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**Girl, Interrupted:
The Distinctive History of Galician Women's Narrative**

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'Galician Women's Narrative'

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the anomaly that whilst there are increasing numbers of Galician-language women poets and writers of children's literature, women prose writers are still few and far between. Beginning with a discussion of debates in feminist criticism that call attention to the role of influence on authorship, I argue that the fragmented history of women's writing in Galicia, due to the perceived absence of a Galician female public voice in the gap between Rosalía's *Follas novas* (1880) and Herrera Garrido's *Néveda* (1920), appears to leave women writers without a literary foremother during the crucial formative years of Galician cultural identity. I then postulate the existence, during the complex, bilingual fin de siècle (c1885-1916), of a 'lost generation' of women writers whose largely Castilian-language texts show the seeds of a cross-generational dialogue that could potentially bridge this gap. Finally, I ask how the fragmented history of women's writing in Galicia continues to affect women writing today.

Girl, Interrupted: The Distinctive History of Galician Women's Narrative

A glance through the author lists of the two principal Galician publishing houses, Galaxia and Xerais, shows that women authors are outnumbered by men by a ratio of almost four to one, and that the majority of these women authors publish exclusively in one of two genres: children's literature – where the vast majority of authors are women who unlike their male contemporaries often do not publish outside the genre – and poetry.¹ The lack of female novelists and short story writers in Galicia is illustrated by the history of the two most prestigious Galician literary prizes, the *Premio Xerais de Novela*, and the *Premio Merlín de Literatura Infantil*. While seven of the seventeen awards of the *Premio Merlín* made between 1986 and 2002 were to female writers, it was only in 2001 that the *Premio Xerais* (founded in 1984) was first awarded to a woman: Marilar Aleixandre, for the novel *Teoría de caos*. The following year, second-time novelist Inma López Silva won with the novel *Concubinas*. To offer some comparison, Spain's most prestigious award, the *Premio Planeta de Novela*, founded in 1952, has had four female winners out of nineteen prizes awarded over the same period (1984-2002),² while the Booker Prize for Fiction, founded in 1969, has had seven female winners out of nineteen between 1984 and 2002.³ Galician writers themselves are acutely aware of the anomaly: in a debate on the future of Galician literature at the *Auditorio de Galicia* in 2000, the (male) novelist Xurxo Borrazás observed that 'debería haber máis mulleres narradoras. Entre as miñas lecturas de narrativa, practicamente se equiparan mulleres con homes. Sen embargo en Galicia, son fabas contadas' [78].⁴ Meanwhile, the writer and activist María Xosé Queizán, in an interview with the feminist journal *Andaina* in 1999,

observed that '[s]obre todo nos últimos tempos, a poesía de mulleres é moi importante, moi variada e de moita calidade ... A narrativa, xa non tanto. A narrativa de mulleres xa é moito máis escasa.'⁵ Given the explosion of Galician literature in the period since 1975, and the large and ever-growing number of male novelists and short story writers, where can the female narrators be?

In the context of Galician literature, a small number of critics have attempted to answer this question, most recently Camiño Noia in her essay 'La narrativa gallega de mujeres' (2000).⁶ Noia offers three possible reasons for the lack of female-authored narrative in Galician: the fact that 'una mujer difícilmente se arriesga al juicio de los lectores sin haber pasado antes por el premio de un jurado o el beneplácito de una autoridad en la materia' whereas '[s]us compañeros varones, más seguros de sí mismos y de lo que hacen, no parecen tener dudas acerca de su producción literaria, y la ofrecen, a veces incluso con arrogancia, a los editores' [239]; '[l]a falta de competencia lingüística en una lengua que no usan en los ámbitos más íntimos' [239], and 'la ausencia de escritoras en los distintos ámbitos de la institución literaria' [240]. While the first two points contain a degree of biological essentialism that defies verification,⁷ women's low profile in many cultural institutions is a fact. In an article published in 1998 in the Galician nationalist journal *Terra e Tempo*, the poet and literary critic Pilar Pallarés observes that one would expect the importance of Rosalía de Castro to have broken down many of the barriers facing women writers. In fact, she says, the reverse is true: women writers other than Rosalía have no place in literary history, as proved by the lack of any reference to other female writers on

the Galician school syllabus beyond a passing mention of the poet Luz Pozo Garza.⁸

In the following analysis, I reframe the lack of female role models (beyond Rosalía) that both Noia and Pallarés observe, in terms of the theory of female authorship outlined more than twenty years ago by the American critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.⁹ In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar argue – in relation to British and American literature – that ‘[b]y the nineteenth century there was a rich and clearly defined female literary subculture, a community in which women consciously read and related to each other’s works’ [xii]. This literary subculture, they suggest, was dominated not by a sense of competition between writers – what Harold Bloom had described six years earlier as the ‘anxiety of influence’ – but by an ‘anxiety of authorship’ and a search for dialogue. They observe that ‘Bloom’s model is intensely (even exclusively) male, and necessarily patriarchal [...]’ and ask, ‘Where, then, does the female poet fit in? Does she want to annihilate a “forefather” or a “foremother”? What if she can find no models, no precursors?’ [47], and they go on to answer their own question: ‘Frequently [...] she can begin [her] struggle only by actively seeking a *female* precursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible’ [49]. In other words, according to Gilbert and Gubar, women writers need to seek out their own narrative history, at the same time as they continue to write within the mainstream narrative history. ‘Sociosexual differentialisation means that [...] women writers participate in a quite different literary subculture from that inhabited by male writers, a subculture which has its own distinctive literary

traditions, even [...] a distinctive history' [Gilbert & Gubar 1979: 50]. Where this distinctive history is lost, they argue, women writers are at a disadvantage: 'If contemporary women do now attempt the pen with energy and authority, they are able to do so only because their eighteenth and nineteenth century foremothers struggled in isolation that felt like madness, obscurity that felt like paralysis, to overcome the anxiety of authorship that was endemic to their literary subculture' [Gilbert & Gubar 1979: 51].

In an article published in 2000 in the *Anuario de Estudios Galegos*, Silvia Bermúdez reads Galician women's poetry in the light of Gilbert & Gubar's revision of Bloom's theory, exploring '[o] particular círculo de tradición feminina das escritoras galegas contemporáneas que se dedicaron a dialogar con poemas ou, nalgúns casos, con obras enteiras de Rosalía' [136].¹⁰ Bermúdez's argument is that not only does a female poetic tradition exist in Galicia, but it is one consciously constructed and based on dialogue with the precursor *par excellence*, Rosalía de Castro (1837-85), as opposed to Bloom's model of automatic struggle. She concludes that '[a]s poetas parecen invitar a Bloom a recoñecer o eixe constitutivo de termos colectivos como os que elas establecen desde a súa condición de mulleres escritoras galegas,' a condition which is based on '[u]nha autoconciencia que non reprime a presenza da precursora' [152]. The strength, diversity, and popularity of poetry by Galician women today is unquestionable, and for Bermúdez this must be connected with the fact that '[p]ara os poetas e as poetas que escriben en galego Galicia e Rosalía [aparecen] ineludiblemente identificadas [...] O recoñecemento e loanza do herdo rosaliano vai vencellado a unha aguda conciencia da formulación dunha identidade galega'

[137]. In other words, in Gilbert and Gubar's terms, the existence of a powerful foremother – who is, furthermore, accepted as an integral part of the national heritage from which women are so often excluded – has been a powerful factor in the continued vitality of poetic production by women. Of course, as Bermúdez makes clear when she talks of 'os poetas e as poetas' for whom Rosalía is an important precursor, the concept of dialogue between generations is not peculiar to women's writing. In the Galician case, for example, inter-generational dialogue is a central part of the works of such canonical authors as Curros Enríquez.¹¹ However, the relationship between women writers and the canon in Galicia is uneasy, and even Rosalía is not admitted to all of the canonical conversations, which are of course closed to the majority of other women writers. Despite Castro's importance as a poet, her narrative production (other than a single, posthumously discovered *conto* and the prefaces to *Cantares gallegos* and *Follas novas*) is entirely in Castilian and is therefore excluded from the Galician metanarrative. As I will argue now, this uneasy relationship is central to the understanding and reconstruction of the 'distinctive history' of women's writing in Galicia.

When we look at the available literature on Galicia's female authors, it is indubitable that if a 'distinctive history' of women's writing ever existed in Galicia, then it has been lost. Carmen Blanco's comprehensive bibliographical guide, *Libros de mulleres* (1994), names only nine women authors writing in Galician before the civil war: Rosalía, Filomena Dato, Clara Corral Aller, Francisca Herrera Garrido, Herminia Fariña Cobián, Carmen Prieto Rouco, Dolores Parga Serrano, Josefa Iglesias Vilarelle, and Mechitas de Vigo (the pseudonym of

Mercedes Viso Troncoso), of whom all but Herrera and Iglesias (an educationalist) are listed exclusively as poets [67-77].¹² The history of women's narrative that is left to us is a disrupted, fragmented narrative that jumps forty years from Rosalía's prologues to *Cantares gallegos* (1863) and *Follas novas* (1880) to the first female-authored novel in Galician, *Néveda. Historia dunha dobre seducción* (1920) by Francisca Herrera Garrido (1869-1950). Does this mean that for forty years, there were no Galician women writers?

Bio-bibliographical research shows that despite their absence from the major histories of Galician literature, the apparent dearth of women writers in Galicia at the turn of the century is a myth. The first comprehensive history of Galician literature, Uxío Carré Aldao's *Literatura gallega* (1911), dedicates a whole chapter to Rosalía and a short section to 'Las poetisas' who have published in Galician, among whom he includes Dato, Clara and Rita Corral, Ramona de la Peña y Salvador de Castro López, Marcelina Soto Freire, Avelina Valladares, Sarah A. Lorenzana, and María Teresa Juega. Carré goes on to lament that:

Las demás escritoras y poetisas, brillante plantel de la intelectualidad femenina de Galicia, como Concepción Arenal, Narcisa Pérez Reoyo y Emilia Calé, ya fallecidas, y Emilia Pardo Bazán, Sofía Casanova, Fanny Garrido, Elisa Lestache, Dolores del Río Sánchez Granados, María Barbeito, Mercedes Tella, Mercedes Vieites, Hipólita Muíño, Sor María Navidad del Niño Jesús, religiosa en Monforte y excelente música, y tantas otras que son hora y prez de la región y de su sexo poco o nada han producido, que sepamos, en gallego.

However, he does hint that many of these women – and, perhaps, others that he does not mention, such as Carmen Beceiro, Luisa Freire Marquina or Melchora

Vidal – may have produced Galician works that have simply never been published [89-90].¹³

When Carmen Blanco surveyed Carré's work and other histories of Galician literature (published in Galician and in Castilian), she found the names of at least twenty-five women who wrote in Galician, although she admits that many of these are mentioned only in passing as being literary women, and 'na maioría dos casos a súa obra resulta case anecdótica ou mesmo descoñecida' [Blanco 1991: 321-22]. Furthermore, as Blanco goes on to note, 'tamén nesta época, por razóns obvias, moitas escritoras nadas en Galicia non cultivan en absoluto o galego' [322], while many others followed Rosalía's example in publishing bilingually. Kathleen McNerney and Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca argue in the introduction to *Double Minorities*, their bio-bibliographical study of women writers in Spain's 'minority' languages, that 'a strict linguistic criterion cannot be applied, since bilingualism in all its variations is a common phenomenon, often due to circumstances beyond the individual's control' [6].¹⁴ Nevertheless, the ambiguity of bilingual writers, or those who self-identified as Galician but published in Spanish, sits comfortably with neither the Galician nor the Spanish metanarrative. This ambiguity is reflected in the media in which these women chose to disseminate their work: while many of them continued to publish their major novels and other works with Spanish publishing houses, they occupied a peripheral position in the Spanish context as, through their participation in Galician social and cultural (if not political) initiatives, they located themselves firmly within the emerging Galician cultural system.

Among those who were active in *fin de século* Galician cultural institutions, Emilia Calé and Sofía Casanova each published a volume in Martínez Salazar's *Biblioteca Gallega*. Calé's *Crepusculares* (1894) and Casanova's *Fugaces* (1898), both collections of poetry, were the only two female-authored volumes in a collection that eventually totalled more than fifty. Later, Casanova's anthology of short stories, *El pecado* (1911) would be the only female-authored volume to be included in the *Biblioteca de Escritores Gallegos*, which, according to José Antonio Durán writing in the *Gran Enciclopedia Gallega*, was 'una de las experiencias editoriales más importantes de la historia de nuestra industria de la cultura.'¹⁵

Filomena Dato Muruais published three of her four collections of poetry (*Follatos: Poesías Gallegas*, 1891; *Romances y Cantares*, 1895; *Fe: Poesías Religiosas* 1911) with Galician publishing houses, while all of these three women, along with Carmen Beceiro and Fanny Garrido, published regularly in Galician periodicals both at home and abroad, most notably *Follas Novas* and *Eco de Galicia* (La Habana); *Suevia* (Buenos Aires); *Terra* (Córdoba, Argentina); *Galicia* and *Revista Gallega* (A Coruña), and *Patria Gallega* (Santiago de Compostela). A number of women, including Casanova, Calé, Dato, and Garrido would be elected corresponding members of the Real Academia Gallega in 1906. Despite the evidence of their presence in *fin de século* Galician cultural circles, however, most of these writers remain outside both the Galician and Spanish metanarratives, as a result of their borderline position – neither Galician enough for Galicia nor Spanish enough for Spain.

It is no coincidence that these years of women's apparent silence, which take in the *fin de século*, are the crucial formative years of modern Galician identity.

According to the Galician metanarrative, these are the years of *Rexionalismo*, the political ideology that forms the transition between the *Provincialismo* of the 1840s to 1880s, and the *Nacionalismo* that developed with the intellectual movement known as the *Xeración Nós* between 1916 and 1936.¹⁶ Bibliographical studies show us that an unprecedented number of authors were publishing at this time, in journals and periodicals if not always in book form.¹⁷ However, modern scholarship gives us a skewed view of the situation: *fin de século* culture is either dismissed as evidence of a ‘depresión finisecular’¹⁸ or, as Dolores Vilavedra – one of a very few Galician critics to confront this question – has observed, omitted from histories of literature altogether.¹⁹ This is because the Galician metanarrative as developed by the *Xeración Nós* conflates language choice and national affiliation, and the stories of the development of ‘Galicianness’ and Galician literature therefore run parallel with the story of the development of the Galician language. In this context, the great intellectuals of the *fin de século*, Manuel Murguía and Alfredo Brañas, are seen as laying the groundwork for the development of the modern Galician-speaking nation, but their work aside, it is seen as a period of stagnation between the *Rexurdimento* (linguistic and literary renaissance) that began with the publication of Rosalía’s *Cantares gallegos* in 1863, and the *Xeración Nós*’s creation of a functional public voice during the 1920s.²⁰

In this context, the greatest difficulty for the scholar of *fin de século* writing is that modern, monolingual histories of Galician literature do not always acknowledge that bilingualism, or even monolingualism in Castilian, did not – for *fin de século* writers – preclude participation in the emerging Galician cultural

system. As language has become the central, institutionalised marker of Galician difference from Spain, so critics have sought to legitimise the connection between Galicianness and the Galician language, by rewriting cultural history through the erasure of non-Galician language voices.²¹ As a result, the literature of the *fin de século* is some of the least considered of Galician writing. Writing by women, statistically a tiny minority of a relatively small total output, has hitherto received a proportionately small amount of critical attention. Although a few books devoted to women's participation in the cultural and political life of the *Rexurdimento* and *fin de século* began to appear in the 1990s,²² the task of recovering the 'distinctive history' of Galician women's writing is made more difficult by the absence of primary information: the history of *galeguismo* is based on a combination of socio-political and cultural texts and acts, but women rarely participated overtly in such debates, being confined mainly to the private sphere. As a result, there is very little evidence available for the reconstruction of the development of a female public voice: for example, Carmen Blanco finds reports of just two public lectures by women in *galeguista* circles during the *Nós* years.²³

The influences at work on the writing of Galician cultural history are not dissimilar to those that have shaped the Spanish cultural narrative: a similarly generational model exists, whereby the perceived linear progression from *Rexurdimento* to *Xeración Nós* – like the false division between 'Generation of 1898' and *Modernistas* or the progression from 'Generation of 1898' to 'Generation of 1907' to 'Generation of 1914' and so on – leaves no space for writers who are not considered to have participated in the creation of the master

narrative. Women writers other than Rosalía are excluded, with the result – as we saw above – that the narrative of women’s writing in Galicia appears fragmented, jumping from the publication of Rosalía’s *Follas novas* in 1880 to the publication of Herrera Garrido’s *Néveda* in 1920. It is indubitable that female authors often have an uneasy relationship with their national literature. For example, in the introduction to *Double Minorities*, McNerney and Enríquez de Salamanca observe that most of the 472 writers they cover ‘have been excluded from Spanish literary history, as well as from the official histories of Catalan, Galician, and Basque literature’ [8]. Drawing attention to ‘the dual discrimination suffered by these writers [that] multiplies the difficulties of locating and reading their work’ [10], they argue that conventional literary criteria cannot always be applied to women’s writing: ‘It is impossible to determine if someone is a “writer” by counting the number of her works. Other criteria are involved in judging literary achievement – value judgements, social effect, literary influence, and so on – which means that this label eludes easy definition’ [11].

I will look briefly now at an example of dialogue between Galician women authors that suggests awareness both of this borderline position and of its contribution to a distinctive, female-centred history. The narrative works of the expatriate writer Sofía Casanova (1861-1958) include several overt homages to Rosalía de Castro. These show that Castro’s influence crosses genres from verse to narrative and back again. It also crosses languages as Casanova, in her Castilian-language texts, engages in dialogue with both Castro’s Galician-language verse and her Castilian-language narrative. For example, the heroine of Casanova’s first novel, *El doctor Wolski* (1894), is called Mara, after the heroine of

Rosalía de Castro's novel *Flavio* (1867), and like her namesake, Casanova's Mara is a frustrated intellectual, trapped by social expectations and in love with a darkly Byronic hero who ultimately fails to live up to her expectations. Unlike Castro's heroine, however, Casanova's Mara escapes her repressive fiancé and the pressures of the society they live in, to found a female commune: at a generation's distance, Casanova was able to imagine a future for her heroine that Castro could never have dreamed of.²⁴

Fifteen years after *El doctor Wolski*, the heroine of Casanova's short novel *Princesa del amor hermoso* (1909) celebrates Rosalía's poetry as a homegrown, female-voiced alternative to the Romantic discourse of the Italian Leopardi which, she says, fixes woman as an alternately scorned and worshipped, but always silent, muse.²⁵ The novella follows Laura, a thinking, writing woman with a voice of her own, as she tries to detach herself from the influence of her Petrarchan namesake: the comparison between the Petrarchan stereotype and Rosalía's active, vocal heroine underpins the whole story. Casanova's Laura has no time for the Romantic poets and their silent objects of affection and instead asks her young suitor José Luis to read her 'versos de nuestra Rosalía, el más humano de sus lamentos':

¿Qué di a meiguiña?
¿Qué di a traidora?...
Corazón que enloitado te crubes
c'os negros desprezos qu'a falsa che-dona,
¿por qué vives loitando por ela?
¿Por qué, namorado, de pena salouzas? [171]

The couple both react instinctively to Rosalía's verses: '[l]a intensidad de la estrofa emocionó a ambos; latían sus corazones, persiguiendo en la difusa verdad de la poesía algo de sus almas, de su esencia sentimental, que el verso despertara y esparcía [...]' [Casanova 1989: 171]. Why does this poem – '¿Qué ten o mozo?' – have such an impact? Both poet and poem are significant: Rosalía was celebrated in the early years of the twentieth century as 'uno de los más altos poetas contemporáneos,'²⁶ having been rediscovered by the 'Generation of 1898,' and her *Obras completas* were published in 1909, the same year as *Princesa*.²⁷ '¿Qué ten o mozo?' is a dialogue between a pair of lovers: that is, significantly, the female protagonist is not a silent object of affection, but a speaking subject. Furthermore, like Laura, she is cynical about her lover's attitude: foreshadowing what will happen to José Luis, he swings from intense devotion ('canciño de cego/ por onde eu andare seguíndome vai') to extreme domination ('parece que pasa soberbo,/ mandando nos homes su real maxestá'). The passage Casanova quotes forms the transition between the two voices, questioning the (male) lover's Petrarchan protestations of misery ('¿por qué vives sufrindo por ela?'), before he replies, accusing her of being as changeable as he ('tamén es cal raiola de marzo,/ que agora descrube, que agora se entolda'). The poem ends as the male voice assures the female that 'Iguales semos,/ nena fermosa,' just as *Princesa* ends with José Luis's assertions that he and Laura are as one [Casanova 1989: 191-192]. Through this passage, Casanova opens up a dialogue with her Galician foremother that has as much impact on the text as the dialogue with Valle's *Sonatas* that Roberta Johnson has noticed.²⁸ The poem quoted offers a direct model for Laura and José Luis's relationship that forms an alternative to the Romantic paradigm of man-subject-poet creating woman-object-ideal. At the

same time, Rosalía's Galicianness, and her commitment to social change, offer José Luis a practical model as he commits to helping the peasants in their struggle for social justice.

A similar dialogue to the one that Casanova, in her Castilian-language text, opens up with Rosalía is apparent also in the Galician-language writing of Francisca Herrera Garrido. However, the effects of the fragmentation of Galician women's writing are evident in the way that critics have read the relationship between Herrera's and Rosalía's texts. Following Ricardo Carballo Calero's assertion that 'Francisca Herrera fai pensar inmediatamente en Rosalía,'²⁹ the vast majority of subsequent critics have identified Herrera's novels and poetry, and particularly *Néveda*, as a direct response to Rosalía's works, published between four and six decades earlier.³⁰ The resulting perception of Herrera, as 'unha escritora que escribe fóra do seu tempo' [Noia 1981: 18] fits in with Gilbert and Gubar's hypothesis that the lack of female role models is prejudicial to women writers. Because of this perception, *Néveda* received little critical attention on publication, was dismissed by the *Xeración Nós* in the 1920s,³¹ and in recent years, has most often been described as an anachronistic example of the 'costumismo rural' that, for most critics, characterises *fin de século* narrative.³² Camino Noia, in the introduction to the 1981 reissue of the novel, argues that while '[r]esulta fundamental prá literatura galega o feito de que unha muller escriba unha novela en galego, xénero que tiña unha escasa tradición na nosa literatura' [Noia 1981: 16], the novel's literary value does not live up to its ideological importance: 'Os libros de Herrera non tiñan nada novo que decir ós seus contemporáneos porque as teses que ofrecían quedaban atrasadas e vellas'

[Noia 1981: 18]. However, there was a constant, albeit sparse stream of broadly similar narrative in Galician during the years between Rosalía's death in 1885 and the publication of *Néveda*, by authors such as Uxío Carré Aldao, Xesús Rodríguez López, Manuel Amor Meilán, Heraclio Pérez Placer, and Aurelio Ribalta, among others.³³ In this light, Noia's assertion that 'na narrativa galega non había modelos *de interés* nos que Herrera se puidese basear' [Noia 1981: 17, italics mine] seems to imply that it is the absence of more recent foremothers, as opposed to forefathers, that forces Herrera to engage in dialogue with a woman who had died thirty-five years before. I would argue, however, that to read *Néveda* solely as a response to Rosalía – and, furthermore, to Rosalía's poetry – is to remove the novel from its social, cultural, political, and linguistic context.

Although the metanarrative of *hispanidad* that has dominated twentieth-century Hispanic criticism gives the impression that *fin de siglo* culture was both monolithically masculine and Castile-focused, in reality the radical demographic changes that affected Iberia as much as the rest of Europe gave rise to an unprecedented variety of alternative voices. This can be seen in the proliferation of largely forgotten writing by both male and female writers based in, and writing about, the peripheries – in Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Basque and other peninsular languages.³⁴ In fact, although writing by women at the turn of the century remains an acutely under-researched area, bio-bibliographical research suggests that the *libro regional* is a central feature of women's writing in the first decades of the twentieth century. The majority of the *fin de siglo* women authors that we know about each produced at least one collection of *cuentos regionales* or a *novela regional*,³⁵ books that were marketed as 'genuinamente regional,' where

‘todos los asuntos [...] son de la tierra’ and where ‘veréis desfilar paisajes y tipos.’³⁶ In other words, *Néveda* – while unique because it is written in Galician – is part of a chiefly forgotten, but widespread tendency in Iberian writing,³⁷ detailed study of which suggests that far from producing simple *costumbrista* or folletinesque illustrations of local colour, many of these writers in fact exploited the regional form as a location for challenging the national.³⁸

Although these works by Casanova and Herrera Garrido are just two examples, they show that the possibility did exist for dialogue between different generations of Galician intellectual women, writing in both Spanish and Galician. Such dialogue is central to the development of any ‘distinctive history,’ as Nancy A Walker argues in her 1995 extension of Gilbert & Gubar’s thesis, *The Disobedient Writer*. In the introduction, Walker observes that ‘narratives are essential to our sense of place in a human continuum,’³⁹ asking, ‘How does the woman writer deal with the accumulated weight of canonical texts in which the tradition of her own voice is the merest whisper?’ [Walker 1995: 17] and answering her own question in the conclusion: ‘intertextuality [is] essential to the formation of literary traditions’ [Walker 1995: 171]. At the moment, we know very little about the lives or the works of Emilia Calé, the Corral sisters, Filomena Dato, Carmen Beceiro or Fanny Garrido, to name only a few of the women who published in Galician media during the *fin de século*. The invisibility of these women and the unavailability of their texts to subsequent generations have led to the apparent fragmentation of the history of women’s writing in Galicia. With more research into these women and the recovery and detailed study of their texts, perhaps we will find more evidence that there was an

awareness among Galician women during this crucial period that they were part of a 'distinctive history' or, in Walker's terms, a continuum. But how does this continuum intersect with existing critical paradigms? Like their foremother Rosalía, *fin de século* women writers occupy a borderline position between the Castilian and Galician languages, and the established and emerging national traditions with which they are associated, and as a result, they are perceived of as a threat to both. As I will argue now, this position continues to inform, and to influence, women writing in Galicia today.

The first female novelist since Herrera Garrido to publish in Galician was María Xosé Queizán. Queizán's first novel, *A orella no buraco* (1965) is considered by many critics to be the most exemplary work of the innovative Galician narrative movement, *A nova narrativa galega*. From the early 1970s, however, Queizán changed track and consciously began to write from a perspective of 'diferencialismo femenino,' trying to create a new place for women in the national narrative through the use of specific linguistic and thematic devices. The most significant result of this approach is her second novel, *Amantía*, published in 1984, which postulates a possible, pre-patriarchal Galician past in its story of the life of the fourth-century nun, Exeria, thus reclaiming a place for women in the earliest history of Galicia. All of Queizán's novels are characterised by the search for a 'distinctive history' for women, always within the specific narrative, historical, and geographical location of Galicia.⁴⁰

As we saw at the beginning of this paper, however, the established women prose writers in Galician today can be counted almost on the fingers of one hand. Apart

from Queizán, the authors who come closest to canonicity – who publish regularly with the major presses, are reviewed and interviewed – are Ursula Heinze, Marina Mayoral, and Marilar Aleixandre. Under ‘narrativa’ in her 1994 study *Libros de mulleres*, Carmen Blanco names these four, as well as Susana Antón, Maruxa Fernández Fernández, Cristina Frasier, Xosefa Goldar, Margarita Ledo Andión, María Victoria Moreno Márquez, María Teresa Otero Sande, Carmen Panero, Amelia Santiso Lorenzo, Xohana Torres, Dora Vázquez, Pura Vázquez, Luísa Villalta, and Helena Villar Janeiro [133]. Six years later, Camino Noia’s ‘panorámica de la narrativa en gallego escrita por mujeres’ [Noia 2000: 237] names most (although not all) of those mentioned by Blanco, adding only Lola González and Navia Franco Barreiro [Noia 2000: 247-259]. To this list, I would add Marica Campo, who published her debut novel *Memoria para Xoana* in 2002 at the age of 54; Ana María Arellano; Uxía Casal; Medos Romero, and Rosa Vidal. All of the authors named in these two studies, with the exception of Navia Franco (b. 1973), were born in or before 1960 (the Vázquez sisters were born in 1913 and 1918 respectively), and many of them have published only one or two narrative works. Furthermore, very few of them publish in the main collections of Xerais or Galaxia. They are found instead either in minor imprints such as Galaxia’s *Descuberta* and Xerais’s *Abismos* (both pocket-sized collections), in the catalogues of smaller and less heavily marketed publishing houses, and even in tiny print runs put out by town, city, or provincial government presses. This means that their works are far less visible than those of their male contemporaries who dominate Xerais and Galaxia’s catalogues.

The absence of authors born after 1960 from either Blanco's or Noia's studies is noteworthy, but what is perhaps more surprising is that while in the most recent years a number of new women novelists have begun to publish, most of these were born in the mid to late 1970s. That is, although the generation of the 1960s was the first to have access to a university education in Galician Language and Literature, this seems to have translated into fewer, rather than more, women choosing to write narrative in Galician. This generation gap is illustrated by the fact that Marilar Aleixandre and Inma López Silva, the last two (and first and second female) winners of the *Premio Xerais de Novela*, were born more than thirty years apart, in 1947 and 1978 respectively. Nevertheless, the last couple of years have seen new spaces opening up for female narrators, including the publication in 2000 of the anthology *Narradoras*,⁴¹ and also of the first volume of Queizán's new collaboration with *Xerais*, the female-authored collection *As literatas*.⁴² These initiatives have been accompanied by an increase in the publication of novels and short story collections by young authors such as Raquel Miragaia (b. 1974), who writes in Galician-Portuguese, Rosa Aneiros (b. 1976), López Silva (b. 1978), and Eva Moreda (b. 1982).

In the light of this sudden surge of new female novelists, the absence of their older sisters, the 1960s generation, is particularly surprising. There are exceptions, of course, such as Beatriz Dacosta Molanes (b. 1967), whose *Cascas de noz* appeared in 2000, and Belén Feliú (1961-1997), whose *Da Guenizah*, was published posthumously in 1998. However, two of their best-known contemporaries, Luisa Castro (b. 1966) and Marta Rivera de la Cruz (b. 1970) publish their novels in Spanish, although Castro (like her namesake Rosalía) has

published poetry in Galician. Both are acutely aware of the ambiguity of being a self-identified 'Galician author' writing in Spanish. In 1988, Castro – based at the time in Madrid – described her childhood dream that she would 'ganar el Premio Nobel a los treinta, lo más tarde, y luego regresar a Galicia para dedicarme enteramente a escribir en gallego y ser universalmente traducida.'⁴³ In an interview with the *Barcelona Review* in the summer of 2002, having returned to Galicia, Castro reflects on the difficulty of categorising her work, and the effect this has had on critical reception of her work, in Galicia and beyond:

Conmigo siempre hubo esa ambigüedad de si yo era una escritora gallega que escribía en castellano, y entonces, aunque era algo que parecía bien, no existía, o existía fuera, pero aquí [en Galicia], no. Pero lo asumo así y me parece bien [...] por otra parte, las únicas reticencias que puedo apreciar aquí son de sectores tan mezquinos que no me suponen ninguna clase de dolor.

Despite the ambiguity, Castro considers herself to be essentially and intrinsically Galician: 'Galicia para mí no es un ente abstracto, es la familia, la educación, la formación, la lengua y lo que transmite la lengua, los valores culturales, y todo eso va contigo porque forma tu mentalidad.'⁴⁴ Nevertheless, she continues to publish her novels in Castilian.

As McNerney & Enríquez de Salamanca note in *Double Minorities*, the equation between language and nationality is not as simple as it is often portrayed to be by nationalist literary historians [6]. This is certainly true for Galicia: two of the four best-known Galician women novelists – Úrsula Heinze and Marilar Aleixandre – are *alófonas*, who grew up in Germany and in Madrid respectively. A third, Marina Mayoral, made her name writing in Spanish before publishing her

first Galician-language novel, *Unha árbore, un adeus* in 1988. The linguistic issue continues to influence and, often, to obscure debate: while the Galician nationalist line is that '[a]s situacións de bilingüismo social realmente non existen' [Queizán 1999], José Del Valle has recently argued that the language behaviour of Galicians reflects a complex set of linguistic responses that go far beyond the official, dualist language policy.⁴⁵ Illustrating this, Marta Rivera (who publishes exclusively in Castilian) argued in an interview last year that 'Para min todo é literatura galega, xa sexa escrita en castelán ou non. Eu son máis escritora galega que moitos que escriben en galego [...] Non se debe monopolizar a literatura galega cos autores que escriban nesta lingua.'⁴⁶ Whatever we may feel about Rivera's claims, we certainly cannot ignore her voice, which throws into relief the existence of alternative – and often conflicting and controversial – interpretations of Galicianness.

Conclusions

When we begin to reconstruct the 'distinctive history' of women's narrative in Galicia, a parallel emerges between the periods of women's apparent silence at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both cases, it is fruitless to look for women writers in the public spaces where canonical conversations take place and the national literature is defined – in histories of Galician literature, in the catalogues of mainstream publishers, or on the syllabus of school and university courses. Bio-bibliographical research shows that during the crucial formative years of Galician national consciousness at the *fin de século*, a significant number of women were active in the Galician cultural sphere. Because they wrote primarily in Spanish, and from a perspective informed by their

position as (largely) middle-class Galician women, they do not fit comfortably into the dominant metanarrative of Galician literature. Their works have been seen as uninvolved in the canonical conversations on which Galician literature is founded and they therefore remain outside Galician literary history. As a result, their part in the development of a public female voice in Galicia remains unseen, and the 'distinctive history' of Galician women's narrative remains fragmented.

Although this fragmentation continues to characterise Galician women's narrative today, there are plenty of writers and texts to be found if we know where to look – both today and at the *fin de século*. However, we as scholars must learn to read these texts on their own terms instead of trying to fit them into existing metanarratives. As McNerney & Enríquez de Salamanca argue in *Double Minorities*, 'to shuffle women into the canon with no previous theoretical analysis of the parameters on which the canon is based may have no effect, since the literary establishment is more than capable of justifying the exclusion of women (as well as other groups of writers) and taking refuge in the well-known criteria of "literary quality"' [9]. In other words, what is needed is the development of new critical and canonical paradigms that acknowledge and welcome difference as essential to the future development of Iberian national literatures rather than a threat to their existence. Until that happens, María Xosé Queizán's lament for the absence of women's stories from Galician national literature – and thus from the national consciousness – will continue to be painfully resonant:

O que boto en falta na literatura galega é un pouso máis realista e un reflexo maior da sociedade [...] As historias das mulleres deste país están sen conta, é unha lástima que non haxa narradoras que nos

conten das mulleres nos distintos aspectos [...] Hai tantos oficios, tantas mulleres con tantas historias... e van morrendo, e non as sabemos [...] Había que dicir-lles iso as mulleres, que deixasen rexistradas as historias aínda que non saiban escribir, que as deixen gravadas, escritas, como sexa, para que logo iso se poida reelaborar e non se perdan [Queizán 1999].

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1. For a detailed study of Galician women writers and children's literature, see Carmen Blanco, *Literatura galega de muller* (Vigo: Xerais, 1991), especially pp. 183-229.
2. For winners of the *Premio Planeta de novela*, see the website <<http://www.canalok.com/lector/premios/planeta.htm>>
3. For a list of winners of the Booker Prize, see the website <<http://www.bookerprize.co.uk>>
4. In *Tempos Novos* 36 (maio 2000), 69-79.
5. María Xosé Queizán, 'Entrevista,' *Andaina*, marzo 1999.
6. María Camino Noia Campos, 'La narrativa gallega de mujeres,' in Iris Zavala (ed), *Breve historia feminista de la literatura española (en lengua catalana, gallega y vasca)*, Vol. VI (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2000), 237-261.
7. For example, Noia's assertion that 'los hombres, en general [...] parecen tener menos prejuicios para recuperar la lengua familiar gallega a partir de la adolescencia' [240] is not corroborated by sociolinguistic data. Gabriel Rei-Doval's study of 'usos familiares [da lingua galega] segundo o sexo' in *A lingua galega no medio urbano, unha visión desde a macrosociolingüística* (Vigo: Xerais, forthcoming 2003), highlights the danger of such – admittedly widespread – assumptions, concluding that 'as diferencias observadas en homes e mulleres nos usos familiares son de escasa envergadura,' and that 'cómpre dar ás diferencias de sexo a dimensión que lles corresponde' [8.9]. For precise data, see the comprehensive study (based on 38,897 interviews) *Usos lingüísticos en Galicia. Compendio do II Volume do Mapa Sociolingüístico de Galicia* (Vigo: Real Academia Galega Seminario de Sociolingüística, 1995), particularly tables 3.1.1.0 'lingua habitual dos entrevistados,' 3.4.1.0 'Lingua de lectura habitual,' and 3.5.1.0 'lingua en que escribe notas habitualmente.' I am grateful to Dr Rei-Doval for these references.
8. Pilar Pallarés, 'Literatura e xénero: unha cuestión aínda pertinente,' *Terra e Tempo* 6/7, monográfico *Xénero e nación* (1997/1998), 34-37.
9. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven CT: Yale UP, 1979).
10. Silvia Bermúdez, '¿Sen a ansiedade da influencia? Rosalía de Castro, Harold Bloom e as poetas galegas do vinte,' *Anuario de Estudios Literarios Galegos* 2000, 135-158.
11. See, for example, Ramón Gutiérrez Izquierdo, "'A Rosalía," Curros Enríquez e o canon,' *Boletín Galego de Literatura* 19 (1998), 103-109.
12. Carmen Blanco, *Libros de mulleres (Para unha bibliografía de escritoras en lingua galega: 1863-1992)* (Vigo: Edicións do Cumio, 1994).
13. Uxío (Eugenio) Carré Aldao, *Literatura gallega. Con extensos apéndices bibliográficas y una gran antología de 300 trabajos escogidos en prosa y verso de la mayor parte de los escritores regionales. Segunda edición puesta al día y*

- notablemente aumentada en el texto y apéndices* (Barcelona: Casa Editorial Maucci, 1911).
14. Kathleen McNerney & Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca, eds, *Double Minorities of Spain: A Bio-Bibliographic Guide to Women Writers of the Catalan, Galician, and Basque Countries* (New York: MLA, 1994).
 15. José Antonio Durán, 'Biblioteca de Escritores Gallegos,' in *Gran Enciclopedia Gallega*, Volume III (Santiago de Compostela: Silverio Cañada, 1974), 248.
 16. For an authoritative history of the transition from *Provincialismo* to *Rexionalismo* and *Nacionalismo*, see Justo Beramendi & Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, *O nacionalismo galego* (Vigo: Edicións A Nosa Terra, 1996).
 17. The definitive bio-bibliographical study of Galician-language narrative published in books and periodicals between 1885 and 1916 is Modesto Hermida, *Narrativa galega: tempo do rexurdimento* (Vigo: Xerais, 1995).
 18. Francisco Rodríguez, *Literatura galega contemporánea. Problemas de método e interpretación*, (Ferrol: Limiar, 1990), 50.
 19. Dolores Vilavedra: *Historia da literatura galega* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1999), 151.
 20. To give a recent example, the *A Nosa Terra* history of *Literatura galega século XX* (Ed. Carlos Bernárdez et al, Vigo: Edicións A Nosa Terra, 2001), begins with the claim that '[a] incapacidade do Rexionalismo para articularse como movemento político na última década do XIX leva a unha parálise da reivindicación galeguista e do labor cultural que a acompañaba' [11] and, as a result, devotes less than five pages out of a total of nearly 450 to the sixteen years leading up to the formation of the proto-nationalist *Irmandades da fala* in 1916.
 21. For detailed argument of this point, see Kirsty Hooper, 'But were they gallegos or galegos? The translation of *fin de século* culture into contemporary Galician,' paper presented at the Annual Conference of the MLA, New York City, December 2002.
 22. These include Aurora Marco's *As precursoras: achegas para o estudo da escrita feminina (Galiza 1800-1936)*, (A Coruña: A Voz de Galicia, 1993); Xosé Vincenzo Freire Lestón's *Lembranzas dun mundo esquecido: muller, política e sociedade na Galicia Contemporánea 1900-1939* (Santiago: Laivento, 1993) and *O traballo extradoméstico da muller galega, 1900-1936* (Vigo: Concello de Vigo, Concellería da Muller, 1993); Anxo Gómez Sánchez & María Pilar García Negro's *Literatura feminina e feminista da segunda metade do século XIX: antoloxía* (Vigo: Asociación Socio-Pedagóxica Galega, 1996), and Noa Rios Bergantinhos's *A Mulher no nacionalismo galego (1900-1936): ideologia e realidade* (Santiago: Laivento, 2001).
 23. Carmen Blanco, *Escritoras galegas* (Vigo: Xerais, 1992), 322.
 24. For a detailed analysis of *El doctor Wolski*, see Kirsty Hooper, 'Fin de siècle Anxieties and Future(s) Perfect: Sofia Casanova's *El doctor Wolski* (1894)', in *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (Liverpool) 79 (April 2002), 175-187.
 25. Sofía Casanova, 'Princesa del amor hermoso,' in AE Bordonada, *Novelas breves de escritoras españolas 1900-1936* (Madrid: Castalia/Instituto de la Mujer, 1989). This novella was first published in *El Cuento Semanal*, num. 156 (14.12.1909).
 26. Azorín, 'Rosalía de Castro,' *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Águilar, 1959-63), 852.
 27. Rosalía de Castro, *Obras completas* (Madrid: Perlado, Paez y Cía, 1909).

28. Roberta Johnson, 'The Domestication of Don Juan in Women Novelists of Modernist Spain,' in *Intertextual Pursuits. Literary Mediations in Modern Spanish Narrative*, ed. by JP Brownlow and JW Kronik (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP/ London, Associated UUPP, 1998), 222-38.
29. Quoted by Camiño Noia, 'Introducción,' *Néveda* (Vigo: Xerais, 1981), 15.
30. For example, Kathleen March sees *Néveda* as little more than 'unha manifestación en prosa do que aparentemente Rosalía encetara coa súa lírica: a liña do folklorismo ou tradicionalismo, o campo galego fronte ás clases privilexiadas,' 'Prolegómenos a un estudio das novelistas galegas,' in *Actas do Segundo Congreso de Estudos Galegos: Brown University, Novembro 10-12, 1988* (Vigo: Galaxia, 1990), 369.
31. In 'La narrativa gallega de mujeres,' Camiño Noia observes that 'Los miembros de la Xeración Nós, los escritores más importantes del primer tercio del siglo XX, otorgaron muy poco valor a la obra de Herrera, a quien consideraban una autora decimonónica por sus textos costumbristas' [248], and quotes a letter from Herrera to a French friend in which she complains about their indifference in comparison with the supportive relationship she had with Manuel Murguía [248 n.12].
32. The phrase is from Anxo Tarrío Varela's six-line dismissal of Galician narrative between 1900 and 1916 in *Literatura galega. Aportacións a unha Historia crítica* (Vigo: Xerais, 1994), 199.
33. Since 1997, the *Centro Ramón Piñeiro* has re-edited nine volumes of prose by *fin de século* authors (all male) under the series title *Narrative recuperada*.
34. Male novelists and short story writers from other areas of the Peninsula who wrote prolifically about their home regions in the first decades of the twentieth century include Juan Pedro Barcelona, Eusebio Blasco, Alberto Casañal Shakery (Aragon); Rafael Altamira and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (Valencia); CA Bardón (León); Arturo Reyes (Andalusia); Evaristo Rodríguez de Bedia, B. Rodríguez Parets (Cantabria).
35. For example, in Galicia, Emilia Pardo Bazán: *Un destripador de antaño: historias y cuentos de Galicia* (1900); *Cuentos del terruño* (1907), and *Cuentos de la tierra* (1922); Emilia Calé: *Escenas de la vida. Novelas* (1890); Sofía Casanova: *Princesa del amor hermoso* (1909), *El pecado* (1911), *El crimen de Beira-mar* (1914); in Andalusia, Carmen de Burgos: *Los inadaptados* (1901); Gloria de la Prada: *Noches sevillanas: cantares* (1912), and *El barrio de la Macarena: cantares* (1917); Blanca de los Ríos: *La Rondeña. Cuentos andaluces* (1902); Carmen Blanco y Trigueros: *Notas de color. Narraciones* (1911); in Cantabria, Concha Espina: *Trozos de vida. Colección de cuentos* (1907), *El esfinge maragata* (1914), *Rosa de viento* (1916); in País Vasco, Francisca Sarasate Navascues de Mena, *Cuentos vascongadas* (1896).
36. All these quotes are taken from Prudencio Canitrot's prologue to Sofía Casanova's collection of short stories, *El Pecado* (Madrid: *Biblioteca de Escritores Gallegos*, 1911), 15.
37. And beyond, if we take into account the simultaneous proliferation of female-authored regional writing in the USA: a comparison of the two bodies of work in the context of resistance to the construction of a homogenising national metanarrative would, I think, be constructive and illuminating. For recent studies of female-authored regional writing in the USA at the turn-of-the-century, see Donna Campbell, *Resisting regionalism: gender & naturalism in American fiction*,

1885-1915 (Athens: Ohio UP, 1997; Sherrie Inness & Diana Royer (eds), *Breaking boundaries: new perspectives on women's regional writing* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997); Kate McCullough, *Regions of identity: the construction of America in women's fiction, 1885-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999).

38. For more detailed discussion of *fin de siglo* Iberian women writers and the regional as a specific location for challenging hegemonic national discourses, see Kirsty Hooper, *Extranjera en mi patria: Gender and Nation in the Pre-1914 Writings of Sofía Casanova (1861-1958)*, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2003, especially Chapter VI: *El Pecado* (1911), 208-255.

39. Nancy A. Walker, *The Disobedient Writer: Women and Narrative Tradition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 11.

40. Queizán is strongly linked with Galician nationalist politics and has been involved in the foundation of two Galician nationalist/ feminist groups, the *Asociación Galega da Muller* in 1976, and the *Feministas Independentes Galegas* two years later. She is also one of the co-ordinators of the feminist literary journal, *Festa da palabra silenciada*, which first appeared in 1983.

41. *Narradoras (25 autoras galegas)*, ed. Teresa Cuiñas and Iria Sobrino Freire (Vigo: Xerais, 2000).

42. *Fenda, loucura e morte*, ed. and tr. María Xosé Queizán (Vigo: Xerais, 2000).

43. Luisa Castro, qtd. in *Queimar as meigas (Galicia: 50 años de poesía de mujer)*, (Madrid: Torremozas, 1988), 217.

44. Belén Fortes, 'Entrevista con Luisa Castro,' *Barcelona Review* 31 (julio-agosto 2002). Can be accessed online at <www.barcelonareview.com/31/s_lc_ent.htm>

45. José Del Valle: 'Monoglossic policies for a heteroglossic culture: misinterpreted monolingualism in modern Galicia,' *Language & Communication* 20 (2000), 105-132.

46. Marta Rivera de la Cruz, 'Entrevista,' *El Correo Gallego*, 18.03.2002.