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# Approaching Androcentrism in Galician Translation: Trends and Patterns

Robert Neal Baxter  
University of Vigo

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## *Palabras clave*

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## *Abstract*

This paper explores to what extent androcentrism is present in translation into Galician by examining this issue from two distinct analytic perspectives: Firstly, I conduct two cursory quantitative macrostudies concerning the number of female writers translated on the one hand and the ratio of male to female translators on the other. Secondly, I outline a gender-based microstudy of translation strategies implemented in a sample of literary texts. The findings of these three preliminary studies indicate that androcentrism still remains the predominant norm throughout translation practice in Galician, although by dint of its status as the dominant discourse, androcentrism is able to masquerade as neutral, enabling it to discredit any counter-discourses and practices which challenge the essentially sexist *status quo*. As an integral part of its applied, hands-on approach to research, this paper concludes by suggesting several measures which could be implemented in order to offset sexist bias in translation as and where necessary in the Galician context.

## *Resumo*

Este artigo examina até que punto o androcentrismo está presente na tradución cara ao galego a través de varios achegamentos analíticos. Primeiro presento dous breves macroestudos cuantitativos sobre o número de autoras traducidas por unha banda e sobre a relación numérica entre tradutores e tradutoras pola outra. En segundo lugar, inclúo tamén un estudo de xénero preliminar no cal se examinan algunhas estratexias tradutivas aplicadas nunha selección de textos literarios. Os resultados destes tres primeiros

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estudos indican que o androcentrismo segue a constituír a norma que predomina na práctica da tradución cara ao galego, mais ao ser o androcentrismo o discurso dominante, este pode facerse pasar por neutral, permitíndolle deslexitimar calquera tipo de contradiscurso ou práctica que supuxer un cuestionamento do *statu quo* radicado no sexismo.

Co fin de cumprir co obxectivo dunha investigación aplicada, baseándose na análises e nos resultados acadados, o artigo apunta unha serie de medidas que se poderían aplicar para endereitar o nesgo sexista na tradución alí onde for preciso.

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## Introduction

The 'I' translating is not neutral. It has never been neutral [...], translators can pose a threat to the established order so, historically, translation has often crossed *swords* with power. Translation as a feminist practice does so by definition. (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 98)

The condition of women in Western society has improved substantially over recent years, due largely to decades of struggle for women's rights. Society as a whole, however, remains essentially patriarchal in its structures and, as often happens with any ideology which challenges and threatens established power structures, the advances brought about by feminism have incurred a reactionary backlash, with feminism insidiously portrayed as 'man hating', making it a dirty word<sup>1</sup> which women may feel afraid to identify with. The ploy by some to discredit feminism also involves appealing to the advances made in the field to portray feminism not only as undesirable but also unnecessary: while latter-day, Third Wave feminists tend not to use the term to refer to themselves, the inherently ambiguous term 'post-feminism' has been applied in a variety of different ways (Gamble 2001: 298), one of which –wittingly or unwittingly– implicitly gives the impression that feminism is obsolete:

[...] Third Wave feminism is a term preferable to post-feminism (which assumes implicitly that the aims of feminism have been achieved and that therefore feminism is largely irrelevant) [...] (Mills 2008:23)

A tacit aim of such stances is to deactivate any new course of action involving the realisation of legitimate, basic feminist aspirations, namely allowing women to exist and be seen to exist on an equal footing with their male counterparts, with ambiguous terms such as 'post-feminism' intentionally used by some as part of the on-going battle to neutralize feminism (Modleski 1991) by 'delegitimising this new-found [...] power.' (Talbot 2007: 754).

The response that non-discriminatory linguistic reforms have generated is symptomatic of this double gambit of ridicule and trivialisation, combined with insinuations that non-sexist language is no longer necessary or relevant. For instance, Cameron (1995: 123-130) charts the way in which the term 'politically correct' has been intentionally devalued and ridiculed, finally becoming a 'snarl word' (Talbot 2007: 759) and reaching the point where the more recently coined antonym 'politically incorrect' has acquired positive connotations (Mills 2008: 114). This same line of attack based on a combination of 'opposition and humour' (Mills 2008: 99) is a common feature of anti-feminist strategies, from language reform to labour rights. Nor, as we shall see, is the field of translation safe from this whiplash of scorn, with feminist translators who attempt to deploy alternative, non-androcentric translation strategies all too easily written off as 'crackpots' (Reimóndez 2009:81) in an attempt to discredit and silence them.

However, far from having become redundant, the need persists for feminist thinking to be applied to all areas of society which continue

<sup>1</sup>

One UK contemporary feminist blog half-jokingly refers to feminism as 'The F Word' ([http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2006/10/why\\_not](http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2006/10/why_not)).

to treat women as invisible, marginal and inferior. The following figures regarding working conditions within the Galician context (CIG 2008: 4-5 & 10-11) should suffice to dispel any doubts which may subsist regarding the ongoing unequal status and treatment of women: women are more likely to be employed on a temporary basis than men; the rate of female unemployment is much higher than male unemployment; women are often obliged to take part-time jobs in order to combine working outside and inside the home; women pay less national insurance taxes, hampering access to welfare benefits; women's salaries are on average 25% lower than men's.

Gender asymmetry in the workplace is a constant running through patriarchal society as a whole, and is reflected and reproduced in the way language is used and also in the way translation is practiced, as this paper hopes to demonstrate. Even the most cursory appraisal of reality clearly reveals that, far from living in a truly post-feminist world, we continue to live in a patriarchal, androcentric system, as the figures above reveal. The first step towards dealing with this problem involves identifying existing prejudice in order to tackle the underlying causes by applying the appropriate corrective measures. This process, including the need for corrective measures in order to redress established latent androcentric bias, affects all levels of social practice and should, therefore, be extended to include the specific field of translation in order to promote parity regarding the way gender roles are portrayed and enacted.

This paper intends to demonstrate that translation falls clearly within the scope of established gender bias at several levels, with any outspoken voices who dare to run the gauntlet by openly questioning and challenging set androcentric norms running the risk of becoming an object of scorn with a view to deriding and silencing them. While striving to maintain academic standards regarding objectiveness as a guiding criterion for the analytic methodology, the paper nevertheless also takes a firm stance in favour of the need to foster a feminist approach and alternatives to the field of translation in order to promote parity.

There are two main reasons which make translation an ideal testing-ground for studies of androcentric bias. Firstly, by operating within an androcentric framework, language cannot stand apart and remain impartial or neutral (Cameron 1995). Given that translation is inextricably bound up with language (von Flotow 1991: 72) it would, therefore, be reasonable to expect to find similar signs of 'male as norm bias' in translation practice as explored by Friederike Braun in her article 'Making Men Out of People: The MAN Principle in Translating Genderless Forms' (1997). Following on from Braun's earlier study involving the way genderless items in Finnish were marked for gender when translated into English, more recent studies have also shown that translation can be a useful tool for gauging to what extent practitioners may have a slanted view of gender roles by forcing them to make grammatically gender-marked choices in their target language when translating from epicene, gender-neutral items in the source text (Baxter 2005). For example, it is interesting to see whether overtly gender-neutral words in English such as 'doctor', 'nurse' and 'child' are marked as masculine or feminine when translated into Galician (i.e. 'doutor / doutora', 'enfermeiro / enfermeira' and 'nen / nena' respectively). The final choice will inevitably reflect the way translators interpret gender roles, including the –conscious or unconscious– deployment of the 'so-called generic masculine' (Hellinger et al. 2001: 9) as a systematic translation strategy.

Secondly, translation plays a particularly important role in the case of languages such as Galician whose process of normalisation continues to be incomplete (see Zabaleta 2002 and García González 2002), and where translation will play a central role at both the level of *normalisation* ('status planning') and *normativisation* ('corpus planning'). In other words, as Óscar Díaz Fouces has put it: [...], las personas que ejercen la mediación lingüística actúan como agentes codificadores de la lengua. (Díaz Fouces 2005: 4).

In more general terms, the symbolic capital of the works which make up the literary canon plays a key role in the creation of collective and national identity as discussed in Hooper (2005). So-called 'weak systems' such as the Galician literary system rely heavily on translations to bolster their literary corpus, for example accounting for 15.2% of all titles published in Galician between 1990 and 1993 (Millán-Varela 2000: 271). In turn, therefore, translation can play an equally important role in the creation of national identity (Arias 1995).

The modern-day nation, which has been successfully shown to be a distinctly a patriarchal construct (West 1997: xvi; Yural-Davis 1997) can be seen to be at logger-heads with non-androcentric cultural agendas (Walby 1990). This is all the more true of emerging, peripheral nations such as Galicia where feminism can be seen as being in competition with the process of national construction (González Fernández 2005). However, rather than vying for attention, I have shown elsewhere that, in the linguistic sphere at least, the two can be complementary (Baxter 2009b).

For all of the reasons outlined above, it is interesting to determine who translates what –or rather whom– and how in Galician, in as much as the final translated products will potentially have an important impact on the (re)transmission of those values which serve as the bedrock for the construction of Galician society. With this particular working context in mind, the aim of this paper is to provide a gender-based overview of translating into Galician from several different perspectives by addressing the following three key questions: Who is translated? Who translates? How is translation carried out?

These initial questions involve two interrelated yet distinct levels of analysis: the first two fall within the scope of macro analyses concerning the phenomenon of translation as a whole (within set parameters), where it is possible to employ quantitative methods in order to contrast results for the gender variable in any given set of predefined circumstances; the third point involves micro analyses of the specific strategies deployed by individual translators when translating certain items in particular instances.

The analyses and conclusions reached in this paper constitute a first tentative empirical study in this field, requiring confirmation by more wide-ranging studies. Nevertheless, and in spite of its limitations, the study samples provide useful insights into the androcentric dynamics of translation into Galician, owing not only to the total volume of items analysed (219 translations) covering a twenty-year period (1990-2009), but also owing to the variety and type of data sources, namely one large, mainstream publisher; one publishing house specialising in translated literature; one self-defined progressive publisher and one, free-access virtual translation repository. By way of caveat, it should also be stated that I believe that research in fields such as this should have practical applications, and while remaining firmly impartial in the way the data is dealt with, this paper retains a commitment to combating sexism. To this end, as an exercise in applied research, I make suggestions regarding

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measures which might be implemented in order to redress any androcentric bias detected in the areas studies.

## Macro analyses

### WHO IS TRANSLATED

Inspired mainly by polysystem theory and the derived concept of 'weak' literary systems (Even-Zohar 1990 and Toury 1990), there is a trend in studies dealing with the role played by translation into Galician to focus on asymmetrical exchanges between the source languages/cultures ('systems') and the Galician target system (Cruces Colado 1993; Fernández Fernández 1995; Luna Alonso 2005 and Millán-Varela 2000). The translation of children's literature also accounts for a significant part of the research carried out in Galicia, owing particularly to the quantitative impact (volume) and the qualitative impact (the possibility to influence readership) of this particular genre.

Until very recently, however, scant attention had been paid to gender-based translation research in Galicia. The opportunity offered by the scope and purpose of the relatively new field of 'paratranslation', originating at Vigo University's Department of Translation and Linguistics, would seemingly be an ideal tool for researching the issue, described by one of its progenitors in the following terms: "“Paratradución” é o noso espazo de análise para describir todo aquilo que está arredor da actividade traslativa que se presenta como tradución á sociedade que a recibe." (Garrido Vilarriño 2003-2004: 38). Nevertheless, even in this field of study, barring a few notable exceptions exemplified by the work of Olga Castro Vázquez and María Reimóndez, very little attention has been paid to the gender aspect of translation processes. In fact, the only course specifically addressing the question of gender and sexuality in translation offered as part of the now defunct PhD in 'Translation and Paratranslation'<sup>2</sup> at Vigo University has been dispensed with in the new Master of the same name. It should also be pointed out that the implications of the design of the translation courses on offer at Vigo University are more far-reaching than for most other subjects, in as much as Vigo is the only Galician University to offer translation studies at either undergraduate or postgraduate levels, with its area of influence spreading into neighbouring Asturias.

Four basic sources of data were selected in order to provide a cursory overview of the situation as objectively as possible regarding the extent to which women writers are (under-)represented as the object of translation into Galician. Three of the sources involve hard-cover publishing houses, supplemented by a third, on-line source for translated texts.

The first source chosen was the *Xerais* publishing company due to its key importance as a leading publisher in Galician, with a significant selection of translated works. The second source was the *Laivento* publishing company, chosen owing to the importance it gives to translated works and also to the fact that the company declares itself to be 'progressive' as well as 'unconformist',<sup>3</sup> a factor thought likely to have a bearing on the works and authors selected for translation. The third publishing company chosen for the study, *Rinoceronte*, is a company dedicated exclusively to publishing works translated primarily into Galician with a small section dedicated to translating Galician-language originals

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The course *Política, Política Lingüística e Política da Tradución: Planificación e Ideoloxía* ('Politics, Language Policy and Translation Policy: Planning and Ideology') was offered from 2004-2009, including a module specifically addressing the issues of gender and sexuality in translation.

3

From the company web site: '[N]unha empresa que ten como único obxectivo o de contribuír desde unha óptica plural, aberta e progresista, á construción nacional da Galiza. [...] optamos, plenamente conscientes dos seus riscos, por emprendermos os anchos e luminosos vieiros da LIBERDADE e do INCONFORMISMO'. Capitals in the original: <http://www.laivento.com/index2.htm#>.

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To date the *Colección Inversa* contains only four titles all translated from Galician into Spanish.

5

The collection contains a total of six non-fiction items in the *Biblioteca Científica* ('Scientific Library') section.

6

Duplicate authorship is applicable to only two out of the four sources and is, therefore, irrelevant to the overall total. Were it to be taken into account, however, including duplicate authorship would only serve to raise the average slightly to 16.11%.

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No translations were published in the following years: 1992, 1994, 1996, 2002 and 2006.

into other languages.<sup>4</sup> The fourth and final source was the 'Virtual Library' (*Biblioteca Virtual: Bivir*), a freely accessible, on-line repository of mainly literary texts<sup>5</sup> in the public domain translated into Galician from a variety of source languages (mainly English, French and German, but also Russian, Danish, Rumanian, Japanese, Latin, Greek, Hungarian and Czech). This project, run by the Galician Translators' Association (*Asociación de Tradutores Galegos*) based at the Galician Philology Department of the University of Vigo, is a valuable source of data owing not only to its scope and diversity but also, and more importantly, because of the links it has with the Department of Translation and Linguistics which serves as a pool for volunteer translators, with the implications of the latter dealt with in more detail later.

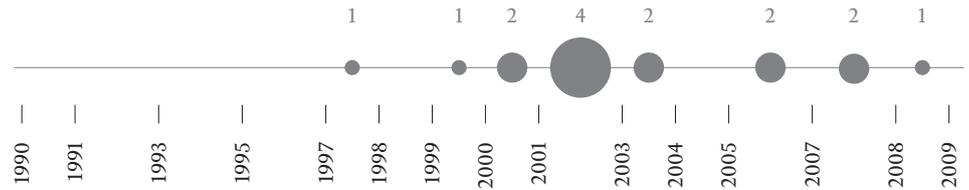
The following figures are the results of a simple count of the number of works by women writers translated and published by each of the sources based on their own catalogues and lists, excluding textbooks, reference works, etc. In some cases the actual figures vary slightly depending upon whether different works by the same author are counted separately, in which case this variation is included in brackets:

- *Xerais*: 16 women authors translated out of a total of 48, i.e. 33.33% (or 31.37% including duplicate authorship)
- *Rinoceronte*: 3 women authors out of a total of 26, i.e. 11.54% (no duplicate authorship)
- *Laovento*: 6 women authors out of a total of 59, i.e. 10.17% (no duplicate authorship)
- *Bivir*: 8 women authors out of a total of 86, i.e. 9.3% (or 11.36% including duplicate authorship)

The average percentage for women authors translated barring duplicate authorship<sup>6</sup> stands at only 16.6% as opposed to the overwhelming 83.4% made up by male authors. When compared with the other sources, *Xerais* would appear to fare considerably better with 16.7% more women writers published than the average, more than doubling the overall average. The key to understanding this difference lies in the fact that *Xerais* runs a special collection, *Literatas*, dedicated exclusively to translated works by women writers, directed by the well-known Galician feminist writer and translator María Xosé Queizán. However, while this may initially appear to constitute a positive step, in practice it effectively forces women writers into a small pigeon-hole, practically barring their access to the main catalogue where, taken as a whole and excluding this collection, women writers account for only 4.17% of the authors translated or a mere 3.92% of the total number of works translated, both figures actually substantially lower than the general average.

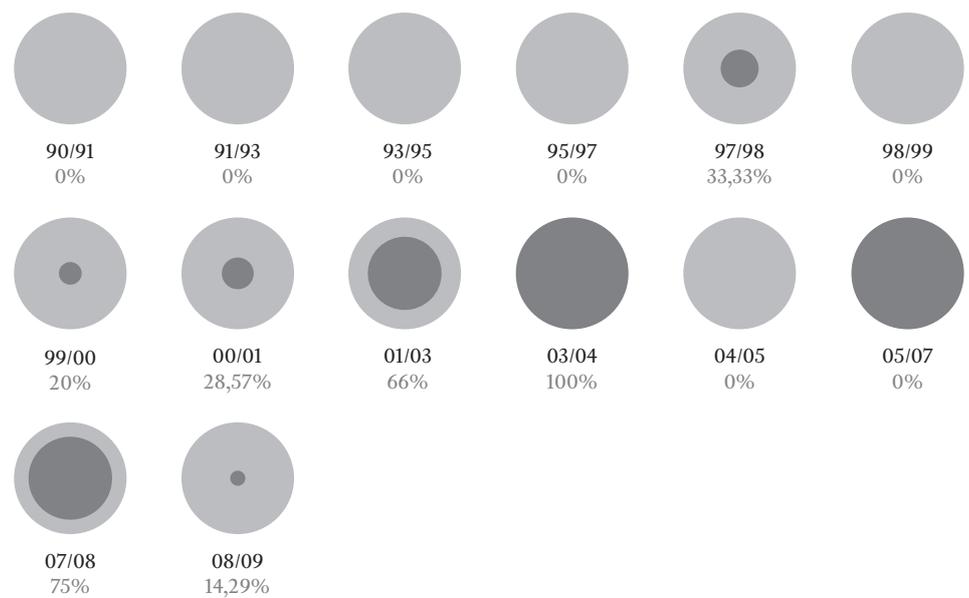
It is also necessary to take a closer look at the way this collection has developed over time. A year-by-year analysis (fig. 1) reveals that while the *Literatas* collection has been maintained since 1999 (the translation published in 1997 and one work published in 2007 both fall outside the scope of the collection), its evolution has been erratic, with some years registering no translations of works by women authors.<sup>7</sup> While the irregular number of translations published per annum may depend to some extent on the availability of public funding, economic factors do not suffice to explain the constant under-representation of women writers as a whole, as discussed in more detail later.

Fig. 1. Total number of women authors translated



The detailed inter annual figures are as follows (fig. 2): 1990-2009 (no translations published in 1994, 2002 and 2006) average 31.26%, peaking at 100% in 2003 and 2005 (with a total of two works translated in both cases), dropping off to 75% in 2007 (3 translations out of 4), and a trough of 66% in 2001 (4 out of 6), with only 33.33% in 1997 (1 out of 3) and falling to its lowest points in 2000 with 28.57% (2 out of 7), 20% in 1999 (1 out of 5) and an all time low of 14.29% in 2008 (1 out of 7), and 0% in 1990, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2004 and 2009 (out of a total of 13 translations).

Fig. 2. Percentage of works by women writers translated



In sum, while any attempts to pay special attention to women's place at any level of society are to be welcomed, care must also be taken when setting aside exclusive spaces for women that have the potential to become new barriers hindering women's access to male-dominated spaces. As a truism applicable not only to patriarchal society as a whole but also in turn to translation, above and beyond the creation of special spaces which necessarily set women apart from the norm, what is needed is a concerted effort to integrate women into the mainstream as valid elements of the normal, dominant discourse, rather than relegating them to the margins where they become backgrounded. In other words, women should be included not because they are women but despite this fact.

Turning to the second case study, the results for the *Rinoceronte* publishing company fall well within the average range for the remaining three sources at 11.02% (excluding the distorting data for *Xerais*). The

Taken from the publishers' presentation page on their website: <<http://rinoceronte.es/quensomos.htm>>

figures reveal a clear preference to translate works by male authors, who account for nearly ninety percent of the titles published. The company's avowed intention to 'do things differently'<sup>8</sup> appears not to extend to including a consideration of the gender variable of the authors selected for translation in order to take steps to offset the general bias.

The third source analysed, the *Laivento* publishing company, confirms the general androcentric trend noted for *Xerais* and *Rinoceronte*, with only 36 women writers out of a total of 175 authors translated, amounting to slightly over one fifth (20.57%). Moreover, if the names of all the authors of collective works are tallied separately, the final figure is slightly lower.

The final source analysed, *Bivir*, is singularly noteworthy because, unlike the other three sources analysed, it is wholly cost-free: no translators' fees are involved because all translators contribute on a voluntary basis; no copyright is payable as all of the works are in the public domain; and publishing costs are inexistent by dint of its exclusively on-line structure. It is a quintessentially non-profit making venture with no economic regard for the saleability of the works selected for translation. If, therefore, economic considerations were a key factor behind the choice of predominantly male authors when selecting works for translation as suggested earlier, it might be expected that any ventures such as *Bivir* which are free from such restraints would reflect this fact. In practice, however, the figures for the *Bivir* diverge very little from the cost-constrained commercial publishing houses. In fact, the proportion of women writers translated and available at the *Bivir* web site at 9.3% is actually slightly lower than the overall 11.02% (excluding the distorting data for *Xerais*). What this would seem to indicate is that, while economic considerations may influence the choice of works translated, it is not an overriding factor which can be seen to account for the androcentric bias concerning the gender of the selected authors which remains relatively stable regardless of external commercial factors.

It remains, therefore, to find an explanation behind the across-the-board androcentric bias concerning the authors selected for translation, especially when considering the huge variety of original literature written by women available for translation, with large-scale and well-reputed women's publishing houses operating world-wide, as in the case, for example, of the UK-based *Virago Press*, to name but one. My contention is that rather than deriving from any specific external cause, androcentric bias is endemic to the Galician language translation sub-sector owing to the overall androcentric slant of the larger social system of which it is a part. It is not, therefore, a question of translation policy being specifically or deliberately sexist, but rather a by-product of a general lack of planning which fails to take into account the inherent androcentric bias of society as a whole. In fact, several researchers have remarked on this lack of planning which seems to be characteristic of the Galician translation market:

Tenemos pues, obras traducidas que responden a criterios muy poco definidos y muy variados. [...] las editoras siguen manteniendo una cierta anarquía en la selección de obras [traducidas] (Luna Alonso 2006: 7, 9)

No parece, en ningún caso que pueda hablarse de una política explícita para favorecer una determinada lengua/cultura origen [...],

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sino que la selección dependería, aparentemente, de los gustos y las prioridades de los editores (Díaz Fouces 2005: 7)

Although both of these remarks were originally made concerning the language pairs involved in the translation processes, our findings indicate that the term ‘unplanned planning’ coined by Díaz Fouces (2005: 8) can be equally well applied to the gender variable. This lack of planning inevitably leads to the same level of under-representation and back-grounding of women in translation found in other areas of life, comparable with the asymmetrical gender situation described above in the case of the Galician job market.

By way of conclusion before moving on to the second macro analysis, the *laissez faire* attitude characteristic of the translation sector means that a failure to take into account the inherent androcentric bias of activities such as publishing set within the wider framework of patriarchal society at large will inevitably lead to a failure to adopt the corrective measures necessary –couched in terms of affirmative action<sup>9</sup> to offset the bias, thereby sustaining and perpetuating the bias when selecting authors for translation, as indicated by the inordinate ratio of male to female authors provided by the analyses.

However, the economic dimension should not be overlooked as a factor potentially affecting the choice of authors to be translated. Languages such as Galician have been described as being ‘economically less viable’ (Baxter 2009a) owing primarily to their low level of self-sustainability with regards to the potential readership/number of consumers and concerns regarding the cost-effectiveness of investments can become paramount when deciding which works to translate, taking into account expenditure on copyrights and translators’ fees in relation to potential sales (with saleability increasing for books which can be used in schools and well-known international bestsellers). Galician publishing, including translation, relies to a greater or lesser extent on institutional backing, and decisions may be taken in order to secure public funding. For example, Díaz Fouces (2005: 7) explains the disproportionate volume of children’s literature translated into Galician in terms of the public grants available. In this sense, it is worth comparing the figures for the three commercial publishing ventures analysed with those for the virtual data source, *Bivir*, which is ostensibly free of such economic constraints and as such might be expected to be unaffected by commercial aspects such as the sale-worthiness of the translations chosen. Of all of the sources studied, however, *Bivir* fares the worst with a proportion of women authors in translation which lags several percent behind the average. What this tends to indicate is that while economic concerns may be a factor when choosing the works and authors to be translated, it is no means the main reason.

My contention is, therefore, that the cause of the male-author bias is derived primarily from a lack of planning in the translation sector as a whole which, by failing to take account of the gender variable, automatically complies with dominant androcentric practice. While not effectively constituting a case of ‘overt sexism’, such practices do stand as examples of what Sara Mills has termed ‘indirect sexism’ (2008). It is clear, therefore, that there is a need for corrective measures in order to achieve a balanced overall publishing policy for Galician, extended to cover the translation sub-sector, with a view to ensuring fair and equal

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Precedents for affirmative action already exist for other areas of public life as stipulated in the Spanish Organic Law 3/2007 for the Effective Equality of Men and Women, which stipulates the need to ‘attend to the principle of a balanced presence between women and men’ in the case of appointments to public office (Article 16). Similar procedures could equally be well applied on a voluntary basis to the translation sector.

representation of women, included as an integral part of the mainstream, rather than relegated to isolated, reserved spaces. Such measures obviously respond to a markedly ideological counter-agenda, which should not be wrongly portrayed as being opposed to a hypothetical neutral stance, but rather to the dominant androcentric discourse which forms the backbone of the underlying ideological agenda of patriarchal societies as discussed in the following section.

#### WHO TRANSLATES

Reimóndez (2009: 73) agrees with von Flotow (1991: 81) in describing translators as 'handmaidens' to male authors, reflecting the traditionally subservient role ascribed to women with regards to their male counterparts in patriarchal societies, arising out of the paternal/maternal and production/reproduction dichotomy addressed by Lori Chamberlain in her seminal study 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation':

[...] the opposition between productive and reproductive work organizes the way a culture values work: this paradigm depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles. (Chamberlain 1988: 455)

However, at first sight, the figures seem to contradict this claim, with men, not women, accounting for the overwhelming majority of literary translators at a ratio in the range of approximately 1:5 - 1:3:

- *Xerais*: only 25 women out of a total of 93 translators: 26.88%
- *Rinoceronte*: only 6 women out of a total of 17 translators: 35.29%

On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that these figures only account for a tiny, albeit socially important, fragment of the translation industry as a whole, namely the highly prestigious practice of literary translation, where the name of the translator often appears even alongside that of the original author, as in the case of *Rinoceronte*. This situation needs to be contrasted with the bulk of professional translations and interpretations which fall outside the scope of prestigious literary translation in order to determine whether the preponderance of male translators is a constant or not.

It is particularly interesting to note that the situation described regarding male-dominated literary translation contrasts starkly with the fact that the vast majority of students enrolled at Vigo University to study Translation since the course began some fifteen years ago have been women. In the absence of any official figures, the author's own personal experience over that same period would indicate that no less than 80% of translation students are women, and in a recent study (Baxter 2005) the random test group was made up of 90.5% female subjects, i.e. over ten females for every male student. There should, therefore, be no lack of well-trained women translators available to take up work, even with the proviso that not all graduates necessarily go on to work in the field that they have studied.

If we go on to compare the figures for the hard-copy publishers with those of the 'Virtual Library' (*Bivir*) with its ties to the Translation

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The 'Virtual Library' (*Biblioteca Virtual, Bivir*) is run by the Galician Translators' Association (*Asociación de Tradutores Galegos*) in association with the Galician Philology Department at Vigo University. The majority of the volunteer translators involved are recruited directly from the Translation and Linguistics Department, which is part of the same Faculty of Philology and Translation.

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Figures taken from the AGPTI membership list (*Directorio de Socios e Socias*) available on their site: <[http://www.agpti.org/galego/asoc\\_gal.php](http://www.agpti.org/galego/asoc_gal.php)>

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One particularly noteworthy example is the writer and translator Marilar Aleixandre who was the object of a tribute during the International Translation Day celebrations organised jointly in 2009 by the University of Vigo's Department of Translation and Linguistics, the Galician Translators Association (*Asociación de Tradutores Galegos*) and the Galician Association of Translation and Interpretation Professionals (*Asociación Galega de Profesionais da Tradución e da Interpretación*).

Department of the University of Vigo,<sup>10</sup> then the proportion of women translators rises significantly, with 35 out of a total of 76, amounting to almost a half (46.05 %). This higher percentage is not surprising given the male-to-female student ratio, although it still lags behind the real figures.

Returning to the *Literatas* collection referred to earlier, it is perhaps not wholly insignificant that not even in the area of women-only literature are all of the translators women, as one might perhaps expect. In fact, although women translators do make up the majority in this case, even here the proportion of 7 female to 5 male translators is still noteworthy. In sum, there is a clear discrepancy between the proportion of men to women actually involved in prestigious translation on the one hand, and the proportion of men to women potentially available. Once again, even allowing for the fact that not all students of translation will go on to work as professional translators after graduating, and that not all professional translators have necessarily studied translation, there is still a large incongruity which remains to be accounted for. We can glean a clearer picture of women's involvement in the field of translation by turning to look at the less glamorous area of non-literary translation and/or interpretation, where women make up the bulk of those employed. For example, the Galician Association of Translation and Interpretation Professionals (*AGPTI: Profesionais da Tradución e da Interpretación*) registers a total of 63 female members out of a total of 79, amounting to an overwhelming 79.75%,<sup>11</sup> much more in line with the proportion of women studying translation at University level in Galicia. Not only do women work as professional translators and interpreters, but they actually make up the vast majority of those working in the field as a whole. However, as in the rest of patriarchal society: the more prestigious the field, the lower the proportion of women. While there is nothing to indicate that the situation is in any way the result of a conscious intent to marginalize women, it does, nevertheless, mirror dominant androcentric practice at large which, if not taken into account, will inevitably lead to discrimination against women.

In practice, the claim made by Reimóndez that female translators are mere 'handmaidens' to male authors actually falls very short of the mark. The stark reality is that, while a majority of male literary translators take the limelight with a majority of male authors, the majority of women translators are cast in the role of drudges working away behind the scenes at the menial chores of non-literary translation.<sup>12</sup> The anonymity which characterises the greater part of professional women translators corresponds to the invisibility traditionally characteristic of both their profession (Venuti 1994; von Flotow 1991: 69) and their gender:

If translators are only handmaidens to authors, then of course there is no need to pay them a real wage for their –laborious, highly intellectual and time-consuming– work. There is no need to acknowledge their authorship [...]. (Reimóndez 2009: 73)

It is perhaps not insignificant, therefore, that the non-professional association for Galician literary translators uses the masculine in its title *Asociación de Tradutores Galegos*, whereas the professional association opts for the inclusive, gender-neutral name *Asociación Galega de Profesionais da Tradución e da Interpretación*. The reason behind this gender imbalance is to be found in the power relations which hold within patriarchal society as a

whole: writing and having one's work published is in itself an act of power in as much as it allows authors to make their voices and opinions heard beyond their immediate circle, with a potential to exert an influence on the community as a whole.

If writing is power, translation is all the more so (Castro Vázquez 2009: 262; Chamberlain 1988: 465), as it is essential for authors who want to make their views known outside their own language community. Translators can potentially become a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of the authors on whom they work: barring cases of self-translation or translation from Galician to Spanish, in many cases authors have no alternative but to put blind faith in the translators of their works with whom they are not always able to communicate, being unable themselves to check translations into languages with which they are not sufficiently familiar. Nor indeed are translators obliged to comply with the demands of the authors of the original regarding how the text is to be translated:

Any translation is an interpretation of the text, and therefore the author has no right to decide over that new text. [...] There are translators who feel more confident if they have the author's support, or authors who go to great lengths in order to control the translation of their work, but this does not mean that there is any basis of any kind to assume that a translator must contact the author. (Reimóndez 2009: 83)

It should come as no surprise that male translators are preferred –albeit unconsciously– over women translators, especially for male authors who make up the majority of published writers, when the metaphorical power relations between author and translator can be cast in terms of the paternal/maternal, production/reproduction dichotomy so central to the patriarchal system:

[...] what the translator claims for “himself” is precisely the right to paternity; he claims a phallus because this is the only way, in a patriarchal code, to claim legitimacy for the text. (Chamberlain 1988: 466)

By way of conclusion, based on a quantitative case study of a selection of representative samples, this section deals with two ways in which women are represented within the Galician-language translation sub sector. Despite limitations concerning the statistical validity of the sample size, both analyses tend to indicate a clear gender imbalance within the sector: firstly, with the notable exception of one collection dedicated specifically to women writers with arguable effects on the overall integration of women writers into mainstream publishing, women authors are largely underrepresented as a whole; and secondly, although women account for the majority of the translators operating as professionals as well as the bulk of translation students in Galicia, they remain considerably underrepresented in the prestigious field of literary translation. The way women are underrepresented in this particular sector can be seen as the result of a failure to recognise and apply measures designed to correct the overall androcentric bias which constitutes the dominant discourse in patriarchal society.

## Micro analysis

This section deals with feminist translation strategies opposed to the dominant androcentric strategies and the way in which androcentrism can masquerade as a 'neutral' strategy owing to its status as the dominant discourse, thereby enabling it to discredit any counter-strategic alternatives which seek to redress the androcentric bias in translation as being 'ideological manipulation'. The aim of this section is to unmask the true ideological conflict between feminist strategies on the one hand, and androcentric strategies on the other, both of which are equally ideological in themselves, regardless of whether they are the dominant discourse in society at large and translation practice in particular or whether they actively combat sexist prejudice. In either case, as we shall see, it is impossible for translators to merely sit on the fence: rather, they must choose which fence they want to sit on.

The key concept regarding the way translators work involves the strategies they employ, i.e. 'the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it' (Venuti 1998: 240). This section focuses on the latter aspect, i.e. the way in which individual translators choose to translate the original texts, without drawing the distinction that certain writers make between 'methods' and 'procedures': '[...] while translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language' (Newmark 1988: 81).

These strategic decisions inevitably rely on the translator's knowledge and perceptions of both the target and source languages and the cultural values implied. Most modern-day theoreticians in the field of translation studies tend to agree that translators make conscious decisions concerning the way texts are to be interpreted and translated, coming together to form an overall translation strategy, defined by Lörscher as: 'a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text, or any segment of it' (1991:76).

For those readers unfamiliar with contemporary translation theory and more especially with the theses of the Manipulation School (as represented in the works of José Lambert, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, amongst other), it is worth pointing out that translation does not involve the mechanical transfer of items from one language to another carried out in an ideological vacuum. Rather, as an activity carried out by individuals integrated within a social framework governed by particular values and norms and working with a tool –language– which is highly bound up with androcentric usages, translation will, in turn, either inevitably reflect dominant ideological bias or consciously reject it, but can never be neutral:

*Traduire n'est jamais neutre. C'est l'acte d'une subjectivité à l'oeuvre dans un contexte socio-politique précis. Le je qui traduit inscrit son savoir dans le texte qui se réécrit. (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 27)*

What this means in practice is that rather than being something that translators can avoid, manipulation is an integral part of the translation process (Hermans 1985: 11). To illustrate this fact, a recent empirical study (Baxter 2005) showed that translators (in this case students of translation) have a marked androcentric approach to translation, with their choices

relying heavily –and unquestioningly– on the traditional gender roles within society, with women relegated to the less prestigious activities. Examples from this study include: ‘doctors’ systematically translated in the masculine (*médicos*), as opposed to the less prestigious profession of ‘nurse’, conversely translated in the feminine (*enfermeira*); the English gender-neutral ‘general-secretary’, is always masculine in translation (*secretario xeral*), as opposed to a predominant use of the feminine when translating ‘secretary’ (*secretaria*). Translation can, therefore, be seen to involve strategic choices which depend upon received ideas concerning gender-appropriate roles and which, if unchallenged, inevitably lead to sexist translation becoming the norm.

Nor can examples of this kind be dismissed as mere slips on the part of inexperienced students, stemming instead from an underlying androcentric world-view, with a long-standing tradition of sexist translation in the field of translation, including several well-known examples, ranging from Bible translations (de Lotbinière-Harwood) and translations of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (von Flotow 2000; Castro Vázquez 2008) to the way Sappho’s sexuality is deliberately tampered with (Baxter 2006). Such perceptions when allowed to creep into translation practice unnoticed and unchallenged result in ideologically manipulated texts which alter the perceptions and experiences of women:

En traduction, l’emploi machinal du masculin grammatical dans la réécriture d’un texte en langue d’arrivée peut non seulement changer le sens d’origine, mais également défigurer la réalité et porter atteinte à l’existence et à l’expérience des femmes. (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 19)

One recent, well-known case involving a controversy over feminist translation strategies reported on in the international press comes from Galicia. A brief analysis of the conflict surrounding the Galician translation of the book *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Haddon 2003) sheds significant light on the way androcentric strategies are perceived as the norm and, therefore, as ideologically ‘neutral’, enabling them to dismiss any counter-strategies which openly challenge the *status quo* of ideological manipulation.

The background history behind this interesting case in point is as follows:<sup>13</sup> the *Rinoceronte* publishing house signed a contract with the translator María Reimóndez to publish her Galician translation of Haddon’s best-seller. However, following her refusal to make a series of alterations required by the publishers on the grounds that she had intentionally manipulated the text to suit her own ideological criteria, the translator’s contract was declared null and void. The Galician version was finally published under the title *O curioso incidente do can á media noite*, translated by the head of the publishing company in question, Moisés Barcia, using mainstream, androcentric strategies in the place of the feminist strategies employed by Reimóndez.

Barcia’s final published version makes extensive, although as we shall see later far from systematic, use of the (pseudo)generic masculine when translating epicene English terms, e.g. ‘educadores’ (translation, page 51) for ‘members of staff’ (original, page 39) and ‘editores’ for ‘the publishers’ (in the ‘Acknowledgements’ / ‘Agradecementos’). Whilst the first case is, perhaps,

more excusable on the grounds that it sounds 'more natural' than the more literally 'faithful' but much more unwieldy rendition '*membros do (cadro de) persoal*', in the second case there is no real reason to prefer the masculine over the non gender-specific collective noun '*editorial*', as proposed by Reimóndez in her translation and rejected by the company (see Reimóndez 2009: 76).

It is worth looking more closely, however, at those instances where the translator decides to consciously diverge from the otherwise across-the-board use of masculine (pseudo)generics, as discussed in detail in the paper by Castro Vázquez 'El género (para)traducido: pugna ideológica en la traducción e paratraducción de *O curioso incidente do can á media noite*' (2009: 258). One striking example involves the shift in strategy employed by Barcia when translates '*liar*' (original, page 230) using the marked feminine form '*mentireira*' (translation, page 242) as opposed to the unmarked masculine ('*mentreiro*') employed as a generic elsewhere, although there is no specific textual context to justify the choice on this particular occasion (see Reimóndez 2009: 76-77). It is also interesting to note that one of the elements highlighted by the international press when reporting/commenting on the affair (e.g. Govan 2008), clearly intended to pass the feminist translator off as a 'crackpot' in retribution for her refusal to tow the sexist line of dominant social norms, reproaching the translator for apparently wanting to 'change the sex' of the pet rat Toby. These comments were made notwithstanding, and most probably with no knowledge of, the fact that '*rata*' is feminine in Galician and that any attempts to specifically mark it as masculine would involve cumbersome circumlocutions such as '*rata macho*' or perhaps a change of species making the 'rat' a 'mouse', which is masculine in Galician ('*rato*'). These reports also glossed over the fact that the translation published by Barcia did not actually differ from that proposed by Reimóndez in this case, a clear sign that the journalist's comments were intended to discredit the feminist translation, rather than examining the facts as they actually stood, which might have led to rather more uncomfortable conclusions regarding the legitimacy of the choices made in either version.

What these examples reveal is that translation (almost) inevitably involves translators imposing their own ideological worldviews on the final text. Mainstream translation practice inevitably follows mainstream social norms, where males serve as the benchmark for all humanity via the indiscriminate use of masculine pseudogenerics in line with the 'male as norm principle' formulated by Braun (1997). Pseudogenerics are not used, however, when what are seen as specifically female roles and traits are involved, switching to the differential feminine instead, as in the translation of '*liar*' cited above or the way '*nurses*' (original, page 230) is translated as '*enfermeiras*' (translation, page 242).

The choices made by translators can be seen to be anything but neutral, with any strategies clearly marked ideologically, with historically unchallenged mainstream norms firmly anchored in the sexist discourse:

recent work [...] on metaphors of translation has shown that the most traditional and misogynist conceptions of gender roles and attributes have coloured much of the discussion on translation, & traditional tropes used for translation have reflected the power relations between the sexes, [...] (von Flotow 1991: 81-82)

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Proposals for wider-ranging, long-term projects designed to provide more comprehensive and statistically conclusive data would necessarily include extending the sample size to include a greater variety of translation sources. It would also be interesting to compare the figures for translations into Galician with the situation for other languages with co-official status in their respective territories, namely Spanish, Catalan and Basque, the latter being of particular interest for the field of gender-oriented translation strategy research by dint of the lack of grammatical gender in Basque. Further studies in the field might also include comparative figures for the male-to-female ratio of practicing translators and trainee translators both within the rest of the Spanish State as well as within the wider context of the European Union.

The real question is not, therefore, whether it is legitimate to 'manipulate' a text when translating, but rather to recognize that ideological manipulation is unavoidable, whereby it becomes essential to determine which sort of manipulation is ideologically preferable, with a power play between two clashing ideologies in which there can be no middle ground:

[...] translation can never happen 'outside' ideology. [...] All translations are marked by the ideology of whoever produces them: manipulation is no longer a curse, but the very nature of the activity, [...]. Of course, ideological intervention in translation can also take place in a more conscious and purposeful way, and this is indeed the case with those who work against mainstream values. Conversely, those who strive to deny or camouflage this intervention are consciously or unconsciously endorsing mainstream ideology [...] (Reimóndez 2009: 72)

There have existed for some time now a series of innovative paradigms which break with traditional, conservative views and misconceptions, providing a better insight into the way translation actually works, effectively acknowledging that 'manipulation' – or 'transformation' to use Deconstructivist terminology (Derrida 1987) – is, in fact, an integral part of the translation process itself. All of the data analysed here point in the same direction, indicating the existence of dominant translation strategies and norms masquerading as 'neutral' by dint of their social acceptability in as much as they clearly respond to and conform to the dominant social discourse concerning gender-roles, which can be seen to be at logger-heads with any counter-strategies which question and challenge their legitimacy in an effort to correct prevalent androcentric bias in translation, decried and scorned by (self-appointed) officialdom as peddling a political agenda.

## Conclusions

While the research presented in this paper constitutes a preliminary study, the findings nevertheless shed light on a subject as yet unexplored in empirical, quantitative terms. Although the results can remain only tentative until further, more exhaustive studies are forthcoming,<sup>14</sup> the scope of the data analysed together with supporting evidence from other related areas of gender and translation make it possible to extract a series of interesting conclusions. On the whole, the results yielded by the analyses of the data confirm the initial hypotheses: as with any human activity set within the framework of a patriarchal, androcentric system, translation acts as a reflection of and vehicle for the prejudices which underpin inequality between men and women at all levels of society.

At both levels of analysis, translation into Galician is highly asymmetrical in the way it deals with men and women. Firstly, at the quantitative level of the two macro analyses, women writers selected for translation are under-represented. At the same time, women translators are mainly relegated to the lower spheres of non-literary translation, with prestigious literary translation occupied primarily by male translators. Secondly, at the micro analytical level concerning translation strategies,

there is a distinct tendency to privilege androcentric choices as the norm. Furthermore, taking advantage of its status as the dominant social discourse, androcentrism tries to pass itself off as 'neutral', thereby effectively enabling it to discredit any counter-strategies as 'harebrained', ideological manipulation.

There can be seen to be a clash between two competing ideologies. The choice remains whether to acknowledge feminist strategies as necessary in order to redress the sexist slant in translation, or to continue to bow to the dominant social dictates in the form of androcentric bias. The question is not whether to impose or not, but what is to be imposed, by whom, how and why. Just as translation is never neutral, nor too can researchers remain impartial in fields such as this one. Convinced, therefore, that academic research can remain scientifically valid and objective, whilst at the same time firmly committed to contributing to social change and following on in the tradition of 'politically motivated research and politically engaged theory' described by Kemp & Squires (1997:6), this paper makes a series of suggestions which could be implemented with a view to minimising the androcentric bias detected at various levels of translation practice in the Galician context.

At the practical level, if gender parity is to be achieved, it is necessary to rethink and (re)direct publishing policies in Galicia as a whole, including the area of translation, in order to integrate more women writers into the mainstream catalogue, whilst at the same time incorporating more female translators within the literary sphere. The question of providing more visibility to and respect for female work in the field of non-literary translation and interpretation also needs to be addressed.

Efforts must also be centred on unmasking and ultimately eradicating androcentric practices in translation by providing better coverage and access for feminist translation strategies as a corrective measure designed to promote a more egalitarian image of women.

Finally, undergraduate translator training in Galicia is one area which has consistently failed to address the question of ideological bias, including sexism, with no courses dealing with the issue either in the two syllabi prior to the Bologna Reform, nor in the new post-Bologna syllabus at Vigo. Bearing in mind that Vigo is the only Galician university offering undergraduate and postgraduate training in translation and interpreting, the implications of this absence are far-reaching. Although the issue was addressed at postgraduate level in the erstwhile Doctorate in Translation and Paratranslation run by Vigo's Translation and Linguistics Department, the revised Master no longer includes the course on Ideology and Translation (see Footnote 2). If future professional translators are at least to be made aware of the way in which underlying prejudices can be projected onto their final translations and the repercussions this can have on their readership, there is a need to integrate the question of ideological manipulation into undergraduate courses.

This paper modestly aspires to be the first step towards practical, empirically validated gender research within the field of translation into Galician, with translation being a potentially powerful vehicle for the transmission and reproduction of social values which may or may not be present in the original works. The symbolic capital and importance of translation especially to weak systems is the prime reason why this study has focused on translation practice and strategies into Galician. Further case studies involving other language pairs and other countries would

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be welcomed in order to corroborate the tentative results arrived at in this study. As an exercise in politically committed research dedicated to furthering the goals of feminism, the paper has included a series of practical measures geared to affirmative action which could be implemented in order to offset the androcentric bias still observable in Galician language translation practice today.



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