

6 *Review*

**AYÁN, Xurxo &
GAGO, Manuel**
*Herdeiros pola forza.
Patrimonio cultural,
poder e sociedade na
Galicia do século XXI*

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Heritage is a conflictive social field dominated by political, economic and power relationships. *Herdeiros pola forza. Patrimonio cultural, poder e sociedade na Galicia do século XXI* (2012) by Xurxo Ayán and Manuel Gago fully engages with this conflictive side of heritage by presenting a critical approach to the management of heritage in Galicia.

In the words of its authors, the book was written by an archaeologist who wants to be a journalist (Xurxo Ayán) and a journalist who wants to be an archaeologist (Manuel Gago). *Herdeiros pola forza* is not an academic book, although it establishes a brave dialogue with many Galician archaeologists and historians, and is not a collection of journalistic essays either, although some of the texts have a clear journalistic tone. It is ‘a memoria cabreada’ (13), rooted in optimism about the possibilities of civil society participation.

Appropriately published by 2.0 Editora, *Herdeiros pola forza* does not fit into any particular genre. It is at the same time a book-blog, an essay collection, an ethnographic narrative and a compilation of archaeological stories. The book is divided into forty-seven mini-chapters, no longer than three to four pages long each, which sometimes include QR codes with links to additional information, such as Galician documentaries made by the authors and their collaborators, blog entries and other web pages. The book would benefit from a longer introduction explaining its genesis and the origins of the material discussed. It is unclear, for example, why the authors included a mini-chapter dedicated to literary history (83–87).

Written with the conviction that ‘non son tempos para intrigar, son tempos para dar a cara con convicción e construíndo ideas’ (13), *Herdeiros pola forza* offers a historiographical and social critique of heritage management models which takes Galicia as a case-study. As shown in ‘Umberto Eco e a amanita muscaria’ (203–206), there is a gap between archaeology and society at large. The authors, who understand heritage

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as a collective endeavour, propose cooperation not only as a powerful social force but also as the only way in which the management of Galician heritage can be changed. They examine specific examples of group initiatives dealing with heritage, such as Mariña Patrimonio, O Sorriso de Daniel, a Mesa Pola Defensa do Patrimonio de Galicia and the most important of all Galician initiatives, Patrimonio.net, an on-line catalogue of almost 5,000 entries (as of 2013) created collectively.

The main argument of the book is related to this idea of collective endeavour and can be summarised by the title of one of the mini-chapters, 'A divulgación, unha parte indispensable da ciencia' (77–82). The authors firmly believe in open information about heritage management: in 'Apartheid patrimonial' (69–71) they criticise how in Galicia the results of most academic archaeological excavations are kept hidden from the public. Nevertheless, their position regarding the dissemination of science is far from idealistic. They establish limits for public information in the case of archaeological sites 'que poden ficar danados estruturalmente a partir de visitas máis ou menos masivas, como poden ser covas que preservan aínda o paleochán e obxectos arqueolóxicos, e aqueloutros que teñen pezas de valor arqueolóxico ou histórico fácilmente substraíbles. Por exemplo, muíños de man castrexos tirados, libros e documentos nas reitorías e pazos arruinados, castros con moita cerámica en superficie' (198).

The relationship between the community and its heritage is examined in auto-ethnographic accounts such as 'Phoskitos, cocacolas, cigarros furtivos e carrizo' (173–176), which follows the authors as teenagers inside the ruins of a Catalan canning factory; and 'Cando os mouros botaron unha man no Tempo da Fame' (57–62), which tells the story of how in the early 1940s, 'o tempo da fame', the villagers of Socastro went to hide inside the *castro* to protect themselves from the soldiers because '[os] mouros pechaban con bosque o camiño do castro' (58). Such accounts and other mini-chapters, like 'A pedra de Rufino' (191–196), are good examples of the authors' careful prose, excellent narration and detailed descriptions.

The authors' interest in breaking the boundaries between academia, society and heritage management is reflected in the colloquial tone, humour and word-games employed throughout book. The authors' sense of humour is generally ironic (*retranca*), although it occasionally becomes sarcastic and readers might easily feel uncomfortable when reading caustic criticism targeting specific people. They use the expression 'arqueoloxía da escopeta nacional' (35–39), a clear allusion to Luis García Berlanga's sharp critique of the upper classes in late Franco Spain, and they invent the term 'toxoterapia' (199). Sometimes the authors write with a disdainful tone which might generate uneasiness in the reader. In 'Os furtivos' (177–180), they introduce their paternalistic typology of 'castrólogos supercientíficos' and 'castrólogos riquiños', and one cannot help but wonder the type of 'castrólogo' Ayán and Gago identify with. The book ends, however, with constructive criticism that avoids the caustic and complaining tone by offering strong positive examples of alternative ways of dealing with heritage, such as Patrimoniogalego.net.

The passion for the ruin, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, transforms *Herdeiros pola forza* into an emotional initiation to the ruins of heritage management in Galicia. The ruins appear throughout the book as a metaphor of the relationship between Galicians and their heritage: 'os galegos convertémonos nos herdeiros forzosos do noso inmenso patrimonio

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cultural, un dos máis ricos do Occidente europeo. Temos moitos tesouros recibidos na parte lexítima da nosa herdanza: unha lingua, unha cultura rica e fértil, un patrimonio histórico que ninguén é capaz de estimar en cifras [] Actuamos coma eses fillos que herdan a casa da aldea, pero non saben moi ben que facer con ela' (11). The book introduces different ways of overcoming the feeling of being *herdeiros pola forza*. Hopefully, the ideas presented by Ayán and Gago will inspire alternatives to traditional and conservative academia.

This reviewer would recommend this book to those interested in heritage – particularly archaeology – and to those interested in Galician culture in general. Furthermore, the book would be a useful tool in the classroom, at both undergraduate and graduate level, thanks to its well-written mini-chapters and the additional material provided by the QR codes. In sum, *Herdeiros pola forza* is a much-needed book whose provocative historiographical perspective will not go unnoticed.