# GALICIAN WOMEN TRANSLATORS IN THE 20TH CENTURY: REWRITING THE HISTORY OF TRANSLATION FROM A GENDER AND NATIONAL APPROACH<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Within the newly established field of Galician Studies, Feminist Theory has played a major role in revealing how women have contributed to the development of the Galician cultural polysystem. However, it is my contention that the translative facet of many women translators has not yet received enough critical attention. Therefore, within the framework of a growing interest in the roles played both by women and by translation in the development of societies, this article seeks to explore the history of translation in the context of Galicia, with a view to underscoring the contributions of women translators throughout the 20th century. The aim of the article is twofold: firstly, to offer an overview of translators such as Mercedes Vázquez Fernández Pimentel, Mari Luz Morales, Teruca Bouza Vila, María Barbeito, Amparo Alvajar, Xohana Torres, and Teresa Barro, in order to open up new areas for research so that subsequent studies can further examine their contributions in more depth. Secondly, it seeks to analyse the power relations which inform the activity of translation both from a gender and national approach.

### Resumen

Dentro de los incipientes Estudios Gallegos, la crítica feminista ha mostrado un empeño en desvelar el papel de las mujeres en el desarrollo del polisistema cultural. Sin embargo, en la historiografía feminista gallega la faceta traductora de muchas mujeres todavía no resulta suficientemente reconocida. Es por ello que, en el marco del creciente interés por desvelar el papel que han desempeñado en la historia de la humanidad tanto la traducción como las mujeres, este artículo busca explorar la historia de la traducción del siglo XX en el contexto gallego para poner de relieve la contribución de las traductoras, con un doble propósito: por un lado, ofrecer unas pinceladas sobre algunas traductoras como Mercedes Vázquez Fernández Pimentel, Mari Luz Morales, Teruca Bouza Vila, María Barbeito, Amparo Alvajar, Xohana Torres o Teresa Barro, abriendo nuevos campos de investigación que en el futuro puedan ser examinados en mayor profundidad. Por el otro, analizar las relaciones de poder presentes en su labor traductora a la luz del discurso del género y de la nación.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This article is the English version of "Traductoras gallegas del siglo XX: Reescribiendo la historia de la traducción desde el género y la nación" by Olga Castro. It was not published on the print version of MonTI for reasons of space. The online version of MonTI does not suffer from these limitations, and this is our way of promoting plurilingualism. <sup>2</sup> The author's affiliation at the time of publishing the original article in Spanish was "University of Exeter".

**Keywords**: Galician women translators. Feminist historiography of translation, gender and nation. Galician translation in the 20th century.

**Palabras clave**: Traductoras gallegas. Historiografía feminista de la traducción, género y nación. Traducción gallega del siglo XX.

Almost a decade ago, the translation historian Jean Delisle (2002a:8) noted a growing interest in reconstructing the feminist genealogy of the theory and practice of translation, especially with regard to recovering the role of relevant women translators and theorists. In fact, several conferences have been organized in recent few years about this topic. Similarly, numerous research papers have been published in journals and also in monographs such as *Portrait de traductrices*, edited by Delisle (2002b) and awarded the 'Best Book of the Year Award' by the Canadian Association of Translation Studies. It is within this framework that my proposal of rewriting the history of translation in Galicia from a gender and national approach takes place, with a view to underscoring the contributions of women translators throughout the 20th century.

Recovering the role of women translators in specific volumes on this topic is a great opportunity to make them visible, remedying their exclusion from mainstream Translation Studies. Furthermore, it is a way of compensating for the fact that most general anthologies have so far focused exclusively on the male genealogy of translation. However, it is my contention that this 'compensatory methodology' should not be applied in isolation, as it would involve two risks: first, it could contribute to the idea that women constitute a separate ghetto; and second, it could be used as an excuse by authors publishing so-called general works (i.e. not focused on women alone) to argue that women are elsewhere represented, therefore continuing evading their gender responsibility. This is why, together with the still needed monographs explicitly devoted to this topic (such as this volume), scholarly research on the role of women translators and theorists should also be included in general anthologies about translation –where they should be considered as part of the relevant historical period or subject matter– as well as in articles in general publications not specifically focused on women.

### 1. The double commitment of feminist translation historiography

History grants legitimacy. For this reason, works produced within the field of the feminist historiography of translation contribute to enriching and highlighting both translation and feminist studies – and by so doing, they are engaging in a double commitment. Firstly, recovering the history of translation contributes to meeting "le besoin de légitimation d'une discipline nouvelle" (Lambert 1993: 22), especially taking into account that Translation Studies has only recently started to be considered an autonomous and independent academic field. Moreover, given the process of intercultural mediation inherent in the activity of translation, these studies also contribute to calling for a more central position for translation in the history of cultures and societies than that to which it is currently and usually consigned (Lefevere 1992: xiv). In this regard, such studies would support Henri van Hoof's argument in *Histoire de la traduction en Occident* that "étudier l'histoire de la traduction, en effet, équivaut en quelque sorte à reprendre l'histoire du monde, l'histoire des civilizations, mais par le biais de la traduction" (van Hoof 1991:7). This may well be the reason for the increasing number of publications on the history of translation and Translation Studies from the mid-70's (Lafarga 2005: 1133).

Secondly, these works are located within the field of the feminist historiography, a discipline that has been questioning the supposed objective and neutral nature of History and proved its marked androcentric nature since the 70's. Therefore, it has revealed how women have been traditionally excluded from the official history of humankind (Lerner 1979). As a way of overcoming this exclusion, feminist historiography aims, in Joan Kelly-Gadol's terms, "to restore women to history and to restore our history to women" (1976: 809). In other words, it seeks to promote a more inclusive reconstruction of collective memory, incorporating women's contributions in their own voices and from their multiple positions. Different works have been produced with this aim. In general terms, not only have they helped disseminate the

contributions of some extraordinary women whose achievements had been systematically ignored (recovering spaces of freedom for women in the public sphere and paving the way for future generations), but they have also helped reconstruct the role of women as a social group in history, reappraising the importance of activities considered to be typically feminine.

The traditional consideration of translation as a typically feminine and reproductive activity, as opposed to the productive/creative (and hence masculine) activity of writing, allowed many women –those who had been excluded from the literary world as authors– to find an outlet in translation. And thus, "c'est en grande partie la traduction qui leur a fourni ce moyen d'action et d'affirmation, les femmes n'étant alors autorisées à pénétrer dans le monde des idées que comme traductrices" (Delisle 2002a: 9-10). Furthermore, in some cases translation was one of the few opportunities for women to do paid work, to the extent that "in some cases [it] was even the basis for financial independence from male relatives and as such a form of emancipation of the typical female role in the 18<sup>th</sup> century society" (Wolf 2005: 17).

Yet, despite it being true that translation acted as a liberating means which allowed women to get access to the literary world as translators, it also functioned as an oppressive mechanism, condemning them to the margins of discourse. This could be seen in relation to the metonymic code of double inferiority between women and translation identified by Lori Chamberlain (1988: 465), according to which the different status of the translation and the source text can traditionally be explained in parallel to the (supposedly) different status of women and men. Building up on these findings, a common feature in these studies has been the emphasis on the contribution made by women translators to the theory and practice of translation for centuries. This is vital in paving the way for a new translation genealogy from a female point of view.

One striking and indeed debatable aspect of some of these works is, however, the explicit rejection of the adjective "feminist". For instance, in the aforementioned *Portraits de traductrices*, the editor introduces the volume stating that

[l]e présent recueil n'est pas pour autant un ouvrage féministe. Il ne cherche pas à stigmatiser des injustices historiques dont les traductrices auraient été victimes et ne veut pas plus une dénonciation de leur marginalisation. Il s'agit plutôt de mini-biographies de femmes qui ont consacré leur vie ou une partie de leur vie à la traduction et qui méritaient d'être mieux connues. (Delisle 2002a: 8-9)

It can be argued, however, that revealing the women's role in history is in itself a feminist goal, regardless of whether these women showed an explicit gender awareness (or not) about their oppressive and discriminatory situation. The contradiction is made even greater when Delisle goes on to assert that all women translators studied in the volume

[toutes] ont, avec détermination, démontré aux hommes par leurs travaux intellectuels qu'être femme n'est pas un défaut. Refusant d'accepter les limites que la société leur assignait, elles ont cherché, à leur manière, à briser le consensus des idées reçues à leer égard, à modifier, comme l'écrit Annie Briset, "le regard des hommes sur les compétences intellectuelles des femmes". (Delisle 2002a: 9)

### 2. History of women in translation: main lines of enquiry

Most of these studies revolve around the role of women translators as intercultural mediators contributing to the development of societies by means of introducing new social debates through the selection of certain works to be translated. In this way, many women translators have powerfully influenced the development of social, cultural and intellectual movements, contributing to scientific progress, the spreading of religions, the exportation of social and literary values, the consolidation of national identities and the diffusion of knowledge – including feminist theories. Besides the women translators studied in the already mentioned *Portraits de traductrices* (Delisle 2002b), in the Iberian Peninsula there are other representative examples of women translators who directly contributed to the spreading of innovative views on the relationship between genders by translating feminist works. One case is the Galician author

Emilia Pardo Bazán, who at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century translated into Castilian The Subjection of Women, a keystone of the British suffragette movement written by the philosopher John Stuart Mill. Carmen de Burgos is also a good example of a female translator who held a similar conception of translation as a social mechanism for feminist subversion. At the beginning of the  $20^{\text{th}}$  century, de Burgos translated into Castilian the work of her contemporary, the prestigious Austrian neurologist Julius Moenius. Far from contributing to the spread of the misogynist ideas found in the original, her purpose was to use the translation as a means to challenge them. Therefore her translation incorporates a foreword and several footnotes where the translator refutes the text, which she also does in a series of essays attached to the translation. In these, she gives evidence of the conditions of women living at that time in history (cf. Sánchez 2010). A similar tendency can be observed in literary feminism, which has already been extensively studied in relation to Catalan (see Godaval 2006 and 2007). Catalan readers were also the first in Spain to get access to Simone de Beauvoir's milestone Le deuxième sexe (1949), thanks to the 1968 translation by Hermínia Grau and Carme Vilaginés. It is important to note that this book was only translated into Castilian by Alicia Martorell in 1998 and into Galician by Marga Rodríguez Marcuño in 2008 (cf. Castro Vázquez 2009).

A second trope discussed in these studies is the contribution of some women translators to the theoretical discourse of the discipline. In many cases, these translators reflected critically about the activity of translating in prefaces, dedications, footnotes or personal correspondence, tackling the dilemmas encountered and the limitations conditioning their practice. Douglas Robinson, among others, has already highlighted the importance of recovering these reflective metatexts, arguing that it would be a first step towards dismissing the idea "that translation theory first begins to be written by women in the 1970s [...] and that wild, woolly, deviant translation theories are a (late)-twentieth-century phenomenon" (Robinson 1995: 172).

Thirdly, the life of these women in the public sphere was frequently linked to discrimination - although translation was considered in some periods of history as a reproductive (and thus feminine) activity, different patriarchal social expectations determined which type of works women could translate and how they ought to translate them, censoring women translators from taking on an authorial and empowered (masculine) 'I' to reflect on their work. Having transgressed these patriarchal social expectations and being conscious of the fact that their translations would be undervalued and discredited, many women translators chose to conceal their sex, resorting to anonymity<sup>3</sup>. This was the case with Albertine Necker de Saussure when translating von Schlegel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Delisle 2002c: 117), or with Jane Wilde in relation to her translations of Dumas, Meinhold or Lamartine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Cronin 2002: 206). Others concealed their female name behind a masculine pseudonym, as was the case with Therese Huber at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>. Being fully aware of the sexist expectations about work produced by women. Huber signed her works with her husband's name. Huber went further and publicly denounced how women translators were being exploited: in addition to not being paid, they could only translate after all their domestic "duties" (Wolf 2005: 20) had been completed. Besides her, there were many other women translators that were fully conscious of this gender discrimination, and therefore their translations were frequently considered as (feminist) subversive acts.

### 3. The Galician context: particularities of the 20th century

In order to specifically examine the role of Galician women translators in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I will first deal with the socio-political context and the particularities of the cultural, literary and linguistic target system in which their practice as translators takes place. Within what can be called a Western perspective on the history of translation, discussions about the Galician system are defined by their peripheral situation, belonging to a minority and minoritized group. This consciousness of periphery is indeed very present in the opening proposal of Xoán González-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, in other cases some women writers signed their originals works as translators, thus using translation as a way of concealing their authorship.

Millán (1995), which articulates, from a theoretical perspective and for the Galician case, a theory of translation for marginal systems in which the notion of alterity stands out as a determining and differentiating factor. Clearly influenced by postcolonial translation theories and by Polysystem theory, this author holds that perceiving translation as a cultural reading of a text using languages with different cultural status,

ábreselle a porta a unha teoría da tradución baseada na experiencia social da desigualdade [...] que valore a influencia do poder sobre os diferentes procesos de comunicación, superando os paradigmas que establecen un diálogo cultural en termos de harmoniosa igualdade. (González-Millán 1995: 65-66)

[opens the door to a theory of translation based on the social experience of inequality [...] which stresses the influence of power on the different processes of communication, going beyond paradigms that establish a cultural dialogue in terms of harmonious equality]

This consciousness of alterity did already exist in a latent way in the practice of translation in Galicia. As evidenced in the panoramic study carried out by Camiño Noia (1995: 13), translation has been used as a mechanism for the normalization of a minoritized system from the very initial stages of publication in Galician in the Middle Ages.

One of the most evident examples of the legitimizing role translation had for the revitalization of the Galician cultural system (together with the emphasis on its potential of identity awareness) occurred in the first quarter of the  $20^{\text{th}}$  century. There was a clear reemergence of translation into Galician, which took place in parallel to the creation of a nationalist political movement around the *Irmandades da Fala* (lit. Brotherhood of language) and the *Xeración Nós* (lit. Us Generation) (cf. Millán-Varela 2000)<sup>4</sup>. Intellectuals belonging to these organizations considered translation a means to recover the Galician language and also as a tool with which to fill in the existing gaps in the political, linguistic and literary spheres. Translation was seen as a way of dignifying and strengthening the autochthonous culture – a culture they wanted to directly link with Europe with a "particular e apaixonado compromiso de descolonizar Galiza política e culturalmente" ["particular and passionate commitment to decolonize Galicia both politically and culturally"] (Caneda Cabrera 1998: 90). This philosophy is reflected on the criteria for the selection of works for translation, aimed at

afianzar os vencellos étnicos, culturais e nacionalistas con outros pobos [...]. A tradución resulta unha actividade empregada principalmente para contribuír á creación dunha identidade galega. Úsase como estratexia modernizadora da lingua e da literatura galega, esforzándose en achegar modelos vangardistas que rompan a inercia da creación galega. (Real Pérez 2000: 27)

[consolidating ethnic, cultural and nationalist ties with other peoples [...] Translation is an activity mainly intended to contribute to the creation of a Galician identity. It is used as a modernizing strategy for Galician language and literature, aiming at introducing avant-garde models that break the inertia of Galician creation].

The publication format of the translations signifies the political role attached to them. As can be inferred from the thorough study about this period carried out by Beatriz Real Pérez (2000), between 1916 and 1936 translations into Galician went beyond the field of literary texts, also covering politics, sociology, economics, language and linguistics, art, literary criticism and philosophy. Leaving aside the six literary translations published in book format, during this period the rest of the more than one hundred translations into Galician were published in the magazines *A Nosa Terra* and *Nós* (421 and 144 issues respectively), both of which served as political vehicles of the Galician nationalist cause.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The *Irmandades da Fala* (1916 and 1936) was a nationalist organization with the political aim of achieving Galician monolingualism. The *Xeración Nós*, so-called after the title of the journal *Nós* (lit. Us) they edited, was made up by a group of intellectuals and writers who crucially contributed to revitalizing both the Galician language and literature written in Galician.

The arrival of Franco's dictatorial regime brought about an abrupt stop to the publishing traffic of translations in Galician. However, at the end of the 50's, political activism started as part of what could be termed a 'cultural resistance'. Most of the (still minority) translations were the result of the individual initiative of translators, who selected books for translation according to their personal interests and linguistic competence. For instance, in 1951 the *Biblioteca Antolóxica de Clásicos* (lit. Anthology of Classics) was created by Instituto Padre Sarmiento in order to translate all kinds of literary genres into Galician, and by so doing, prove that the Galician language was a 'valid' and operative language for all genres. In the diaspora, the activity of translation into Galician was resumed again, especially around the publishing house Galaxia and its cultural magazine *Grial*. The publishing house Sept and the collection *Bibliófilos Gallegos* also published translations into Galician outside of Galicia (cf. Rubio Puga 1999).

The political changes after 1975 brought about a new turn in editorial policies. This allowed the start of a new trend towards the recovery of the Galician political, linguistic and cultural identity, as proven by the fact that

[e]n este último cuarto de siglo se publicaron en gallego más libros que en toda la historia de Galiza, con un incremento casi constante en cifras absolutas que se puede considerar como vertiginoso. Así, de 57 títulos (no todos ellos de carácter literario, claro está, aunque sí mayoritariamente) en 1975 pasamos a 1.145 en 2000, con una subida porcentual de casi un 2000. (Constenla Bergueiro 2004)

[In this last quarter of the century more books in the Galician language were published than in the whole history of Galicia, with an almost constant increase in absolute figures that can be considered vertiginous. From the 57 titles published in 1975 (not all of them literary, indeed, but still the majority), the figure grew to 1,145 in the year 2000, a growth of almost 2000 per cent].

A parallel between the evolution of the traffic of translation into Galician and the evolution of the Galician editorial production can easily be identified. Only 6 translations were published in 1975, followed by an exponential growth that lead to 129 translations being published in the year 2000, when translation constituted 11.26 per cent of the entire Galician publishing market. In 2007, 18 per cent of all publications in Galician were translations, including children's literature, textbooks, fiction, social science and humanities, scientific-technical writing and leisure books (cf. Luna Alonso 2009). And yet, far from this positive trend of the last few years, more recent studies are warning about a marked decrease in production in the near future. This would partly be a result of the new governmental policies in place since 2009, when there was a significant reduction

das axudas á tradución por parte da Xunta de Galicia, o que tamén provocará que as editoriais, sobre todo as que máis invisten en importación de textos contemporáneos procedentes doutros espazos culturais cara ao noso e viceversa, han reducir as súas apostas nese ámbito" (Luna Alonso 2010: 207).

[of the incentives given by the Galician Government of the Xunta de Galicia, which will cause the publishing houses, especially those ones that invest the most in the importation of contemporary texts from other cultural areas and vice versa, to reduce their commitment in this area].

# 4. Women and / in translation into Galician

Bearing in mind the particularities affecting translations in the Galician context discussed above, the most productive periods in which to examine the contributions of women translators are the first third and the last quarter of the  $20^{\text{th}}$  century.

# 4.1. The resurgence of nationalism in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

One of the periods when most translations were published into Galician was the first third of the  $20^{th}$  century. This period has been extensively studied. Applying a gender approach on the already mentioned thorough study carried out by Real Pérez (2000: 10-18), reveals that there were absolutely no translations signed by women in the only publications where translations into Galician were published at the time – the nationalist magazines *A Nosa Terra* and *Nós*. In other words, none of the approximately one hundred translations published in these two magazines in this period were carried out by women. Since language is normally considered a determining factor for belonging to a cultural system (something which, in my opinion, is generally a valid criterion), these data seem to indicate that in this period there were no women translators contributing to the configuration of the Galician women translators, despite translating into Castilian, also showed a clearly nationalist consciousness. As such, the role of these women translators must be reconsidered within the Galician scene, analysing their apparently contradictory attitude as the only way to discern to what extent their translations could be relevant (or irrelevant) in shaping the Galician cultural and literary system.

In some cases, the choice of Castilian could be attributed to their geographical localization outside Galicia. In other cases, it could be due to the quite usual trend (especially during the initial stages of linguistic recovery) of defending a minoritized language and/or literature by making use of the standardized language against which it competes. But in some other cases, it is my contention that it could also be the result of a process of double discrimination against women translators: on the one hand, the oppression they were subject to as women and subordinate individuals of a colonized nation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, the discrimination they were subject to as women and intellectuals by the Galician nationalist movement of that time.

### 4.1.1. Linguistic choice as gender violence

The fact that Galician women translators with a clear national consciousness translated into Castilian could be understood as a result of the gender oppression arising from the sociolinguistic situation in which Galician is a minoritized language. Although at first sight this situation of 'minorization' could potentially affect men and women translators alike, a more indepth analysis (rooted in sociolinguistic studies about the situation of contact between languages of disparate status) show a clear gender constraint due to fact that women's speech is normally closest to the 'prestige' standard, i.e. Castilian. The reason for this could be that, as a result of their greater social vulnerability, women would feel the need to constitute a nonstigmatized model that allows them to escape from a position even more subordinated than the one they socially have as women. Therefore, in order to avoid rejection, women would be the first ones to linguistically assimilate the prestige standard and the idea of correction -in this case, adopting the the language that legitimates and empowers them the most (Bourdieu 1991)while rejecting everything they consider linguistically marked as negative (García Mouton 2003). In the diglossic situation of Galician / Castilian, this negativity was associated with the vernacular language, which was traditionally linked with poor and rural classes, as opposed to the middle classes and the Castilian and Hispanicizing bourgeoisie.<sup>5</sup> This pressure on women – and especially, on educated women- to conform to gender roles is recorded in 1929 by Mari Luz Morales in the text "Galega, *jpara i-escoita!*" [lit. "Galician women: stop and listen"] where she scolded educated women for abandoning their own language:

¿Que absurda ideia d'unha 'finura' falsa, dun aristocratismo postizo i-arbitrario te leva a desterrala da intimidade do teu fogar? ¿Acaso non sabes que poser duas lingoas propias, nosas, é o mesmo que ter duas almas? (in Obelleiro 2010, online)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Recent studies prove that those attitudes can still be appreciated to a very great extent nowadays (cf. González Veira and Seoane Bouzas 2010; Moure 2010).

In this context, the preferential use of Castilian by women could be understood as a formula that many of them would applied in order to be accommodated to the prestige model; in other words, a strategy of self-defence against their social exclusion. According to Goretti Sanmartín, this social pressure on women, ultimately making them abandon the language with lesser social prestige, could be the result of a process of gender violence. However,

case nunca se acompaña ese discurso [de la violencia de género] coa afirmación de que o feito de erradicaren a lingua a tantas mulleres desta nación tamén responde a unha actuación de violencia sufrida polo colectivo feminino que, como é sabido, soporta unha moito máis forte presión social para se axustar aos modelos sociais da corrección. (Sanmartín 2009: 50)

[this discourse of [gender violence] is almost never accompanied with the statement that the fact of wiping out the Galician language for so many women of this nation is also a violent act suffered by women as a group, who, as it is well known, endure a much greater social pressure to adjust to socially accepted correction models.]

Taking into account this situation, few women wrote in Galician, and even less women translated into this language. This could partially explain their absence as translators in such publications as *A Nosa Terra* and *Nós* mentioned above. Yet, in order to obtain a more thorough characterization of their absence it is vital to go a step further and consider the mainstream towards women and translation shown by nationalists.

### 4.1.2. Exclusion from the national discourse

The importance attached to translation as a political tool by the *Xeración Nós* turned it into a political issue of primary (not secondary) concern. Therefore, translation was only suitable for the most influential authors, i.e. the 'patriarchs' of nationalism (and not for women). It is important to note that in these nationalist circles women were mainly considered as 'relative' beings, that is to say, they were defined in 'relation' to their husbands or children. As such, they were urged to work towards nationalist goals both as mother-educators of future generations, and as emigrants', peasants' and sailors' wives. The promise for these women was that they would see their situation improve with the arrival of nationalism – but this would be still as 'relative' beings, and not in the sense of achieving full personhood (Rios Bergantinhos 2001: 66).

Women were also a key object in nationalist imagery, in a trend that has been identified across the planet since time immemorial, for "throughout global history, with few exceptions, women, the feminine, and figures of gender, have traditionally anchored the nationalist imaginary – that undisclosed ideological matrix of nationalist future" (Heng 1997: 31). As Belén Martín Lucas clearly shows, in the Galician case women's bodies were also used as metaphors of earth and homeland, defining in the feminine "[a] la tierra en la que el hombre planta su semilla para que dé frutos, y así se concibe también a la tierra, como una madre que cuida, protege y da alimentos a sus hijos" (Martín Lucas 2000: 163) ["the land where men sow their seeds in order for it to give fruit, and also the land as a mother that takes care of, protects and feeds her children"].

A symbolic feminization of the nation as a woman to marry or love is created here, together with a symbolic identification of the "motherland" as a maternal link (the latter, especially in those societies with a high percentage of emigration, as is the case in Galicia). Although both metaphors are intended to be presented as an honorific treatment for women, they actually function as an instrument for objectifying women: in the first case, because "al ser elevada al símbolo de la nación la mujer deja de ser una persona y sujeto autónomo cuyos sentimientos cuentan, para convertirse en un simple instrumento y manera de expresión del deseo masculino" (Nussbaum, in Martin Lucas 2010: 54) ["when uplifted to symbolize the nation, women are no longer persons and autonomous subjects, whose feelings need to be considered, but they turn into simple instruments and means of expression of male desire"]. In the second, the symbolic boost as mothers also entails a series of dangers, since

lejos de favorecer el progreso feminista lo entorpece, ya que se proyecta la imagen de estar defendiendo a las mujeres al darles un protagonismo simbólico, cuando en realidad se están reafirmando los valores patriarcales que reducen a la mujer al papel de reproductora, de protectora de la comunidad y de transmisora de los valores tradicionales. (Martín Lucas 2010: 55)

[far from favouring feminist progress it hinders it, since it pretends to defend women by conferring them symbolic prominence, when it is actually patriarchal values that are been reinforced, which reduce women to role of breeding, community protection and the transmission of traditional values.]

In fact, the non-consideration of women as full politic subjects would finally lead to the exiguous space that was reserved for intellectual women in the pro-Galician publications *A Nosa Terra* and *Nós*. Being manifestos of the nationalist parties, only 8 women authors could ever publish their original writings and articles in these two magazines (Rios Bergantinhos 2001: 68); yet, as argued above, not their translations.<sup>6</sup> Since these publications were virtually the only ones having Galician as a vehicular language, with this attitude the members of *Xeración Nós* were dramatically restricting the access of women to translation (and to a great extent also to writing) in their own language.

Although on an international scale numerous studies proved how translation was considered a secondary activity as opposed to the primary activity of authorial production, the importance given to translation as political vehicle in the Galician context turned it into a primary activity – therefore, a masculine activity. We could therefore assert that the traditional consideration of translation as a feminine activity due to its assumed secondary nature with regard to the original disappears as the importance given to it grows. Also in relation to the importance of translation, in the Galician cultural system there are no references to the traditional metonymic comparison of the double inferiority of women and translation that equates female with the secondary and derivative element. Yet, the absence of this gendered and sexist discourse is probably due to the fact that the feminine personification was already "occupied" with its attribution to the nation, this rhetoric being a fundamental pillar for the nationalist discourse itself.

Furthermore, on the international level translation acted as a liberating instrument by allowing women access to the literary world as translators (in spite of being, paradoxically, an oppressive mechanism condemning them to the margin of discourse). Nevertheless, in the Galician case Castilian served as a platform on which Galician women translators could publish their translations (in spite of being the colonizing language, towards which both social pressure and gender roles pushed women). Put it differently, Castilian was used as a mechanism to enter into the literary field, even if this was a "foreign" world.

4.1.3. Relevant women translators at the beginning of the century

In view of this situation, it is my contention that two interrelated aspects should be taken into account when reconstructing the Galician history of translation: first, the fundamental contribution of these women translators at the beginning of the century who, in spite of bearing witness of a deep nationalist consciousness, resorted to Castilian as the language in which to write their translations; and second, the contextualization of their linguistic choices within their historic, social and political framework, as the result of a process of double discrimination. Failing to take into account these two complex dynamics, or limiting commentary to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The quoted article by Mariluz Morales is an exception (and also a good example) of how the Galician nationalism of that time, despite excluding women intellectuals from their publications in Galician, was concerned with the loss of female speakers (cf. Sanmartín 2002: 100-107).

assertion that in this period there were no women translators into Galician, would inevitably offer a biased and inaccurate view of the cultural polysystem.

Mercedes Vázquez Fernández Pimentel (?-1964) stands out among those whose work is still not sufficiently recognised. In the 20's, she published poetic translations in the magazines *Yunque* and *Estela*, and more specifically translations of German poems by Albert Sergel, Emma Böhm and Emma Mullenhoff. Some of them received praise from the author Evaristo Correa in his brief Galeguist stage, declaring that they showed a "grande sensibilidade" (Marco 1993: 193) ["great sensitivity"].

The professional life of the journalist Mari Luz Morales (1889-1980) took place in Catalonia, where she lived and where she became the first woman in Spain to run a newspaper, La Vanguardia. Living outside Galicia, she chose Castilian as the language for her translations. Yet, Morales was closely linked to the political and cultural movements in favour of Galician culture – as member of the Asociación de Escritoras e Escritores en Lingua Galega (lit. Association of Galician Writers) and of the Partido Galeguista (lit. Galeguist Party), she visibly positioned herself in favour of the first Statute of Autonomy for Galicia. Likewise, as secretary of Mulleres Galeguistas (lit. Galeguist Women) during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), she repeatedly declared her feminist affiliations. In her journalistic writings in Galician and Castilian she showed this double consciousness, by writing "textos fervientemente feministas y reivindicativos, también del gallego" (Obelleiro 2010, online) ["fervently feminist and protest texts also about Galician"]. One of the numerous translations she published during this period was the anthology Obras maestras al alcance de los niños (translated from English into Castilian), a volume with a great impact used as a reference book in schools. In the 20's and 30's, she translated from Catalan into Castilian stories by Caterina Albert for the newspaper El Sol, in Madrid. She also rendered into Castilian the book Suburbio by Xavier Benguerel, and poems by the Catalan poet Pere Quart, who was at that time director of publications for the Catalan Government. The quality of this translation was appreciated by the author, as can be read in a letter dated 1937 and currently held in the Ateneu Barcelonès: "La vostra traducció em sembla molt enginyosa i llevat de dues estrofes, altrament intraduïbles, perfecta, fidelísima" (in González Fernández 2009, online) ["Your translation seems very ingenious, and, except for two verses, that were untranslatable anyway, it is perfect and extremely faithful"]. Morales was also a pioneer in the field of audiovisual translation, working as translator and author of cinematographic scripts for Paramount. The journalistic profile of Morales led her to publish Las románticas, a book containing biographies of remarkable women such as Madame de Staël, who in 1816 became the first woman to publish a treatise on translation (De l'esprit des traductions) – a book with innovative contributions at the time of publication (cf. Simon 2002; Stark 1993).<sup>7</sup> This biography written by Morales is, therefore, the first study carried out by a Galician woman on Madame de Staël, author of the first femaleauthored treatise on translation - and most probably the only one so far.

Teruca Bouza Vila (1906-2005) must be also mentioned in this section, as she wrote highly praised translations of comedies from Castilian into Galician, as well as translations into Galician of classical theatre plays from French such as *Le médecin malgré lui (O médico a paus)* by Molière, performed in the theatre Jofre, in Ferrol, in 1929. Possibly because of the target language chosen (Galician), these translations are still unpublished, although without doubt their high historic-documentary value would make their publication certainly advisable.

## 4.2. From the dictatorship to the Normalization Act

The trend of Castilian being the target language chosen by writers working within a clearly Galeguist framework was intensified with the arrival of the dictatorship. This may be partially due to very obvious contextual factors, such as the linguistic repression in the first years of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Contrary to the main assumptions of her time (defining translation as a secondary and derivative activity), Madame de Staël considers that translation should have a re-evaluated and positive function, as it normally highlights the beauty of the foreign literature rather than impoverishing it. Despite this great contribution, her treatise is scarcely mentioned in studies on translation theory and history.

regime or the experience of exile in Latin America. The translations of the writer and educator María Barbeito (1880-1970), who devoted most of her time to translating French authors into Castilian after being expelled from teaching with the instauration of Franco's regime in 1936, are also ascribed to this framework. Some of her most remarkable published translations were *Perros perdidos sin collar* by Gilbert Cesbron, *El libro de los novios* by Marc D'Isolin or *La piedra angular* by Zoé Oldenburg. Nevertheless, other translations remain unpublished, such as that of the *Livre de ma vie* by Ana de Noailles. Still, the translator's foreword to this book –in which Barbeito analyses the work, themes and style, and discusses translational issues– was published.

Amparo Alvajar (1916-1998) worked mostly in exile. She moved to Argentina after Franco's military coup due to her Galeguist, republican and feminist family ties – her father was a politician and her mother was an activist in a Republican women's association in the Spanish Second Republic (1931-1936). Besides her world-renowned success as a playwright, she received the Premio Nacional de Literatura in Buenos Aires. Alvajar devoted herself professionally to translation from French (Diderot, Flaubert, Bollard), Italian, English and Portuguese, which earned her recognition as the "mellor tradutora de Hispanoamérica" (Marco 2007:22) ["best translator in Latin America"]. Besides this, Alvajar was the first Galician person who worked as a translator for the United Nations in New York, for Unesco in Paris and for the International Labour Organization in Geneva. This professional career placed her in a privileged position from which she reflected on non-literary translation. These reflections can be found in in her correspondence with Carmen Muñoz and her husband Rafael Dieste, as well as with her own sister Ana María Alvajar (cf. Alvajar 2000 and 2002). The translational contribution of Alvajar (in Castilian) must be placed within the work in favour of the Galician culture carried out in exile, where very often Galician consciousness is present alongside a nostalgia for a land which will not be returned to by choice. This translator spent the last years of her life in Portugal, "preto da fronteira coa súa amada terra natal, pero sen atreverse a voltar a pisala máis" (Portela Yáñez, in Alvajar 2000: 5) ["close to the border with her beloved homeland, but without daring setting foot on it again"]. As printed on the back cover of Notas sobre Amparo Alvajar, a panoramic view on her work by Luís Seoane defines her

unha das mulleres de información intelectual máis traballada da Galicia de hoxe [...] Agora matina traballar novamente para Galicia desde fóra, aínda que non deixou endexamais de traballar para ela, como ocorre con moitos escritores e artistas desa xeración cuxa obra foi feita por circunstancias especiais no estranxeiro e nas peores condicións. (Seoane, en Alvajar 2000)

[one of the women with the greatest intellectual education of contemporary Galicia [...] now she is working for Galicia again from abroad, although she never ceases working for it, as is the case with many writers and artists of that generation whose works, due to specific circumstances, were written abroad and under the worst conditions.]

All in all, the weakness of the polysystem led generally to a scarcity of translations into Galician at that time, with very few published translations by women. This absence is especially relevant in comparison with the prolific contributions of women translators in other areas in the Iberian Peninsula with their own language, such as Catalonia (cf. Godayol 2006 and 2007).

In fact, it was not until 1967 that a woman translator published the translation of a whole book into Galician. This pioneering role was taken by Xohana Torres (1931-), who also became the first translator into Galician of children's literature. This was as a result of the cooperation between the Catalan publishing house La Galera and the Galician publishers Galaxia in order to translate children's literature between the two literary systems (in the series *A galea de ouro* and *Desplegavelas*) without having to go through the central/hegemonic language of the interliterary community (Domínguez 2009: 45). Torres continued her pioneering activity until she became, together with Carlos Casares and Salvador García Bodaño, one of the most prolific translators of children's literature into Galician in the 70's and 80's. As a writer, in 1968 Torres became the author of the first Galician book translated into the four peninsular languages, *Polo mar van as sardiñas* (Domínguez 2008: 25). Her pioneering work translating children's

literature, together with her inaugural work in Galician, turns Xohana Torres into a very appropriate name for a possible (and necessary) award for translation of children's literature into Galician. This would be more than desirable, in view of the enormous and ever growing importance that the translation of children's literature is having nowadays in Galicia.

The progressive advance towards the normalization of Galician since the 1970's (although slow and still incomplete) may be the cause for the linguistic criterion to be considered, once again, the main requisite for belonging to the cultural system, i.e. Galician literature is what is written in Galician. However, this same criterion might be understood differently now. Indeed, women still exhibit disdainful attitudes towards their own language as a result of their attempt to adapt to gender roles, but in my opinion, the cultural polysystem is now sufficiently developed in order for the language choice (the linguistic criterion) to be the main requisite to determine what 'belongs' to the Galician polysystem. Therefore, far from the position recently adopted by some authors, arguing that the main criteria for defining what belongs to the Galician polysystem must be the writer's birthplace -see for example Galician-born and Castilian writer Marta Rivera de la Cruz when she states that "non se debe monopolizar a literatura galega cos autores que escriban nesta lingua" (in Hooper 2003: 111) ["Galician literature must not be monopolized with authors that write in this language"]- it is my contention that the requisite of using the Galician language would be most appropriate for two reasons: first, because it is a voluntary and free choice that anyone can make; and second, because of its inclusive nature, as anyone can learn it irrespectively of their birthplace.

Among the growing number of women translators who have been translating into Galician since the *Lei de Normalización Lingüística* (lit. Language Normalization Act) was passed in 1983), Teresa Barro (1936-) deserves great recognition. Barro shows a clear commitment to dignifying and revitalizing the language. Together with Fernando Pérez Barreiro, Barro translated *Alice in Wonderland*, one of the first books to be translated into Galician in democracy and after the Normalization Act. This rendering was the first translation into Galician to be awarded the translation prize given by the Spanish Ministry for Culture (1985), an award "highly significant, considering that the Galician translation had to compete with translations into all the languages of the Spanish State" (Millán-Varela 2000: 276).

### 4.3. Some notes about the current situation: A feminized profession?

In general terms, translation is currently a feminized profession in Galicia. On the one hand, the majority of people registered on undergraduate programmes at the Universidade de Vigo (the only official degree in Translation and Interpreting offered in Galicia) are women. On the other, this feminization tallies with the figures of members of the *Asociación Galega de Profesionais da Tradución e Interpretación* (AGPTI, lit. Galician Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters), as 81% of the AGPTI members are women.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as Neal Baxter (2010: 123) points out, in the field of literary translation the proportion of women translators publishing with the two leading translation publishing houses is substantially lower: 26.88% in the case of Edicións Xerais and 35.29% for Rinoceronte Editora. Examining the gender power relations within the translation sphere, it can be said that

as tradutoras si exercen de *bonnes à tout faire* no ámbito infravalorado da tradución non literaria, mentres que, segundo unha repartición de papeis dos máis habituais, o ámbito prestixiado da tradución literaria fica maioritariamente en mans de tradutores varóns. [...] Mentres hai unha elite de varóns tradutores literarios prestixiados, existe un batallón enorme de mulleres tradutoras anónimas que levan a cabo os labores máis rutineiros e desagradecidos da tradución xeral e técnica. (Baxter 2010: 125)

[Women translators practise as jacks-of-all-trades in the undervalued area of non-literary translation, whereas, according to one of the most common distribution of roles, the prestigious

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> These data were obtained after consulting the public databases available on the website of the AGPTI (see http://agpti.org/galego/asoc\_gal.php). Apart from the 6 translation agencies included in the list, out of the 84 members of AGPTI, 68 are women and 16 are men.

area of literary translation is mostly in the hands of men. [...] Whereas there is an elite of prestigious male translators, there is an enormous group of anonymous women translators that carry out the most routine and thankless tasks of general and technical translation.]

The policies of the publishing houses toward the translation of Galician literature seem to play a remarkable role in this tendency. When the initiative to translate a certain text is taken by publishers, they sometimes entrust the translation to an already well-known writer (regardless of whether he or she has training and/or experience in the field of translation) – maybe in the hope of better marketing and of making the translation more saleable. However, on other occasions, when the initiative is taken by a potential translator, well-known authors are the ones who generally succeed in getting the publishing houses to accept their proposals to render foreign works into Galician – especially if this is negotiated with publishers where they publish their originals in Galician; in these cases, the Galician writer becomes also the translator of foreign works.<sup>9</sup> The greater proportion of male rather female writers in the Galician literary system (despite the greater presence and recognition that women authors have been gaining in the last few years) might explain, at least partially, this trend towards a masculinization of literary translation. In view of this situation, two discriminatory attitudes are elicited: first, women translators are pushed into the less prestigious and less recognized field of 'professional' translation; and second, taking for granted that translation is a feminized profession (while failing to recognize the power relations operating in the dynamics of the publishing houses) could function in an analogous way to the discourse of the "overrepresentation" of the feminine denounced by Freixas (2009), ultimately leading to the belief that quantitative superiority has already been reached in translation. This, indeed, risks being used as a mechanism for depoliticization and social demobilization (cf. Freixas 2009 for an understanding of the pernicious consequences of this discourse in the field of literature).

### **Concluding remarks**

Within the framework of the recent interest in identifying the role of translation and women in history, this article has aimed to highlight the contributions of women translators throughout the 20th century, with the intention of analysing the power relationships through the lenses of gender and nation. Taking into account the particularities of the Galician case, I consider that it is vital to stress their role both as translation agents (a role that has been quite disregarded so far in Galician compilations about women's history) and as women (a contribution a constantly obviated in accounts about translation history in Galicia).

In this sense, together with the need to highlight the work of women translators who translated into Galician, I have attempted to underline the importance of revising the criteria defining the construction of Galician translation history. In spite of the fact that nowadays the linguistic criterion (the language choice) may be *a priori* a valid requisite in order to establish what belongs to the cultural and literary polysystem, this criterion should be approached in a more flexible way under some circumstances (such as those at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the early stages of the configuration of Galician nationalism). By so doing, a more thorough perspective on the dynamics in translation history in the Galician cultural system would undoubtedly be gained. This flexibility would require that the account of Galician cultural history also considers and contextualizes the role played by these women translators who, despite (some of them) translating exclusively into Castilian, were showing a clear national/ist commitment in other spheres of their lives.

In fact, this contextualization would entail explaining this dynamics not only as a result of their geographical location, their exile or the situation of extreme weakness of the Galician literary system until the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also as a consequence of a process

 $<sup>^{9}</sup>$  These trends echo the debate about whether it is writers or professional translators who are better prepared to translate literature. Although this debate falls beyond the purpose of this article, it is revealing to read the different views on this shown by different translators covered in a journalistic piece published in 2008 in the Galician edition of the newspaper *El País* (cf. Salgado 2008).

of double discrimination against women translators: on the one hand, discrimination as gender oppression in a diglossic society that exerts more pressure on women to fit into all social and linguistic roles considered appropriate for them (leading them to use a language that is different to the one spoken in their territory); on the other, discrimination as their expulsion from the nationalist discourse, and from the journals and magazines where virtually all publications in Galician appeared. In regard to the situation as it currently stands in the professional field in Galicia, this contextualization also implies the need to unmask how generalizing the feminization of the profession means falling into a (false) overrepresentation of the feminine, which ultimately risks concealing the power relations operating in publishing houses that continue to reduce the participation of Galician women translators in the more prestigious field of literary translation.

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