses the unpublished diaries of Dom Rosendo to give insight into the personal and private lives of those living in New Norcia, yet is overshadowed by Buzon's contribution, making it monotonous and unremarkable, particularly the time given to the original Spanish version of diary entries which are likely to frustrate non Spanish speakers. Esposto focuses on the reconstruction of the old diaries and the modern technologies and processes used, therefore it is likely only to find readership in a very specific audience and very unappealing for general readership. Although not intentional, his goal seems almost ridiculous in the wider scheme of historical scholarship due to its limited relevance, difficulty and time restraints.

The second focal point of Galician Australian relations is based in commerce and seafaring. Migue Rodríguez begins this link by exploring the pacific sea routes used by the House of Maluccas. The contribution highlights the futility of humanity in the disastrous attempts to secure new routes to the Indies and spice islands, the danger faced and lives lost for an economic gain. It is a sobering reality and also an unintentionally humorous insight into the ludicrous and incredible journeys which were often abandoned or complete failures. Langdon's theory of Spanish presence in Polynesia presented by Rodríguez, despite its dubious nature noted by the author, presents the thought provoking possibility of rewriting Australian-Spanish history. Galdo and Losada highlight a wider history of migrations and the peculiar presence of Galician culture in Australia until modern times. This is one of few contributions which is strongly focused on Galicia or Galician culture as opposed to general Australian or Spanish influence.

Contemporary views

With the exception of few contributions, the book loses both pace and focus in the final two sections. Lamas's contribution loses momentum with her bibliometric study of publication trends in the Galician paper 'la voz'. While attempting to highlight the evolution of productivity and interest in Galician Australian relations, the contribution has a narrow scope of interest and could have been addressed in a more appealing manner. It serves as an example of the exaggerated links between the antipodes.

Ballyn's contribution is refreshing as it offers the first insight into an alternative view of Salvado's role in Australia through the eyes of Alf Taylor, a poet who experienced New Norcia first hand as a child. While the contribution is in the form of an interview, it is highly emotional while demonstrating the obligatory modern viewpoints of indigenous history. The interview presents the uncensored truth of the impact of Salvado's new Norcia and contrasts the heroic and passionate character with which we have been presented, with a colourful yet burdened image of Alf Taylor. Gerrand's contribution has merit in its study of Galician culture. This is one of few contributions with a focus on Galician culture however it also features many elements of Catalan nationalism, which while integral to understanding modern Spain, should serve as a basis for a Galician elaboration rather than a focus point in itself. While providing a roundabout example and explanation of Galician cultural nationalism, it could no doubt be explored in a more direct way as the goal of a .gal domain is a weak example of Galician nationalism and the importance of regional identities within Spain.

Literary Views

The third section of the book is a literary comparison including various studies on contemporary Australian novelists and poets. Elements such as the sense of community, place, identity, colonisation and new identity form the basis for analysis. These contributions focus more on Australian works, values and authors making the section unbalanced and distorted. The third section seems out of place with such a strong literary focus that only maintains relevance through the occasional reference to a common value or literary method.

With the second section the book begins to lose pace and focus. It becomes increasingly unbalanced between Australia and Galicia and themes becoming more obscure such as the Vazquez's feminist approaches. The book remains unconvincing of the importance of Galician Australian relations both in modern times and throughout history. While the structure of the book – historical and contemporary perspectives, allows a smooth and gradual move between themes and periods, the final literary section seems out of place and comparatively, totally irrelevant. Surprisingly, the lack of equilibrium combines with inconsequential facts to present the idea that despite an ever increasingly globalised world, the ties shared between Galicia and Australia were stronger in the past than in modern times. While many interesting facts are presented, in the scheme of Australian or Galician history, their relationship seems of increasing lesser importance. This is supported by the comparison of Neighbours and Mireas Vivas in the

contemporary section which, compared to the historical perspective or immigration patterns, seems an inane cultural comparison.

At 355 pages, the book is an extensive work yet it focuses more on quantity than quality. Many contributions focus on themes or issues of little relevance to the study of Australian Galician relations. Perhaps this is due to a lack of a real connection between the antipodes. While there is an evident link through characters such as Salvado which continues into present times, many of the contemporary 'links' such as that of the eucalypt tree, are dubious at best. It appears as if the book is trying to accomplish too much from a limited subject, taking in contributions from all areas and times in an attempt to make a concise overview.