

Interpreting Communities: Minor, Minority and Small Literatures in Europe

'Eco Artivism in Galician Feminist Fiction:

Teresa Moure's *A intervención* (2010)'¹

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If small literatures have been consistently banished to the margins of history, their women's voices have been doubly silenced. Narrative by women writing in the language of Galician from the non-state Atlantic nation of Galicia in north-western Spain represents a case in point, demonstrating the persistent and multifaceted tensions between language, nation, gender and genre. In this essay, through analysis of the 2010 novel *A intervención* [The Intervention] by influential writer Teresa Moure (born Monforte de Lemos, 1969), I examine how creativity is presented as a form of resistance to the heteropatriarchal neoliberal order of the nation-state, demonstrating how women in minoritised linguistic and cultural contexts write against the hegemonic social, political, environmental and economic discourses that have endeavoured to stifle them. Defying the binds relating to their linguistic, cultural and literary heritage, as well as their gender, many contemporary women writers of fiction in Galician have set out to defy state hegemony and reclaim space in the historically patriarchal Galician literary sphere, renegotiating and redefining discourses of Galician culture more generally.

The unsteady trajectory of the Galician novel by women

In Galicia's linguistically diglossic society, the autochthonous Romance language of Galician, which is closely related to Portuguese, has been under threat from the imperialist imposition of Spanish since the Early Modern period, culminating in the repression of Galician language, culture and identity during the Franco dictatorship of 1939-1975. The political and cultural spheres tend to be more mutually dependent in non-state nations where access to institutional support is precarious, and literature written in Galician has been fundamental to asserting Galician national consciousness. As a result of centuries of Spanish centralisation, literature written in the language 'enfrenta un contexto diglósico, está fortemente ligada a unha ideoloxía concreta, e convive con eivas na institucionalización política que a realidade galega aínda conserva' [faces a situation of diglossia, is strongly linked to a concrete ideology, and maintains an unsteady coexistence in the political institutionalisation that continues to define the Galician reality].² It was during the rise of the nation-state and national identities in the nineteenth century that Galicia's distinct sense of self came into being; a shift which, critically, was driven forward by a Romantic woman poet and novelist. In 1863, Rosalía de Castro published the first literary work in the Galician language, a

¹ This chapter draws on material in my monograph *Contemporary Galician Women Writers* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2020). Reproduced here with generous permission of the publisher.

² Mario Regueira, 'Editorial', *Galicia 21*, Issue J (2020), 3-6 (p. 3).

collection of poems entitled *Cantares Gallegos*. Her bold decision to defy centuries of linguistic and cultural repression by writing in Galician triggered the *Rexurdimento* [Renaissance], the cultural revival of Galician-language literature and a pivotal moment in Galicia's self-discovery that was especially revolutionary given her gender. De Castro's pioneering poetry vindicated the Galician landscape, culture and psyche, challenging the subjugation of her people by the Spanish nation-state, highlighting widespread impoverishment and the plight of emigrants, and crucially, drawing attention to the oppression of women. Along with the work of other *Rexurdimento* writers such as Eduardo Pondal and Manuel Curros Enríquez, De Castro's focus on Galician cultural specificity, penned in the Galician language, worked in tandem with the political discourse on Galician regional identity being circulated by intellectuals such as her husband Manuel Murguía and Alfredo Brañas. This would ensure a flurry of literary and cultural activity in a language hitherto consigned to the medium of orality, and set the foundation stones for early Galician nationalism which gained ground in the early twentieth century.

The Galician literary canon was developed during this period by mostly male intellectuals who were challenging linguistic, political and cultural oppression whilst adhering to acutely conservative and patriarchal norms of the time. The ensuing masculinist perception of novels authored by men as instrumental to nation-building has had lasting ramifications for women writing narrative fiction in Galician, with their contributions often dismissed or overlooked. In spite of the evidence that women have been writing narrative in the language since Rosalía de Castro paved the way in the nineteenth century, it has only been since the turn of the new millennium that women's contributions to the genre can be said to have achieved visibility, recognition and commercial success. Narrative by women writers has been consistently ignored by Galician cultural institutions, as has been well documented in feminist scholarship in Galician Studies.³ Moreover, appropriation of De Castro's legacy has meant that the poetic genre continues to be perceived as quintessential to Galician identity (even though she was also a prolific writer of prose), and women writers especially have been expected to uphold the Rosalían tradition by writing poetry. Francisca Herrera published the novel *Néveda: Historia dunha dobre seducción* [Néveda: Story of a Double Seduction] in 1920, whilst many Galician women succeeded in publishing narrative in Spanish during the intense linguistic imperialism of the dictatorship, yet most women writers who achieved success publishing in the Galician language in the twentieth

³ For further reading on the perceived lack of narrative written by women in Galician, see Catherine Barbour, *Contemporary Galician Women Writers* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2020), Helena González Fernández, *Elas e o paraugas totalizador: Escritoras, xénero e nación* (Vigo: Xerais, 2005); Kirsty Hooper, 'Girl, Interrupted: The Distinctive History of Galician Women's Narrative', *Romance Studies*, 21, 2 (2003), 101-114; María Liñeira, 'Literary Citizenship and the Politics of Language: The Galician Literary Field between 1939 and 1965' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2015); María Xesús Nogueira, Laura Lojo and Manuela Palacios (eds.), *Creation, Publishing and Criticism: The Advance of Women's Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

century did so through poetry.⁴ Women writers also maintained a presence in Galician-language children's literature, a phenomenon again reinforced by patriarchal associations between women and this particular genre. At the height of the dictatorship in the 1960s, María Xosé Queizán and Xohana Torres were an exception to the rule, as they managed to publish feminist adult novels which contributed to the male-dominated mid twentieth-century wave of radical, experimental novels labelled *Novo Narrativa Galega* [New Galician Narrative]. However, their efforts had been censored by the Francoist establishment on the one hand and derided or ignored by conservative (male) Galician nationalist critics on the other, seen for example in the scathing reviews that targeted the provocative, anachronistic themes of Queizán's path-breaking radical feminist novel *A orella no buraco* which underwent Falangist censorship.⁵

The apparent androcentrism of Galician-language narrative has nonetheless been derailed in the new millennium, as a proliferation of novels by women writers has encroached on the Galician literary market with much success. The dissemination of women-authored work defies not only the systematic repression of the Galician language and women's voices that characterised the Franco dictatorship, but also the patriarchal tenets of Galician nationalism and Galician literature. A new generation of women writers has consolidated women's perspectives in Galician-language narrative throughout the past two decades to much critical acclaim. Galician literature continues to face the at times insurmountable political and commercial challenges that threaten small literatures, namely the cultural and linguistic hegemony of established national literatures and the highly competitive, globalised neoliberal market. Yet minoritized groups working within this minoritized context, whether they be women, LGBTQ+, racialised or immigrant writers, are continually managing to forge new paths, to varying degrees of success, prominence and longevity.

New directions: Teresa Moure

I turn now to consideration of the ways in which the novel *A intervención* by Teresa Moure contests capitalist, state-sanctioned oppression through its focus on an ecofeminist act of civil disobedience, shedding light on the role of eco activist creativity in Galician-language narrative by women. Moure, who stands as arguably one of the best-known contemporary Galician writers in Spain, has been a driving force in establishing a foothold for women writing novels in Galician. She stands as a key spokesperson of Galician nationalism, which has historically relied on cultural intervention due to political subjugation, and is a staunch supporter of Galician independence, gender and LGBTQ+ equality and eco-activism. Moure has published novels, journalistic and academic essays, children's stories, poetry and a play and is a Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Santiago de Compostela. In 2005, her novel

⁴ See Liñeira.

⁵ Dolores Vilavedra, *A narrativa galega na fin de século* (Vigo: Galaxia, 2010), p. 312.

Herba moura [Black Nightshade] made a splash in the Galician literary scene with an unprecedented level of critical and commercial success and with translations into Catalan, English Italian, Dutch, Portuguese and Serbian - a rare phenomenon for Galician-language writers, especially women. It won the prestigious Xerais prize for Galician fiction and was also the first book by a woman to win the Galician-language category of Spain's national literary prize, the Premio de la Crítica Española. Though the novel was lauded in the local press as a feat for Galician feminism and Galician women writers, Helena Miguélez-Carballeira has influentially argued that its supposed innovation had been exemplified decades before by writers such as Queizán and Torres who dared to pen radical feminist discourse in Galician during Francoism.⁶ It is indeed crucial to note that any furore surrounding female-authored works can obscure the engrained gender imbalance that continues to plague certain facets of the Galician literary market.

Moure herself is an avid social justice activist, in favour of an ecofeminist Galician nationalism that resists conservative, heteropatriarchal place-based politics. Her third novel *A intervención* was the last she would publish in 'standard Galician'. In 2013, she penned a well-publicised manifesto for the Galician nationalist newspaper *Praza Pública* announcing her decision to revert to the use of Galician-Portuguese, a minority, lesser-used variant of written Galician that is also known as *galego internacional* [international Galician].⁷ She signalled her support for the ideological movement of *reintegracionismo* [reintegrationism], which calls for the reassertion of Galicia's linguistic, social, political and economic links to Lusophone cultures as a means to resist oppression by the Spanish state. Moure's subscription to this marginal movement within the broader minority context of Galician nationalism represents an ideological stand against not only the state-imposed infiltration of Spanish, but also the more institutionalised, conservative factions of Galician nationalism that are represented by standardised Galician and mainstream publishing. There is undeniably a tangible contradiction in Moure's insistence on contesting Spanish sovereignty and rejecting standardised Galician to write in a marginal language variety yet simultaneously self-translating her novels to the hegemonic language of Spanish. Indeed, the writer herself admits that publishing her work in standard Spanish has considerably broadened her readership, for her work is known throughout Spain and further afield as a result of her self-translations, collaboration with mainstream publishing houses, successful application for Spanish-language prizes, and interviews given in Spanish about her work.⁸ The process of self-

⁶ Helena Miguélez-Carballeira, 'Inauguar, reanudar, renovar: A escrita de Teresa Moure no contexto da narrativa feminista contemporánea', *Anuario de estudos galegos* (2006), 72-87.

⁷ Teresa Moure, 'Sobre encrucilhadas, normas ortográficas e independencia', *Praza Pública*, 27 March 2013 <<http://praza.com/opinion/981/sobre-encrucilhadas-normas-ortograficas-e-independencia/>> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

⁸ Moure's self-translations include *Hierba mora* (Barcelona: Lumen, 2006); *La jornada de las mujeres-árbol* (Barcelona: Ronsel, 2006), *La palabra de las hijas de Eva* (Barcelona: Lumen, 2007) and *Artes subversivas*

translation from Galician to Spanish allows for exportation of the minority culture into the dominant one, and can serve to contest hegemonic discourses, given that ‘self-translators’ double affiliation in multilingual contexts places them in a privileged position to problematise power and to negotiate identities’, as Olga Castro, Sergi Mainer and Svetlana Page assert.⁹ However, the process can be equally problematic for the minoritized language and culture, seen for example in the failure to clarify on the foreign language translations of Moure’s texts that the originals were written in Galician, in addition to the omission of certain markers of cultural specificity in her self-translations, such as the reduction of references to local place names in the translations of *A intervención*, editorial decisions which assume that the non-Galician reader will not be familiar or wish to be made familiar with aspects of Galician cultural specificity.¹⁰ This linguistic and cultural erasure undermines not only the author’s dissident publishing strategy of writing in Galician-Portuguese, but also her broader commitment to promoting Galician cultural distinctiveness and contesting state hegemony that is extrapolated in the text of *A intervención*.

***A intervención*: Galician ecological activism**

Tension between political interests and commercial pressures notwithstanding, Moure asserts the radical ideological positioning first put forward in her provocative ecocritical essay *O natural é político* (2008) in *A intervención*. This is a semi-utopian tale of environmental activism – ‘activism’ being the conscious intermingling of art and political activism that stems from the work of Chicano artists in Chiapas, Mexico and Los Angeles, USA in the 1990s.¹¹ The novel was published in Galician in 2010, with the author’s self-translation into Spanish, *Artes subversivas para cultivar jardines* [Subversive Arts for Growing Gardens], released in 2014, and an English-language translation by Philip Krummrich, *The Operation*, published in 2021. Themes such as collective memory, ecoactivism and artistic practice merge in a plot that centres on an unconventional group of individuals who collaborate to protest the destruction of the environment. When university student Leandro Balseiro is looking for a creative outlet for his political activism, his mother Clara suggests that they create a piece of land art that mimics her late father Old Leandro’s extravagant garden by planting flowers over an abandoned quarry, this illegal reclaiming of commodified land being

para cultivar jardines (Gijón: Hoja de Lata, 2014). Teresa Moure cit. in Montse Dopico, ‘O amor de mãe tópico tem uma leitura antipolítica’, *Praza Pública*, 13 October 2014 <<http://praza.gal/cultura/7994/lo-amor-de-mae-topico-tem-uma-leitura-antipolitica/>> [Accessed 10 March 2022].

⁹ Olga Castro, Sergi Mainer and Svetlana Page, ‘Introduction: Self-Translating, from Minorisation to Empowerment’ in *Self Translation and Power: Negotiating Identities in European Multilingual Contexts*, ed. by Olga Castro, Sergi Mainer and Svetlana Page (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1-22 (p. 11).

¹⁰ See Olga Castro, ‘Apropiación cultural en las traducciones de una obra (autotraducida): la proyección exterior de Herba Moura, de Teresa Moure’, in *Aproximaciones a la autotraducción*, ed. by Xosé Manuel Dasliva and Helena Tanqueiro (Vigo: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2011), pp. 23–44.

¹¹ See, for example Arcadi Poch and Daniela Poch, *Artivism* (London: Carpet Bombing Culture, 2018).

the artistic and political ‘intervention’ referred to in the title of the novel. They enlist the help of Candela, with whom Leandro is having an affair, and Sampaio, an Austrian pianist who is suffering from acute amnesia. Sampaio’s long-lost daughter Ingrid, a psychiatrist, unexpectedly arrives in Galicia looking for her father, and encourages the group to document the experience. The textual metanarrative is composed of the five protagonists’ diary entries leading up to the intervention.

Since Galician society has historically been largely agrarian, the rural sphere continues to be idealised as a significant and indeed stereotypical marker of its distinct collective identity. *A intervención* diverges from traditional bucolic narratives, serving as ‘a further example of how the rural landscape has been suffused with more complex social and political dynamics’ through attempts to reclaim the Galician attachment to the land as a site of artistic, ecofeminist revolution.¹² Conceived of by Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974, ecofeminism can be understood as feminist environmental consciousness which denounces the patriarchal commodification of women and the natural world, reclaiming the essentialist conflation of the land, the nation and the female body.¹³ Clara suggests staging the intervention in an abandoned quarry in the remote mountainous area of O Courel on Galicia’s eastern border with Castile as it is a symbolic representation of the natural environment being threatened by global capitalism:

non moi lonxe, a pouco máis de douscentos quilómetros, unha comarca enteira estaba a ser borrada do mapa. Transmítiunos coa voz quebrada que se trataba dun lugar dunha beleza emocionante, con fragas centenarias e ríos abrollando entre montañas magníficas e bravas

[not very far away, little more than two hundred kilometres away, an entire region was about to be wiped off the map. She told us in a broken voice that it was a place of incredible beauty, with centuries-old ravines and rivers running between wild, magnificent mountains] (AI, 143).

There have been numerous examples of environmental destruction provoked by capitalist exploitation in Galicia in recent years, with examples including mass deforestation, endemic wildfires and mining that have been met with widespread protests in Galician society. The textual focus on an intervention in an abandoned quarry in O Courel, an area negatively impacted by extractive industries, is therefore especially resonant.

Moure insists on the need to protect Galicia’s natural environment through a magical realist exposé of its effects on generations of Clara’s family, the Balseiros, whose attachment to the land perpetuates a typical Galician cliché: ‘os galegos, por moito que teñamos as casas a medio derrubar, chantamos á porta fermosísimas plantas nun xesto de tenrura fóra do razoábel’ [Galicians, as much as we have houses

¹² Maria Reimóndez, ‘The Rural, Urban and Global Spaces of Galician Culture’ in *A Companion to Galician Culture*, ed. by Helena Miguélez-Carballeira (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2014), pp. 157-174 (p. 162).

¹³ See Françoise d’Eaubonne, *Le féminisme ou la mort* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1974).

that are half falling down, grow really beautiful plants with care that goes far beyond the usual] (AI, 283). When in his youth Clara's late father Old Leandro lost his job, his mother had encouraged him to take up gardening because of the healing power of nature, evoking the ecofeminist conflation of femininity, maternity and the earth. This environmental potential is thrown into contrast with the weakness of humanity, which depends on nature for survival, 'as flores dispuxeron o goberno de todas as cousas' [flowers deposed the government of all things] (AI, 22), whilst the sheer force of nature in Old Leandro's garden is rumoured to have brought about climate change. Even as a talented gardener Old Leandro was not always able to fulfil the needs of his supernatural garden: 'as flores, todas as súas flores benqueridas, estaban dando gritos desesperados que el non podía ouvir polas limitacións inherentes aos sentidos da súa especie' [the flowers, all his darling flowers, were giving out desperate cries that he couldn't hear due to the limitations to the senses inherent to his species] (AI, 124). Both large- and small-scale acts of resistance challenge state oppression and the commodification of the land, often with elements of the fantastic genre:

As violetas pechábanse de golpe cando facía rolda a parella da garda civil e as dúas flores sempre contrapostas do hippeastrum retorcíanse nunha viraxe imposíbel até se miraren con tal de sinalar o paso do cura don Simón, que disque coqueteara coa Falanxe

[the violets closed suddenly when a couple of civil guard officers were doing their rounds and two always opposing flowers of the hippeastrum twisted in an impossible contortion until they could signal that the priest don Simón, who it was said was in league with the Falange, was passing by] (AI, 22).

When Clara's mother abandoned the family (this plot point contrasting with the feminist emphasis on the adult Clara's maternal instinct), her father set the house on fire in a fit of rage and left the child to fend for herself, with the garden serving for her as a source of sustenance, protection and emotional solace, vindicating the intrinsic relationship of the Galician community, and women, to the earth. She shelters in a bed of hydrangeas and feeds herself by sucking petals, in an ecofeminist image of Mother Earth: 'as flores facían oficio de nai e decidían con plena xustiza o goberno de todas as cousas' [the flowers did the job of a mother and decided with complete justice the government of everything] (AI, 127). Her deep-seated attachment to the environment as an adult stems from this early dependence on it in the face of parental rejection and imminent danger, showing the nurturing power of nature that has been compromised by human intervention: 'foi difícil de explicar no hospital, mais para curaren a nena tiñan que deixar entrar canda ela a árbore á que se abrazaba' [it was difficult to explain in the hospital, but to cure the child they had to bring in the tree that she was hugging] (AI, 129). These enmeshed themes of community, maternity and the natural world highlight Moure's concern for the protection of Galicia's natural spaces in the face of human intervention.

The place-based activism in the novel is implicitly linked to global social movements, evoking political dialogue with wider social movements. Arif Dirlik has

emphasised the role of social movements in redefining static conceptions of place, suggesting that they:

offer a means to linking places in larger wholes that are important not only for overcoming the parochialism that is the predicament of place-based politics but also to answer to the demands of sustenance within political economic spaces that of necessity transcend places.¹⁴

By instigating political activism in a space that has been commodified, the characters in Moure's novel and the text itself adhere to Michael Keith and Steve Pile's call for 'a commitment to the continual questioning of location, movement and direction – to challenging hegemonic constructions of place, of politics and of identity.'¹⁵ Their activism captures the spirit of avant-garde performance movements such as 'Reclaim the Streets', a series of unauthorised counter-culture street parties which began in London in 1995 and spread throughout the world. Evoking Moure's implicit criticism of the conservatism of Galician institutions, Candela and Leandro break into the University of Santiago de Compostela, cover the carpet in soil and write in Galician 'a terra tamén é arte' [the land is also art] (AI, 131), harking back to the environmental creations of artist couple Cristo and Jeanne-Claude.¹⁶ Even so, Candela insists on her autonomy as a woman activist, reflecting Moure's feminist activism: '[Candela] detestaría que a presentase así, como alguén secundario, alguén que incita outro á acción mentres se mantén nas marxes' [Candela hated being introduced like that, as someone secondary, someone who incites someone else into action while remaining on the margins] (AI, 47). Moure herself rebelled against the subjugation of Galician culture by carrying out small-scale activism. When the conservative former Galician Minister for Culture Roberto Varela made the inflammatory comment, 'a cultura galega limita' [Galician culture is limiting], the writer and some friends painted his words on windmills, seeking to challenge stereotypes of Galician insularity.¹⁷ A group of Galician writers signed a petition demanding the politician's resignation for committing 'unha descualificación da nosa mesma identidade' [a denouncement of our very identity].¹⁸

Moure has commented that the characters' cathartic process of introspection which is provoked by their activism can be considered a metaphorical revision of the history of Galicia, a key means of contesting centuries of Spain's annihilation of non-

¹⁴ Arif Dirlik, 'Globalization, Indigenism, Social Movements, and the Politics of Place', *Localities*, 1 (2011), 47-90 (p. 51).

¹⁵ Michael Keith and Steve Pile, *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 217.

¹⁶ See Burt Chernow, *Cristo and Jeanne-Claude: A Biography* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Roberto Varela cit. in Isabel Bugallal, 'La cultura gallega está bien pero limita, prefiero la cultura hecha en Galicia', *Faro de Vigo*, 23 April 2009 <<http://www.farodevigo.es/galicia/2009/04/23/cultura-gallega-limita-prefiero-cultura-hecha-galicia/319421.html? pCom=2#EnlaceComentarios>> [Accessed 12 October 2019].

¹⁸ 'Once autores rexeitan a "análise negativa da cultura galega" de Varela', *La Voz de Galicia*, 25 January 2010 <http://www.lavozdeg Galicia.es/ocioycultura/2010/01/26/0003_8252185.htm> [Accessed 10 March 2022].

Castilian cultures.¹⁹ As Neil Anderson argues, ‘through the processes of creative forgetting, family re-membling, and artistic maternity, Clara performs a political intervention by inventing a home that is less hierarchical, less rigid in its roles, and more conducive to happiness than the lost ‘paradise’ of her infancy’.²⁰ As a woman leading the project outwith institutional culture, Clara also reaffirms Galician women’s creativity beyond the patriarchal confines of institutions, exposing how, as Linda Nochlin has famously claimed, ‘the total situation of art making, both in terms of the development of the art maker and in the nature and quality of the work of art itself, occur in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure, and are mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions.’²¹ Planning the intervention becomes a means for her to come to terms with her turbulent past, emphasising the potential of an ecofeminist political activism for working through the collective trauma relating to Galicia’s subjugation and ‘poñer orde na memoria colectiva’ [put collective memory in order] (AI, 21). The intervention is rooted in the customs and traditions of the local community, in defiance of the influence of globalisation. The instigators ridicule Candela’s husband’s insistence that the project should receive institutional recognition, ‘*Merchandising. Podedes vender de todo*’ [Merchandising. You can sell everything] (AI, 254), for he is perpetuating the very capitalist values they seek to overhaul, and indeed Candela’s affair with Leandro undermines the heteropatriarchal values he represents. By adopting the method of laying floral carpets that is typical of the religious celebration of Corpus Christi in many Galician towns, the activists entrench their activism in the local area, as Leandro insists ‘non fomos quen de rachar coas nosas ataduras’ (AI, 80) [we haven’t broken our ties]. He mounts Celtic sculptures of torque, a totem of a wolf’s head and a yew tree which harks back to the purity of Galicia’s disputed Celtic past, the pre-industrial period when culture was intrinsically linked to nature: ‘esas formas conéctannos co pasado remoto e coas culturas que algún día habitaron este territorio antes de o colonizaren os romanos e de nos converteren en parte do occidente industrial’ [these shapes connect us with the remote past and with the cultures which once inhabited this land before it was colonised by the Romans and they converted us into part of the industrial West] (AI, 247). They carry out the intervention between the summer solstice and the Galician festival of San Xoán, in keeping with local Celtic and Catholic traditions.

One of the participants is Austrian pianist Daniel Sampaio, who is suffering from acute amnesia having been knocked down whilst walking the iconic Camiño de Santiago [Way of St James] pilgrimage. Through collaborating to recover the Galician

¹⁹ Teresa Moure cit. in ‘Teresa Moure ‘Os prexuízos contra o galego aumentan por mor da ineptia dos gobernantes’’, *La Opinión Coruña*, 23 May 2010
<<http://www.laopinioncoruna.es/cultura/2010/05/23/teresa-moure-prexuijos-o-galego-aumentan-mor-da-ineptia-gobernantes/387141.html>> [Accessed 10 March 2022].

²⁰ Anderson, ‘A Critical Geography of Home: Teresa Moure’s *A intervención*’, *Modern Languages Open* (2016), DOI: <http://doi.org/10.3828/ml.o.v0i0.111>

²¹ Linda Nochlin, ‘Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?’ in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* ed. by Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 229-233 (p. 232).

landscape, Sampaio regains his lost memories of a childhood spent in Galicia during the civil war when his family were forced to flee to Austria. His flashbacks to the lavish cultural scene he has left behind in Vienna, representative of capitalist spoils, are superimposed with the old town of Santiago de Compostela and its university history department, the Ortigueira, Moeche and Pardiñas folk festivals, the night of San Xoán and most significantly, the rural setting of O Courel. The project, rooted in the earth and defined by a greater purpose, is portrayed as more 'authentic' and less superficial than the milieu of the European high arts. In an allusion to Moure's reintegrationist ideology and an early indication of his suspected Galician ancestry, Sampaio's surname is Portuguese, a combination of São and Paulo [Saint Paul] - the Apostle who converted to Christianity. Sampaio too has undergone a process of conversion as a former benefactor of capitalist excess in Viennese high society who has become enlightened by eco-activism in rural Galicia. The organic means of carrying out the intervention stands as a rejection of the negative influence of globalisation and digital technology:

Quizais este obxectivo non sería de todo estraño en Berlín ou en Nova York mais, fóra das grandes urbes e dos seus circuitos bohemios, era case impensábel que ninguén cambiase a súa vida auténtica para consagrarse a un proxecto delirante, e moito menos que pretendesen facelo sen un patrocinador ou unhas canales de comunicación axeitadas e, por riba, na clandestinidade

[perhaps this objective wouldn't be altogether out of place in Berlin or in New York, but outside of the big cities and their bohemian scenes, it was almost unthinkable for someone to transform their authentic life to throw themselves into to a crazy project, and much less to try to do it without an investor or some appropriate communication channels and above all, in secret] (AI, 204-205).

Clara and Candela bond over their desire to ingest compost, with the symbolic consumption of organic matter an ecofeminist act that renders them quite literally at one with the earth, but conversely reinforces patriarchal, colonial stereotypes associating woman, and Galicians, with nature. The group are helped by a young man Tomé, who unlike so many of Galicia's rural youth has not moved away to find employment opportunities, and retains the traditional attachment to the land that is integral to Moure's vision for Galicia: 'tan apegado á terra coma nós' [as tied to the land as us] (AI, 178). This grass-roots approach to inciting the local community into action corresponds to Moure's insistence on locally-driven resistance: 'Agora estaban rexenerando e remodelando artisticamente o terreo: a súa terra recuperaba esa estima colectiva' [now they were regenerating and artistically remodelling the terrain: their land was recuperating that collective esteem] (AI, 245). Their aim to produce radical art embedded in the local community is envisaged as provocative resistance to the establishment: 'debía denunciar a inepcia dos gobernantes, enraizarse no país, tirar do que é do seu, debía conmoer as consciencias durmidas e dispoñelas á actuación, ademais de alertalas sobre os problemas reais do tempo que nos tocou vivir' [it had to

denounce the ineptitude of governments, be rooted in the country, take back what belongs to it, it had to mobilise sleeping consciousness and prepare them for action, as well as alert them to the real problems of our times] (AI, 66). When Sampaio passes away towards the end of the novel, his ashes are scattered over the quarry garden, marking the climax of the text, as he is bound to both the artistic movement and the Galician land from which he came. The Balseiro line of horticultural artists will be continued, ensuring that the struggle to preserve Galicia's natural spaces and contest state capitalist exploitation continues, as the last line of the text reveals that Candela is pregnant with Leandro's child, conceived during the intervention.

Yet although the participants in the intervention break the law, setting out to challenge the environmental negligence of the Spanish state, their artistic social disturbance ultimately fails. Succumbing to a fate that might recall Clara's father's garden project, they gain recognition for their cause, but ultimately don't succeed in what they set out to achieve. The project's outcome arguably destabilises its utopian mission and diminishes its ideological resonance, though it can also be read in terms of Jack Halberstam's theorisation of failure as a 'queer art' - itself a mode of resistance as it 'allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development'.²² In an implicit allusion to the Spanish trope of Quixotic madness, the group escapes prosecution due to a plea of insanity proven by their diary entries, thereby destabilising the strong arm of authority.

Whilst it is cause for celebration that Moure's fictional account of environmental activism is circulating in translation beyond Galicia's borders, the limits of the translation and marketing processes with regard to the sensitive exportation of the minority culture should not be overlooked. The tensions surrounding creative resistance in this novel by one of Galicia's most well-known women writers reflect the complex standpoint of Galician-language writers, and indeed women writers, in the negotiation of their contested history and identity. Though *A intervención* admittedly falls into certain traps of cultural essentialism, reinforcing the age-old associations between Galicia, woman and nature, Moure proactively draws on and engages with global feminist, environmental, political and aesthetic movements through a textual focus on community-based ecofeminist activism in rural Galicia. This novel serves as just one example to demonstrate the essential role of Galician women cultural producers in resisting heteropatriarchal global and state capitalism to assert a collective identity that is decolonial and feminist as well as environmentally conscious. For even if they must negotiate market pressures and write against the confines of linguistic and gender bias, women writing in Galician in the twenty-first century continue to prove that they are a force to be reckoned with, like countless others, greater- or lesser-known, before them.

²² Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2011), p. 3.

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