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How Rebel Can Translation Be? A (Con)textual Study of *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* and Two Translations into Spanish

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1. Introduction

Over just a few months, the publication of *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* (henceforth *Good Night Stories*) by Italian-born authors Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo (2016) resulted in a huge commercial triumph in the USA, becoming a reference in the field of feminist success stories for young children. What started as a modest Kickstarter crowdfunded initiative aiming to produce a different book for children, which could inspire “alternative” fairy tales by drawing on the life stories of one hundred *extraordinary women*, soon became the most funded book in the history of fundraising for children’s literature publication. A second volume of bedtime stories and a *Rebel Girls Journal* followed the successful first book and an official website with videos, podcasts, audiobooks and merchandising was launched.² Confirming its bestseller status, the first volume of stories has been translated into nearly fifty languages worldwide. Consideration of the various re-inscriptions of the text in different languages, cultures and editorial frameworks is significant to understand how it actually integrates networks of women appealing to build more democratic and plural voices, not only abroad through translation but also in the USA.

Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it seeks to analyse the texts, paratexts and contexts relating to *Good Night Stories*. Special attention will be paid to the nature of the (editorial) project and the construction of feminist subjectivities and discourses in this explicitly collective text, as they are key in order to appreciate the type of feminism materialised in the collection. Secondly, taking this source-text related analysis as a starting point, this chapter attempts to assess the cultural and political implications of *Cuentos de buenas noches para niñas rebeldes* (henceforth *Cuentos de buenas noches*), translated into Spanish by Ariadna Molinari Tato and published in Argentina and Spain in 2017. In effect, these two contexts merit separate attention not only because they are regulated by different linguistic, editorial and translation policies, but also because they are shaped by distinct feminist and literary traditions. Our focus will be to explore how feminist narratives present in the source text travel in translation and how they are marketed and received in the two target cultures. In other words, the analysis examines how these narratives are variously subjected to local and global

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² See: <https://www.rebelgirls.com/>

resignifications through translation. The study of reception in Argentina and Spain will be based on media commentaries and specialised reviews in feminist and literary venues. Trying to determine how *rebel* these translations may be; i.e., to what extent they strengthen a transnational feminist perspective that facilitates more plural and democratic encounters, the study of these three editions goes beyond a comparative textual/paratextual analysis of (translation) strategies and techniques, to also examine the wider (con)texts which frame these collective editorial initiatives and projects possible in the USA, Argentina and Spain. Indeed, this case study is particularly productive to show how relevant political and gender ideologies in *Good Night Stories* may be reconfigured through translation to adjust to different audiences and cultures. The fact that different varieties of Spanish are used in the translations make for an ideal research case inasmuch as they enable a comparative study of the discursive, social and political resignifications the book may have at both sides of the Atlantic. Understood as a complex hermeneutic process, each of these translations conveys a worldview of their own which, in this particular case, differently relates to the Iberian and the Argentinean contexts.³

2. How rebel is the source text? A feminist analysis of the US-American book and the Rebel Girls project

Good Night Stories is often said to have reinvented the fairy tale genre by introducing stories of “real” women. Fairy tales have long been regarded as sites for asserting, questioning and subverting ideologies of gender and (meta)discourses on gender (Haase 2004). The stories borrow the typical opening fairy tale formulae “once (upon a time), there was,” which provide a cohesive narrative framework for the collection of stories. In contrast with this homogenizing structure, the entries include quotes attributed to the women in the stories and the illustrations by sixty female artists, which compose a heterogeneous canvas of technique, texture and colour, adding to a more vivid portrayal. The reinvention of the classical genre, mentioned on the back cover of the book and often alluded in reviews and marketing campaigns, should be read in conjunction with the paratextual indication on the credits page. A succinct note warns readers about the nature of the book as a work of creative nonfiction: “inspired by the life and adventures of one hundred heroic women,” the stories should not be read as “an encyclopedic account of events” (2016: credits page). In line with feminist fairy tales, the book is reportedly meant to encourage young readers to develop their enormous potential and construct a new kind of rebellious femininity. However, our analysis will show how authors’ strategies clash with these feminist ideals. On the other hand, some of these choices, if preserved, may create dilemmas for translation and reception in different parts of the world.

Good Night Stories has enjoyed a place of privilege in the market and received many prizes and awards. Listed as a *Sunday Times* and *New York Times* bestseller, the book was named Blackwell’s book of the year and Foyles’ Children’s Book of the year in 2017.

³ Our analysis is limited to the translations published in Argentina and Spain. Translations published in other Latin American countries and in other official languages in Spain may be affected according to other local/contextual resignifications.

It was also shortlisted for Children’s Book of the Year in 2018. *The Washington Post* acclaimed the book as one of the best to raise “activist kids” (Allard 2017). Notwithstanding, the book also met with criticism and even censorship. In certain circles, for example, the criteria for selecting women were contested (Schaub 2017; Tyler 2017; Scutts 2018). The struggle for women’s equality in the book is disputed by Tricia Lowther (2018), who argues that classifying books specifically for girls and boys may contribute to reinforce gender and social stereotypes rather than break them. On account of its “detrimental influence,” the book was banned in Turkey for children under the age of eighteen (Docherty 2019).

One of the most widely-noted facts about *Good Night Stories* is that it was born out of a rewards-based crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter, which broke all records in its category (Stengel 2016; Eyre 2018b; King 2018; Haithman 2020). Originally aimed at USD 40,000, the campaign raised USD 675,614 on Kickstarter (13,454 backers) over one month and was later tactically moved to Indiegogo’s InDemand platform, where the sum gathered has now reached USD1,287,676 (24,902 backers). Co-author Favilli disclosed that crowdfunding was “used as a customer discovery tool” (Favilli in Stengel 2016). Ample media coverage was also secured to guarantee the success of this unprecedented crowdfunding campaign (Actman Becker 2016; Pittman 2016; *Real Simple* 2016; Stengel 2016). Yet, in this context, the prosperity of the campaign comes to represent something other than just the instrument for materialising a book project. As Favilli herself has declared: “The path to the American Dream may be lined with crowdfunding” (Favilli in Stengel 2016). The book can symbolically be regarded as a celebration of the culture of success, achieved through hard work and virtue, attributed to the Dream (Hochschild 1995; Schudson 2004). Close scrutiny of the book’s paratexts and of the selection of stories, as we will demonstrate in this chapter, confirms the inscription of an authorial voice in the US-American system of values. By reminding readers of their (unalienable) rights to freedom and happiness, the Preface explicitly recognises the pillars of the US Declaration of Rights (1776): “A world where each of us will be able to say with confidence: ‘I am free’,” “May we remember every day that we have the right to be happy” (Favilli and Cavallo 2016: n.p.).⁴ In consonance with this philosophy, the project is framed within the parameters of individuality and entrepreneurship characteristic of “free-market feminism” (Fraser 2013) rather than within collective action and social solidarity. Reduced to a dream of individuality, stories such as those of Michele Obama and Malala Yousafzai do not come close to represent the struggles of historically marginalized communities.

The first edition of the book was published in 2016 by Timbuktu Labs, Inc., the digital publishing startup co-founded by Favilli and Cavallo in 2011. Based in California, Timbuktu Labs claims to be an independent publisher and to support copyright. It has recently been indicated that the company “has sold 5.5 million books in 49 languages, and [that] its podcast has been downloaded 4.5 million times” (Haithman 2020). Authors

⁴ In this analysis, we have used an unpaginated e-book corresponding to the first US-American edition.

Favilli and Cavallo donated USD 100,000 from the proceeds of their book to the charity founded by Malala Yousafzai (Eyre 2018a). Timbuktu Labs made a smart move when they sold publication rights to Random House for all the other English-speaking markets. The maneuver proved to be strategic and highly profitable, not just to conquer those markets but also to all future endeavours of the Rebel Girls brand. Penguin Random House launched an aggressive campaign on social media and outdoor advertising, which aimed at placing the book as “the ideal read for girls (and boys!) of all ages,” “an agenda-setting book,” and “the book under every Christmas tree in 2017” (Robertson 2018). The global bestseller was marked as “the definitive book of the year” by *The Guardian* (O’Farrell 2017).

The book project and its source of finance have been the subject of multiple news articles and interviews. The conception of the book project seems to initially respond to driving personal and professional motivations. Former Silicon Valley tech, Favilli (2015) denounced facing gender discrimination in a male dominated business scenario.⁵ To a certain extent, *Good Night Stories* came as a response to this open and continuing hostility, and as a means to empower girls and women in general. In fact, the Italian authors are also said to have started a Rebel Girls Movement (Eyre 2018a). Intended as an effort to fight sexism and having no source of finance in Italy, the book was produced in English and in the USA, where “ti spingono subito a trasformare le idee in progetti concreti” (Favilli in Sarto 2016) [“they immediately push you to transform ideas into concrete projects”].⁶ In developing their idea, Favilli and Cavallo made use of pioneering research into gender representation in children’s literature and in children’s lives to scientifically support the project (McCabe et al. 2011; Bian, Leslie and Cimpian 2017). In various news articles and interviews, authors have commented on research findings showing that gender stereotypes, still dominant in children’s literature and media industry, have quite a negative impact on girls’ self-esteem who, by the age of 6, seem to feel inferior to boys (Favilli and Cavallo 2017; Villeda 2017). The presentation of feminine “real” models in the book could, according to the authors, help girls build up their confidence. The book they had in mind would be presented as a “global and inclusive collection of stories” (Favilli in Jones 2018) with the capacity “to create a more equal world” (Favilli and Cavallo in Docherty 2019). Identifying a need in society as well as a gap in the market of children’s books, Italian authors met with the golden opportunity to develop their project.

The design of a high quality, attractive product which could engage diverse audiences of children, parents and carers worldwide in such a competitive market was not an easy task. Authors Favilli and Cavallo did more than put the product on that market: they re-instilled the idea of the *rebel girl* paving the way for building the Rebel Girls brand. Adopting a

⁵ This commercial profile can also be seen in Favilli’s LinkedIn page, where she portrays herself as a bestselling author “with a successful track record of developing, launching, and monetizing editorial products” (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/elena-favilli-a1b470b>). Cavallo stopped her association with Favilli in 2019 to start her own project (<https://www.francescatherebel.com/>)

⁶ All translations into English of press materials are our own.

rather casual rhetoric, Favilli explained they had thought it would be “cool” to put the word “rebel” next to “good night stories” (Favilli in Blake 2017) in order to transform what the authors considered to be a current negative stereotype in different cultures and languages. To them, “being a ‘rebel girl’ means living on your own terms and resisting society’s expectations” (Favilli and Cavallo in Sagramola 2018). Such a conception would be accompanied by the choice of one hundred tales of extraordinary women.

Far from that, both the selection of stories and the authors’ understanding of the “rebel girl” and “female rebellion” become, in our view, a critical area of contention for a number of reasons. Firstly, the use of “rebel” to endorse women’s activism is marketed as original, establishing no relation with previous uses of the term in the field of feminism. In fact, the epithet “rebel girl” had already been productive in the USA to characterise feminist activist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964), “the first rebel girl” (Scutts 2018). More recently, the appellative “rebel girls” has been used to distinguish the action of youth activists across the Americas (Taft 2011). Secondly, the view of female rebellion in the book is intimately related to that of success, as most stories are, in fact, told from a success perspective. Even when the fate of the heroines involved was sometimes tragic, the eventual costs of rebellion are generally disregarded in these inspirational stories (Scutts 2018). Such is the case of Amelia Earhart and Policarpa Salavarrieta who, on account of different reasons, find an early and violent death. Lastly, in keeping with the tenets of both the American Dream and market-feminism, action in the stories is typically portrayed as individual, disregarding the influence of contextual and historical conditions. The story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott illustrates this point. As a result, the power of collective action in women’s movements is also blurred.

The selection of women and stories has, according to the authors, responded to various criteria. A general criterion implied adopting an intersectional approach so that the women included would represent a wide diversity of gender and ethnic identities, sexual orientations, religious beliefs and occupation (Villeda 2017). Diversity is not particularly emphasised in the volume. For example, Coy Mathis is presented as an elementary school student when her inclusion in the book is actually related to her transgender condition and the case she won against her school. A further selection criterion particularly established the focus on “notable women,” from different professions and fields, whose stories could be considered not mainstream, and from countries not typically represented in children’s media (Blake 2017, Sagramola 2018). Additionally, the stories would have to picture women from present and past times whose stories could be appealing from a child’s perspective (Dansberger Duque 2017). There remains the notion that women’s achievements are only measurable against what men have done or can do, as is the case of Amna Al Haddad. Other women such as Grace O’Malley are depicted as having to act like men to be accepted. In some cases, women’s portrayal verges on objectification as is exemplified by Maud Stevens Wagner’s entry. The prospective selection was adequately tested before the official launching of the crowdfunding campaign. Favilli and Cavallo built an email list with potential backers/customers of the project to whom they sent the story of a remarkable woman every week and asked for their feedback (Stengel 2016).

Still, the final selection of notable women and stories was not without controversy among readers. Favilli and Cavallo were the target of criticism due to the inclusion of Burmese Nobel Prize for Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who is held responsible for standing by as the military in her country conducted an atrocious campaign of abuse and torture against the Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims.⁷ While many parents (and the more general public) expressed concern regarding the Burmese leader, surprisingly few readers or reviewers commented on Margaret Thatcher's entry. Meagan Tyler's (2017) critical review in her feminist blog, however, states that Thatcher's individualism, damaging conservative policies and dubious liaisons with powerful dictators should exclude her from the select collection.

Similarly, the occupation criterion adopted in the volume is rather unclear and inconsistent. A factor to consider in the description of professions is that the story and legacy of women such as Elizabeth I, Catherine the Great or Hatshepsut are determined, at least partly, by birth, which makes it difficult to see them as "real" sources of inspiration. Regarding the geographical distribution, the book was meant to be "as diverse and inclusive as possible" (Favilli and Cavallo in Dansberger Duque 2017), and oriented to incorporate countries "not usually represented in children's media" (Cavallo in Blake 2017). Yet, authors Favilli and Cavallo ended up with a limited choice of forty-three countries. The representativeness of the effective selection in the repertoire is contentious as most of the countries actually belong to the American (55 per cent) and European continents (27 per cent), the two leading nations being USA (30 per cent) and UK (9 per cent). A similar criterion is adopted for the selection of the illustrators in the collection. Seventeen artists are identified as Italian and fifteen as US-American, altogether responsible for fifty-two of the illustrations.

3. How rebel can translation be? Production and reception of the Argentinean and Spanish versions

As it can be concluded from section 2, the self-declared intention to promote plural identities crossed by different lifestyles, historical times, racial/ethnic diversity and geographical heterogeneity remains unfulfilled in the source text. In what follows, we seek to investigate whether the Argentinean and Spanish translations⁸ have been "rebel" enough to restore the lost announced narrative. A transformative *rebel* translation could enable equally transformative reading experiences by manifesting itself against the source text and also by making the translated book into a true transnational feminist endeavour. An act of mediation and connectivity, translation is undoubtedly a fruitful site of intervention facilitating political solidarity networks between women across the globe through the articulation of more democratic, plural and collective voices. In effect, a

⁷ Authors claimed they would not exclude the idea of removing Aung San Suu Kyi from later editions of the book (Wood 2017).

⁸ The expressions "Argentinean translation" (Arg.) and "Spanish translation" (Spa.) are used to refer to the translation into the Spanish language published respectively in Argentina and Spain.

critical perspective inspired by transnational feminist translation would have been productive to honour the liberating promise of the source text. Transnational feminist translation emphasises the ethical role translation has in facilitating cross-border and cross-linguistic alliances between women, which challenge prevailing hegemonies and regimes of oppression operating in neoliberal societies (Castro, Ergun, Flotow and Spoturno 2020).

Transnational feminist translation (studies) draws on theories that emerged to destabilise or decolonise the hegemonic position of so-called international or global (i.e. western-centric) feminisms (Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Alexander and Mohanty 1997). Its productiveness lies in combining the struggle against patriarchal structures and systemic inequalities with the struggle against power dynamics among and within women. To this effect, feminist transnational approaches foreground an intersectional perspective that considers how race, gender, sex, class and other layers of oppression interact. Questioning asymmetrical power dynamics is crucial to challenging oppressive narratives such as those defended by “liberal feminism,” which, being complicit with neoliberal values and individualist assumptions about what constitutes women’s professional success, disregards the way in which social structures of inequality disadvantage women and bases a few women’s successes on the exploitation of 99 per cent of women (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2018). Revealing and reverting power asymmetries is equally central to unmasking traditional hegemonic formulations from “mainstream feminism,” which promotes white, middle class, heterosexual and cisgender women as the only political subjects of feminism, therefore cooperating with a political whiteness allowing privileged women to enact violence while organising to end sexual violence (Phipps 2020).

Restoring the transnational feminist character of this project would entail transformative transgressive recreation through different translation and editorial interventions in the wider context of the two closely related, but different, editorial projects targeted at Spanish-speaking markets. Translation as a strategy of intervention materialises locally through a variety of discursive procedures operating at textual and paratextual levels in the translations. Meanwhile, the more comprehensive translation and editorial policies, which reflect and are reflected *also* by translation procedures, contribute to reinforce or question the *status quo* (Castro and Spoturno 2020). Evidence of specific translation techniques and the introduction of translation paratexts in the form of notes, prefaces, glossaries, among others, add to the definition and contextualisation of the translation and the editorial project within the receiving audiences. In the case under study, it is particularly relevant to determine whether translation and editorial interventions enhance the potential that the selection of stories may have for building cross-border alliances in the target cultures. An accurate assessment of the translation and editorial projects leading to the publication of *Cuentos de buenas noches* in Argentina and Spain must consider at least three factors which work at different levels: (1) the re-inscription of the genre in the translation, often a key aspect to consider when dealing with books meant for children, is not a determining factor in this case; (2) the franchise and bestselling condition of the

source text imposes specific global market editorial constraints; and (3) in translation projects of this magnitude, the ultimate responsibility for some textual interventions does not lie solely with the translator, but usually depends on other mediating agents (including proof-readers, commissioning editors or publishers) acting as gate-keepers with power to decide how the translated product is going to be presented in the target culture.

The translation of *Good Night Stories* into Spanish was commissioned to Ariadna Molinari Tato, a Mexican published translator in the fields of gender, environmental and healthy diet issues.⁹ Grupo Planeta, a well-established global publishing corporation, which currently operates in Spain, Portugal, France and different countries in Latin America, bought the world Spanish rights and firstly published the translation in Mexico in 2017.¹⁰ The imprints chosen to launch the project in Argentina and in Spain appeal to different group ages: while the Argentinean version, published in Buenos Aires, is credited to Planeta, in Spain the book was published in Barcelona by Destino infantil y juvenil,¹¹ the Planeta imprint for children and young adult literature. Unlike the Argentinean case, the choice of this specific imprint explicitly categorises the book as children literature in Spain. According to Iván Barreto, the editor of the Spanish version, Grupo Planeta developed an interest in the project in 2016 motivated by the successful donation campaign through which the authors managed to raise three times the targeted amount of USD 40,000 (Barreto in Catanzaro 2017). Marta Bueno, the editorial director for children's literature at Grupo Planeta, further explains that, in betting on this project, the message the book communicates was crucial: “el objetivo no es solo dar un mensaje de éxito femenino, sino que las pequeñas entiendan que equivocarse también está bien si luchan por lo que les gusta” (Bueno in Bazán 2019) [“the aim is not just to send a message of feminist success but to [help] little girls understand that making mistakes is okay as long as they fight for what they want”]. Along the same lines, Mexican editor Carmina Rubrancos credits the success of the book to the alleged universality of the message it conveys (in Blanc 2017).

Both the Argentinean and the Spanish editions were a success in terms of the number of editions published.¹² According to data released by the publisher in June 2019, in Spain the book made it to the bestseller list for 90 weeks and sold 250,000 copies in 2018 alone (Bazán 2019). A similar situation is registered in Argentina, where the translated book soon became a bestseller (Gigena 2018). This was reflected in the good reception it generally encountered in blog reviews, media articles and commentaries on social media posts. The considerable impact these translations have had can also be estimated through

⁹ Molinari Tato has also contributed to an edited volume on feminist issues (Olivares Mansuy 2016) and published a piece in *Debates feministas*.

¹⁰ As informed on the credits page of the Spanish book, the translation copyright belongs to Molinari Tato and the Editorial Planeta Mexicana. The Argentinean book grants the translation copyright to the translator only.

¹¹ A translation into Catalan was also published in Barcelona in 2018 by Estrella Polar, another imprint of Grupo Planeta. Grupo Planeta belongs to the transnational corporation Grup 62.

¹² Planeta also published the Spanish translations of the second volume of stories (2018), which despite being part of a series, was commissioned to a different translator.

the great number of editorial projects they inspired both in the Argentinean and the Spanish literary markets (Elmert 2018; Guerrero 2018, Larralde and Cameros Sierra 2018; Pigna 2018; Rea and Matarozzo 2019; Uve 2018, among others). The level of attention received in the media differed in both countries according to a Google search we conducted in Argentinean and Spanish websites, which, despite its inherent limitations, showed considerably fewer hits in Argentina.

In Argentina, the book received positive reviews in well-known newspapers such as *La Nación* (Blanc 2017), *Clarín* (Díaz Virzi 2017) and *Página 12* (Santoro 2018), mainly stressing its commercial success all over the world and the book's potential for "unprincessing" ("desprincesar") female characters and presenting male characters in a different light.¹³ The book has actually prompted few detailed critiques in Argentina. An exception is the online discussion of the book, in which children's literature author Graciela Montes (in Garralón 2018) stresses the idea that children's literature should not lose its possibility for disruption. Children's literature is often subject to strict vigilance, typically including lessons and mandates children are supposed to learn. In this same sense, Spanish critic Ana Garralón (2018) points out the inconvenience of books such as this one which seem to aim at asserting what is politically (and explicitly) correct. The underlying risk is that children's literature and young readers are regarded as having little possibility to create new worlds at symbolic levels. Curiously enough, no commentary is made in these reviews and articles about the fact that the book is a translation or about the entry dedicated to Evita Perón, the only Argentinean woman in the book.

By contrast, in Spain, the book received close and varied media attention, with newspaper reports published in *El Periódico* (Catanzaro 2017), *Agencia EFE* (Bazán 2019) or *La Vanguardia* (Amat Vendrell 2019). These generally positive pieces, which tend to highlight the American Dream accomplished by the Italian-born authors and their courage to confront the Alpha men at Silicon Valley, often include quotations from the commissioning editors and experts in gender studies. On just one occasion, one of these experts tangentially criticises the sense of heroism that all women must carry to be extraordinary and make the cut: "La idea del 'tú puedes' me parece una estafa, porque lleva a la culpabilidad" (García Ribas in Catanzaro 2017) ["The 'you can do it' attitude seems to me a scam as it leads to guilt"].

A significant fact about the reception in Spain is the large number of blog posts written about the volume. The laudatory tone of most reviews, which stress the geographical, racial and religious diversity in the book, seems to echo the authors' declared liberating narrative. Still, a review published in a religious blog emphasises the anti-Roman Catholic, anti-Spanish and radical leftish activism as well as the gender propaganda the book conveys throughout. Criticism also centres on aspects such as the so-called hypocritical financial success, the choice of women, which reflects the absence of

¹³ Connections with previous similar editorial projects developed both in Argentina and Spain can be readily established (Chirimbote 2015; Sánchez Vergara 2016; Cívico and Parra 2016).

Spaniards and the inclusion of a US-American transgender girl, the over-selection of pro-abortion US-American judges and the erasure of the Roman Catholic condition of some of the women included (Ginés 2019). Out of the nine literary blogs consulted, only two show some sort of moderate and balanced criticism (Beta 2018; Sánchez Rueda 2018), defining the book as a “quiero, pero no puedo en el escalón del feminismo” (Sánchez Rueda 2018) [“I really want but I can’t take a step in the feminism ladder”]. As in the Argentinean case, and despite the abundance of posts in literary blogs, no mention is ever made of the fact that the book is a translation, although one review underlines the typos and mistakes from a (peninsular) Spanish perspective.

4. Paratextual framing: qualitative comparative analysis

The study of the paratextual dimension of *Good Night Stories* is crucial to assess the full materialisation of the Rebel Girls project. Originally defined as a “zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of pragmatics and strategy” (Genette 1997: 2, emphasis in the original), paratexts articulate precise reading instructions while they also contribute to the construction of an authorial voice or ethos (Amossy 2009; Spoturno 2017). Even if there are no target-system paratexts *per se*, in the target texts, the translation of paratexts readjusts these reading instructions with a consequent impact on the configuration of the work as a whole. As noted earlier, by an act of paratextual omission, the genre of the book is refashioned in the Argentinean and Spanish versions, in which there are no traces of the note on the credits page of the source text categorising the book as a work of creative nonfiction. By omitting this note, the translations can be now read as an encyclopaedic and/or literary account of these women’s lives.

As much as in many other global editorial projects, the peritextual dimension of the texts in translation seems to be regulated by common marketing strategies.¹⁴ This means that the binding and typesetting of the book as well as the covers, titles, dedication, epigraphs, preface and other sections are kept as unalterable as possible. All the illustrations are duly retained in both translations.¹⁵ Some changes, though, have been made in the contents page in the translations to correct the alphabetical listing of women using their first names in all cases.¹⁶ The span of time between the publication of the source text and the translations is kept to a minimum, which creates a strategic network of publications, (re)translations, in various markets quite simultaneously. In keeping with the Rebel Girls project, the translation of the source text is made to fit into a market of global entertainment media. The presence of the translator of the book is virtually obliterated in the target texts, which should, disregarding the languages and cultures involved, look generally alike and after their fertile source. In the same fashion, the intervention of other mediating agents —be it the the translator, proof-reader or editor— in the process of

¹⁴ See, for example, the translation of the *Harry Potter* series (Lathey 2016) and *Harry Potter* as a synergistic entertainment product (Tanner 2013).

¹⁵ Each of the illustrators also produce their own construction of the stories confronting the readers of the translation with at least two interpretations, that of the translator and that of the illustrator (Willson 2020).

¹⁶ This affects the identification of the two Chinese women in the collection.

translation is made invisible, as none of the translations include any target-system paratexts (translator's notes, prefaces). Paratexts designed to promote children's appropriation of the type of life experiences in the volume are kept in the two target texts ("Write your story" and "Draw your portrait"). However, the invitation for positive reviews at the end of the Authors section is removed from both translations. Chances for interaction with favourable readers and their more vocal participation as consumers in the Rebel Girl merchandising market are therefore reduced.

Still, some degree of localisation has proven necessary for the product to get into such diverse markets. Different norms of translation regulate the discursive economy of the two target texts to generally accommodate to the receiving communities' diction. Acknowledgement of language diatopic variation is duly made in the language adaptation made in the Argentinean version by a language corrector named Lucero Elizabeth Vázquez Téllez. Interestingly, no linguistic adaptation to peninsular Spanish is recognised on the credits page in the Spanish text. Variation in the use of the second person plural pronoun is probably the most prominent difference in the adaptation process, *ustedes*, being the rule in the Argentinean edition, and *vosotros*, in the Spanish edition. Grammatical and lexical adjustments are introduced accordingly. Observance to the rules for punctuation, accents and typographical conventions, prescribed by the *Real Academia Española* [Royal Spanish Academy], is not systematic in any of the two versions.

As far as the selection of stories is concerned, both the Argentinean and the Spanish versions keep the controversial entry of Aung San Suu Kyi's story. In this respect, the main difference between the two translations is the replacement in the Argentinean version of Thatcher's story by the German anti-Nazi political activist Sophie Scholl (Arg.:178). Rather than a translator's decision, this change could respond to editorial policies and the need to ensure commercial success in the local market, where the perspective towards the Malvinas War adopted in the source text could have provoked harsh criticism. This noticeable ideological intervention in the contents of the book is carried out silently.

The translation of certain discursive aspects in the paratextual sections such as the Preface, the Acknowledgments and the Rebels' Hall of Fame including the names of all backers of the project, is most deserving of attention. Remarkably, the translation augments binarism and inconsistency when it comes to the recreation of gender-related nouns and forms. At a grammatical level, it is significant that the masculine gender is very often used as (it if was) a generic form in the translations into Spanish, following "the Male-As-Norm principle when translating genderless forms" (Braun 1997: 3) —a sexist practice in translation with material consequences (Castro 2013). The use of so-called masculine generic forms is alternated in the translations with the added bifurcation of genders ("la inmensa confianza que nuestros seguidores y seguidoras," Arg.: xi, Spa.:11 / "the deep trust that our backers," n.p.; "Deseamos que cada lector y lectora,"

Arg.:xii, Spa.:12/ “May each reader,” n.p.).¹⁷ In some cases, the employment of feminine forms in the source text becomes gender neutralised in the translation, in which, for instance, an unmarked noun such as “artistas” [artists], is used to render the explicitly feminine compound “female artists.” Inconsistencies are also revealed in the translations when unmarked formulae such as “May we all remember” and “we are building together” are rendered through feminine forms: “Y quizás así cada *una* de nosotras recordemos/recordará a diario...” (Arg.: xii, Spa.:12); “el mundo que estamos construyendo *juntas*,” Arg.:xii, Spa.:12). The Rebels’ Hall of Fames, which is packed with women’s names, is curiously translated as “Salón de la fama de *los* rebeldes,” in which rebely is identified with a masculine plural generic form through the use of the masculine article “los.” The choice could be read as excluding the many *women* backers of the project as well as the *niñas rebeldes* imagined in this book.

5. From the discursive construction of women’s images to the negotiation of linguistic and cultural identities in the translations

The selection and analysis of our corpus, portraying the ten women originally from Spanish-speaking territories, aim at establishing connections between the discursive representation of these women and the linguistic, translation and editorial policies adopted the target texts. This specific corpus includes the three stories from Mexico (doctor Matilde Montoya, 1859–1939; painter Frida Kahlo, 1907–1954; activist and politician Eufrosina Cruz, 1979), two from Cuba (ballerina Alicia Alonso, 1921–2019; drummer Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, c. 1922); and one story from each of the remaining five countries: Dominican Republic (activists Mirabal Sisters, 1920s–1960), Bolivia (mountaineers Cholita Climbers, c. 1968–); Colombia (spy Policarpa Salavarrieta, 1795–1817); Chile (writer Isabel Allende, 1942–); and Argentina (politician Evita Perón, 1919–1952). As it can be readily noticed, Spain and the large US-Latina community remain unrepresented in the collection of stories. Through a qualitative comparative methodology and within the framework of transnational feminist translation studies, we will specifically look at various discursive and cultural aspects that contribute to shape or mitigate the intersectional character in the representation of women in our corpus.

As noted in section 2, *Good Night Stories* features some individual and collective entries quite problematically. In stories examined the presentation of both individual women and groups of women is rooted in oppressive discursive forms rather than in a liberating, empowering narrative. For instance, the entry dedicated to the extraordinary painter Frida Kahlo relegates her figure to a secondary position as compared to that of her husband, Diego Rivera, “Mexico’s most famous artist” (n.p.). Other than diminishing her talent and achievement as a painter, the presentation of Kahlo and Rivera’s romantic story oddly leaves out the emotional abuse Kahlo experienced in their marriage (Herrera 2002; Subizar 2019), which is regarded as one of the “triggers for her psychological disruptions” (Courtney et al. 2017). By excluding this harmful element in their relationship, the

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the emphasis is ours.

narrative uncritically reinforces a romanticised model of love. A feasible site for intervention, rather than challenge this idealised view of Kahlo's image, both translations into Spanish render the story without making any significant feminist intervention.

The portrayal of collective stories in the corpus is also controversial as the sense of women's agency and solidarity is weakened in the source text. Even if announced as a plural entry, the section devoted to the Cholita Climbers, the five Bolivian indigenous women who climbed the Andes in their traditional colourful skirts with no specific mountaineering gear, presents the explicit mention of just one mountaineer. Her name, however, has been adapted to English spelling so that instead of Lidia Huayllas, the text reads *Lydia* Huayllas (n.p.). Altogether only three of the five Aymara women can be seen in the illustration of the entry, but they are anonymised despite the equally crucial role they played in the first expedition (Murciego and Iraburu 2000). This inexplicable loss is not amended in the translation (Arg.:36, Spa.:48). What the translation amends, though, is the spelling of the name *Lidia* and the inadequate explanation of the term "*cholitas*," which is actually an ethnic designation for mestiza women in Bolivia, and not the local word for skirt as the source text indicates. The translations into Spanish correct this stereotypical and reductive depiction by providing the actual term for skirt in italics, "*polleras*," which is current in Argentinean Spanish but not used in peninsular Spanish.¹⁸

Similarly, the Mirabal sisters are inaccurately portrayed as a homogenous group of "four sisters [that] started to fight for freedom" (n.p.) against dictator Raphael Trujillo¹⁹, an idea which is reinforced in the illustration. Nevertheless, it is widely known that only three of the sisters were in fact involved in political activism and, as a result, became fatal victims of Trujillo's regime on 25th November of 1960 (Robinson 2006). No mention is made of their deaths or the fact that in 1999 the United Nations General Assembly designated this date the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in their honour (Alter 2014).²⁰ Again, a conservative translation approach offers no precise contextualisation of the role *three* of these women had nor does it restore the link to the United Nations resolution.

As much as in the paratextual sections, this conservative translation approach is materialised through a general tendency to opt for the use of so-called generic forms, thereby producing an overall discursive mis/underrepresentation of genders other than the masculine in the text. One of the exceptions to this rule, however, is found in Montoya's story, which describes the support she received to pursue her dream of becoming the first doctor in the history of Mexico. Interestingly, in rendering the genderless noun "friends" (n.p.), the translations take different paths by either employing a neutral form ("*amistades*," Arg.:128 [friendship]) or by introducing a marked feminine noun ("*amigas*," Spa.:142 [female friends]). Another important exception in our corpus is the

¹⁸ In some British editions, this use has also been corrected.

¹⁹ This name has also been adapted to English spelling.

²⁰ Death is a taboo in most stories of the collection. Only a partial understanding of women's lives such as the Mirabal Sisters and Salavarieta is made available to the young readers.

translation of the often-used term “girl.” Another significant example is Allende’s entry (Arg.:76, Spa.:88), where “girl” is variously translated as “joven” [youngsters], “mujer” [woman] and “niña” [female child] in the opening paragraph. In the Argentinean version, the term is also rendered through hypocoristic forms such as “pequeña niña” (Arg.:48, Spa.: 60) and “niñitas,” (Arg.:50, Arg.:142). These nuances suggest a fair intervention in the target language, which cannot convey the context-dependent polysemy of “girls” in English with just one term (Mills 2003).

In both translations, the discursive texture is marked by a renewed tension between generalisation and particularisation affecting the rendition of terms denoting relevant linguistic and cultural identities. For example, in the entry dedicated to Cuban drummer Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, the plural noun “papayas” (n.p.) is generalised in Spanish through the use of the hypernym “frutas tropicales” (Arg.:142, Spa.:156) [tropical fruits]. The use of the term “papaya” is not current in all Latin American varieties of Spanish — in Cuba and Nicaragua, for example, the noun may be informally employed to refer to the vagina. By contrast, in other cases, the addition of specific geographical references enables a fresh localisation of the stories. This is the case of Eufrosina Cruz, who is depicted as the “girl who did not want to make tortillas” (n.p.). The term “tortilla,” which may refer to typical (but different) foods both in Spain and Mexico, is contextually specified through the addition of the adjective “mexicana” [Mexican] to supplement Cruz’s identity (Arg.:48; Spa.:60). A similar aim is achieved with the resituation of Evita Perón in “Argentina” (Arg.:50, Spa.:62) rather than in “South America” (n.p.). These discursive adjustments seem to acknowledge the varied cultural awareness readers of the translations may have in different Spanish-speaking regions. Other interventionist procedures in the translations include the temporal re-framing of some of the stories to place conflicts between territories in the past. This strategy, which can be read as an intent to safeguard diplomatic relations between those territories, may also be seen as part of an editorial commercial policy. For instance, when “the Spanish” are presented as “England’s enemies” (n.p.), the translation adds the time adverbial “en ese entonces” [then] to explain that the two countries are no longer enemies: “los españoles que, en ese entonces eran enemigos de los ingleses” (Arg.:60, Spa.: 72). Likewise, when indicating that Colombia was once ruled by “Spain” (n.p.), reference to the country is reformulated to stress temporal distance through “la corona Española” (Arg.:160, Spa.: 174) [the Spanish Crown].

Some degree of linguistic and cultural fine-tuning is also introduced in the back translations of the famous quotes included in the stories. In some cases, the translations fix inaccuracies in the version in English. For instance, the translation into Spanish of Policarpa Salavatierra’s defying claim “I’m a young woman, and you can’t scare me” (n.p.), which in English unifies her dual self-identification as a woman [mujer] and as a young person [joven], restores the Colombian spy’s well-known dictum: “Soy mujer y joven” (Arg.:160, Spa.:174). This contrasts, however, with other stories in which the back translation of famous quotes does not reflect the original diction in Spanish. Such is the case of the quotes attributed to Isabel Allende and Evita Perón in the target texts. In our

corpus, a further note should be made about the translation of the quote announcing Perón's death. In the source text, the quote partially recovers the epithet "the spiritual chief of our [the] nation" (n.p.), which the Argentinean Parliament (Luna 2013) granted Perón upon her death. The use of the noun "chief" in English is closer to the Spanish title whereas the translations seem to evoke the typical epithet in English "the spiritual *leader* of the Nation." By introducing the feminine gender-marked noun "lideresa" ("lideresa espiritual de nuestra nación," Arg.:50, Spa.:62), the translations acquire a peculiar tone as this unusual term may have a pejorative connotation in Spanish (Calero 1999).

6. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we explored the recreation of feminist subjectivities and discourses in *Good Night Stories* and in the translations into Spanish published in Argentina and Spain. The analytical approach adopted has required examining the processes of agency, transgression, transformation, as well as the various discursive, (inter)linguistic, (trans)cultural and political re-inscriptions in the making and commercial introduction of this global bestseller and the two translations discussed. The goal throughout has been to assess both local and global resignifications effected through translation in the wider contexts of two distinct receiving cultures. Favilli and Cavallo have proven that building a strong authorial voice is a necessary condition to aggressively break into the market of children's media industry and literature with an innovative gender perspective. By projecting a versatile image of accomplished entrepreneurs and knowledgeable creators, they managed to establish the right credentials and won the approval of the general public.

In spite of the authors' public claim to pursue a plural, diverse and transformative narrative through this crowdfunded initiative, the analysis conducted has shown that the feminism advocated in the book and the Rebel Girls project rather responds to the logic of market-feminism and conformism to US-American values. Indeed, the understanding of feminism and women's rebellion in the book can be readily inscribed in the tenets of the American Dream and its long tradition of success stories. Women's empowerment seems to be at the service of the commercial success of the project. By the same token, the category of *woman* articulated in the book is problematic as it fails to account for the dynamic, non-binary and necessarily situated nature of women as subjects of feminisms engaged in collective action.

Drawing on these findings, we sought to interrogate whether the Argentinean and Spanish translations had been "rebel" enough to restore the announced liberating feminist agenda. Overall, it was found that a more dogmatic voice is built in the target texts. A number of linguistic, discursive and cultural procedures both at paratextual and textual levels evidence various active editorial and translation strategies in the versions in Spanish. These typically affect the selection of women included and the historical, geographical and temporal adjustments made in the interest of cultural diplomacy (and possibly commercial profit), and the revision of certain linguistic inaccuracies in the source text.

None of these interventions, however, are aimed at re-establishing the intended transnational feminist agenda. Even if some linguistic procedures are applied at the level of gender-marked/neutral forms, these were found to be non-systematic showing a majority of masculine inflections with an alleged generic meaning. Moreover, some contradiction prevails in the source text in the definition of this “work of creative nonfiction,” in which the lives of “real” women are portrayed. Interventions implemented during the translation process meant the removal of this paratextual genre indication. As already noted, this enables two additional interpretive lines as the translated books can be regarded also as encyclopaedic and/or literary accounts of these women’s lives. In fact, both in Argentina and in Spain, the book has been presented and received as a piece with the power to revolutionise children’s *literature*. Framed within global editorial policies based on the best-selling status of the book, the translations do not acknowledge the visibility of any mediating agents. All in all, a rather conservative translation approach and monolithic discourse are favoured in the target texts, therefore hampering the potential of the volume as a feminist transnational endeavour. By and large, these translations fail to effectively challenge, let alone subvert, the individualistic liberation narratives in the source text. Further research considering the specific parameters of translating children’s literature and the ethical implications of negotiating fiction and reality may complement and extend the discussion presented in this chapter.

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