

## Preface translation as a feminist and inclusive language usage action

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De la paratraduction  
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Article abstract

This paper focuses on the translation of a collection of seventeen prefaces for different editions of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Chatterjee 2008/2020, translated by Nicolella, Oliveira *et al.*). The translation project is part of a collective and voluntary translation agreement made between the State University of Campinas, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and an NGO (Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde) to translate and adapt to Brazilian Portuguese the widely known book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective 2011). Two points were discussed more thoroughly: first, the importance of paratexts (Genette 1987/1997) and paratranslation, especially the intersemiotic interpretation of the text and the image of the book cover (Yuste Frías 2022; 2021; 2011); and second, inclusive language use (Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul 2014), considering that the masculine form is the standard in Portuguese while the translation project concerns a feminist book (Davis 2007). We present four examples of translations made by students with the support of CAT tools and revised considering a more inclusive language usage. In the final remarks, we will discuss that the translation project provided the integration between translation practice and theoretical discussions underlying this practice. We will also point out some challenges and discussions still ongoing in Brazil.

# Preface translation as a feminist and inclusive language usage action

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## RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cet article est de présenter le projet de traduction de dix-sept préfaces créées lors de la publication des différentes éditions du livre *Our Bodies Ourselves* (Chatterjee 2008/2020, traduit par Nicolella, Oliveira *et al.*). Ce projet s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'accord de traduction collective et volontaire mis en place par l'Université de Campinas, l'Université Fédérale de Rio de Janeiro et une ONG (*Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde*) pour traduire et adapter ce très célèbre ouvrage en portugais brésilien. Deux points sont discutés plus en détail: le premier est l'importance des paratextes (Genette 1987/1997) et de la paratraduction, notamment l'interprétation intersémiotique de l'image et du texte de la couverture du livre (Yuste Frías 2022; 2021; 2011). Le second est l'usage du langage inclusif (Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul 2014), le masculin étant jusqu'alors la norme de concordance standard en portugais, alors que le projet de traduction porte sur un livre féministe (Davis 2007). Nous présentons quatre exemples de traductions réalisées par des étudiants à l'aide de logiciels puis révisées, sur la base d'un langage plus inclusif. En conclusion, nous soulignerons également la façon dont ce projet de traduction a permis d'articuler la pratique aux discussions théoriques qui la sous-tendent. Ce faisant, nous mettons en lumière un certain nombre de discussions et de défis actuels au Brésil.

## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the translation of a collection of seventeen prefaces for different editions of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Chatterjee 2008/2020, translated by Nicolella, Oliveira *et al.*). The translation project is part of a collective and voluntary translation agreement made between the State University of Campinas, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and an NGO (*Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde*) to translate and adapt to Brazilian Portuguese the widely known book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective 2011). Two points were discussed more thoroughly: first, the importance of paratexts (Genette 1987/1997) and paratranslation, especially the intersemiotic interpretation of the text and the image of the book cover (Yuste Frías 2022; 2021; 2011); and second, inclusive language use (Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul 2014), considering that the masculine form is the standard in Portuguese while the translation project concerns a feminist book (Davis 2007). We present four examples of translations made by students with the support of CAT tools and revised considering a more inclusive language usage. In the final remarks, we will discuss that the translation project provided the integration between translation practice and theoretical discussions underlying this practice. We will also point out some challenges and discussions still ongoing in Brazil.

## RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar el proyecto de traducción de diecisiete prefacios para diferentes ediciones del libro *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Chatterjee 2008/2020, traducido por Nicolella, Oliveira *et al.*). El proyecto forma parte de un acuerdo de traducción colec-

tivo y voluntario entre la Universidad Estatal de Campinas, la Universidad Federal de Río de Janeiro y una ONG (*Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde*) para traducir y adaptar al portugués brasileño el muy conocido libro *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective 2011). Se discuten más a fondo dos puntos: en primer lugar, la importancia de los paratextos (Genette 1987/1997) y de la paratraducción, especialmente de la interpretación intersemiótica del texto y de la imagen de la portada (Yuste Frías 2022; 2021; 2011); y en segundo lugar, el uso del lenguaje inclusivo (Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul 2014), teniendo en cuenta que el masculino es el estándar en portugués, y que el proyecto de traducción consiste en traducir a un libro feminista (Davis 2007). Se presentan cuatro ejemplos de la traducción realizada por estudiantes con el apoyo de programas informáticos y revisadas considerando un uso de lenguaje más inclusivo. En los comentarios finales, discutiremos sobre cómo el proyecto de traducción proporcionó la integración entre la práctica y las discusiones teóricas que subyacen a esta práctica. También señalaremos algunos desafíos y discusiones que aún están en curso en Brasil.

#### MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVE

Our Bodies Ourselves, prefáce, traduction féministe, paratraduction, langage inclusif  
Our Bodies Ourselves, preface, feminist translation, paratranslation, inclusive language  
Our Bodies Ourselves, prefacio, traducción feminista, paratraducción, lenguaje inclusivo

Women Unite  
Our Bodies Ourselves: A book by and for women  
(Book cover text, United States 1973)  
(Chatterjee 2008/2020: 14)

Because making the feminine visible in language means  
making women seen and heard in the real world.  
Which is what feminism is all about.  
(Lotbinière-Harwood 1989: 9)

### 1. Some thoughts about prefaces

Paratexts have increasingly become spaces of visibility for translators, where they externalise their reflections on translation and usually include studies on the author, the text and the translation process. Paratexts often demonstrate the translator's theoretical and practical vision of translation and have become a study topic in Translation Studies, in general, and in Feminist Translation Studies, in particular. The prefaces of the translated books, for example, were important spaces for the Canadian feminist movement, in which feminist translators present intervention and manipulation strategies (Godard 1990). Lotbinière-Harwood (1989), used as an epigraph of this work, when translating *Lettres d'une autre*,<sup>1</sup> by Lise Gauvin, explains in the preface that she uses strategies to make the feminine visible in the language.

Avant-propos, introduction, note, preamble, presentation, prologue and preface are some of the names given to the text before the translated text. Genette uses the term preface because it is the most commonly employed in France (also in Brazil) "to designate every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it" (1987/1997: 161, translated by Lewin). According to Genette, "many

nuances distinguish one term from another, especially when two or more introductory texts appear together” (1987/1997: 161). The author evokes Derrida’s distinction between introductions and prefaces in Hegel’s book:

The preface must be distinguished from the introduction. They do not have the same function, nor even the same dignity, in Hegel’s eyes, even though the problem they raise (in their relation to the philosophical corpus of exposition) is analogous. “The Introduction (*Einleitung*) has a more systematic, less historical, less circumstantial link with the logic of the book. It is unique; it deals with general and essential architectonic problems; it presents the general concept in its division and in its self-differentiation. On the other hand, the Prefaces are multiplied from edition to edition and take into account more empirical historicity; they obey an occasional necessity.” (Derrida 1972/1981, translated by Johnson, cited by Genette 1987/1997: 161, translated by Lewin)

Since the best-known preface in the area (Benjamin’s *The Task of the Translator*, which introduces the translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens*) (1923/2000), paratexts have become increasingly important to the theoretical discussions in Translation Studies. Recently, the inclusion of prefaces in new translations and the growing research on paratexts show the subject’s relevance to the field. In *Proposta de parâmetros para análise de paratextos de livros traduzidos* [*Parameters proposal for the analysis of paratexts in translated books*], Carneiro (2015) states that between 1999 and 2015, there was an increase in academic interest in empirical research on paratexts of translated books. This led to the development of her work, which focuses on French works translated in Brazil during the second half of the twentieth century. The author proposes seven parameters for analysing paratextual elements that distinguish the translated book from the original book. Some of these parameters are the position of the translator’s name (on the front cover or elsewhere) and the presence of a preface or postface by the translator.

Another type of publication that has increased in recent years are books composed of collections of prefaces. These collections bring together paratexts published in different situations, often expressing this in the title, such as *Livro dos prefácios* [*Book of Prefaces*],<sup>2</sup> which contain prefaces originally written by Holanda for a wide variety of books. The book cover presented it as “true essays by one of the most important authors in the study of Brazilian culture.” Another example of a collection of paratexts is the book *The Translator’s Word: Reflections on Translation by Brazilian Translators*,<sup>3</sup> which, as the title suggests, assembles thoughts by Brazilian authors who have translated, such as Clarice Lispector and João Ubaldo Ribeiro, as well as translation scholars and poets, such as Haroldo de Campos and Paulo Henriques Britto. As Vieira states in the introduction to the book, the compilation contributes to translation historiography and “brings Brazil’s ever valuable contribution on a par with other selections published abroad but which prioritize translators’ thinking enshrined in mainstream cultures” (Vieira 2018: 34).

When Yuste Frías mentions the prefaces, he insists on the irrefutable fact that the prefaces constitute the paratranslations of the translations, that is, their thresholds:

Consequently, only in the liminal space of the preface (whether authorial, editorial, or allograph, by the way) can one claim that translation writing is not “like a paratext” – everything is a paratext. But the paratranslative text of the translator, the editor, or a third person who edited the authorial, editorial, or allograph preface, respectively, of

a translation, is not the translation, properly speaking, but always the threshold of the translation, that is to say, its paratranslation. (Yuste Frías 2022: 48, our translation)

Based on the above, this paper focuses on a collection of prefaces for different editions of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.<sup>4</sup> The motivation for choosing this particular publication arose from the fact that students from our university (State University of Campinas) were participating in a collective and voluntary translation collaboration with another Brazilian university (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and the *Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde*, a Brazilian NGO, to translate and adapt the widely known book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (henceforth, OBOS)<sup>5</sup> into Brazilian Portuguese.

In Genette's classification, the collection is both an epitext of OBOS and a grouping of peritexts of other translations, forming a book that functions independently from all the others in which the prefaces were originally published. As an epitext-book, it increases the visibility of previous OBOS translations and helps draw attention to our translation due to be published in 2023 under the title *Nossos Corpos por Nós Mesmas*<sup>6</sup> [literally, *Our Bodies for Ourselves*]. It is worth noting that the prefaces in the source text (Chatterjee 2008/2020) are themselves translations, which are presented as a book of prefaces. Moreover, we have included in the Brazilian Portuguese translation of the source text an introduction, our own preface and three additional prefaces that were not in the English collection (namely, Hebrew, Bengali and Nepali). Consequently, the Brazilian translation is another book, which is different from the "original"<sup>7</sup> not only because it is a translation but because it contains additional texts and has a distinct objective.

In the next section, we will present the collection and the translation process, including some considerations on paratranslation (Yuste Frías 2022). Then, we will discuss some thoughts on translation choices derived from reflections on translating feminism. In the classroom, the methodology employed for the translation was the use of the *Smartcat* program, in its free version, powered by a *Google Translator* machine translation engine, and the revision tools of *Microsoft Word*. The use of these tools fostered debates about what is expected from a translation which aims to defend the use of inclusive language in translation in comparison to the solutions given by machine translation, as will be illustrated with the examples in Section 3. Finally, in the closing remarks, we will point out some challenges and still ongoing discussions in Brazil.

## 2. Translation process and paratranslation

The project objective was to develop undergraduate students' skills and abilities by translating different types of texts, learning how to use CAT tools, reviewing and proofreading their classmates' translations and preparing the final version for actual publication. Since the text was translated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching methodology was adapted so that the translation could be discussed entirely online. We used *Google Meet* (with sessions recorded and made available afterward), reference materials made available via *Google Classroom* and other communication tools such as e-mail and *WhatsApp* (where we kept a class group). Regarding translation teaching, we followed a socioconstructivist, student-centered, and project-based approach (as proposed by Kiraly 2000; 2005; 2012), in which students actively

participate, have more autonomy and exchange knowledge while working with authentic translation tasks.

The preface translation project began with the reading of the collection so each student could select which preface they would like to translate and which one they would like to revise/proofread. Before and during the translation, we discussed the process based on intratextual and extratextual aspects to be analysed, such as content, style, communicative intention, interlocutor, medium in which the translations would be published as well as reasons and objectives that justified them. We also addressed studies defending the role of the translator as a constructor of meaning and as an agent responsible, both ethically and politically, for their translations (Baker 2013; Zaidan and Baker 2019). Two points were discussed more thoroughly: the issue of paratexts and paratranslation (Genette 1987/1997; Yuste Frías 2011; 2021; 2022) and the use of inclusive language (Bringas López, Castro *et al.* 2012; Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul 2014),<sup>8</sup> considering that the translation project concerns a feminist book. As Davis states about feminism in OBOS,

Instead of being preoccupied with feminist history as a single story, multiple and diverse accounts of feminism in different places and at other points in time can be generated. It becomes possible to think about how feminism travels—that is, how feminist knowledge and knowledge practices move from place to place and are “translated” in different cultural locations. And finally, we can consider how transnational feminist encounters emerge within a context of globally structured hierarchies of power and what this means for feminist encounters across lines of difference. (Davis 2007: 10)

Published as prefaces to the respective language editions of OBOS, each text reflects the idiosyncrasies of the translation projects while highlighting what unites these different groups of women in different parts of the world—concern for women’s health and well-being, knowledge of their own bodies and the challenges to achieve fundamental rights, including reproductive, labour and environmental rights. In addition, our English to Brazilian Portuguese translation elicited discussions about indirect translation and the use of English as a lingua franca. Considering our context, we proposed adding a collaboratively written preface to the collection to present the theoretical reflections arising from the translation experience. We discussed how prefaces are a space to explain the translation choices and to direct the reader to aspects deemed necessary at the time of translation. The writing took place during meetings between students using *Google Meet* and simultaneous editing in *Google Docs*. As discussed in the next section, it provided the integration between translation practice and theoretical discussions underlying this practice.

### 2.1. Paratranslation

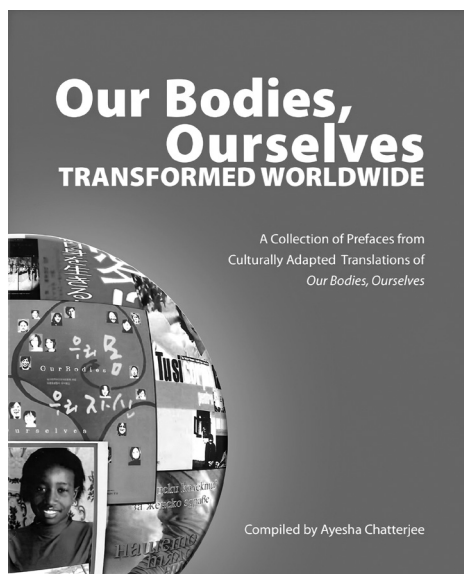
In this paper, we adopt the term *paratranslation* (*paratraducción*), whose application and history are presented in Yuste Frías (2022), to make some considerations regarding the translation of the paratexts in the published collection of prefaces of multiple translations of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Chatterjee 2008/2020, translated by Alice Nicolella, Ana Oliveira *et al.*)<sup>9</sup>. As proposed by the research group *Traducción & Paratraducción* (University of Vigo), the study of paratextual material in the translation process begins with the source text (Yuste Frías 2022: 40-41). Thus, before



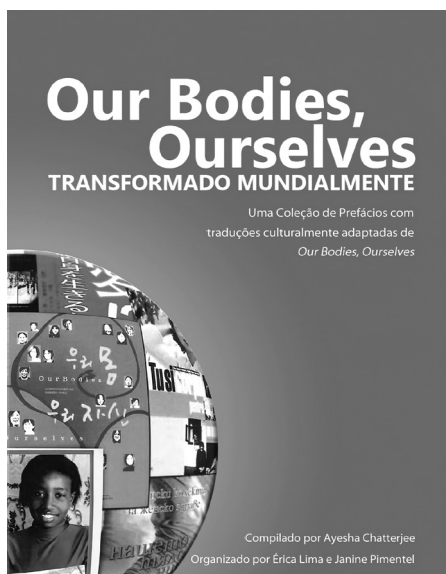
starting the translation, we discussed and analysed the images representing women from several countries that appear on the cover of the collection, as presented below.

FIGURE 1 AND FIGURE 2<sup>10</sup>

**English Cover**



**Portuguese Cover**



The globe represented on various covers of OBOS translations conveys the plurality and, at the same time, the union of different initiatives aimed at bringing reliable information to women worldwide over more than fifty years. The choice of images brings forth ideological, social, cultural and political issues, revealing that feminism presents itself even before the translated books are opened. Therefore, to interpret the images, the photos or the lack thereof, one must not only consider the time and culture but also think about the symbolism of the colours, the typographical choices and other characteristics. As Yuste Frías states, “the different and varied verbal, verbal-iconic and paratextual productions that make up the prefaces always create a space of paratranslation suitable for the translation of certain identities” (Yuste Frías 2021, our translation).

Before starting the translation, we discussed the relationship between the choice of the book cover, cultural issues and women’s representations. We also discussed the extent to which the covers resemble the American cover and the transformation of the images of the American edition itself. For example, the Farsi translation by the University of Maryland practically reproduced the 2011 English book cover.<sup>11</sup>

The most visible covers in the collection (Figures 1 and 2) are those for Armenia, Bulgaria, Japan, Romania, Senegal and South Korea. On the cover of the Senegalese edition (2004), the young women are black, while on the cover of the Romanian edition (2002), there are only white women of various ages. On the Korean edition (2005), we have many small faces in small size and, unlike the other covers, the title appears in English (in white) and Korean (in yellow). The cover of the Bulgarian edition contains a female silhouette in shades of blue. The Japanese edition (1988) is the

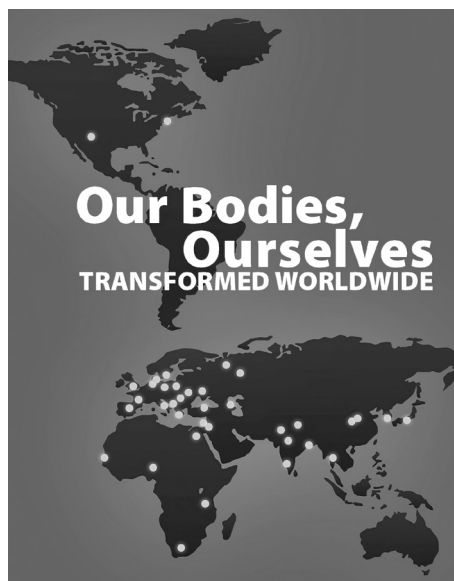
only version that does not present a female figure on the cover and is in vibrant colours, predominantly red.

In addition to the image, the title of the original text is: “Our Bodies, Ourselves Transformed Worldwide: A Collection of Prefaces from Culturally Adapted Translations of Our Bodies, Ourselves and, at the bottom, Compiled by Ayesha Chatterjee” (2008). In the Brazilian edition, we added: “Organized by Érica Lima and Janine Pimentel” (Chatterjee 2008/2020). First, we tried to include the names of all the translators, but we chose to remove them because the front cover became too busy and difficult to read. We also added a title page with the information of the original and the ISBN, a page with the names of the seventeen participants (organisers, translators, supervisors) and a table of contents.

On our back cover, in addition to the translated text, we included Brazil’s yellow dot on the map, indicating our forthcoming Brazilian translation of OBOS in the world:

FIGURE 3 AND FIGURE 4<sup>12</sup>

English Back Cover



Portuguese Back Cover



The Brazilian version also includes an introduction in which the organisers talk about the importance of the project, contextualising the translation of the collection concerning the entire OBOS translation and adaptation project. In this introduction, we explain why we added three prefaces and why we changed their order: the collection opens with a Portuguese preface, followed by the forewords to the two English versions, originally published at the end of the original collection. Then, the Hebrew, Bengali and Nepali prefaces, published after the collection edition, were added, followed by the remaining fourteen prefaces initially published in the English version, in descending order (from 2011 to 1988).

Another issue we discussed concerning paratranslation is the choice of title for the different translations. In various languages, the titles have changed, for example,



the Israeli edition, translated as *Women and Their Bodies* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 21). This title implies that someone else is speaking on behalf of women rather than the women themselves talking about their bodies. According to the English edition preface, *Women and Their Bodies* had already been used before being changed to *Women and Our Bodies* and, finally, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 15). The pronoun *their* lends an interpretation that is quite different from the one lent by *our* in the title. The plural first-person pronoun appears in the whole book, as in the title for Nepal, literally translated as *Our Body is Ours* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 36), or in the Armenian title, literally translated as *Our Body and We* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 59).

The English translation of the title in the preface for the Bangladeshi edition is *The Story of Our Lives* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 34). The term *lives* is also used in the Polish translation, *Our Bodies* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 53), in the Latin American edition *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 74). In the Indian edition, done by the Tibetan Nuns Project, the title is *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 48). The word *health* also appears in the Senegalese edition, *Our Bodies, Our Health* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 50). The Romanian edition in addition to the main title, has a subtitle: *Our Bodies, Ourselves for the New Century: A Book By and For Women* (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 56), which takes the sub-title from the 1973 English edition. The titles are similar to the proper names of the books and reflect the moment they were translated. In addition, they show the focus given in each country, which justifies the choice of words such as “lives,” “health,” “mind,” “new century” and the inclusion of prepositions (*for, by*). In the Brazilian translation, we chose *Nossos Corpos por Nós Mesmas* to show that we are agents of our actions. Because of that idea, we opted to include the preposition *por* (*Our Bodies for Ourselves*).

The Brazilian Portuguese translators gave their collective preface a title that clarified its function: *Our Bodies, Ourselves: Translators' Foreword* (or “A preface to introduce our translations”). As previously mentioned, besides reading all the prefaces in the collection, the students also analysed the book covers that accompany each preface. In their words:

When comparing the covers, we notice that all of them have particularities that refer to the countries where they are from, either through photos that depict them in that country or through illustrations and shapes that refer to the female body or the specific country where they were published. Considering that each image brings a representation of each country and the way women are perceived according to each culture, we realise that the interpretation arising from the translation starts not only from the text but also from the reinterpretation of the imagery aspect in the covers. (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 10, preface by the students/translators<sup>13</sup>).

According to the translators, writing the preface allowed them to describe their translation experience and gave way to discussions about what kind of language should be used to encourage critical thinking about the issues presented in these prefaces. As a result, the female students/translators developed greater awareness about using inclusive language, paying particular attention to avoiding using the masculine gender as a standard and rethinking terms that show sexist undertones.

Our collection also added another paratext, one translator's note in each preface, to show the multiplicity of voices and give more visibility to the name of each translator. To this end, we included the following note in all prefaces:

This preface, included in the adaptation of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and published in (YEAR), was originally written in (SOURCE LANGUAGE) and translated into English by (TRANSLATOR'S NAME). Available at: (LINK TO THE PREFACE IN ENGLISH). Translated from English to Portuguese by (TRANSLATOR'S NAME).

A preface is a place where translators have a voice and the students/translators preface combines all of them, showing a connection between the original languages in which each one was written. There is also a time and space intersection since the story told in each preface over decades blends with our story about our prefaces' translation in pandemic times. The cover images stitching into a single image of a globe also show this intertwining—what unites us and sets us apart from women elsewhere in the world. Each cover incorporates each preface, which is different from merely illustrating the preface.

Bringing to mind Derrida's thinking about the construction of meaning, we can say that our translation of the preface collection is the same, but also a deferred one. Still in line with Derrida, we can say that translations are deferred and postponed (referring to the idea of *différance*) and, at the same time, an addition and a substitution (referring to the concept of *supplement*). According to Derrida,

[T]here have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the "real" supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. (Derrida 1967/1974: 158-59, translated by Spivak).

As Johnson states in the preface to her translation of Derrida's *Dissemination*, "[t]he logic of the supplement wrenches apart the neatness of the metaphysical binary oppositions. Instead of 'A is opposed to B,' we have 'B is both added to A and replaces A.'" (Johnson 1981: xiii). Therefore, for the construction of meaning in our translation, we must consider the play of signifiers, the supplement and the *différance*, weaving the threads of the text, which will be redone in each reading. In creating our text, we considered the book's feminist history and the importance of inclusive language for women's visibility, as we will see in the next section.

### 3. Feminism and inclusive language

Since its release in the 1970s, OBOS has addressed women's right to knowledge about their bodies, to choose whether to use contraceptive methods or not and whether to choose motherhood or not. The 1973 book cover has an image of women holding a poster with the words "Women Unite," and underneath it, next to the title, the motto: *A book by and for women* (which has been used in this paper's epigraph). Over its 50-plus-year history, OBOS has always addressed women's social demands and the defense of women's rights. The fact that it has always been up-to-date and relevant for its time has raised worldwide interest, since 1988, in translating it. Initially, one-off actions, led by a group of white middle-class women, started to encompass feminism more broadly, including women from different classes, races and places.

The last decades have also brought some changes to women's status in Brazil. Feminist studies developed by different authors on different fronts, such as Gonzalez (2020), Ribeiro (2018) and Hollanda (2019), have gained more prominence and have reached a growing audience. In 2006, the Brazilian Congress passed the Maria da Penha Act to curb acts of domestic violence against women.<sup>14</sup> However, we are

still far from the ideal behind that piece of legislation: the massive feminicide rates, the wide gender pay gap and the scant representation of women across Brazilian government positions indicate that we still lag significantly behind when it comes to gender equality. This situation leads to the somewhat obvious conclusion that there is no point in reducing the issue of women's marginalisation purely to linguistic controversies. Despite this, it cannot be ignored that male-centered language use is often linked to a relationship between power and oppression. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the role that language plays in establishing power relations and avoiding the use of traditionally sexist language is a form of inclusion.

Although there are laws concerning the use of the feminine form in the designation of public positions (Law 2.749/1956) and the use of inclusive language for jobs in the Brazilian public administration, there is still a lot of resistance and a preference for the masculine generalisation. During her term in office, President Dilma Rousseff enacted Law 12.605/2012, which establishes that diplomas and certificates must designate the profession and/or degree in the gender inflection corresponding to the person graduating.<sup>15</sup> Even with all these laws, the use of the term **Presidenta** (the female term for President) rather than **Presidente** (the most used form, even when referring to a woman) at the time Rousseff was in office always sparked a debate, including in the mainstream media and continues to be criticised in some fields, mainly by right-wing groups and the current President himself.<sup>16</sup>

Another topic often discussed in relation to Romance languages is the robust gender marking for articles, nouns, pronouns and adjectives, in which the masculine is seen as the standard while the feminine is the subordinate. If we have, for example, a group of fifteen female translators and only one male translator, the plural form in standard language when referring to the group would be **os tradutores** (the masculine plural form of the word in Brazilian Portuguese for translator). As Coady states,

An understanding of not just why sexism in language exists but how it exists allows us to deconstruct arguments against feminist linguistic reforms more easily. It allows us to argue that institutions such as the Académie française are not just sexist but that their arguments are linguistically unsound (Coady 2018: 287).<sup>17</sup>

To minimise the presence of masculine forms in language, we sought to adopt a nonsexist and inclusive language (Bringas López, Castro *et al.* 2012; Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul 2014).<sup>18</sup> We used some strategies to avoid the standard masculine predominance and demonstrate the feminine in linguistic constructions in the Brazilian Portuguese translation. These strategies, adopted in the OBOS translation, were also replicated in the translation of the collection, ensuring linguistic and ideological consistency, as well as indicating that we are aware of the masculine power in the language—or, in the Derridian sense, that phallocentrism is structural—and that translators intervened in the translation to address this issue. Henitiuk (1999) goes beyond the idea that man is at the centre and develops the conception of *phallogtranslation*, defined as “an inadequate interpreter of women's writing, given an observable reliance on ingrained phallogcentric assumptions” (1999: 473), that is, phallogtranslation places the male as the centre and erases possible feminist readings of a text.

### 3.1. Examples

During the translation process, we had several discussions in class about the importance of inclusive language usage. As previously mentioned, the students translated the collection using *Smartcat* and *Google Translate*. It could be observed that machine translation (MT) still does not present solutions that consider gender issues and, in addition, the Portuguese translation is generally based on European Portuguese. The examples below illustrate that, as Monti states, “MT systems still suffer from biases in the areas of grammatical and social gender” (2020: 466).

In addition to the English original and the students’ translation into Brazilian Portuguese, we also present the MT version for comparison purposes. The use of a *CAT tool* was necessary for project management purposes (as there were multiple files as well as several translators and reviewers involved, all working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and helped with standardisation by using a shared glossary. We elected the free version of *Smartcat* powered by *Google Translate* machine translation engine as the CAT tool of choice for the actual translation process as students were already familiar with it and *Microsoft Word* revision tools for the proofreading process. The automatic translation showed solutions that consider the predominance of the male forms allegedly seen as “neutral” in Portuguese, and elicited interesting debates on what is expected of a translation with the explicit objective of defending women’s right to information on health, reproduction, contraception and sex.

The first example comes from the Polish preface to *Our Bodies, Our lives*. The preface highlights that there were no social movements to improve healthcare or organisations and groups to support women at the time of writing (2004). Therefore, the book could fill this gap and inspire change, as well as promote the circulation of information and the exchange of experiences. Some examples of the use of inclusive language in this preface are as follows:

- 1) Our Polish edition arrives at the most appropriate time. The reform of our health care seems not to serve the population well. Not only **patients** but also **medical professionals** are **disoriented and confused** about the rules of the new system. Moreover, the market economy brought about new threats. Powerful pharmaceutical companies encourage **physicians** to prescribe pricey drugs, not always to the benefit **of the patients**.

(Chatterjee 2008: 20, written by Tarasiewicz,  
translated by Jaguslak).

- a) A nossa edição polonesa chega na hora mais apropriada. A reestruturação do nosso sistema de saúde parece não servir bem à população. Não só **os pacientes**, mas também **médicos profissionais** estão **desorientados e confusos** sobre as regras do novo sistema. Além disso, a economia de mercado trouxe novas ameaças. Empresas farmacêuticas poderosas incentivam **médicos** a prescrever medicamentos caros, nem sempre em benefício **dos pacientes**.

(Machine Translation)

- b) A nossa edição polonesa chega em uma hora bastante apropriada. A reestruturação do nosso sistema de saúde parece não responder aos anseios da população. Não só **pacientes**, mas também **profissionais de saúde** se encontram em **estado de desorientação e confusão** sobre as regras do novo sistema. Além disso, a economia de mercado trouxe novas ameaças. Empresas farmacêuticas poderosas

incentivam o **corpo médico** a prescrever medicamentos caros, nem sempre em benefício **de pacientes**.

(Chatterjee 2008/2020: 54, translated by Waberski,  
revised by Ribeiro)

In our translation, we removed the article that marks the male gender in *patients* (**os/dos pacientes**) and replaced *male doctors* (as translated by MT) with **profissionais de saúde** (health care professionals). We translated *physicians* as **corpo médico** (medical staff), while MT translated it as **médico** (a male doctor), marking the male gender again. We also changed the adjectives *disoriented and confused*, which appeared in the masculine form in Portuguese, to nouns (*state of disorientation and confusion*).

The next example comes from the preface to the Indian edition (2008). In this excerpt, the word *parenthood* was translated by the MT as **paternidade** (*paternity*), which is the term used in the Brazilian Federal Constitution regarding family planning (responsible parenthood), which refers to the term to both men and women.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, we opted for **maternidade** (motherhood) in the translation, emphasising that the book is written for women and by women. MT literally translated the second highlighted term, **o leitor não técnico** (*non-technical reader*) in the masculine form. However, in our translation, we chose to have the feminine first and then the masculine (**a leitora e o leitor**), contrary to the order most commonly used in Portuguese (the masculine first).

- 2) Despite the impressive work done by the women's health movement in South Asia and the volume of learning and training materials on women's health, there is a serious dearth of material for the educated and aware woman who is looking for accurate information on health and sexuality. Non-technical materials are focused almost completely on pregnancy and **parenthood** or on specific medical conditions, while materials on broader issues almost always tend to discourage the **non-technical reader**.

(Chatterjee 2008: 6, written by Women Unlimited,  
an Associate of Kali for Women)

- a) Apesar do trabalho impressionante feito pelo movimento por saúde das mulheres no Sul da Ásia e do volume de materiais de aprendizagem e de treinamento sobre saúde feminina, há uma séria escassez de material para a mulher informada e consciente que busca informações precisas sobre saúde e sexualidade. Os materiais não-técnicos são focados quase completamente em gravidez e **paternidade** ou em condições médicas específicas, enquanto os materiais em questões mais amplas tendem quase sempre a desencorajar o **leitor não-técnico**.  
(Machine Translation)
- b) Apesar do impressionante trabalho feito pelo movimento por saúde das mulheres no sul da Ásia e do volume de materiais de aprendizagem e de treinamento sobre a saúde feminina, há uma grande escassez de materiais para mulheres informadas e conscientes, que estão procurando conhecimentos precisos sobre saúde e sexualidade. Os materiais não técnicos são focados quase completamente em gravidez e **maternidade**, ou em condições médicas específicas, enquanto os materiais sobre questões mais amplas tendem, com frequência, a desencorajar **a leitora e o leitor comuns**.

(Chatterjee 2008/2020: 40 translated by Ribeiro,  
revised by Waberski and Spolidorio)

In the preface for the Armenian translation (2001), we used two strategies to translate *reader*: in the first case (*Armenian reader*), we used the feminine (**leitora armênia**), while the machine translation presented the term in the masculine again (**leitor armênio**). In the second instance (*the reader*), we chose a broader expression (*reading public*), and the MT turned *reader* back to the masculine (**leitor**). Another choice was to add the expression **profissionais das áreas** (professionals of such and such areas) to avoid translating the professions of those involved in the project in the masculine form, as would be the most usual in Portuguese. Thus, instead of *translator, editor, doctor*, we used *professionals in the areas of translation, editing, medicine, and others*. We also avoided the pronoun **eles** (they), the third person plural masculine in Portuguese, using **essas pessoas** (these people) instead, as seen in the excerpt below:

- 3) On behalf of Our Body and We, the **Armenian reader** gains a lot of much-needed information. Therefore, it is worth mentioning the grateful work that has been performed by the Armenian staff, i.e., **translators, editors, doctors-consultants and others**. Maintaining the original, **they** tried to overcome many difficulties, thinking hard about the professional terms and concepts which would make the book accessible for **the reader**.

(Chatterjee 2008: 29, written by Mangasaryan)

- a) Em nome do livro Our Body and We, o **leitor armênio** ganha muitas informações extremamente necessárias. Por isso, vale a pena mencionar o trabalho gratificante que tem sido realizado pela equipe armênia, ou seja, **tradutores, editores, médicos-consultores e outros**. Mantendo o original, **eles** tentaram superar muitas dificuldades, pensando muito sobre os termos e conceitos profissionais que tornariam o livro acessível para **o leitor**.

(Machine Translation)

- b) Por meio do livro Our Body and We, **a leitora armênia** ganha muitas informações extremamente necessárias. Por isso, vale a pena mencionar o trabalho gratificante realizado pela equipe armênia, ou seja, **profissionais das áreas de tradução, edição, medicina e outras**. Mantendo o original, **essas pessoas** tentaram superar muitas dificuldades, pensando muito sobre os termos e conceitos profissionais que tornariam o livro acessível para o **público leitor**.

(Chatterjee 2008/2020: 63 translated by Waberski, revised by Prior and Spolidorio)

In the last example, the word *doctor*, translated as **medico** (male doctor) by MT, has been replaced by the expression **consulta médica** (medical appointment). For *our loved ones* and *others*, we have chosen to use **pessoas queridas** (literally, loved people), which is gender-neutral. Again, the MT produced a more literal translation, in the masculine form (**entes amados**). Finally, in *take care of ourselves*, we chose to bring the idea of plurality, unlike MT, which offered **si mesma** (itself) rather than **nós próprias** (ourselves).

- 4) When we need to go to **a doctor**, the information that the book offers, with its voice of respect and support, helps us to better understand and participate actively in health decisions that are so important for our own lives (...) This book recognises that for all women, taking care of **our loved ones** has a very high priority, but in order to take care of **others**, we must also take care of **ourselves**.

(Chatterjee 2008: 39, written by Shapiro)



- a) Quando precisamos ir **ao médico**, as informações que o livro oferece, expostas por uma voz de respeito e suporte, nos ajudam a compreender e a participar ativamente nas escolhas médicas que são tão importantes para nossas vidas. Este livro constata que cuidar de **nossos entes amados** é de prioridade muito alta para todas as mulheres, mas que para encarregar-se pelo **outro**, também requer um cuidado com **si mesma**.

(Machine Translation)

- b) As informações contidas no livro, expostas por uma voz de respeito e amparo, nos ajudam, quando precisamos ir a uma **consulta médica**, a compreender e a participar ativamente das escolhas médicas que são tão importantes para nossas vidas. (...) Este livro constata que cuidar das **pessoas queridas** é de prioridade muito alta para todas as mulheres, mas que para cuidar de **outras pessoas**, também devemos cuidar de **nós próprias**.

(Chatterjee 2008/2020: 75-76 translated by Chalhoub and Silva,  
revised by Nicolella and Spolidorio)

On the one hand, the translation choices brought up discussions about binarities: man/woman; masculine/feminine; mother tongue/foreign language. On the other hand, we could discuss the text's phallocentric interpretation and be consistently attentive to a more feminist version, especially with the paratext written by the translators. Although the differences in some cases seem slight changes, they intend to show an awareness of the power relations and oppressions across languages. As the students/translators state in the Portuguese Preface:

We tried to create a *new meaning* within a language that is marked by gendered words and, as a result, reinforces ideologies through so-called "neutral speech." Our objective was then to deconstruct patterns and to work toward equity. We feel that our objective is to expand the female space within society, to promote discussions about women's voices and bodies, so we, as a whole, can be truly respected. (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 8, translated by the students/translators)

The very notion of the original text was reviewed by our students and by the OBOS organisation when the latter (i) suggested including three prefaces that were not part of the original collection, in addition to the preface added by our translators, and (ii) agreed with changing the presentation order and including the table of contents. Our collection, thus, is the collection translated from English, but it is also a new one, with its own characteristics and paratexts. There was also an affirmation of the women's collective strength, as in OBOS, its prefaces were written by many hands, in different times and spaces, aiming at different, but converging objectives in the varying contexts of the feminist struggle.

#### 4. Challenges and future discussions

Learning, commitment, interlocution and resilience describe both the experiences described in the prefaces and our relationship with the collection, whose translation was, from the beginning, a supplement (Derrida 1972/1981) to the OBOS book. Therefore, our collection emerges as a translation but also as another collection. Published in 2020, a year before the first *Nossos Corpos por Nós Mesmas* volume came out, it functioned as an epitext to draw attention to the project and a commitment that the translation would be published soon after.

Although we considered the project to be positive, it is also necessary to highlight some of the challenges of online learning. They include unreliable Internet access, which made it impossible for some students to attend online classes in real time and forced them to rely on watching the recording afterwards; difficulties in the interaction because of the virtual class format; the need to record for asynchronous access while being aware of this situation; and the need for lengthier written explanations in reference materials and instructions for the activities, as many revisions were carried out asynchronously. We were able to address the issue of the translations target audience, publication deadlines, the use of CAT tools and the difficulties inherent to teamwork and online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the students/translators point out in the Portuguese preface:

The pandemic was responsible for aggravating social differences, and unfortunately, in Brazil, it was also responsible for increasing the number of cases of domestic violence and abuse. The process of translating the prefaces took place in this context, and as a result, it was inevitable to reflect on how debating women's issues and their bodies is only more urgent. Access to quality information designed for and by women proved to be even more pressing than before the pandemic. (Chatterjee 2008/2020: 10, translated by the students/translators)

Just as it is impossible to separate translation from paratranslation, the prefaces and the book covers help us understand the cultural differences and are part of the very history of OBOS and, by extension, of how the fight for women's rights has evolved over the past decades around the world. Additionally, they show this can be complex and move slowly. These prefaces also reveal to the reader the idiosyncrasies of each translation in each era, corroborating what Derrida stated about prefaces being circumstantial.

The experience with the use of MT integrated into *Smartcat* made it clear to the students that even translation performed by machines is biased because it assumes as standard the most recurrent translations, as evidenced in Monti (2020). It also showed that it is essential to read critically so that choices can reflect that translating is much more than just writing a text in another language.

Another issue discussed was the difference between the use of inclusive language with lexical resources that are already part of the language and resources being considered in recent years, such as the use of *-x* and *-e* as morphemes that encompass more than the binary gender categories. This issue deserves much more discussion, in both the academic realm and in society at large. Examples of relevant studies include Borba and Lopes (2018), regarding the ideological and social implications of the use of *-x*, and Schwindt (2020), who proposes that the use of *-e* finds "less limited conditions for expansion in the system in the subset of gendered nouns and adjectives." We understand that the use of inclusive language is only one step and that we need much more to go beyond the binarisms of language.

This project fostered discussions about the importance of translation for feminism and showed that translation could help change perception and be an instrument of counter-hegemony. We are aware that there is still much to be explored on this matter. However, we understand that both translations (of the collection and the OBOS book) intend to be relevant translations for our society. According to Derrida, in another context,

[a] relevant translation would therefore be, quite simply, a “good” translation, a translation that does what one expects of it, in short, a version that performs its mission, honours its debt and does its job or its duty while inscribing in the receiving language the most relevant equivalent for an original, the language that is the most right, appropriate, pertinent, adequate, opportune, pointed, univocal, idiomatic, and so on. (1999/2001: 177, translated by Venuti)

Despite its challenges, the project enabled the interaction of teaching, research and community outreach, something highly valued as the three pillars of the Brazilian higher education system. Finally, we consider that the project helped students learn, develop autonomy and reflect on the power of language and translation in society.

## NOTES

1. Gauvin, Lise (1984). *Lettres d'une autre*. Montréal et Paris: l'Hexagone; le Castor astral.
2. Livro dos prefácios [Book of prefaces] (Holanda 2018).
3. The Translator's Word: Reflections on Translation by Brazilian Translators (Martins and Guerini 2018).
4. Chatterjee, Ayesha, ed. (2008): *Our bodies, Ourselves Transformed Worldwide: A Collection of Prefaces from culturally Adapted Translations of Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Consulted on 12 April 2022. <<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/prefacebooklet.pdf>>. Chatterjee, Ayesha, ed. (2008/2020): *Our bodies, ourselves transformado mundialmente: uma coleção de prefácios com traduções culturalmente adaptadas de Our bodies, ourselves*. Érica Lima and Janine Pimentel, eds. Translated by Alice Zaroni Nicolella, Ana Oliveira *et al.* Campinas: Unicamp/Publicações IEL. Consulted on 10 April 2022. <<https://www.iel.unicamp.br/sites/default/files/iel/publicacoes/OBOS.pdf>>.
5. More information about the project can be found at <<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/global-projects/brazil-coletivo-feminista-sexualidade-e-saude/>> and <<https://obosbrasil.com/>>. Consulted on 10 April 2022. Our translation is the first one in Portuguese and is based on the ninth and latest edition of the book, which has 944 pages.
6. The Boston Women's Health Book Collective and Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde. *Nossos corpos por nós mesmas*. Um clássico do feminismo mundial. São Paulo: Ema Livros; Editora Timo (forthcoming).
7. The quotation marks in “original” are because fifteen prefaces translated from English were initially written in other languages, that is, they have also been translated. We will not, in this paper, discuss indirect translation, but the emphasis is essential so that the very notion of what we mean by original can be put into perspective.
8. BRINGAS López, A. Castro, O.; FARIÑA BUSTO, M; et al (2012): *Manual de linguaxe inclusiva no ámbito universitario*. Vigo: Unidade de Igualdade da Universidade de Vigo. GOVERNO DO ESTADO DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL, Secretaria de Políticas para Mulheres (2014): *Manual para o uso não sexista da linguagem: o que bem se diz bem e entende*. Rio Grande do Sul: Secretaria de Comunicação e Inclusão Digital.
9. Although Yuste Frías makes it clear that the concept of *paratraducción* goes far beyond “paratexts in translation” or “the translation of paratexts” (2022: 30, our translation), it is not the goal of this paper to discuss the theoretical conceptions and scope of the concept, but to present specific points that help us analyze the importance of paratranslation in the collection translation process.
10. Figure 1 available at <<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/preface-booklet.pdf>>. Figure 2 available at <<https://www.iel.unicamp.br/sites/default/files/iel/publicacoes/OBOS.pdf>>. Consulted on 10 April 2022.
11. All covers are in the Global Projects - In their own words: <<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/global-projects/in-their-own-words-prefaces-to-cultural-adaptations-of-our-bodies-ourselves/>>. Yuste Frías (2021) presents a review of the translation of the collection and the relation to paratranslation in *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (OBOS) transformed worldwide... from Brazil. *Blog de Yuste. On y sème à tout vent. Blog de investigación T&P*, Vigo: T&P\_UVigo, [on line], 21/01/2022. Available at: <<https://www.joseyustefrias.com/2021/01/21/obos-brasil-prefacios/>>. Consulted on 10 April 2022.

12. Figure 3 available at <<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/preface-booklet.pdf>>  
Figure 4 available at <<https://www.iel.unicamp.br/sites/default/files/iel/publicacoes/OBOS.pdf>>. Consulted on 10 April 2022.
13. At OBOS' request, the preface was translated into English by the translators-authors, namely: Alice Nicolella, Ana Oliveira, Beatriz Waberski, Dhafinny Silva, Gabrielle Teixeira, Juliana Ricardo, Lais Depintor, Larissa Veras, Lia Ribeiro, Maria Vitória Grisi and Nathália Teixeira. Available at: <<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/global-projects/brazil-coletivo-feminista-sexualidade-e-saude/>>. Consulted on 10 April 2022.
14. Law n. 11.340, August 7, 2006. <[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/111340.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/111340.htm)>. Consulted on 15 April 2022.
15. Law n. 2.749, April 1st, 1956: <<https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1950-1959/lei-2749-2-abril-1956-355226-norma-pl.html>>; Law n. 12.605, April 3rd, 2012: <[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2011-2014/2012/lei/112605.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2012/lei/112605.htm)>. Consulted on 15 April 2022.
16. Far-right political parties are making moves to prevent what they have called neutral language, such as the proposed law PL10-2021. The Bill aims to prevent the use of nonstandard language in schools. A report was made by university professors Érica Lima and Anna Christina Bentes with counterpoints to this proposal. The text in Portuguese can be accessed at: <<https://www.iel.unicamp.br/br/content/docentes-do-iel-emitem-parecer-sobre-o-projeto-de-lei-no-102021>>. Consulted on 12 April 2022. In the article "Le président est une femme: the challenges of translating gender in UN texts," Enora Lessinger (2020) addresses the use of the generic masculine for president and other occupational terms.
17. France is another country that present resistance. Periodically, there are demonstrations against inclusive language by the French academia. The arguments presented can be seen at: <<https://www.academie-francaise.fr/actualites/lettre-ouverte-sur-lecriture-inclusive>>. Some counterpoints to this thinking can be found in Abbou, Candea, *et al.* (2018), who relate the fear of inclusive writing to the fear of emasculation.
18. The subject has been discussed in some texts by project participants, such as Lima (2021); Cerineu, Ferenzini, *et al.* (2021) and Lima, Pimentel, *et al.* (2020): Nossos Corpos por Nós Mesmas: um projeto de tradução feminista. *Le monde diplomatique*, Edição Feminismos Transnacionais, 16 de julho. <<https://diplomatie.org.br/nossos-corpos-por-nosmesmas-um-projeto-de-traducacao-feminista/>>. Consulted on 10 April 2022.
19. Article 226, §7 <[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm)>. Consulted on 10 April 2022.

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