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## **On the margins and beyond: The translation of contemporary Galician women fiction writers in multilingual Spain and the Anglosphere**

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### **Abstract**

A remarkable gender gap exists in literary translation, as a result of the well documented tendency across time to translate fewer women writers than men writers. Given the role of translation as an activity of intercultural mediation and cross-border connectivity, this gender gap has far-reaching consequences not only for the silenced writers and their literatures, but also globally for society as a whole: it may prevent readers from accessing great foreign literature authored by women. Nevertheless, not all women writers are experiencing this gender gap in the same way, with some authors having their work translated into other languages and getting recognition abroad more easily than others. Among the obstacles hampering their cross-border dissemination, one factor stands out: writing literature in a minoritised language. This is precisely the case for Galician women fiction writers. While some Galician women novelists are marginalised in their own literary field, others have achieved considerable success in recent times, often a precondition for their translation. Drawing on this, my aim is to analyse the challenges and opportunities Galician-language women fiction writers may be presented with when trying to get recognition and enter new literary markets via translation, both in multilingual Spain and in the Anglosphere. All in all, my chapter seeks to shed light on issues around gender, language, ethnicity and translation affecting contemporary Galician-language novelists, which also have implications for global audiences worldwide.

### **Introduction**

For most contemporary women novelists writing in Galician<sup>1</sup>, gender and language-ethnicity are two intersecting social categories through which power operates in interlocking systems of oppression, creating asymmetries and leading to marginalisation both within Galicia and beyond. Given this two-fold crossroads<sup>2</sup>, Galician-language women writers share with their

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<sup>1</sup> Galician is a minoritised language spoken by approximately 3 million people worldwide, mainly in Galicia, migrant communities of Galicians in Spain and Latin America (Beswick 2007: 55). It holds co-official status with Spanish in Galicia, an Autonomous Community in Northwest Spain (for more details see footnote 1 in Chapter 6).

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to focus here on two of the categories defining the necessarily plural identity of Galician-language women writers, i.e. gender and ethnicity/language. Other categories operating at other levels create unique experiences for these human beings, both as Galician-language writers and as women, therefore rejecting essentialist conception about them. The plural "women" must also be understood beyond the normative binary and/or cisgender category.

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male counterparts the challenges linked to the minoritised status of their language/literature<sup>3</sup>, and they share with other women writers different challenges associated with gender.

And yet, not all Galician women novelists experience 'being on the margin' in the same way or to the same extent. Besides the complex interaction with other intersectional categories, in Chapter 6 Eva Moreda Rodríguez argues that some women authors are 'on the margin of the margin' of Galician literature due to a combination of additional factors, including context-sensitive and unique circumstances specific to them. That proves to be the case for writers such as Ursula Heinze, Silvia Bardelás and Beatriz Dacosta, thoroughly studied in the previous chapter: despite the literary value of their writing projects, they have gone mostly unnoticed in the Galician literary field. And in Moreda Rodríguez's words, barriers to visibility will be even greater in the worldwide literary market and in other literary fields in Spain.

Some other authors, however, have achieved a certain degree of success and recognition within the Galician literary scene, generally measured in terms of literary awards, bestselling books and a fair coverage in cultural magazines and newspapers. Success in the source culture is often seen as a *sine qua non* condition for crossing borders and reaching new target audiences via translation. Complementing Moreda Rodríguez's insights into the situation of those novelists who are 'on the margin of the margin' of Galician literature, I will focus on novelists who have gone 'beyond' those margins, that is, writers who have both gained status and recognition within the Galician literary scene and experienced translation as a result of it – either actively becoming self-translators of their own work, or seeing how their works became available in other languages. As anticipated in the previous chapter, these would include some of the writers that have contributed to renovating Galician fiction since the 2000 and led some scholars to hypothesise about a “boom” of women novelists (Vilavedra 2018).

My aim is to examine the challenges and opportunities that these Galician-language women fiction writers may be presented with when trying to get recognition and enter new literary markets via translation, both in multilingual Spain and in the Anglosphere. When doing so, two contextualising factors will be considered. First, as numerous studies have already shown (see Castro, 2017; Ríos and Palacios, 2005), women writers are generally discriminated against in translation flows, with considerably fewer women writers being translated than men writers. Second, when it comes to translation, minoritised languages such as Galician frequently become less translated languages (Branchadell and West, 2005), with all the constraints this entails.

Translation flows in Galicia have received considerable scholarly attention in the last few decades, mainly in publications by members of the research group BITRAGA<sup>4</sup>, who in 2004

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<sup>3</sup> Since different Galician written standards co-exist, as explained by Moreda Rodríguez, authors using the non-official *normativa reintegracionista* –as opposed to the official *normativa isolacionista*– would be facing an additional layer of discrimination (see footnote 15 in Chapter 6).

<sup>4</sup> The research group BITRAGA (Biblioteca da Tradución Galega, lit. Catalogue of Galician Translations) is based at the University of Vigo and all publications by their members can be found on <https://bitraga.gal/>

launched the *Digital Library of Galician Literary Translation* available at <http://bibliotraducion.uvigo.es><sup>5</sup>. As these scholars demonstrate (Luna Alonso & Galanes Santos 2017), until 2017, Galician literature had been translated into 47 cultural communities in 37 different languages. Half of these titles were translations published within multilingual Spain: Spanish was the main target language into which Galician fiction was rendered, followed by Catalan and Basque, the other two minoritised languages which, alongside Galician, were also granted co-official status in their territories by the 1978 Spanish Constitution<sup>6</sup>. These are followed closely by other neighbouring target languages such as Portuguese, Italian and English.

### **The case of multilingual Spain**

In view of the data above, the fact that half of the translations from Galician into other languages are published in Spanish, Catalan and Basque could seem to suggest that Galician novelists are indeed visible within Spain. However, general figures reveal that in absolute terms the number of translated titles is relatively low. Literature for children and young adults is the most popular genre, followed by fiction (Galanes Santos, 2010; Montero Küpper, 2012). To the best of my knowledge, no studies have specifically studied the production, circulation and reception of Galician women novelists in translation into the other official languages in Spain<sup>7</sup>. To compensate for this, a careful examination of publications analysing translations flows into Spanish (Francí Ventosa, 2016), Catalan (Comellas Casanova, 2007; 2016) and Basque (Manterola Agirrezabalaga, 2016; 2020) was carried out. The scrutiny of the three different target systems revealed that translation from Galician into these languages represents a very small part, with women fiction writers having an anecdotal presence.

Two trends can be identified in translations from Galician into the other official languages in Spain. First, translation into Catalan and Basque is often originated in the target system and carried out by professional literary translators. Although these two language pairs (i.e. Galician into Catalan and Galician into Basque) may not significantly increase the authors' visibility in the target systems, they do have great symbolic capital (Luna Alonso, 2007). All exchanges between the three minoritised languages have the potential to help strengthen the three literary systems and improve the perceived prestige of their readers and speakers – indeed, the Basque-, Galician- and Catalan-speaking writers and publishers associations regularly hold *Galeuscat* meetings to think of common strategies to support their literatures. Second, translation into

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<sup>5</sup> Other studies have focused on translation flows within the Iberian Peninsula context, including translations from and into Asturian, Aragonese, Aranese, Basque, Catalan, Galician, Portuguese and Spanish (see Gallén, Lafarga & Pegenaute, 2010; Galanes Santos, Luna Alonso, Montero Küpper & Fernández Rodríguez, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Basque (*euskera* in the Basque language) is a co-official language in the Autonomous Communities (regions) of the Basque Country and Navarra, in Spain, and it is also spoken in three provinces of the French Basque Country. Catalan (*català* in Catalan) is a co-official language in the Autonomous Communities of Valencia, the Balearic Islands and Catalonia, in Spain, and it is the only official language in Andorra.

<sup>7</sup> Other related topics researched so far include the role of women translators as initiators of translations into and from Galician (Luna Alonso, 2017) and the translation of foreign women writers in the Galician book market (Buján Otero, 2020).

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Spanish is often seen as a strategy with a two-fold potential: (i) entering the Spanish-speaking literary market (both in Spain and in Latin America), and (ii) becoming a launch pad to literary agents and international publishers who could access the books in Spanish as a previous step before possibly translating them into other languages (Galanes Santos & Luna Alonso, 2017)<sup>8</sup>. Being aware of this, and possibly induced by additional reasons (see Santoyo, 2010), an increasing number of Galician writers are “incessantly” (Dasilva, 2009, p.145) resorting to self-translating their own novels.

In Spain, self-translation between languages and literatures of disparate status has become a very common practice, namely for bilingual authors who choose to write in minoritised languages and to subsequently make their work available into the hegemonic language (Grutman, 2013)<sup>9</sup>. Living in diglossic<sup>10</sup> societies characterised by a sociolinguistic conflict between their working languages, “individual decisions become laden with political consequences” (Castro, Mainer & Page, 2017, p.8). Among the political dilemmas originated by the asymmetries between the two languages, I would emphasise the following:

(a) the degree of visibility (López L.-Gay, 2010) of the source text requested by the author-translator and/or allowed by the Spanish publisher (i.e. whether it is presented as an original or a translation);

(b) the liberties taken to recreate the text in their privileged position as rewriters of their own work (Bassnett, 2013; Tanqueiro, 1999), including domesticating or foreignising their texts to make them more or less palatable to the target reader; and

(c) the level of 'competitiveness' between the two texts in a diglossic society (Dasilva, 2009).

When confronting these dilemmas, some bilingual authors may end up reinforcing a “self-minorisation process” (Castro, Mainer & Page, 2017, p.12) inasmuch as they succumb to pressures from Spanish publishers, which often invite authors to produce an “opaque self-translation” (Dasilva, 2011, p.45), that is, a target text in the hegemonic language with no evidence of the first original in the minoritised language, on the grounds that the book is going to sell better. Some other authors, however, may show greater awareness of the risks involved due to the asymmetrical position of the languages and openly renounce to translate their own

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<sup>8</sup> Some critical voices have questioned whether Spanish should be invariably considered as 'the' intermediary language, claiming that other languages like Portuguese (more similar to Galician than Spanish) or English could also be considered.

<sup>9</sup> The Basque and Catalan contexts have been thoroughly studied by Elisabete Manterola Agirrezabalaga (2014) and Josep Ramis (2017) respectively.

<sup>10</sup>In sociolinguistics, diglossia refers to the asymmetrical use of two languages by the same linguistic community, leading to a hierarchical relationship between. According to Donna Patrick (2010, p. 176), at the macrolevel, a minorised language lacks status, prestige, diffusion, standardisation and a normalised functional use, in favour of another normalised language; at the microlevel, a minorised language lacks recognition by speakers of the dominant language, with speakers of the minorised language generally conforming and ultimately adopting the dominant views.

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work, “saying NO to self-translation” (Arrula-Ruiz & Manterola Agirrezabalaga 2019, p.267 emphasis in the original).

The ways Galician women fiction writers have recently faced these dilemmas vary. I have identified three main approaches, which I classify below as invisible self-translation, visible self-translation and double originals. Each of them has different implications in terms of the visibility and recognition potentially gained beyond (and within) the Galician border. I illustrate them in relation to the self-translation practices of Teresa Moure, María Reimóndez and Inma López Silva, three prolific, renowned and award-winning authors in Galicia, who openly claim to be feminists.

### *Invisible self-translation*

*Herba Moura*, by Teresa Moure (2005), quickly became one of the most awarded books in Galician literary history. Following its success in 2006, the Catalan translation *Herba d'enamorar* and the Spanish self-translation *Hierba mora* were published. As analysed elsewhere (Castro, 2011), Moure slightly 'recreated' some visible details of the source text in her Spanish version, e.g. changing the Galician name of the main character 'Einés' to the Spanish 'Inés', and deleting the final line of the text which located the plot in the Galician city of Santiago de Compostela. The self-translation published by Lumen (an imprint of the transnational publishing corporation Random Mondadori) does not give any evidence that the book is indeed the Spanish version of a book previously published in a different language, not even in the copyright page, where no mention of the original title can be found. When the Portuguese (2007), Italian (2008) and Dutch (2008) translations were published, all of them acknowledged in their copyright pages that the Spanish 'original' had been taken as source text, despite having professionals who could have translated directly from Galician<sup>11</sup>. Perhaps the most striking consequence of this was that Portuguese readers ended up reading a story that had been recreated for a Spanish audience instead of directly accessing the Galician text, which would have been closer to the Portuguese (for example, keeping the Galician and Portuguese name 'Einés' rather than the Spanish 'Inés'). Therefore, Moure's (un)intentional domestication of her self-translation for the Spanish reader ultimately led to the cultural appropriation of her book, presented as Spanish literature both in Spain and abroad.

### *Visible self-translation*

María Reimóndez's (2012) *En vías de extinción* was the author's fourth novel and the only one she has self-translated into Spanish, despite her being a fully qualified professional translator and interpreter. Her 2014 self-translation is clearly 'recreated' too, but in a different way. She takes responsibility of all interventions and gives priority to the Galician text to the extent that Spanish-language readers are asked to position themselves in relation to it. The Spanish text was the first novel ever published by KNS, a small Galician press specialising in books for dog

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<sup>11</sup> The latest translation into English published by Small Stations in 2018 was done directly from the Galician text.

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training, mainly translations into Spanish (often by Reimóndez herself). Although the title in Galician could have been identical in Spanish (the term 'vías' exists in both languages), Reimóndez exerted her privileged position as author-translator to alter it, replacing 'vías' (lit. 'ways') by 'peligro' (lit. danger), so that the two books could be differentiated. The copyright page of *En peligro de extinción* visibly states the original title and provides twice, and separately, the name of the author and the translator. The book includes a translator's preface raising awareness about the 'Peligros' or dangers of cultural appropriation that a dominant, colonial reading by a Spanish-language audience may pose. It also includes plenty of explanatory translator's footnotes that remind readers of the foreignness of the text and a final glossary with cultural terms. The titles of the chapters (all of them names of trees) are kept in Galician, without further explanation. The same applies to direct-speech dialogues in the text, which are kept in the source language when written in standard (that is, correct) Galician. However, when the author had used a dialectal variety of Galician in her original, the source text is followed by a 'disruptive' translation into Spanish, offered in smaller case and square brackets. On the author's official website<sup>12</sup> this self-translation is listed alongside all the other translations of her books. Thus, by intentionally publishing in a Galicia-based non-literary small press, Reimóndez is implicitly accepting the limited scope of her textual and paratextual interventions.

### *Double originals*

In February 2020, Inma López Silva announced the simultaneous publication of *O libro da filla* (in Galician) and *El libro de la hija* (in Spanish), the latter published by the already mentioned Lumen imprint (Random Mondadori), where she had also published one previous invisible self-translation. Neither of the two publications are presented as the primary or first text<sup>13</sup>. Instead, the copyright page presents both as simultaneously published and independent from one another. Information about the process of writing and re-writing the text(s) is not available yet and will hopefully be found in paratexts (such as interviews) in the future. On the author's official website<sup>14</sup>, all previously translated and self-translated books are listed in the 'Translations' tab, both on the Galician and the Spanish sites. This double original, however, is announced as a Galician book in the Galician version of the site and as a Spanish book in the Spanish version. Pictures of the different official launches of this novel shared in the author's social media invariably show the two books: the larger dimension of the Spanish book is unquestionably a random fact; yet, it seems to anticipate the asymmetries between the two novels. Consequently, in wanting to reach a wider audience, López Silva's simultaneously published Spanish self-translation can be seen as a primary text, coexisting and competing for readers with the Galician text in a diglossic society.

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.mariareimondez-escritora.com/>

<sup>13</sup> A forthcoming textual analysis of the two books will hopefully offer more insights into the kind of liberties the author may have or have not taken.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.inmalopezsilva.com/>

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## The case of the Anglosphere

With or without a Spanish intermediary text available for increasing the chances of a subsequent translation at a global level, Galician-language women fiction writers have struggled to see their work translated into other languages – not only because of the traditional lack of women writers in translation generally, but also because of the difficulties associated with less translated languages, as already argued. That said, examining the current situation in relation to the English-language book market is particularly interesting and productive for two reasons that I will explain next: (a) the openness that the book industry has been lately experiencing towards translation and (b) the recent specific initiatives developed to promote the translation of women writers.

The latest *Literature across Frontiers* report (Büchler & Trentacosti, 2015) estimates that translations of creative writing into English are overcoming the infamous 3 per cent figure, to make up 4 or 5 per cent of all publications. The number of translations is growing significantly in absolute terms, proportionally to the increasing number of books published in general, and sales of foreign fiction are rising every year (Flood 2019). A renovated interest in European languages, including languages of small countries, has been identified, mainly by newly created micro or small independent publishers who are leading the translation business (Chitnis, Stougaard-Nielsen, Atkin & Milutinović, 2020).

Foreign women authors, however, are still facing barriers (see Carson, 2019) that prevent them from being translated into English. Out of that meagre 4 or 5 per cent of translated literature, less than one third of books in English translation are authored by women writers (see Radzinski, 2014). To challenge this, different initiatives have been put in place over the last five years, commonly referred to as WIT (Women In Translation). Examples include the #WITMonth campaign on Twitter by @WIT\_Read, the Women in Translation tumblr, the review blog Translating Women, the Warwick Prize for Women in Translation, Project Plume, the Year of Publishing Women, or the Translating Women conference in London (for a comprehensive description, see Castro & Vassallo, 2020).

Despite these two favourable trends, Galician women novelists are encountering numerous checkpoints and roadblocks<sup>15</sup>. In 1999, María Xosé Queizán became the first woman fiction writer to have a book translated into English (*A semellanza*, in Peter Lang). Between 2000 and 2015, a total of 19 Galician translations were published in book format, but none of them authored by women. The situation started to change in 2017 with four women novelists having their books translated into English. The Bulgaria-based small press Small Stations published authors like Leticia Costas (*Un animal chamado néboa*) and Anxos Sumai (*Así nacen as baleas*) in 2017, and the already mentioned Teresa Moure (*Herba moura*) in 2018, all as part of their series Small Stations Fiction. The publisher, which sells its books online, specialises in literary translation from Galician to English. In fact, a total of 15 books authored by 10 men

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<sup>15</sup> For a full description of all the Galician women in English translation, see Castro (2020).

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novelists have been published so far in this series, making titles by women account for a meagre 16.6 per cent of the total. The fourth Galician writer available in translation is Eva Moreda (*A Veiga é como un tempo distinto*), who had her work published in English by the London-based independent (indie) publishing group, Francis Boutle Publishers.

For indie publishers, “state, supranational and third-sector funding” (Chitnis, Stougaard-Nielsen, Atkin & Milutinovic, 2017, p.12) is vital. Some funding bodies provide grants in the target context, such as those awarded by the Welsh Books Council, Arts Council England or English PEN Award, the latter being granted to Moreda's translation by Craig Patterson, which covered for up to 75 per cent of the translation expenses. Most commonly, translation support policies come from the source cultures. Publishers interested in Galician women novelists can apply to the grants by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (which covers all co-official languages in Spain) or the translation grants by the Xunta de Galicia regional government (see Castro & Linares (2019) for details). Small Stations regularly gets translation grants from the Xunta, often becoming the only foreign publisher that manages to successfully secure them for translating into English. This may help understand, for example, that the Bulgarian indie company published nine titles in 2016, “almost half of the books from Spain coming out that year in English translation” (Post, 2019a, n.p.), having “literally cornered the market on Galician literature” in the Anglosphere (Post, 2019b, n.p.).

The fact that Small Stations successfully secures these grants is no panacea. They present numerous formal and practical issues that hinder the application process to new publishers interested in Galician fiction as it became evident in the questions posed by different stakeholders to the translation grants coordinator, during the *Internationalization of Galician Literature in English Translation* symposium (see Rubal, 2019). In sum, if the administration is to truly promote the internationalisation of Galician writers generally, and women fiction writers in particular, a number of action points are urgently needed. Among them, the creation of an online translation rights catalogue, in which both women and men writers are represented, displaying the 'selling points' of particular books to a foreign readership. This would hopefully lead to greater diversity in the type of publishers committed with Galician fiction. A second aspect would be setting up a cultural institution with competences in translation decision-making processes, which could also offer support by representing Galician writers in book fairs. Besides specific measures to rethink the purpose and design of the translation grants detailed elsewhere and the way they are disseminated (Castro & Linares, 2019), it would also be crucial that all decisions about which titles presented by publishers will be awarded a translation grant, funded by taxpayer's money, are considered from a gender approach.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have analysed the situation of Galician women fiction writers regarding their (in)visibility beyond the Galician literary field. In doing so, I have emphasised the power of translation as a tool for intercultural exchanges and cross-border connectivity. I hope to have demonstrated that discussions about (dis)closing the gender gap in literary translation have

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both local and global implications. At a local level, they concern the marginalisation that women writers may be undergoing in their source cultures, as it is the case in the Galician literary field, as thoroughly examined by Moreda Rodríguez in Chapter 6. At a global level, they concern the consequences for audiences in different target cultures who may be denied access to great foreign literature simply because it is authored by women and/or originally written in a minoritised language.

Given precisely their double affiliation as women and writers in a minoritised language, my aim was to shed light both on the barriers Galician women fiction writers may face when trying to widen their readership through translation and on the strategies put in place to overcome them. In order to do so, I drew on Moreda Rodríguez's findings about the greater degree of marginalisation experienced by some Galician women novelists –such as Bardelás, Dacosta and Heinze– subjected to a number of additional context-sensitive factors. This provided the necessary context to frame my research about translation within a different group of Galician women novelists, i.e. those who have achieved a certain degree of visibility in their source culture.

Regarding translation within multilingual Spain, I have identified that Galician women fiction writers often try to overcome the alleged lack of interest coming from the target cultures (Basque, Catalan and Spanish) by resorting to self-translating their own works into Spanish. The different scenarios discussed in this chapter concerned acclaimed feminist writers for whom literature is a form of social activism, and as such they all wanted to share their feminist messages with a wider audience. Negotiating their two-fold condition as feminist women authors and Galician-language writers proved to be challenging. The three tendencies discussed suggest that self-translation into the hegemonic language may end up having undesired consequences in a number of ways: some authors may reach higher visibility by publishing with established imprints (Lumen), but they do so at the expense of being 'appropriated' by the Spanish target culture (e.g. Moure and López Silva); while some other authors are consciously emphasising the cultural specificity of their projects, but they do so at the expense of having a very limited dissemination by being published by a small non-literary press based in Galicia (e.g. Reimóndez).

As regards to translation of fiction books by Galician women writers into English, my study revealed an immense gap, despite the openness that the English-language book market is showing to translation and despite all the recent WIT initiatives in place. Following the first novel ever translated into English and published in the USA in 1999 (Queizán), three authors were published in Bulgaria in 2017 and 2018 (Costas, Sumai and Moure) and only one was published by a UK-based publisher in 2019 (Moreda). This overview contrasts with the considerably higher number of Galician men novelists in English translation, which suggests that the marginalisation suffered by women writers has more to do with their gender and not so much with the minoritised status of the language they write in. In these circumstances, and in line with Moreda Rodríguez's conclusions in Chapter 6 about the Galician literary field, from

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a translation angle claims about a 'boom' of women novelists must be also read with caution. It is therefore urgent to reassess the already deficient translation support policies funded by the Galician government so that a gender approach is implemented. For, if literary translation allows us to improve social understandings of diversity in our multilingual world, we must not forget that readers from around the globe deserve to also get access to writing by women from minoritised contexts.

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<sup>16</sup> I would like to express my disagreement with the APA Citation Style that requires references to be listed under authors' last names and initials (rather than full first names), which is known to erase women's contributions to academic disciplines (see Braun 1997), as well as my disappointment with the lack flexibility shown by the publisher to challenge these patriarchal norms. I would also like to emphasise that research conducted for this chapter is mainly informed by other women's previous research (36 women out of the total of 50 authors listed in my References section). Making this explicit is indeed a way of helping closing the gender gap in the academy.

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