

Feminisms at Work:  
The (Re)Production of Gender and Culture in Contemporary Galicia

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Emma Pedreira's 2019 poetry collection *As voces ágrafas* ('The Unwritten Voices')<sup>1</sup>, as the title suggests, gives voice to a chorus of overlooked women whose existence is often considered prosaic. Scanning groceries, descaling fish, enduring racist and xenophobic comments from customers, mopping, and counting change are poetic acts in these pages dedicated to the women working in supermarkets. As they labor, they also dream, desire, and resist, affirming that, more than a site of consumption, the produce section is also a site of cultural production and feminist practice. In Pedreira's collection, poet Xohana Torres' celebrated verse 'Eu tamén navegar' ('I too sail'), which became a battle cry of Galician women's agency, is subverted, replaced with 'Eu tamén naufragar' ('I too shipwreck') (2019: 13). Far from an admission of defeat, this declaration is the highest expression of what transfeminist scholar Jack Halberstam (2011) calls 'the queer art of failure', an embracing of values that are anathema to life in a heteropatriarchal, capitalist society. One can interpret 'Eu tamén naufragar' as a rejection of both patriarchal and neoliberal feminist traditions that take a limited view of women's agency or that reinforce imperial, androcentric notions of subjectivity. In so doing, Pedreira's text represents what philosopher Ewa Majewska describes as feminist narratives and histories 'open to account not just for the most heroic and visible agents, but also those whose political agency consists of non-heroic, weak and ordinary resistance' (2021: 55).

Across Galicia there is a similar celebration of women's quotidian resistance to oppression through feminist and woman-led cultural production. Larger-than-life murals depicting elderly, rural women turn them into the pillars of society; feminist organizations lead the charge on protecting communal lands and combatting the fires that decimate the countryside each year; photography exhibits adorn museums in celebration of the women who gather shellfish along the coast, and activist art interventions denounce sex trafficking through public displays of clothing strung out on washing lines. Women are playing a major role in the *Novo Cinema Galego* ('New Galician Cinema') shown at festivals worldwide, in the fight for justice for trans and queer communities, and in converting traditional artisanry, costume and music into avant-garde art forms.<sup>2</sup> Rural spaces are being reclaimed and reimagined by racialized, trans, queer, and migrant artists, musicians, writers, and activists as landscapes able to sustain cultural diversity. Because heteropatriarchal violence is compounded by racism, transphobia, classism, ableism and other structural forms of oppression, feminists are working from the margins to lead more inclusive equality initiatives. Laura Bugalho has been an outspoken advocate seeking justice for both trans and migrant communities in Galicia; CRU Producións ('CRU Productions') promotes social

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are our own.

<sup>2</sup> Respectively, some examples include directors Jaoina Camborda and Xiana do Teixeiro; transfeminist activists Xácia Ceibe and Cristina Palacios; artisans and designers Lucecús and Elena Ferro; and musicians Mercedes Peón and Mounqup.

change through transfeminist audiovisual production; grassroots activist collectives such as *Resistencia en terra allea* ('Resistance in a Foreign Land') center and amplify the voices of racialized and migrant women in the fight to decolonize Galician society, and *SOS Galicia* works to visibilize and denounce racist, homophobic, xenophobic and sexist discrimination.

In a similar spirit, this issue on '(Re)Producing Galician Femininities' represents a very modest step towards showcasing the dynamic, multifaceted and multimodal feminist and woman-led cultural production that has been so prevalent in Galicia in recent years, yet substantially underrepresented and invisibilized in scholarship. The four articles included here, by contributors working from a variety of perspectives and specialisms, examine the ways in which Galician women are engaging in creative and experimental forms of self-expression, self-production and consumption of culture, reconfiguring and 'refashioning' Galician feminisms and femininities within a global framework. The focus is on non-canonical artistic formulations located on the fringes of, and often serving as a challenge to, mainstream Galician culture. Drawing on diverse approaches including decolonial feminism, queer studies, food studies and affect theory, the articles span the genres and mediums of literature, audiovisual production, digital media and performance art. Themes including sustainability, queerness, community, rurality and resistance recur across the contributions, intersecting with issues of gender in new, exciting and often unexpected ways. The articles confront issues such as biphobia, body shaming, sexual and obstetric violence which are embedded in the neocapitalist appropriation of women's bodies. Particularly timely in the wake of the #MeToo movement, 8M women's strikes and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality, and with social media playing an ever more prominent role in the diffusion of grassroots feminist activism, these essays demonstrate how contemporary Galician creative practice by, for and about women challenges patriarchal binaries and stereotypes. This is especially resonant in the current context of a neoliberal discourse of 'postfeminism', which 'tries to simultaneously constrain, displace and replace feminism' (Martínez-Jiménez 2020: 1000), appropriating the movement for political and commercial ends. While the essays here reflect only a small snapshot of the rich, subversive iterations of gender in Galician culture, they enter into dialogue with broader debates on feminisms and non-state cultures, revealing new ways of thinking about gender from peripheral, non-hegemonic and decolonial positions.

Marginalized spaces, as Black feminism has taught us, are not inferior ones; quite the contrary. We remember the late bell hooks' words and embrace marginality 'as a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of a radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds' (1990: 150). Using Galicia's marginalization within post-imperial Spain as a point of departure has allowed scholars, writers, poets, artists, filmmakers, translators, and activists to establish solidarity and dialogue with literatures, cultures and peoples from other non-hegemonic positions – be it with regard to language, race, gender, sexuality, or migration status. It is this decolonial potential that draws us to Galicia as outsiders, and that we hope to share with readers. As the editors of this issue, we are aware of the role that our own positionality plays in our work. On the one hand, our affinities

with Galician culture are underpinned by our respective upbringings in Northern Ireland and as part of the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York, where questions of language, empire, sovereignty, and migration are as present and pressing as they are in Galicia. On the other hand, we are also keenly aware of the inherent privilege that comes with working within the anglophone academy, and the limitations this entails. For us both, Galician is an acquired, chosen language through which we seek to learn from the Galician context, in dialogue with international feminist debates. Doing feminism requires constant reevaluation of our own conditioning and acquired ways of doing, for ‘being *troubled* by questions around our own responsibilities, feminist ethics and our research practices means that we need both to learn and unlearn’ (van den Berg, Dupuis, Gaybor and Harcourt 2022: 294).

While this issue inevitably must fall short of representing the multiplicity of Galician women’s identities and cultural imaginings, we hope it reaches towards such comparisons and encourages readers to consider Galicia and Galician feminisms within non-canonical, intersectional and global frameworks. To ensure that the visibility and liberation of the most privileged does not come at the expense of the many, decolonial feminism emphasizes the need to think about the multiple identities women hold and how this relates to systems of power and disenfranchisement. As philosopher Amia Srinivasan reiterates, ‘any liberation movement – feminism, anti-racism, the labour movement – that focuses only on what all members of the relevant group (women, people of colour, the working class) have in common is a movement that will best serve those members of the group who are least oppressed’ (2021: 17). Thusly, we urge against the tendency to oversimplify Galicia’s subalternity or to overstate analogies to other non-hegemonic groups. In her essay included here, María Reimóndez reminds us that Galicia occupies what she refers to as a ‘hinge position,’ oscillating between its non-hegemonic and hegemonic positions in Spanish and global contexts respectively. Despite its own histories of linguistic, political, and economic repression, Galicia and Galicians have directly and indirectly participated in and benefited from oppressive structures such as colonialism, Christian hegemony, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and Eurocentrism in global contexts and within Galicia’s own borders. Recent high-profile cases of violence in Galicia evidence the ways in which racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia operate hand-in-hand. The homophobic attack that led to the murder of Samuel Luiz and the assault on Ibrahima Diack and Magatte Ndyae, two Senegalese migrants who came to his defense; the femicide of Mónica Marcos, beaten to death by her partner; and the case of Annie, a young transgender woman from Colombia, thrown from the Roman wall that surrounds Lugo, are only the tip of the iceberg.

The awareness of Galician femininity as a plural, multifaceted, and complex assemblage, shaped by factors such race, class, sexuality, language, gender, ability, age, migration, religion and ideology, is generating Galician feminisms that are increasingly wide in their reach and ambitious in their decolonial vision. To that end, at the center of ‘(Re)Producing Galician Femininities’ are multiple questions: what kinds of gendered subjectivities and theories are being produced and reproduced in Galician culture; how do women’s sexuality and reproduction continue to be engaged with as themes of importance whilst being resituated within broader structures of power

and violence; and how does feminist production – of literature, film, art, goods, ideas – work from the margins to resist neoliberal and hegemonic notions of femininity and womanhood.

This special issue contributes, on the one hand, to the expanding corpus of English-language scholarship about Galician culture, such as the foundational collective volumes edited by Sharon Roseman and Heidi Kelley (1999), Kirsty Hooper and Manuel Puga Moruxa (2011), Helena Miguélez-Carballeira (2014), Benita Sampedro Vizcaya and José A. Losada (2017), and Obdulia Castro, Diego Baena, María A. Rey López and Miriam Sánchez Moreiras (2022). On the other, it aims to partake in the robust scholarship around gender published in Galician, exemplified in works by scholars such as Helena González Fernández (2005), Olga Castro and María Reimóndez (2013), Daniel Amarelo (2020), Miriam Couceiro Castro (2021), and Daniela Ferrández Pérez (2022) among many others. In what follows, we have sought to hold space for readers to explore just some of the burning issues that feminist scholars are engaging with today in Galician Studies. In order to complicate binaries of production and reception, scholarship and creative practice, we have bookended this collection with essays by women who are both scholars and producers of art and literature, allowing them to reflect not only on their own creative processes, but also the ways in which they interact with the work of other contemporaneous women creators. Additionally, as this issue reflects on women's productivity beyond dominant frameworks, it is important to note that two of the contributors are also independent scholars, which speaks to the precarity and marginality of feminisms within Galician institutions, and to the ways in which field-shaping scholarship is coming from beyond traditional academic settings. While each of the pieces engage with a specific topic, we want to highlight the ways in which they each intersect and contribute to much broader discussions about the present and future of Galician culture, society and politics. Fundamentally, they each reflect how women in Galicia are continually reclaiming, refashioning and reproducing innovative, non-hegemonic cultural responses that negotiate and challenge the binds of the neoliberal heteropatriarchy.

María Reimóndez, whose essay opens this collection, has been at the center of (at times polemical) debates about Galician feminism, but her work has indisputably pushed the boundaries with regard to the inclusion and representation of queer, trans and racialized women in Galician literature and has introduced Galician readers to feminist theory and artistic creation from around the world. In 'Backwards is forward. Reclaiming Sexual and Gender Diversity in Galicia through Literature', Reimóndez pushes back against the narrative that Galicia, like other peripheral spaces, is 'backward', insisting instead that this stereotype has served to obscure how complex gender and sexual identities operate in Galicia, and how these are finding expression in recent literary publications. This article, in its breadth, opens doors to further consider how Galician feminism is intricately related to environmental sustainability, language, migration, and rurality, and reminds us that when we talk of Galician women, trans, queer, racialized, migrant, and disabled women are central to the conversation and to the success of feminist projects in improving conditions for all.

The second contribution to the issue, 'Twenty-First Century Galician Food Femininities in Lorena Conde's *Santa Inés* and Oliver Laxe's *O que arde*' by María Liñeira, takes as a starting point the idea that food serves as the only uncontested, yet ubiquitous, marker of Galician identity

by laying out a panorama of ‘food femininities’ in diverse range of works from contemporary Galician visual and performing arts. Through a comparative analysis of Lorena Conde’s feminist play *Santa Inés* (‘St. Agnes’) and Oliver Laxe’s award-winning film *O que arde* (*Fire Will Come*), this article reveals how food, bodies and gendered subjectivities are mutually constituted. The works analyzed show the extent to which questions of power and patriarchy traverse discourses around food production, preparation and consumption, intersecting with questions of sexuality, age, rurality, domesticity, sexual violence, consumerism and more. Liñeira underlines the need to develop the subfield of Galician Food Studies, emphasizing that women’s ‘foodwork’ plays a prominent, yet understudied and indeed undervalued, role in Galician culture. This ties into broader conversations surrounding the significance of women’s role in the feminist (re)production of Galician cultural practices and traditions.

Catherine Barbour’s essay ‘Of Monsters and Women: Feminist Response to Gender-based Violence in Galician Noir’ contrasts discourses of resistance to gender-based violence in popular Galician-language noir television series *O sabor das margaridas* (*Bitter Daisies*), the first in the language to air on Netflix, with the independent feminist web series *Monstras* (‘Monsters’), created through modest crowdfunding by the Galician collective Corentena Producións (‘Quarantine Productions’). Through these examples, Barbour argues that though the advent of Galician noir to global streaming platforms has been cause for celebration in the Galician cultural sphere, the feminist potential of its plotlines and female characters is limited by market pressures. Responses to violence against women tend to be much more effectively executed in low-budget countercultural feminist productions such as *Monstras*. Contemporary digital content creation, operating in the informal, unstable and accessible spaces provided by social media, is replete with feminist and women’s contributions, many of which are articulated in the Galician language, reflecting how the digital space serves as a prime location for feminist exchange. Just as women influencers – YouTubeiras (YouTubers), TikTokers and Instagrammers – are actively creating and reconfiguring Galician culture within global digital networks, feminist creative activists can easily diffuse path-breaking work and incite radical conversation via freely available online media that facilitate broad public engagement.

To close the issue, Adriana Páramo Pérez draws on her own practice as a documentary filmmaker following Iria Pinheiro’s *Anatomía dunha serea* (‘Anatomy of a Mermaid’), a theatrical work which foregrounds the issue of obstetric violence through exploration of the playwright’s own experience of giving birth. In ‘Shifting Views on the Pregnant Body: Filming the Play *Anatomía dunha sera*’, Páramo Pérez analyzes Pinheiro’s focus on childbirth and her own affective response to it to emphasize the need for more realistic and inclusive portrayals of labor in audiovisual production as a pressing health and social issue. As María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar has noted of women’s artistic production in twenty-first-century Galicia, ‘maternity has become a locus of debate with antagonistic positions that bring once more to the fore the opposition between equality and difference feminisms’ (2018: 378). The works of Páramo Pérez and Pinheiro contribute to these discussions by linking questions of embodied, personal experience to collective concerns about structural violence. While these works focus on the experiences of cisgender

women with regard to (re)production, the need for nuanced iterations of childbirth and maternity discussed in this essay occurs within much broader debates in Galicia about reproductive and medical justice that include abortion access for all, destigmatization of menstruation, miscarriage and menopause, access to equitable and appropriate care for trans folk, and the physical and mental health needs of incarcerated women. Feminist cultural production brings with it the visibilisation of women faced with infertility, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, grandmothers, carers and women who choose to be child-free, experiences which have consistently been overlooked or misrepresented in mainstream heteropatriarchal culture, but that this issue may serve as a springboard for other scholars to explore.

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