

SOMETHING IN BETWEEN: GALICIAN LITERARY STUDIES BEYOND THE LINGUISTIC CRITERION

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ABSTRACT: The history of literary phenomena is intertwined with the history of multilingualism. And yet, the study of literature is usually done within the paradigm of the national literature as developed in the 19th century which, from the premise of the existence of a single national language, rarely deals with the production in other languages. This article examines the shortcomings of the imposition of the linguistic criterion applied to the Galician context paying attention to an unexplored area of intersection between national literatures, namely the literary translation of Luis Pimentel's poetry. It concludes by proposing a new understanding of Galician literary studies beyond the linguistic criterion that offers a more nuanced account of the literary field.

KEYWORDS: linguistic criterion, literary citizenship, literary translation, pseudo-original, Luis Pimentel.

QUALQUER COISA DE INTERMÉDIO: OS ESTUDOS LITERARIOS GALEGOS ALÉN DO CRITERIO FILOLÓXICO

RESUMO: A historia dos fenómenos literarios entretécese coa historia do multilingüismo. Porén, o estudo da literatura faise a miúdo dende o paradigma da literatura nacional creado no século XIX que, partindo da premisa da existencia dunha única lingua nacional, rara vez se ocupa da produción noutras linguas. Este artigo examina as limitacións da imposición do criterio filolóxico aplicado ao contexto galego prestándolle atención a un eido inexplorado da intersección entre literaturas nacionais, isto é, a tradución literaria da poesía de Luis Pimentel. Conclúe propondo un novo entendemento dos estudos literarios galegos alén do criterio filolóxico que ofrece unha visión máis completa do campo literario.

PALABRAS CHAVE: criterio filolóxico, cidadanía literaria, tradución literaria, pseudorixinal, Luis Pimentel.

«Eu não sou eu nem sou o outro, | Sou qualquer coisa de intermédio: | Pilar da ponte de tédio | Que vai de mim para o Outro» is a short poem by the Modernist Portuguese writer Mário de Sá-Carneiro, which has been described by Clara Rocha (2013: 417) «as an extraordinary synthesis of the drama of disper-

sion or the multiplication of the “I”, which would become central to his work». Although Sá-Carneiro was writing about gender identity, his words have accompanied me during my research on the linguistic identities of Galician writers, where the present article has its roots. The angst poured into his lines is proof that failing to construct a single and stable gender identity in a society where gender is clearly defined and policed often constitutes a drama. Many writers, the Galician Alfredo Conde springs to mind (Vilavedra 2010: 86-95), have expressed similar feelings regarding their linguistic choices. Yet, despite the ubiquity of this feeling, we must be careful not to generalise. As Kirsty Hooper has pointed out, the tension between Galician and Spanish linguistic identities can be problematic, «or, more controversially, [...] not so problematic» (2007: 2). This article explores that «something in between» the Galician and the Spanish national literatures, both defined by language, through the case-study of Luis Pimentel to show the wealth of literary phenomena which is lost when we rigidly apply the linguistic criterion. Finally, it proposes a new understanding of Galician literary studies that offers a more nuanced account of the literary field.

LUIS PIMENTEL AS CASE-STUDY

The poet Luis Vázquez Fernández (1895-1950), best known as Luis Pimentel, occupies a central position in the history of 20th-century Galician-language poetry. And yet, almost all his poems in Galician are pseudo-originals: that is, they were originally written in Spanish, translated into Galician by several of his galeguista friends, and passed off as originals.¹ Born to an urban middle-class family, he received, like all his siblings, including the only girl, the translator Mercedes Vázquez Fernández Pimentel, a good liberal education, and he became a medical doctor. His links with the galeguista movement were established in the 1920s through the cultural avant-garde magazines published in his hometown of Lugo, and were consolidated years later when he attended university in Santiago de Compostela. Pimentel published poetry in Spanish and Galician —although significantly more in the former than

¹ Anthony Pym defines the concept of «pseudo-original» as a «translated text falsely presented and received as original» (1998: 60).

in the latter— in literary magazines and newspapers. His poetry circulated amongst his friends and his reputation as the finest Galician poet in both Galician and in Spanish grew to the extent that several key literary agents showed interest in publishing his work. Camilo José Cela, who was the founder of the literary magazine *Papeles de Son Armadans*, offered to publish his poetry, first in Spanish and later in Galician. And yet, despite repeatedly trying to get a book published, he managed to publish only a short book of eight poems in Galician, *Triscos* (1950). Posthumously, his friends published a collection in Galician, *Sombra do aire na herba* (1959), and a collection in Spanish, *Barco sin luces* (1960); his bilingual *Obras completas* were finally published in 2009. It would take more space than we have here to describe the intricacies of his complicated and unfortunate publishing history but it will suffice to say that Pimentel's «drama textual», as Arcadio López-Casanova (1990) calls it, is not only a personal matter, but a testament to the difficulties of publishing literature in Galicia and Spain in the first half of the 20th century. The fact that his work was linguistically unstable added another layer of difficulty.

Officially, Pimentel was a bilingual poet; his book *Barco sin luces* had two versions: one in Galician and another in Spanish, and Pimentel seemed as keen to publish one as the other. We could think of Pimentel as another Galician bilingual author but, as his contemporaries knew, he was not. Despite being all his life in daily contact with Galician, having encountered positive attitudes towards the language, and being part of the galeguista movement, Pimentel, like many people of his social class, had a limited productive knowledge of the language. Hence, his poems were either entirely translated into Galician or carefully revised by friends. These friends included some important galeguistas of the 20th century: Evaristo Correa Calderón translated into Galician his first published poem; Ánxel Fole edited *Triscos*, whose title was chosen by Ramón Piñeiro, one of Pimentel's oldest and closest friends and frequent translator; and Celestino Fernández de la Vega, who edited *Sombra do aire na herba*, titled the book, selected the poems and translated them into Galician.

This information was kept a secret for decades with complex results. In 1974, an anthology of Galician literature was published that featured original Galician poems next to their translation into Spanish; the translator, the poet Miguel González Garcés, explains Ricardo Carvalho (also Carballo) Calero, «que cria traduzir a Pimentel [...] traduz-me a mim neste caso» (1989: 268).

Since the late 1970s, thanks to the academic work of Carvalho Calero and Aracéli Herrero Figueroa, the linguistic nature of Pimentel's poetry has become known. Nonetheless, it was not until 1990, when the Real Academia Galega dedicated to Pimentel the Día das Letras Galegas, an event set up in 1963 to commemorate those who write in Galician, that most critics and readers discovered that his poems were pseudo-translations. Because the information threatened Pimentel's position in the canon, critics either ignored the issue altogether, as they had done so far, or tried to justify his language choice. In her book *Rosas na sombra: A poesía de Luís Pimentel*, Pilar Pallarés takes great pains to justify the Spanish version of his book *Barco sin luces* and considers, for instance, «[a]té que ponto as tentativas dunha edizón en español, xa nos anos 40, son fruto dunha decisión espontánea, dos consellos de Dámaso Alonso, ou resultado do clima de represón e terror» (1990: 21).² Here, Pallarés assumes that Pimentel wrote his poetry in Galician and was persuaded or coerced by external factors hostile to Galician to self-translate it into Spanish. In other words, she ignores the fact that he wrote his poetry in Spanish and was persuaded by external factors favourable to Galician to let others translate his work into Galician and pass it off as an original.

The general conclusion was that «[a]xudado ou non, do que non restan dúbidas é da insobornable vocación de poeta galego de Pimentel e mesmo de poeta en lingua galega» (Murado 1990: 29). That is, Pimentel's position in the canon was consolidated and we could say, following Gideon Toury, that his Galician-language, «while genetically a translation, [it] cease[d] to *function* as one» (1995: 138; italics in the original). In other words, Pimentel's original poetry belongs to the category of texts which «have been negated by transfiguration, by an act of appropriative penetration and transfer in excess of the original, more ordered, more aesthetically pleasing. There are originals we no longer turn to because the translation is of a higher magnitude» (Steiner 2000: 194–195). A further example of this is provided by the contemporary anthologies of Galician literature translated into English published in 2010, *Anthology of Galician Literature 1196–1981* edited by Jonathan Dunne and Breogán's *Light-house: An Anthology of Galician Literature* edited by Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos. Like González Garcés's anthology, they both include an English trans-

² Alonso was a fellow poet in Spanish, a powerful critic and one of the most important Hispanists at the time.

lation of the Galician translations of «A Rosalía» and «Paseo» published in 1959 in *Sombra do aire na herba*.

THE LINGUISTIC CRITERION

This conclusion will surprise many because Galician literature is conceptualised as that exclusively written in Galician and writers are closely policed. The linguistic criterion, or «criterio filolóxico», was officially sanctioned in the introduction of Carvalho Calero's seminal work *Historia da literatura galega contemporánea*, published in 1962. The idea was a legacy of the late 18th-century German philosophy, to which we owe most of our linguistic ideologies. Johann Herder, Johann Fichte, and Friedrich Schleiermacher developed and disseminated the idea that one of the key elements of a nation was language. The Portuguese philosopher Eduardo Lourenço refers to this as a process of *sacralização* which produced an «*ontologização do laço que liga uma língua a uma pátria*» (1999: 185; italics in the original). Thus, «[a] língua [deixou] de ser a mera expressão histórica contingente de uma realidade igualmente contingente e histórica como é uma pátria, em sentido político, para ser o seu *fundamento*, ou antes, a sua *substância*» (Lourenço 1999: 184; italics in the original). In order to become a fully-fledged nation, communities had to develop and institutionalise their linguistic varieties into only one national language. And, since almost no European state could claim to be wholly monolingual when this ideology spread throughout Europe and became the official linguistic ideology of its states, «it became imperative for any supralocal community to achieve the desired unity by exercising a strict control over language» (Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2002: 7).

The bilingual situation of those communities where, apart from Basque, Catalan and Galician, Spanish was spoken, posed a dilemma: which language should be deemed the national language? These communities' answers have differed greatly and varied throughout time, depending, among many other factors, upon the political scenario and the situation of the regional language in terms of its social prestige and number of speakers. However, apart from the process to revitalise Basque, Catalan, and Galician, these communities were also involved in the process of exercising strict control over the supralocal language, Spanish. Both processes were ideologically similar because, as Kathryn Woolard has pointed out, «movements to save minority languages

ironically are often structured, willy-nilly, around the same received notions of language that have led to their oppression and/or suppression» (1998: 17; 118). One of the main strategies used by both processes is the sociolinguistic phenomenon called «erasure», which offers a «totalizing vision in which some groups (or activities, or [linguistic] varieties) become invisible and inaudible» (Irvine 2001: 39).³

Official Galician literary history presupposes that the linguistic criterion was operative since the 19th-century *Rexurdimento* or the time of the Irmandades da Fala, founded in 1916, although at the time the linguistic criterion was not even firmly established in Spanish literature. As Elias Torres Feijó (2000: 975) convincingly argues, the use of Galician is a «défice projectivo», that is, it constitutes one of the needs detected «que indicam um vazio que se quer preencher (ou umha presenza que se quer substituir), um projecto que se quer realizar» (2000: 975). In other words, advocating the linguistic criterion is not the same as adhering to it, as Pimentel's case shows.

In recent years, scholars such as Dolores Vilavedra (1999), have proposed a new field *nómos*, that is, «the principle of vision and division [of] the [literary] field» (Bourdieu 1996: 223), drawing from the work of Itamar Even-Zohar. Vilavedra affirms as belonging to Galician literature those authors and works that are part of the Galician literary system but the *nómos* that determines who belongs and who does not is not addressed. The systemic criterion is almost always used as a synonym for Galician national literature and it does not engage with the literary phenomena in between traditions. In other words, it does not address the elephant in the room: what happens with the works of Galician-born writers that are not written in Galician? Or, as Carvalho Calero put it referring to Pimentel, «¿pertenece a la literatura española o a la gallega?» (Carballo 1981: 9).

As Kirsty Hooper shows, the question of language choice is «one of the key, but largely unarticulated, problems in contemporary Galician cultural discourse» (2007: 1). In the literary field, the problem is epitomised by the endless debates that arose between Ramón del Valle-Inclán and Emilia Pardo Bazán. Most scholars avoid the subject altogether, others acknowledge the is-

³ For instance, according to Jordi Gracia, Manuel Rivas is read by «un altísimo porcentaje de ciudadanos como un narrador y poeta de la literatura española (y no, como es, traducido del gallego)» (2000: 9).

sue by warning the reader, quite often in a footnote, that they only study the writer's Galician-language work. Yet every now and then, usually motivated by institutional decisions or the forces of the market, a voice cries out in the desert in favour or against the inclusion of Spanish-language authors in the Galician literary canon. Thus, apart from discussing the issue of the essence of the national literature at a suprapersonal level, we must also discuss the issue at a more personal level because, «one of the central stakes in literary [...] rivalries is the monopoly of literary legitimacy» (Bourdieu 1996: 224). The question is, therefore, who belongs and who does not belong to the literary field? Who is and who is not a national writer? This issue must be analysed in the context of a wider discussion about identity.

LITERARY CITIZENSHIP

Drawing on Hooper, I take from Mario Santana's work the concept of literary citizenship, which could be defined as the status of those who belong to a given literary system or literary field or simply literature, depending on the theoretical framework we use. It focuses the attention on issues of identity. The *Diccionario da Real Academia Galega* supplies a seemingly straightforward answer to what it is to be a Galician: as an adjective, *galego/-a* means «De Galicia e dos seus habitantes», and as a noun, «persoa natural ou habitante de Galicia» and «idioma falado en Galicia e nas zonas próximas de Asturias, León e Zamora». This definition does not, however, explain the complex web of issues surrounding identity in a peripheral community where there is a nationalist movement involved in the struggle for a certain degree of independence from another, contesting, nationalist movement.

The popular definitions of identity have basically four alternative criteria: birthplace, descent, sentiment/behaviour, and language (Woolard 1989: 37-38). For an important nationalist sector, a person is Galician if, being born in Galicia or of Galician parents outside Galicia (or being brought up in Galicia, I would add), he or she feels Galician, knows the traditions, and uses the language. Failing to fulfill any of these four criteria lessens a given person's degree of Galicianness. Not all of the criteria have the same relevance, however. Those who do not envisage Galicia as an entity separate from Spain or work for its autonomy are said to be less Galician by some. Contemporary writer Miguel-Anxo Murado claims that «[l]os gallegos no son más o menos gallegos

por tener conciencia política de serlo» (Murado 2008: 103), a view shared by most Galicians, although many a nationalist would profoundly disagree.⁴ For instance, the intellectual galeguista Ramón Piñeiro (1915-1990) talked of a «Galicia galega», opposed to the «Galicia anti-galega» (Rojo 1987: 9). Kathryn Woolard's findings for the Catalan case are similar: «some Catalan nationalists assert that it is necessary to demonstrate loyalty to the language, customs, and institutions of Catalonia in order to be Catalan, even if one is of Catalan descent for generations» (Woolard 1989: 39).

For lack of a more precise terminology, we only have one adjective (galego/-a) to refer to the different manifestations of Galician identity and thus the label Galician literature, conventionally used to refer to that literature written in Galician, cannot encompass the totality of the literature written by Galicians. Many think that defining Galician literature as that written by Galicians regardless of their language is a step back. Naturally, we must be vigilant of what it is at stake. As a codified language, Galician is endangered by Spanish; as a spoken language, more traditional varieties are being displaced by a heavily Castilianised variety; and literature in Galician could be said to be like other «minor languages and literatures [...] subject to the invisible but implacable violence of their dominant counterparts» (2004: back cover), as Pascale Casanova shows in *The World Republic of Letters*. According to postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak, «the use of essentialism as a short-term strategy to affirm a political identity can be effective» (qtd. in Morton 2003: 75) to empower minority groups. The linguistic criterion can be considered an example of «strategic essentialism».

Nonetheless, the rigid application of the linguistic criterion, that is, that Galician literature be exclusively written in Galician, to Galician literary studies has serious shortcomings. Unless we overcome what José Lambert's calls «la concepción estática [...] de las literaturas nacionales [...] según las cuales las tradiciones literarias coincidirán sólo con tradiciones lingüísticas al tiempo que todas las tradiciones lingüísticas coincidirán con el principio de las naciones» (Iglesias Santos 1999: 258), we will not be able to explain cases such as that of Pimentel. In other words, we must be careful of imposing the lin-

⁴ The critic and Galician nationalist politician Francisco Rodríguez resents those contemporary writers who «por puro oportunismo mercantilista — a “política” de prêmios — desde o campo ideolóxico españolista e obxectivamente ao servizo da asimilación cultural e lingüística, acaba[n] por ser escritor[es] galego[s]» (Rodríguez 1990: 16).

guistic criterion in Galician literary studies because it prevents us from engaging with the variety of literary phenomena. The idea that Galicianness can only be expressed in Galician has made scholars forget how complex the politics of language, and therefore of power, are in multilingual societies. Furthermore, the rigid obedience of the linguistic criterion has prevented scholars from asking questions such as: how do Galician writers in Spanish convey their Galicianness? What are the differences, if there are any, between the Galician-language and Spanish-language works of bilingual writers? What are the interliterary relations between Galician writers in Galician and in Spanish? The linguists Mauro Fernández and José del Valle argue that «the majority of Galicians display linguistic practices and attitudes that do not match the dominant discourse that identifies language (Galician) and social identity» (Valle 2000: 123). Similarly, most Galicians feel that the literatures of Valle-Inclán, Pardo Bazán and certainly Pimentel speak of and to them, despite the general consensus that Galician literature is only written in Galician.

In the terminology of Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory we could talk of «the Galician literary system in Galician» and «the Galician literary system in Spanish» but, apart from being a rather clumsy expression, I doubt there were ever two different literary systems, especially before the 1980s; the Spanish-language work of authors such as Luis Pimentel and Luis Seoane was part of the same set of literary relations as the Galician-language work of Luz Pozo Garza and Xohana Torres. What is more, many of these Spanish-language writers were interpellated, in the Althusserian sense of the term,⁵ by the galeguista cultural agents, who were largely targeting the urban, educated, upper- and middle-classes because they could provide the important symbolic capital that Galician needed. By the 1930s, Galician had established itself as a literary language and many young writers, though most monolingual Spanish-speakers, started writing in Galician. To borrow Blanco Amor's words, they wrote in Galician «como quen emprega un idioma aparte, alleo aos seus orixenes, unha lingua koiné como o esperanto» (Ruiz de Ojeda 1994: 106–107). The *galeguismo* continued to interpellate writers, such as Pimentel, who could provide significant symbolic capital for Galician literature, but, in order to be integrated into Galician literature their often complex linguistic performance had to be either

⁵ «[I]deology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals [...] or “transforms” the individuals into subjects» (Althusser 2004: 699).

simplified or justified. In my opinion Xoán González-Millán uses the second strategy when he talks about «la suspensión temporal del criterio filológico» (2000: 10) and justifies the émigré and exile Luis Seoane's Spanish-language works as a means to establish better relationships with the Argentine elites. The attitudes towards Galician in Argentine were negative among the Galician diaspora and the local elites, but the same can be said for Galicia and Spain.

To conclude, I think we must walk the difficult path of the happy medium and challenge the equation «one nation, one language, one literature» while trying to understand the strategic reasons as to why communities hold firm to it. Making Xoán González-Millán's aim my aim: in my research I strive to «superar o espellismo dunha cultura filolóxica na definición e delimitación do comportamento dunha literatura nacional e na concepción mesma do fenómeno lingüístico» (González-Millán 1998: 6), so we can contribute to the construction of a model that can give a more nuanced account of the complex relationship human beings establish with the languages they speak and how this relationship is reflected in literature.

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