

MUTATIS
MUTANDIS

Mutatis Mutandis. Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción
ISSN: 2011-799X
Universidad de Antioquia

Berton-Costa, Pâmela
Retranslation as Feminist Re-visioning: *La casa de los espíritus* into Brazilian Portuguese
Mutatis Mutandis. Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción,
vol. 13, no. 1, 2020, January-June, pp. 183-205
Universidad de Antioquia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.27533/udea.mut.v13n1a09>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=499272694010>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's webpage in redalyc.org

UDEM
redalyc.org

Scientific Information System Redalyc
Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and
Portugal

Project academic non-profit, developed under the open access initiative

Retranslation as Feminist Re-visioning: *La casa de los espíritus* into Brazilian Portuguese¹

Pâmela Berton-Costa

pamelaberton@gmail.com

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3816-9031>

São Paulo State University (UNESP), Ililce, São José do Rio Preto, Brazil

Abstract

There has been renewed interest in feminist translation studies in recent years; however, debate continues about the best approach to effectively apply feminist strategies to translation, especially when it comes to literary texts. In this paper, using examples from a previous comparison between the original book *La casa de los espíritus* and the only Brazilian Portuguese translation, feminist retranslation options are discussed. Although this novel, by Chilean author Isabel Allende, is part of the Latin American Post-Boom, which many critics consider to be a feminist literary movement, the translation seems to consistently erase the novel's feminist features. This paper attempts to show that a feminist literary retranslation may highlight characteristics of a text that had been overlooked. It is important to bear in mind that this study does not intend to "correct a bad translator," but to reflect upon the role of the feminist translator.

Keywords: feminist retranslation, Post-Boom, literary translation, Brazilian Portuguese, Latin America.

La retraducción como acto de re-visión feminista: *La casa de los espíritus*
al portugués brasileño

Resumen

Los últimos años han visto un renovado interés en los estudios feministas de la traducción. Sin embargo, aún no hay consenso sobre cuál es la mejor manera de aplicar efectivamente estrategias feministas a la traducción, especialmente en el caso de textos literarios. En este trabajo, a partir de una comparación anterior entre el original *La casa de los espíritus*, de la escritora chilena Isabel Allende, y la única traducción disponible para el portugués brasileño, se discuten opciones de retraducción feminista. Aunque el libro hace parte del post-boom latinoamericano, que muchos estudiosos consideran como un movimiento literario feminista, la traducción parece borrar de forma consistente aspectos feministas de la narrativa. Este estudio pretende mostrar que una retraducción literaria feminista puede poner en evidencia aspectos de un texto que fueron ignorados anteriormente. Es importante

¹ This article is part of the doctoral research project "Identity and Gender in Brazilian and American Translations of *La casa de los espíritus*, by Isabel Allende," in which I study and compare three books: one original (*La casa de los espíritus*, in Spanish, Allende, 1985a) and two translations (*The House of the Spirits*, to English, Allende, 1986, and *A casa dos espíritos*, to Brazilian Portuguese, Allende, 1985b). This project is held in São Paulo State University (UNESP), Brazil, and it is financially supported by São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP): grant #2018/17944-5.

destacar que no se pretende “corregir a un mal traductor”, sino reflexionar sobre el papel de la traductora feminista.

Palabras clave: retraducción feminista, pos-boom, traducción literaria, portugués-brasileño, América Latina.

A retradução como ato de re-visão feminista: La casa de los espíritus para o português brasileiro

Resumo

Os últimos anos viram um renovado interesse nos estudos feministas da tradução, no entanto, ainda não há consenso sobre qual a melhor abordagem para aplicar de forma efetiva estratégias feministas à tradução, especialmente no caso de textos literários. Neste trabalho, a partir de uma comparação prévia entre o original *La casa de los espíritus*, da escritora chilena Isabel Allende, e a única tradução disponível para o português brasileiro, são discutidas opções feministas de retradução. Apesar de o romance fazer parte do pós-boom latino americano, que muitos estudiosos consideram como um movimento literário feminista, a tradução parece apagar de forma consistente aspectos feministas do livro. Este estudo pretende mostrar que uma retradução literária feminista pode colocar em evidência aspectos de um texto que foram ignorados anteriormente. É importante destacar que não se pretende “corrigir um mau tradutor”, mas refletir sobre o papel da tradutora feminista.

Palavras-chave: Retradução feminista, pós-boom, tradução literária, português-brasileiro, América Latina.

La retraduction comme ré-vision féministe : *La casa de los espíritus* au portugais brésilien

Résumé

Ces dernières années ont connu un regain d'intérêt pour la traductologie féministe, mais il n'y a pas encore de consensus sur la meilleure approche à adopter pour mettre en œuvre efficacement des stratégies féministes en traduction, en particulier dans le cas des textes littéraires. Dans cet article, des options féministes de retraduction sont discutées à partir d'une comparaison précédente entre l'original *La casa de los espíritus*, écrit par l'écrivaine chilienne Isabel Allende, et la seule traduction de cette œuvre littéraire disponible en portugais brésilien. Bien que ce roman fasse partie du post-boom latino-américain, que de nombreux chercheurs considèrent comme un mouvement littéraire féministe, sa traduction semble systématiquement effacer ses aspects féministes. Cette étude a donc pour objectif de montrer qu'une retraduction littéraire féministe peut mettre en évidence des aspects qui ont été auparavant ignorés. Il est important de souligner qu'il ne s'agit pas de « corriger un mauvais traducteur » mais de réfléchir sur le rôle de la traductrice féministe.

Mots clés : retraduction féministe, post-boom, traduction littéraire, portugais-brésilien, Amérique latine.

1. Introduction

This paper uses examples from a previous comparison of the first book by Chilean author Isabel Allende, *La casa de los espíritus* (first published in 1982) and the only Brazilian Portuguese translation, in order to discuss feminist retranslation options and enhance cross-border dialogue in Latin American women's writing and feminist translation. Even though feminist translation studies are often criticized for their heavy focus on literature, the examples used here call the attention to daily translation practices, namely, the false proximity between languages and the lack of attentiveness to gender² in any type of translation. Another important element to consider is the fact that much of the work on feminist literary translation does not deal with Latin American novels written by Spanish-speaking³ female authors compared with their Brazilian Portuguese translations; thus, this paper intends to start closing that gap.

La casa de los espíritus follows a Chilean family through the decades and retells real historical events —namely, a *coup d'état* and Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile. Like many authors in the Post-Boom literary movement, Allende uses fictional characters to reacquaint us with violent events that took place in twentieth-century Latin America. Although some critics do not consider that *La casa de los espíritus* embodies feminist thought, the book is usually read as being critical of sexist, conservative societies. On the other hand, its translation into Brazilian Portuguese (*A casa dos espíritos*, 1985)

seems to consistently attenuate this feature, which possibly occurred because the text, author, and literary movement were not seen as feminist at the time the book was translated.

The present article is divided into three parts. The first section gives a brief overview of the Post-Boom literary movement, which allowed female writers such as Isabel Allende to be published locally and globally. It then goes on to explain why the novel analyzed here can be considered feminist, presenting arguments that both favor and challenge this thesis. The second section discusses the idea of translation as transformation and then presents the findings of the previous comparison between original and translation, focusing on three key themes that emerged frequently during analysis: inaccurate translations, omissions, and attenuations. The third section uses the examples given in the second section to propose feminist retranslations while discussing possibilities and difficulties that may arise from this practice. It also explains the feminist translation project presented here. The paper finishes with final thoughts on the theme.

1. Latin American literary context: Post-Boom

The Post-Boom may be defined as a literary movement with a political commitment, specifically feminist activism. To understand its complexities, it is necessary to address the movement that came before it, the Latin American Boom, against which the Post-Boom reacts. Both movements are complex and scholars disagree on many aspects of them. Although the Boom started between the 1940s and the 1950s, the 1960s were its most important decade (Serrão, 2013; Shaw, 2005), when Gabriel García Márquez published his most famous book, *Cien años de soledad* (1967). The name of the movement comes from the

2 This paper only addresses questions related to “women” —without discussing the controversies regarding this term— as this is a limitation of the analyzed corpus, but discussions may be expanded to other types of activist translations, such as queer.

3 The differences between Spanish variants are not addressed in this paper.

economic term *boom*, and it refers to the rapid success that novels written by Latin American authors reached in Europe and in the United States during this period (Trouche, 2012). A defining characteristic of the Boom is the fact that it was a movement driven essentially by male authors, such as Julio Cortázar (*Rayuela*, 1963), Mario Vargas Llosa (*La ciudad y los perros*, 1963), and Juan Rulfo (*Pedro Páramo*, 1955). Shaw (2005) argues that many female writers from the same period, such as Rosario Castellanos (*Balún Canán*, 1957) and Beatriz Guido (*Estar en el mundo*, 1950), were not considered “Boom authors.”

This view is supported by Raquel Serrão (2013), who points out that Elena Garro was only able to publish her book *Los recuerdos del porvenir* in 1963, a decade after finishing it, when the editorial market was more ready to accept women’s writing. After the huge success of *Cien años de soledad*, a shift seemed to occur around the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, when the elitism and reader-unfriendliness of Boom novels started to be questioned. By the beginning of the 1980s —according to some scholars—, “it had become recognized that the ‘Boom’ in the New Spanish American novel had come to an end” (Shaw, 1989, p. 87). The change that had started a decade earlier finally surfaced and a vast number of young authors started publishing texts with very different characteristics from the Boom.

Contrary to the predominance of male authors in the Boom, the Post-Boom boasted a large number of female writers,⁴ such as Isabel Allende (*La casa de los espíritus*, 1982), Laura

Esquivel (*Como agua para chocolate*, 1989), and Luisa Valenzuela (*Cola de Lagartija*, 1983), to name a few. This “sudden” appearance of various novels written by women seems to be a coincidence, but Serrão (2013) claims that the Boom movement was seen as so intellectual, revolutionary, and innovative that texts by women were not considered on the *same level* as those by men; thus, it was *not worth* publishing them. On the other hand, because Post-Boom is seen as an optimistic movement that restored love and sentiment to stories—precisely what is considered to be “women’s territory” in literature—, female authors no longer faced so many obstacles to publish their work as their predecessors.

In the historical context of Latin America, as Norma Klahn (2014, p. 38) observes, women’s writing “has been a site actively marked by gender, but where questions of class, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and generation have been inexorably present.” This gendered aspect stands out, especially after the 1980s. Political commitment is a distinctive characteristic of the Post-Boom, a movement that embodies “viewpoints formerly marginalized or largely absent, such as feminist” (Shaw, 1995, p. 19). Because this writing is marked by gender, Post-Boom texts scrutinize, question, and criticize sexist concepts, while also giving female characters agency. Serrão explains that in these novels, women are allowed to be protagonists and narrators, and “it is from important details of the history of Hispanic American foundation that these characters shed light on the conquest of the New World, updating the colonial images—and all its phallogentricity— inherited from the conquistadors’ writing” (Serrão, 2013, p. 110). Post-Boom novels, therefore, reinterpret

4 Although some new studies argue that the number of women writers in 20th-century Latin America has been largely overestimated (Castillo, 2009), their presence is still very relevant in this movement, especially because

the most famous and referenced books of the Post-Boom were written by women.

history from a different perspective —a feminist one in many cases.

Although there is no general agreement about many aspects of both Boom and Post-Boom, most scholars acknowledge that Isabel Allende is one of the most important authors of the latter. Through writing, she questions society's practices and values, and she refuses "to accept the patriarchal oppression historically practiced by the upper classes and the military in Latin America" (Meyer, 1990, p. 360). Her first book, *La casa de los espíritus*, —considered to be the first unquestionable success of the Post-Boom (Shaw, 2005)— is seen as a "feminocentric novel" (Meyer, 1990, p. 360), critical of conservative societies.

The historical narration of *La casa de los espíritus* uses three protagonists —grandmother Clara, daughter Blanca, and granddaughter Alba—, to criticize how sexist discourse dictates the fate of women. These three women embody different aspects of being a woman⁵ in a conservative Latin American country. The story is told mainly by an omniscient narrator —who reveals herself in the last pages as Alba—, while some parts are written in the first person by grandfather Esteban Trueba (Clara's husband). Alba uses Clara's diaries, Blanca's letters, and the ledgers of the Tres Marias farm, along with many photographs and documents, and her own memories to retell the story of her family in a third-person voice composed of all the female voices that came before her.

5 The novel criticizes some aspects of race and class, but these three protagonists do not represent all the possibilities of being a Latina: they are all white, upper class, heterosexual women (who are aware of some of their privileges). Most of the sexist problems to which the book calls attention through Clara, Blanca, and Alba are related to the universe of wealthy, white women.

Regarding this double-narration, Doris Meyer (1990, p. 363) notes, "the grandfather represents the internalized patriarchal culture and the granddaughter the newly born feminist[;] Allende embodies this emergence of a polyvocal feminist text which expresses the hope of an ethically transformed community." Alba is able to tell the story of her family and to be heard because her narration unites many female voices. The fact that Alba needs various women to overthrow the masculine, oppressive narrative of history in this novel shows the feminist ideal of women supporting each other and opening doors for the next generation.

However, some critics do not consider that *La casa de los espíritus* embodies feminist thought, arguing that it endorses patriarchal beliefs. For instance, Cristina Ruiz Serrano (2011, p. 884) claims the novel does not "culminate in a successful female subversion." Similarly, Mariana Suárez Velázquez (2004) argues that Allende's female protagonists do not attack the dominant discourse and are not able to change the status quo. Those who support this view argue that the female characters do not subvert the traditional sexist trope, but comply with social roles, accepting their fates in a sexist society.

This would seem true of Clara, who used to accompany husband Esteban Trueba to political events even after he punched her. It would also seem to apply to Blanca, who silences her suffering every time her father humiliates her for being financially dependent on him, or to Alba, who joins the student movement only to be closer to a man. However, what this analysis fails to notice is the agency of these women. Clara never talks to Esteban again after being beaten by him. Blanca leaves the husband who was imposed on her and, although she does not make enough money to leave the family

house, she is able to provide for her daughter. She also has a long-lasting secret affair with Pedro Tercero. Finally, even though Alba does join the student movement just to be closer to Miguel, after the *coup d'état* she chooses to hide persecuted people from the military government and to help them escape to foreign countries because she believes it is the right thing to do.

Clara, Blanca, and Alba may be seen as a continuum of resistance in which each generation is more aware of the consequences of sexist oppression and tries to fight against it in every way they can. Clara's weapon is silence: her voice is all she has and she does not allow it to be controlled by her husband's will. Blanca, although seemingly silent, exerts her autonomy even further, by leaving the house occasionally to meet her lover, hiding him from the government when he is persecuted by the military. Although she always returns home and only leaves the country when there is no other option, she starts doing what Clara could not, that is, more than just refuse to do what is expected of her in silence. Alba does even more: when she sees people in danger of being arrested, tortured, and killed by the dictatorship, she takes matters into her own hands and starts hiding them like her mother did with Pedro Tercero, but she goes further and smuggles these people into foreign embassies so they can flee the country.

We may see Clara as an almost static object, acting only inside her own universe, the big house on the corner (the house of the spirits) and Tres Marías, influencing the lives of her family members and of those who come to her. Blanca is a pendulum, she goes away to have fortuitous encounters with Pedro Tercero, but she always comes back to the safety of her family's house. Alba constantly leaves the safety of the house to act, being taken away,

imprisoned, tortured and raped by the soldiers of the military regimen, but ultimately she chooses to remain, pregnant and alone, in the house. It may seem contradictory that Alba stays in the big house at the end of the book, but we need to interpret her choice in the light of the changes that occurred: The house no longer represents safety for this family; she is no longer protected there. So, her staying is an act of resistance.

In fact, Alba knows she is in danger of being captured again. Before dying, Esteban had wanted to send her away, but she refuses to leave. The House is empty, except for her. For Alba, the idea of returning to the safety of the family as Blanca did before her is only possible if she leaves the country. Instead, she chooses to stay, she frees herself from an imposed fate—a movement that Clara started, Blanca amplified, and Alba achieved. Each of these women, therefore, stands on the shoulders of their female antecessors, who opened doors so the next generation could achieve more. Through the stories of these characters, *La casa de los espíritus* retells history in a feminist way, thus, effectively incorporating female voices into history—to *herstory*. Clara, Blanca, and Alba “embody historical awareness and intuitive understanding” in opposition to Esteban, who “is the blind force of history, its collective unconscious, its somatotonic (i.e., aggressive, vigorous, physical) manifestation” (Earle, 1987, p. 550). It is through Alba's words, and more generally, the writings of Post-Boom female authors, that Latin American women were able to start occupying this place in history.

Eurídice Figueiredo (2013, p. 88) explains, referring to female writers seizing space through words, that when women take up this space by writing words down “—therefore, entering a domain reserved to men—, women writers

subvert the masculine order of the world and establish a new order, an order in which a woman talks about herself, her body, her feelings, her anguishes.” Hence, in the context of the Post-Boom, it is through these stories that female writers make it possible for women to be part of the historical narrative. It is in this writing space that these writers are able to raise their voices and call attention to female existence. This means that word choices made during translation may or may not accurately reflect these voices. This important matter of translation —specifically of the Brazilian Portuguese translation of *La casa de los espíritus*— is discussed in the section below.

2. The Brazilian Portuguese translation: *A casa dos espíritos*

In this paper, every translation is considered the transformation of an original text through the process of its interpretation. As Venuti (1986) explains, the translator is dependent on interpretive choices, which inevitably result in transformation. This transformation cannot be understood as being isolated, but it needs to be considered in relation to cultural, social, and historical values. Because all these values change with time, when analyzing a translation and the transformations it imprints, we need to consider the context in which this text is produced and read.

Specifically, in the case of this study, since the beginning of the 2010s, Brazil has witnessed what Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda (2018) has called a “feminist explosion,” one that has led thousands of women to protest, to rethink, and to reconsider our place in society. All aspects of female existence are being rediscussed, not only in closed, feminist groups, but also in mainstream media, books, music, and all types of cultural products —including literature. This movement is not

restricted to Brazil, and women from Latin American countries have been supporting each other more and more in the past decade, which is made possible through translation between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese. Translation is, therefore, an important space for feminisms and “an important means of producing identities, knowledges and cross-cultural encounters” (Castro & Ergun, 2017, p. 1) between these women. As an example, the movement *Ni una menos*, which fights violence against women, started in Argentina and has spread across various Latin American countries in the last five years.

This feminist agenda of Latin American transnational encounters has resulted in an unprecedented interest of Brazilian women in cultural products from neighboring countries.⁶ When analyzing translation between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese in a South-to-South context, it is even more interesting to consider that this renewed interest in Latin American cultural production in Brazil is not restricted to feminist texts, but is part of a wider movement. In the past decade, there has been a rise in the number of Latin American books being translated in Brazil, and literature from different countries such as Honduras and Ecuador, for instance, can now be found in Brazilian Portuguese versions (Filgueiras, 2015). In this context, it is important to debate “which transformations we really want to imprint in

⁶ This can be seen in many places, such as lists of Latin American women’s texts for Brazilians to read (e.g., <http://notaterapia.com.br/2018/04/08/11-mulheres-substanciais-da-literatura-latino-americana/>) or lists of important Latin American women in history (<https://asminanahistoria.wordpress.com/2018/02/20/20-mulheres-da-america-latina-que-voce-precisa-conhecer/>). All these lists use translation to bring these women’s stories to a Brazilian context, and they all assert that Brazilians know very little about their Latin American neighbors.

the translation of the Other” (Amorim, 2014, p. 175), that is, how these texts are being translated and what transformations they are going through.

This is particularly relevant if we consider that those feminist alliances between Latin American countries are being forged *through* translation, which includes not only new texts but also texts from other decades, such as Post-Boom novels. In the case of *La casa de los espíritus*, which questions patriarchal societies and criticizes sexist oppression through its narrative, it is relevant to question how the feminist aspect of the book was transformed in translation and whether this translation served to strengthen such alliances.

For that reason, I will now proceed to discuss some transformations that this novel underwent in the Brazilian Portuguese translation. To do so, I present three examples that illustrate three of the recurrent transformations found during analysis:⁷ inaccurate translations (Example 1), omissions (Example 2), and attenuation (Example 3). All passages were selected because they affect the re-creation of female characters in comparison to the original. As the editions used are available only in paperback, passages presented here were copied manually from the original book in Spanish and the Brazilian Portuguese translation

during analysis. A back translation is provided after each passage.

The editions studied were the oldest available when this research started, in March 2016.⁸ The Spanish original is the fifteenth edition, published by Plaza & Janés in 1985. The Brazilian Portuguese text (*A casa dos espíritos*) was translated by Carlos Martins Pereira. The edition studied here (the 5th edition) was published in 1985, by Difel (Difusão Editorial S. A.). Neither of the books mentions any revision or editing, and both are divided into fourteen chapters plus an epilogue. There is not much information about the translation process nor the translator, and the publisher did not reply to any of my attempts to make contact.

Having presented the editions in my analysis, I will now discuss the examples selected for this paper. The first example is taken from different chapters, and it compares the translation of words related to *boredom* or *irritation* when referring to women or men. It is divided into two scenes: the first scene (Example 1.1) is a description from the beginning of the book when Clara is a child and the del-Valles attend a mass. The narrator describes the family, specifically, Clara’s mother. The second scene (Example 1.2) is from Chapter 13, and it refers to Esteban Trueba reflecting on the financial consequences of the *coup d’état*.

⁷ The results presented here are part of a broader study in which I have read, compared, and analyzed the original in Spanish and two translations: one into Brazilian Portuguese and one into American English, phrase by phrase. When a significant transformation happened in translation (compared to the original text), I manually copied the respective passage from each book into charts. The complete study has 323 selected passages. In this paper, I present examples that represent some of the most important findings related to gender in the Brazilian version.

⁸ This date refers to the beginning of the doctoral research project “Identity and gender in Brazilian and American translations of *La casa de los espíritus*, by Isabel Allende.”

Example 1.1.

<p>Spanish</p> <p>p. 11</p> <p>Su esposa Nívea prefería entenderse con Dios sin intermediarios, tenía profunda desconfianza de las sotanas y se aburría con las descripciones del cielo, el purgatorio y el infierno, pero acompañaba a su marido en sus ambiciones parlamentarias, en la esperanza de que si él ocupaba un puesto en el Congreso, ella podría obtener el voto femenino, por el cual luchaba desde hacía diez años, sin que sus numerosos embarazos lograran desanimarla.</p>	<p>Brazilian Portuguese</p> <p>p. 3</p> <p>Nívea, a esposa, preferia entender-se com Deus sem auxílio de intermediário tinha profunda desconfiança das sotainas, aborrecia-se com as descrições do céu, do purgatório e do inferno, mas acompanhava o marido nas suas ambições políticas, na esperança de que, conseguindo ele um lugar no Congresso, ela pudesse obter o voto feminino, pelo qual lutava fazia dez anos, sem que seus numerosos estados de gravidez a fizessem desanimar.</p>
<p>Back translation</p> <p>His wife, Nívea, preferred to deal with God without intermediaries, she had a deep distrust of cassocks and was bored by descriptions of heaven, purgatory and hell, but she shared her husband's parliamentary ambitions, hoping that if he got a seat in Congress, she would secure the vote of women, for which she had fought for the past ten years, without being discouraged by any of her numerous pregnancies.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>Nívea, the wife, preferred to deal with God without the help of an intermediary, she had a deep distrust of cassocks and was irritated by descriptions of heaven, purgatory and hell, but she shared her husband's parliamentary ambitions, hoping that if he got a seat in Congress she would secure the vote of women, for which she had fought for the past ten years, without being discouraged by any of her numerous pregnancies.</p>

Example 1.2.

<p>Spanish</p> <p>p. 351</p> <p>Descubrió que la riqueza le producía un inmenso fastidio, porque le resultaba fácil ganarla, sin encontrar mayor aliciente para gastarla y ni siquiera el prodigioso talento para el despilfarro de su nieta lograba mermar su faltrica.</p>	<p>Brazilian Portuguese</p> <p>p. 433</p> <p>Descobriu que a riqueza lhe dava imenso tédio, porque se tornava fácil ganhá-la, sem encontrar maior atrativo para gastá-la e nem sequer o prodigioso talento para o esbanjamento de sua neta conseguia esvaziar-lhe as algibeiras.</p>
<p>Back translation</p> <p>He discovered that wealth made him immensely irritated because it was so easy to him to grow wealth without finding a great incentive to spend it, and not even his granddaughter's prodigious talent for wastefulness was able to deplete his purse.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>He discovered that wealth made him immensely bored because it became so easy to grow wealth without finding a great incentive to spend it, and not even his granddaughter's prodigious talent for wastefulness was able to empty his purse.</p>

The passages show the difference between the translations of words related to *fastidio*, *aburrimiento* [irritation, boredom]: when referring to male characters, the translator opted for synonyms of *boredom* and *bored*; when referring to women, he opted for synonyms of *irritation* and *impatience*, even when the original suggested the contrary. This is clearer when the two scenes are compared and Nívea's (female) character *se aburría* [was bored] in the original, but she *aborrecia-se* [was irritated] in the translation. Here, the supposed proximity between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese seems to be the cause of an inaccurate translation. Although *aburrirse* [to be bored] sounds similar to *aborrecer-se* [to be irritated], in Brazilian Portuguese the idea of *se aburría* [was bored] would be *entediava-se* [was bored], not *aborrecia-se* [was annoyed, was irritated].

In comparison, Esteban's (male) character was not happy in the original because *la riqueza le producía un inmenso fastidio* [wealth made him immensely irritated], whereas in the translation *a riqueza lhe dava imenso tédio* [wealth made him immensely bored]. The supposed

proximity between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese is probably the cause once more, as the word *fastio* [boredom], which is very similar to *fastidio* [irritation; a type of boredom that causes annoyance], exists in Brazilian Portuguese as a synonym for *tédio* [boredom]. The problem is that *fastio* and *tédio* [in Brazilian Portuguese] mean *boredom*, while *fastidio* [in Spanish] means *irritation, annoyance*. As these choices are made throughout the entire translation, they reinforce the stereotype of angry women in opposition to calm, composed men. Women in Spanish are *bored*, but in Brazilian Portuguese, they are *irritated*. Men, on the contrary, are *irritated* in Spanish and *bored* in the translation.

The next two examples are from the last two chapters, Chapter 14 and the Epilogue, respectively. Both are about Alba, as she is being held captive by the government in hidden places where prisoners and *desaparecidos* are tortured, raped, and killed. In Example 2, Alba is being interrogated and tortured for the first time right after arriving at the center where she will be imprisoned for a few months.

Example 2.

Spanish	Brazilian Portuguese
pp. 356-357	p. 441
Voces desconocidas la presionaban, entendía el nombre de Miguel, pero no sabía lo que le preguntaban y sólo repetía incansablemente un no monumental mientras la golpeaban, la manoseaban, le arrancaban la blusa, y ella no podía pensar, sólo repetir no y no y no , calculando cuánto podría resistir antes que se le agotaran las fuerzas, sin saber que eso era sólo el comienzo, hasta que se sintió desvanecer y los hombres la dejaron tranquila, tirada en el suelo, por un tiempo que le pareció muy corto.	Vozes desconhecidas pressionavam-na, ouvia o nome de Miguel, mas não sabia o que lhe perguntavam e só repetia incansavelmente um não monumental enquanto lhe batiam, lhe mexiam, lhe arrancavam a blusa, e ela não podia pensar, só repetia não e não , calculando quanto podia resistir antes de esgotar as forças, sem saber que isso era só o começo, até que se sentiu desfalecer e os homens a deixaram tranquila, estendida no chão, por um tempo que lhe pareceu muito curto.

Back translation

Strange voices pressed in on her, she heard Miguel's name but did not know what they were asking, and kept repeating tirelessly a monumental no while they beat her, handled her, pulled off her blouse, and she could not think, could only repeat **no and no and no**, calculating how long she could resist before her strength wore out, not knowing this was only the beginning, until she felt herself fade and the men left her alone, lying on the floor, for what seemed to her a very short time.

Back translation

Strange voices pressed in on her, she heard Miguel's name but did not know what they were asking, and kept repeating tirelessly a monumental no while they beat her, moved her, pulled off her blouse, and she could not think, could only repeat **no and no**, calculating how long she could resist before her strength wore out, not knowing this was only the beginning, until she felt herself faint and the men left her alone, lying on the floor, for what seemed to her a very short time.

In this passage, there is an omission: in the original, Alba says *no* three times [*no y no y no*: no and no and no], in the Brazilian Portuguese translation, she says *no* only twice [*não e não*: no and no]. Although small, this omission is significant because the analysis uncovered several small passages omitted in this translation. Specifically, here, in a scene showing a strong female character being tortured and doing her best not to say anything that could lead the soldiers to find—and possibly torture and kill—someone she loves, the omission of the word *não* [no] diminishes Alba's strength and determination. Even though she says *não* [no] twice in Portuguese—which shows part of her strength—, Alba is less strong in the translated

text when the big picture of the translation is considered. As she is the female character that is able to break the circle of sexism, choosing her own destiny, this is important because she has less agency in the Brazilian Portuguese version.

In the third and last example of this paper, Alba is no longer in prison where she had almost died from repeated sessions of torture and rape. She is taken to a female concentration camp, where she is reunited with cellar companion Ana Díaz and where she meets other women prisoners like her, who take care of her and help her heal both physically and emotionally.

Example 3.

Spanish

p. 375

Repartían las porciones con estricta justicia, a cada quien según su necesidad y a mí me daban un poco más, porque decían que estaba en los huesos y así ni el hombre más necesitado se iba a fijar en mí. Me estremecía, pero Ana Díaz me recordaba que yo no era la única mujer **violada** y que eso, como muchas otras cosas, **había que olvidarlo**.

Brazilian Portuguese

p. 462

Repartiam as rações com estrita justiça, a cada qual segundo a sua necessidade e a mim me davam um pouco mais porque diziam que eu estava nos ossos e dessa maneira nem o homem mais necesitado iria olhar para mim. Estremecia, mas Ana Díaz lembrava-me que eu não era a única mulher **violada** e que **eu devia ignorá-lo** como tantas outras coisas.

Back translation

They divided the portions with strict justice, according to everyone's need, and they gave me a little more because they said I was just bones and not even the most desperate man would look at me. I shuddered, but Ana Díaz reminded me that I was not the only **raped** woman, and that, along with many other things, **was something to forget**.

Back translation

They divided the portions with strict justice, according to everyone's need, and they gave me a little more because they said I was just bones and not even the most desperate man would look at me. I shuddered, but Ana Díaz reminded me that I was not the only **violated** woman, and that **I should ignore it**, along with many other things.

In this last example, there is an attenuation: the verb *violar* [to rape] and its variations are consistently translated as *violar* [to violate] in Brazilian Portuguese, but these words have slightly different meanings in both languages. Although *violar* [to violate] can be used as an old-fashioned synonym for the verb *to rape* in Brazilian Portuguese, the best choice would be *estuprar* [to rape], as *violar* [to violate] is more commonly used to refer to objects, such as *violar uma carta* [to break a seal, to open a letter without consent], or *violar a lei* [to break the law]. *Estuprar* [to rape] is more explicit than *violar* [to violate] in this case because it makes clearer the idea of non-consensual, forced sex.

Another transformation here is the translation of *había que olvidarlo* [it should be forgotten] into *eu devia ignorá-lo* [I should ignore it]. Even though *to forget* and *to ignore* may be seen as synonyms, they have different consequences when one is ignoring or forgetting the trauma of being raped. To ignore that something bad has happened is to *pretend it did not occur*—thus, never seeking justice—, whereas to forget it is to choose to let it go, to keep living *despite* what happened. Therefore, in this example, translations of the Spanish words for *violada* [raped] and *olvidarlo* [to forget it] diminish the negative impacts of sexual violence against women. As the fight on the behalf of victims of sexual assault is a key aspect of various feminist movements, in a feminist

context, these transformations are not favorable to women.

One of the findings that emerges from these three examples is that the (false) proximity between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese consistently leads to mistranslation in this book. These inaccurate choices result in a translated text less critical of sexist societies in comparison to the source text. Another finding is that there are omissions throughout the translation and that they too transform the text, minimizing its feminist ideas. It is important to consider that *La casa de los espíritus* is a feminist book and a very representative novel of a literary movement that sheds light on women's literature in Latin America. Its translation into Brazilian Portuguese, on the other hand, seems to downplay the strength of women and attenuate men's bad behavior, and this is why a retranslation—especially a feminist one—is relevant. In the light of new discussions on Latin American feminisms, this first translation fails to meet not only the feminist aspect of the book but also the historical similarities between women's struggles in both countries, Chile and Brazil.

Even though *La casa de los espíritus* is not a biographical book, it is inspired by Allende's life and retells real historical events that took place in Chile, namely the 1973 *coup d'état* that deposed socialist president Salvador Allende

and established a military dictatorship that lasted until 1988. A similar event had taken place in Brazil almost a decade earlier when left-wing president João Goulart was deposed in 1964 by the military who also established a dictatorship that lasted until 1985. Both *coup d'états* were supported by the United States government in the context of the Cold War, and both resulted in long-lasting military regimes that were responsible for thousands of disappeared people, tortured prisoners, raped women, and violent deaths.

Due to this political context, in both countries, feminist movements were delayed by a decade in comparison to other Western societies where women's movements exploded during the 1960s. Here, discussions on the condition of women happened "under the bitter context of Latin American dictatorships that silenced—ruthless—dissenting voices" (Sarti, 2001, p. 32). It was only in the late 1970s that women started gathering both in Brazil and in Chile as a reaction against the violence of these governments. These groups are the base of modern feminisms in both countries, and they started for the same reason: to fight against the violation of human rights by the military.

Cynthia Sarti (2001) explains that militant feminism in Brazil started in the 1970s because of women's resistance to the dictatorship. The same happened in Chile, where left-wing women initiated several groups to fight for human rights, according to the archives of *Biblioteca Nacional de Chile* [Chile National Library] (2018). Except for the depicted solidarity among the women held captive in the female concentration camp, *La casa de los espíritus* does not cite explicitly any women's movement. However, the feminist context of the fight for human rights is embodied both in these imprisoned women and in Alba saving innocent people from the military. The novel

ends just as feminist movements are starting in Chile, that is, in the late 1970s.

Readers can only imagine what happened to Alba after she finished writing her family's story. Because the women imprisoned in the female concentration camp are responsible for her being able to cope with torture and rape, it is indeed possible that Alba would continue to fight for human rights as did women from both countries during those decades. This similar feminist context could have influenced the translation or could have allowed this interpretation of Alba's actions.

Nonetheless, not all translators are sensitive to feminist issues, and this was probably not the focus of this translation, which was marketed as a family novel, not a feminist one, as can be seen in its paratexts. The first translator was possibly unaware of this historical context of female oppression and, as discussions about the condition of women were largely restricted to feminist groups at the time when the translation was done, there is a chance that he was unfamiliar with these possibilities of interpretation. For the purpose of this study, it is not relevant if he was un/aware of the interpretations that were erased or created in his translation;⁹ what in fact is relevant are the effects of the translation—and they are not favorable to a feminist interpretation of the source text.

⁹ There is little information on the specific context of production of this translation. The way the book is presented in its paratexts suggests it was marketed as a family drama. It is compared to *Cien años de soledad*, and it mentions magical realism and Latin America literature. The feminist aspect of the novel is a more recent interpretation, one that was not widely discussed when the book was first published in Spanish—which is another argument in favor of a feminist retranslation project.

Now that twentieth-century Latin American history and its feminist movements can be seen through the lens of today, it is possible to make what Adrienne Rich (1972, p. 18) has called a *re-vision*, that is, “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction.” This new critical direction is feminist, and it aims to bring out feminist aspects of the original “that had been overlooked or even suppressed” (Massardier-Kenney, 1997, p. 65). Thus, in the context of a feminist re-visioning, the section that follows moves on to consider options of retranslation for the examples presented above.

2. Retranslation as an intentional feminist act

A feminist translation is an activist transformation, one that intends to be conscious of its role inside the space between languages, cultures, and values. In this case, the retranslation proposed here is a feminist act that aims to call attention to aspects of Allende’s novel that were neglected in the first translation. Although this paper confronts what I believe to be a mistranslation or a bad translation (Costa & Alvarez, 2014), it does not intend to dismiss the first translator as “bad.” Especially because “[n]o translation is the production of only the translator” (Flotow, 2012, p. 129), as source text, author, publishers, editors, book designers, and typesetters are involved in the process of creating this final product, that is, the translated book.

I do not know to what extent the translator is responsible for and conscious of the omissions and inaccurate translations that were found during my analysis. Nonetheless, they exist and can be seen throughout the entire text. It is important to point out that this project is “a new understanding and representation of the source

text, in another time and space and culture, and by another individual—who chooses to, and is able to, read differently” (Flotow, 2009, p. 37). Hence, it is inevitable that the choices presented here are different from those of the first translation, as the social, cultural, and historical moment has changed, but especially because the translator (and her intentions) have also changed. The resulting text modifies some inaccurate choices that were found in the original translation and also translates all previously omitted passages. I do not intend to state, however, that my first version is more “beautiful, smooth, and true” than the original translation—a nomenclature that Flotow (2009) uses to criticize the way retranslation projects are often presented. On the contrary, it is *one* possible translation among many.

Thus, the feminist practice carried out in this paper is divided into two phases: firstly, the original text was retranslated with the aim to keep the translation as close as possible to its Spanish original, which resulted in a first draft for each selected passage. Nonetheless, my feminist project is not this first draft, as this is only the first step in achieving a feminist translation. This methodological choice to start by translating as close as possible to (an interpretation of) the original was made so the difference between a (supposedly) faithful translation would be more obvious when compared to a feminist translation written by a feminist translator.

In the second phase, I returned to this version and modified it, freeing myself from the idea of being “too faithful” to the words and expressions of the original, trying to make this second version a more feminist text. This means that I privileged choices that could make it more possible for the reader to interpret this narrative as a criticism of sexist societies; thus, I have translated the interpretations

that favored this view. In one of the examples presented in this paper, for instance, I have tried to make Alba—a woman being tortured by men—seem as defenseless as possible, and to present these men as more violent and sexist. This does not mean that she is translated as weak; rather I intended to make her vulnerability more evident in order to call attention to and criticize the violence and sexual abuse perpetrated by a Latin American dictatorship.

Below, I show and discuss both versions: the first, “more faithful” version, and the feminist translation that I propose. Although it may sound like these two phases are very distinct, separate movements, they were in fact made up of various moments in which I would interpret and translate, read and reread, and then return and retranslate once more. The original and its back translation are repeated before both translations to make it easier for the reader to compare all passages.

Example 1.1.

Spanish p. 11	Brazilian Portuguese First version	Brazilian Portuguese Feminist version
Su esposa Nívea prefería entenderse con Dios sin intermediarios, tenía profunda desconfianza de las sotanas y se aburría con las descripciones del cielo, el purgatorio y el infierno, pero acompañaba a su marido en sus ambiciones parlamentarias, en la esperanza de que si él ocupaba un puesto en el Congreso, ella podría obtener el voto femenino, por el cual luchaba desde hacía diez años, sin que sus numerosos embarazos lograran desanimarla.	Sua esposa Nívea preferia entender-se com Deus sem intermediários, tinha profunda desconfiança das batinas, entediava-se com as descrições do céu, do purgatório e do inferno, mas acompanhava o marido nas suas ambições parlamentares na esperança de que, se ele ocupasse um cargo no Congresso, ela poderia obter o voto feminino, pelo qual lutava havia dez anos, sem que suas numerosas gravidezes conseguissem desanimá-la.	Sua esposa Nívea preferia entender-se com Deus sem intermediários, tinha profunda desconfiança das batinas, entediava-se com as descrições do céu, do purgatório e do inferno, mas acompanhava o marido nas ambições parlamentares na esperança de que, se ele ocupasse um cargo no Congresso, ela finalmente conseguiria o voto feminino, pelo qual lutava havia dez anos, sem que suas numerosas gravidezes conseguissem desanimá-la.
Back translation	Back translation	Back translation
His wife, Nívea, preferred to deal with God without intermediaries, she had a deep distrust of cassocks and was bored by descriptions of heaven, purgatory and hell, but she shared her husband's parliamentary ambitions, hoping that if he got a seat in Congress she would secure the vote for women, for which she had fought for the past ten years, without being discouraged by any of her numerous pregnancies.	His wife, Nívea, preferred to deal with God without intermediaries, she had a deep distrust of cassocks and was bored by descriptions of heaven, purgatory and hell, but she shared her husband's parliamentary ambitions, hoping that if he got a seat in Congress she would secure the vote for women, for which she had fought for the past ten years, without being discouraged by any of her numerous pregnancies.	His wife, Nívea, preferred to deal with God without intermediaries, she had a deep distrust of cassocks and was bored by descriptions of heaven, purgatory and hell, but she shared her husband's parliamentary ambitions, hoping that if he got a seat in Congress she would finally secure the vote for women, for which she had fought for the past ten years, without being discouraged by any of her numerous pregnancies.

Example 1.2.

<p>Spanish</p> <p>p. 351</p> <p>Descubrió que la riqueza le producía un inmenso fastidio, porque le resultaba fácil ganarla, sin encontrar mayor aliciente para gastarla y ni siquiera el prodigioso talento para el despilfarro de su nieta lograba mermar su faltrica.</p>	<p>Brazilian Portuguese</p> <p>First version</p> <p>Descobriu que a riqueza lhe dava imenso incômodo, porque para ele era fácil ganhá-la, sem encontrar maior atrativo para gastá-la e nem sequer o prodigioso talento para o desperdício de sua neta conseguia esvaziar suas algibeiras.</p>	<p>Brazilian Portuguese</p> <p>Feminist version</p> <p>Descobriu que a riqueza lhe era absurdamente irritante, porque ele conseguia facilmente ganhá-la sem encontrar maior atrativo para gastá-la e nem sequer o prodigioso talento para o desperdício de sua neta conseguia esvaziar suas algibeiras.</p>
<p>Back translation</p> <p>He discovered that wealth made him absurdly irritated because he could so easily grow it without finding a great incentive to spend it, and not even his granddaughter's prodigious talent for wastefulness was able to deplete his purse.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>He discovered that wealth made him immensely irritated because it was so easy to him to grow wealth without finding a great incentive to spend it, and not even his granddaughter's prodigious talent for wastefulness was able to deplete his purse.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>He discovered that wealth made him absurdly irritated because he could so easily grow it without finding a great incentive to spend it, and not even his granddaughter's prodigious talent for wastefulness was able to deplete his purse.</p>

In Example 1.1, it is important to highlight that not much changes from the first to the second version. Apart from accurately translating *se aburría* [was bored] into *entediava-se* [was bored], the only difference is the use of *finalmente conseguiría* [she would finally get] instead of *podría obter* [she could get], which slightly changes the phrase from *she would be able to secure the vote for women* to *she would finally secure the vote for women*, in a tentative way of calling attention to suffragette movements and the long time it took women to be allowed to vote.

In Example 1.2, there is a small difference between both versions, as Esteban is seen as more irritated in the feminist translation, in which

a riqueza lhe dava imenso incômodo [wealth made him immensely irritated] changes into *a riqueza lhe era absurdamente irritante* [wealth made him absurdly irritated]. It is significant to see Esteban as more irritated because he is the embodiment of the obstacles that women must face to achieve independence; therefore, the worse his behavior is toward women, the more they have to fight for equality. As this novel criticizes sexism by showing how it dictates the fate of women especially through his character, in this feminist re-visioning and retranslation, Esteban is portrayed as angrier whenever the original text allows this interpretation. In doing so, I intend to call attention to the difficulties that women must fight against.

Example 2.

<p>Spanish pp. 356-357</p> <p>Voces desconocidas la presionaban, entendía el nombre de Miguel, pero no sabía lo que le preguntaban y sólo repetía incansablemente un no monumental mientras la golpeaban, la manoseaban, le arrancaban la blusa, y ella no podía pensar, sólo repetir no y no y no, calculando cuánto podría resistir antes que se le agotaran las fuerzas, sin saber que eso era sólo el comienzo, hasta que se sintió desvanecer y los hombres la dejaron tranquila, tirada en el suelo, por un tiempo que le pareció muy corto.</p>	<p>Brazilian Portuguese First version</p> <p>Vozes desconhecidas a pressionavam, ouvia o nome de Miguel, mas não sabia o que perguntavam e só repetia incansavelmente um monumental não enquanto batiam nela, a manuseavam, arrancavam sua blusa e ela não podia pensar, só repetir não e não e não, calculando quanto poderia resistir antes de se esgotarem as forças, sem saber que isso era só o começo, até que se sentiu desvanecer e os homens a deixaram em paz, estirada no chão, por um tempo que pareceu muito curto.</p>	<p>Brazilian Portuguese Feminist version</p> <p>Vozes desconhecidas a pressionavam, ouvia o nome de Miguel, mas não sabia o que perguntavam e só repetia incansavelmente um monumental não enquanto era espancada, enquanto eles apalpavam seu corpo, enquanto eles arrancavam sua blusa e ela não conseguia nem pensar só repetir não e não e não tentando calcular quanto poderia resistir antes de se esgotarem as forças, sem saber que ainda era só o começo, até que desmaiou e os homens a deixaram jogada no chão por um tempo que pareceu curto demais.</p>
<p>Back translation</p> <p>Strange voices pressed in on her, she heard Miguel's name but did not know what they were asking, and kept repeating tirelessly a monumental no while they beat her, handled her, pulled off her blouse, and she could not think, could only repeat no and no and no, calculating how long she could resist before her strength wore out, not knowing this was only the beginning, until she felt herself fade and the men left her alone, lying on the floor, for what seemed to her a very short time.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>Strange voices pressed in on her, she heard Miguel's name but did not know what they were asking, and kept repeating tirelessly a monumental no while they beat her, handled her, pulled off her blouse, and she could not think, could only repeat no and no and no, calculating how long she could resist before her strength wore out, not knowing this was only the beginning, until she felt herself fade and the men left her alone, lying on the floor, for what seemed to her a very short time.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>Strange voices pressed in on her, she heard Miguel's name but did not know what they were asking her, and kept repeating tirelessly a monumental no while she was beaten up, while they were touching her body, while they pulled off her blouse, and she could not even think, could only repeat no, no, and no, trying to calculate how much longer she could resist before her strength gave out, not knowing this was only just the beginning, until she passed out and the men left her sprawled on the floor for what seemed to her a time that was too short.</p>

In Example 2, the first version includes the missing *não* [no], updates some words, and leaves out some pronouns (*lhe*) that are current in Spanish but sound odd in Brazilian Portuguese. The second, feminist version seeks to highlight Alba's suffering through various strategies. Firstly, I have chosen to repeat the word *enquanto* [while], which seems to extend the duration of the scene and emphasizes all the different ways that these men attack the female character. Another way to expand the time she is being tortured is the use of *ainda* [just] in *this was only just the beginning*. In opposition, to abbreviate the time she is not being tortured and is left alone on the floor, the word *demais* [too short] is chosen to replace the expression *muito curto* [very short].

Secondly, the active voice of *la golpeaban* [they were beating her] was changed to a passive voice in order to call attention to the target of the action; the verb was also intensified and *golpear* [to hit, to hit repeatedly] became *espancar* [to beat up], which is a violent verb in Brazilian Portuguese commonly used to describe torture scenes. This highlights the fact that Alba was not hit repeatedly, but she was *espancada* [beaten up], which is much more explicit. More vivid words were also chosen to represent the violence Alba underwent, such as *desmaiou* [she passed out] instead of *se sentiu desvanecer* [she felt herself fade], and *jogada no*

chão [sprawled on the floor], which is an expression that conveys the idea that one is left violently on the floor.

Thirdly, I opted for the verb *apalpar* [to touch and then press someone with one's hand, to explore someone's body with one's hand] in the phrase *eles apalpavam seu corpo* [they were touching her/exploring her body], which aims to highlight the fact that Alba suffers this kind of sexual violence because she is a woman and these men are taking advantage of her vulnerable situation. I also repeated the masculine pronoun *eles* [they], which is not mandatory in Brazilian Portuguese and aims to call attention to the fact that these people are men. Another option to emphasize Alba's vulnerability was to omit the expression *em paz* [alone] in the phrase *os homens a deixaram em paz* [the men left her alone] so the fact that she was sprawled on the floor as the result of being thrown violently after passing out would sound more poignant. At last, another way of highlighting her vulnerability is using *tentando calcular* [trying to calculate] instead of *calculando* [calculating], as it shows how difficult it is to think coherently under torture while it also shows that she is trying to be strong. All these strategies were used so the torture scene would seem more explicit in order to emphasize critiques to Latin American dictatorships through literature.

Example 3.

Spanish p. 375	Brazilian Portuguese First version	Brazilian Portuguese Feminist version
Repartían las porciones con estricta justicia, a cada quien según su necesidad y a mí me daban un poco más, porque decían que estaba en los huesos y así ni el hombre más necesitado se iba a fijar en	Repartiam as porções com estrita justiça, cada uma recebia de acordo com sua necessidade e para mim davam um pouco mais porque diziam que eu estava só no osso e nem o homem mais	Repartiam as porções com estrita justiça, cada uma recebia de acordo com sua necessidade, e para mim davam um pouco mais porque diziam que eu estava só no osso e nem o homem mais

<p>mí. Me estremecía, pero Ana Díaz me recordaba que yo no era la única mujer violada y que eso, como muchas otras cosas, había que olvidarlo.</p>	<p>necessitado ia me olhar. Eu estremecia, mas Ana Díaz me lembrava que eu não era a única mulher estuprada e que isso, como muitas outras coisas, tinha que ser esquecido.</p>	<p>necessitado ia me querer. Eu tremia, mas Ana Díaz me lembrava que eu não era a única mulher estuprada e que isso, como tantas outras coisas, era melhor esquecer por enquanto.</p>
<p>Back translation</p> <p>They divided the portions with strict justice, according to everyone's need, and they gave me a little more because they said I was just bones and not even the most desperate man would look at me. I shuddered, but Ana Díaz reminded me that I was not the only raped woman, and that, along with many other things, was something to forget.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>They divided the portions with strict justice, according to everyone's need, and they gave me a little more because they said I was just bones and not even the most desperate man would look at me. I shuddered, but Ana Díaz reminded me that I was not the only raped woman, and that, along with many other things, was something to forget.</p>	<p>Back translation</p> <p>They divided the portions with strict justice, according to everyone's need, and they gave me a little more because they said I was just bones and not even the most desperate man would want me. I shuddered, but Ana Díaz reminded me that I was not the only raped woman, and that, along with many other things, was something to forget for now.</p>

In this last example, the first change was to translate *mujer violada* [raped woman] as *mulher estuprada* [raped woman]. As explained before, *violar* [to violate] does exist in Brazilian Portuguese, but it is not as explicit as *estuprar* [to rape]. In this project, whenever the verb *violar* [to rape] appeared in the original, I chose to translate it as *estuprar* [to rape]. This is significant because the translation of *violar* [to rape] from Spanish to Brazilian Portuguese as *violar* [to violate] and not as *estuprar* [to rape] is very common in other types of texts. In fact, the Brazilian edition of the Spanish newspaper *El País* usually translates *violar* [to rape] (in Spanish) into *violar* [to violate] (in Portuguese), which may cause the same attenuated interpretation pointed out in the previous section, that is, it may cause the reader to see a case of *violación* [rape in Spanish] as not so serious as a case of *violação* [violation in Brazilian Portuguese]. This interpretation is not

favorable to women in either literature or real life.

Another change in this example was to accurately translate *había que olvidarlo* [it should be forgotten] into *tinha que ser esquecido* [it should be forgotten]. In the feminist version, this phrase was adapted to suggest that these women will fight for justice later and the idea of *it should be forgotten* is replaced by *era melhor esquecer por enquanto* [it was something to forget for now]. As women's movements in Chile and Brazil started during the 1970s to fight against the violence of the military regimes, one might assume the women in the novel who were raped by soldiers during the dictatorship would fight for justice, even though this idea is not explicit in the original. Thus, this feminist translation project has chosen to favor this interpretation by adding *por enquanto* [for now]. In this retranslation, this first gathering

of tortured, raped women could result in feminist groups seeking strength in each other. As this study is not constrained by editorial rules, as a commercial translation would be, it has a certain freedom in interpreting and opting for words and expressions that are more distant from the original text when they emphasize the feminist viewpoint.

However, this type of addition is controversial and it might seem that I am *stretching* the interpretation to better fit my intentions. Feminist strategies like this have been largely critiqued. Arrojo, for instance, argued that feminist translations “cannot be absolutely acceptable” (1994, p. 159) and that feminist translators “seem to fall into another version of the same ‘infamous double standard’ that can be found in our traditional, ‘masculine’ theories and conceptions of translation” (1994, p. 149). Nonetheless, there is room for this type of *stretched feminist interpretation*, especially when we consider the new interest in feminisms in Latin America and in Brazil. Even though not all feminist translators may be able to go this far, I see this feminist academic praxis and the debate it generates as a means to discuss possibilities and to shape alternative approaches to language and translation.

Another controversy in feminist translation studies is the fact that feminist translation projects are criticized for not being able to fully transform this discourse into practice. Flotow (1997) and many others point out that examples of specific moments in which the feminist translator actively intervenes in a text are rare in many feminist translations, and the translator is sometimes more present in paratexts than in the actual translation. This also applies to other types of projects, as re/translation has been criticized because “what (re)translators and the other agents involved *say* they do in (re)translation does not always correspond to

what they actually *do*” (Alvstad & Rosa, 2015, p. 17), which seems to point to a gap between theory and practice.

Carolyn Shread (2011, p. 284) addresses this gap noting that this “call for translators to ‘practice what you preach,’ to show their theory through their practice, suggests that critics are looking for signs that would mark a work as a readily identifiable ‘feminist’ translation.” Like her, I too question if my own feminist translation would be open to these critiques, especially when confronted with passages such as those in Example 1, in which not much seems to have changed. After a long discussion, Shread (2011, p. 287) states that her interest “is to imagine other ways in which feminism intervenes in translation through paradigms that produce not only linguistic innovation but also shape alternative translation processes and hence also different conceptions of translation itself.” She believes that activism in translation does not only mean exhibiting identity markers in the text; on the contrary, she argues that it may work in more subtle ways.

Although my proposal seems to be restricted to linguistic analysis, this feminist retranslation project aims to shape an “alternative translation process” that takes into account the Latin American context of renewed interest in translated literature, especially in feminist novels. Because Brazilian feminists depend on translation between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese to understand our feminist neighbors, translators interested in strengthening Latin American feminist alliances (like I am) want to reshape the way Latin American women’s novels were and are being translated. This includes not only an attentive translation of new texts but also a re-visioning of older novels that can be the door to a vast number of female writers. Given the importance of Post-Boom texts in feminist Latin American literature, many feminist

readers may start their contact with this literature through a famous book such as *La casa de los espíritus*, which is why a feminist retranslation is relevant in Latin American feminist transnational dialogue.

3. Final thoughts

The feminist translation project undertaken here is indeed linguistic, as I work in a space between languages. Thus, I have aimed to show that it is possible to achieve a feminist translation—even though feminism is not obvious in every phrase and examples might seem scarce to some. This project also rethinks the ways feminisms intervene in literary translation and in the false proximity between Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese. Although the focus on literature is considered a “major gap” of feminist translation studies (Castro & Ergun, 2017), as stated in the introduction of this paper, literature is a subject that still needs to be addressed. Particularly because, “despite the 1980s promise that gendered analysis would inflect and enrich our literary and cultural analyses across the board, little has changed in the privileged and more valued realms of theoretical discourse” (Castillo, 2009, p. 245). Hence, we still have a long way to go in order to significantly change literary discourse, which continues to be marked by a white, straight, wealthy male perspective.

The heavy focus of feminist translation theories on literature is certainly seen as a shortcoming, and it is true that this focus must be expanded to other fields as well—especially because we live in a globalized world, unaware that many texts we read have been translated—, but that does not mean that literature should no longer be considered from a feminist point of view. Notably, there is space for feminist thinking on Latin American literature and its translations, especially

in a South-to-South context of translation. As Castro and Ergun (2017, p. 3) point out, “[t]he existing scholarship on ‘gender and translation’ or ‘women and translation’ also fails to reflect the cross-cultural rise of attention given to the subject matter or the emerging geographical and inter/disciplinary diversity within the field.” Thus, even though there has been an increase in the number of texts published on Latin/a America in the past couple of decades, the link between women and translation is still weak in this southern part of the world.

This leads to the second subject of my feminist intervention: to call attention to the ways in which the language pair Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese is being translated, especially in Latin America. Because the languages are considered similar, this results in inaccurate translations, as discussed in this paper. With this study, I intended to highlight some of their differences and incite others to rethink translations involving these languages in all types of texts through a feminist viewpoint. As the last couple of decades have seen renewed interest in feminisms worldwide and as feminist allegiances are being formed transnationally, it is important to create strong connections between Latin American countries that share a similar history of female oppression. While *Chilenas* question a rape by Neruda with the movement *Confieso que he violado*, *Argentinas* fight for *ni una a menos*, and *Brasileiras* discuss *meu primeiro assédio*, translation is what makes these alliances possible and, despite the feminist resurgence in recent years, there remains a great need for the feminist perspective in Latin American translated texts.

References

- Allende, Isabel. (1985a). *La casa de los espíritus* [The house of the spirits] (15th Ed.). Barcelona: Plaza & Janés.

- Allende, Isabel. (1985b). *A casa dos espíritos* [The house of the spirits] (Carlos Martins Pereira, trans.). São Paulo: Difel.
- Alvstad, Cecilia, & Rosa, Alexandra Assis. (2015). Voice in retranslation: An overview and some trends. *Target*, 27(1), 3-24. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.27.1.00int>
- Amorim, Lauro Maia. (2014). Tradução como diáspora: as vozes da poesia afro-americana no Brasil. In Lenita Esteves & Viviane Veras (Eds.), *Vozes da tradução: éticas do traduzir* (pp. 149-176). São Paulo: Humanitas.
- Arrojo, Rosemary. (1994). Fidelity and the gendered translation. *TTR*, 7(2), 147-162. <https://doi.org/10.7202/037184ar>
- Biblioteca Nacional de Chile. (2018). Movimiento feminista durante la dictadura (1973-1989). *Memoria chilena*. <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-100703.html>
- Castillo, Debra A. (2009). Latin American gender studies in the twenty-first century. *Comparative Critical Studies*, 6(2), 233-250. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E174418540900072X>
- Castro, Olga & Ergun, Emek. (Eds.). (2017). *Feminist translation studies: Local and transnational perspectives*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315679624>
- Costa, Claudia. de Lima, & Alvarez, Sonia E. (2014). Dislocating the sign: Toward a translocal feminist politics of translation. *Signs*, 39(3), 557-563. <https://doi.org/10.1086/674381>
- Earle, Peter G. (1987). Literature as survival: Allende's "The house of the spirits." *Contemporary Literature*, 28(4), 543-554. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1208317>
- Figueredo, Eurídice. (2013). *Mulheres ao espelho: autobiografia, ficção, autoficção*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. uerj.
- Filgueiras, Mariana. (2015). Literatura latino-americana ganha novo fôlego no Brasil. *O Globo*. <https://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/livros/literatura-latino-americana-ganha-novo-folego-no-brasil-16453126>
- Flotow, Luise von. (1997). *Translation and gender: Translating in the 'era of feminism'*. Manchester (uk): St. Jerome Publishing.
- Flotow, Luise von. (2009). This time "the translation is beautiful, smooth, and true": Theorizing retranslation with the help of beauvoir. In James Day (Ed.), *Translation in French and francophone literature and film* (pp. 35-50). Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042026490_004
- Flotow, Luise von. (2012). Translating women: From recent histories and re-translations to "queerying" translation, and metamorphosis. *Quaderns. Revista de Traducció*, 19, 127-139.
- Hollanda, Heloísa Buarque de. (2018). *Explosão feminista: Arte, cultura, política e universidade*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Klahn, Norma. (2014). Locating women's writing and translation in the Americas in the age of latinamericanismo and globalization. In Sonia E. Alvarez, Claudia de Lima Costa, Veronica Feliu, Rebecca Hester, Norma Klahn, & Millie Thayer (Eds.), *Translocalities/Translocalidades: feminist politics of translation in the Latin/a Americas* (Kindle Edition, pp. 38-56). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Massardier-Kenney, Françoise. (1997). Towards a redefinition of feminist translation practice. *The Translator*, 3(1), 55-69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.1997.10798988>
- Meyer, Doris. (1990). "Parenting the text": Female creativity and dialogic relationships in Isabel Allende's "La casa de los espíritus." *Hispania*, 73(2), 360-365. <https://doi.org/10.2307/342815>
- Rich, Adrienne. (1972). When we dead awaken: Writing as re-vision. *College English*, 34(1), 18-30. <https://doi.org/10.2307/375215>

- Sarti, Cynthia A. (2001). Feminismo e contexto: Lições do caso brasileiro. *Cadernos Pagu*, (16), 31-48. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-83332001000100003>
- Serrano, Cristina Ruiz. (2011). Paradigmas patriarcales en el realismo mágico: alteridad femenina y ‘feminismo mágico’ en “La casa de los espíritus” de Isabel Allende y “Los recuerdos del porvenir” de Elena Garro. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 88(6), 863-885. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2011.603492>
- Serrão, Raquel de Araújo. (2013). A hora e a vez do rosa no pós-Boom latino-americano: a ficcionalização da história sob a ótica feminina. *Olho d'Água*, 5(1), 103-118. <http://www.olhodagua.ibilce.unesp.br/index.php/Olhodagua/article/viewFile/182/190>
- Shaw, Donald L. (1989). Towards a description of the post-boom. *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 66(1), 87-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475382892000366087>
- Shaw, Donald L. (1995). The Post-Boom in Spanish American fiction. *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1359>
- Shaw, Donald L. (2005). *Nueva narrativa hispanoamericana: Boom. PosBoom. Posmodernismo*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Shread, Carolyn. (2011). On becoming in translation: Articulating feminisms in the translation of Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *Les Rapaces*. In Luise von Flotow (Series Ed.), *Translating women* (pp. 283-303). Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Suárez Velázquez, Mariana Libertad. (2004). Con luz natural: divergencias, fragmentos y calcos en las escrituras de mujer del Chile contemporáneo. *Iberoamericana*, 4(13), 63-77. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18441/ibam.4.2004.13.63-77>
- Trouche, André. (2012). Boom e pós-Boom. In Eurídice Figueiredo (Org.), *Conceitos de literatura e cultura* (pp. 83-102). Niterói, Juiz de Fora: EDUFF.
- Venuti, Lawrence. (1986). The translator's invisibility. *Criticism*, 28(2), 179-212.

How to cite this article: Berton-Costa, Pâmela. Retranslation as feminist re-visioning: *La casa de los espíritus* into Brazilian Portuguese. *Mutatis Mutandis, Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción*, 13(1), 183-205. <http://doi.org/10.27533/udea.mut.v13n1a09>