

SPANISH AND LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS IN THE LITERARY CANON: A
PARATEXTUAL STUDY OF ANTHOLOGIES OF FANTASTIC LITERATURE (1946-2016)

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*With particular thanks to Consuelo García (Universidad Autónoma de
Barcelona) for her assistance with the statistical input*

ABSTRACT

While it is evident that there are outstanding women authors of the fantastic in Spain and Latin America since the nineteenth century, it is not as clear whether these writers are fairly represented in the corpus available to readers. To what extent are women authors part of the fantastic canon? Are there female reference points for new generations of women writers? To explore processes of canon formation in the literature of the fantastic from a feminist perspective, this article gathers paratexts from 110 anthologies. Employing a quantitative approach with regard to indexed authors, the first section addresses specific questions related to gender and the fantastic in the Hispanic context by analysing statistical data. The empirical study is complemented by an analysis of how the female author is presented and constructed through the discourse in introductions, forewords and other paratextual materials of these anthologies.

RESUMEN

Si bien es obvio que desde el siglo XIX hay excelentes voces femeninas en la literatura fantástica española y latinoamericana, no lo es que estas escritoras cuenten con la representación merecida en el corpus del que disponen los lectores y lectoras. ¿Hasta qué punto forman parte estas escritoras del canon fantástico? ¿Hay puntos de referencia femeninos para las nuevas generaciones de escritoras? Para investigar los procesos de formación del canon en la literatura fantástica desde una perspectiva feminista, este artículo compila paratextos de 110 antologías. Con un enfoque cuantitativo en lo que concierne a los índices de autores y autoras, a través del análisis estadístico la primera parte muestra cómo el género y lo fantástico se interrelacionan en el contexto hispánico. Este estudio empírico es complementado por una segunda parte en que se analiza cómo la figura de la autora es presentada en las introducciones, los prefacios y otros elementos paratextuales en estas antologías.

INDEX OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 – Global gender ratio: male and female authors indexed in the anthologies

Fig. 2 – Correlation between the number of female/male indexed authors

Fig. 3 – Anthologies with more than 7 copies in Spanish libraries

Fig. 4 – Percentage of female writers indexed in Hispanic anthologies since the 1940s

Fig. 5 – Ratio of female/male editors of Hispanic anthologies

Fig. 6 – Number of times women authors are indexed in different anthologies

Fig. 7 – Most frequently occurring nationalities of indexed women authors

‘The difficulty is that I have no mouth through which I can speak’ (*The Penelopiad*, Margaret Atwood)

1. CONTEXT TO THE STUDY

This research was triggered by the striking underrepresentation of female writers (regardless of their language and nationality) in the most widely distributed anthologies of the international fantastic, as borne out in some of the best known collections. The volume *Antología de la literatura fantástica* (1940), edited by Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares and Silvina Ocampo, is one of the most internationally reprinted anthologies of the fantastic. It included authors from very different literary traditions and was instrumental in obtaining international recognition for lesser-known Hispanic writers. It has even been considered by some critics as ‘un esbozo de la primera antología fantástica hispanoamericana, aun cuando no se haya hecho con ese propósito’ (Sardiñas and Morales 2003: 17) and as setting out ‘the rules of the genre in Latin America’ (Manguel 1983: 613). Only 10% of the writers indexed in the revised edition of the *Antología* (second edition, 1965),¹ which is the most widely translated version of the volume, are women, including the Argentines Pilar de Lusarreta, Delia Ingenieros and Silvina Ocampo, and the Mexican Elena Garro. *Black Water: The Flamingo Anthology of Fantastic Literature* (ed. Manguel 1983) contains a selection of 62 male and 7 women writers, only one of whom is Hispanic (Silvina Ocampo), versus 8 Hispanic male writers. *Fantastic Tales: Visionary and Everyday*, another of the most reprinted and cited anthologies, edited by Italo Calvino and translated into English in 1997, follows a similar pattern, containing 26 short stories and with only one written by a female author (Vernon Lee).

¹ On the process of compiling the *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, see Louis (2001) and for a comparative study on the two versions, see Balderston (2004).

There seems to be a scholarly consensus regarding the most influential (male) authors in 19th and 20th century literature: E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, H. P. Lovecraft, Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar feature recurrently in the most well-known critical studies of the fantastic, such as those by Louis Castex (1951), Roger Caillois (1965), Tzvetan Todorov (1970), Rosemary Jackson (1981), Neil Cornwell (1990), Brian Attebery (1992) and David Roas (ed. 2001; 2011), all of which focus mainly on a corpus written in English and French (and also Spanish in the case of Roas) and, overwhelmingly, on male writers. Within the already very restricted domain of visibility for women writers that is the fantastic, the questions that prompted this study were: to what extent are Hispanic women authors part of the fantastic canon? Do there exist female reference points for new generations of women writers within the Hispanic context?

Out of the many methods available for the analysis of processes of canon formation in literature from a gender perspective - such as the examination of university programmes and set texts, of gender imbalance in A-level syllabi, of the female presence in national histories of the fantastic, of the availability of texts written by women in libraries and bookshops, or of gender ratio in publisher's archives² - this study is dedicated to the scrutiny of anthologies of the fantastic. Anthologies are considered an important factor in canonising (Johnson 1991; Di Leo 2004): they are cultural, political and literary objects that legitimise certain voices and texts and serve as guidance for scholars and readers in identifying referential authors nationally and internationally, by 'providing models, ideals and inspiration', 'transmitting the heritage of thought' and 'creating common frames of reference' (Harris 1991: 115). In addition, in the case of fantastic literature anthologies have been instrumental in raising

² On the gender question in Spanish programmes in British universities, see Davis (2010) and in the North American context, L. Brown & Johnson (1998).

awareness of the existence and historical continuity of this specific narrative form, employed by writers occasionally or assiduously across Hispanic traditions since the 19th century.

As canon criticism has constantly noted, the selection of cultural capital (the sense of a canon) operates as a type of selective memory: literary histories are preserved and transformed through the authors selected and/or translated by critics, scholars and the market. One of the most important lessons learned from feminist criticism is that this process of canonisation does not originate within a gender-neutral framework, as research by Robinson (1983) and Winders (1991) among others have noted. While it is not the intention of this article to point to deficiencies in or to discredit any specific anthology on the fantastic, nor to question the literary value of those authors considered as referential, the aim instead is to provide a feminist critical perspective on the existing canon in the context of the Hispanic fantastic.

2. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

2.1. The method: data selection and variables

Since the Hispanic fantastic is the major focus of this study, the largest part of the data gathered is extracted from anthologies written and published in Spanish, regardless of whether the specific country of origin is Latin America or is Spain. These anthologies in Spanish are contrasted with those available in English and French. The reasons for selecting these two other literary traditions to compare the data available in Spanish is the following: the anglophone and francophone fantastic greatly shaped the fantastic since its origins in the late 18th century, as demonstrated by the British Gothic and Victorian ghost story as well as American 20th century horror best-sellers and films that popularised the classic works of the fantastic universally. In the francophone

context, of crucial relevance are the emergence of the fantastic in modern Paris during the 19th century (García 2017), the impact of the *école belge de l'étrange* that took hold in particular from the 1920s and the Quebecois revival of the fantastic after the 1980s.

The selected data fulfilled the following criteria: the anthologies had include more than four different authors in a single volume; the title had to comprise one of the words 'supernatural', 'sobrenatural', 'fantástico', 'fantastique' or 'fantastic' and exclude other neighbouring terms such as terror, horror, scifi, fantasy, as well as references to 'insólito', 'misterio', 'weird tales', 'uncanny', 'ghost stories' or 'histories maléfiqes'. This generated a more coherent corpus within the parameters of the restricted approach to the fantastic, as developed mainly in European criticism, to distinguish it from the all-inclusive American term of 'literatures of the fantastic'.³

The sources used to identify these anthologies included catalogues of national libraries (Biblioteca Nacional de España/Bibliothèque Nationale de France/The British Library), global catalogues (worldcat.org and REBIUN) as well as some major university libraries. Blogs, digital fandom associations and other online platforms dedicated to fantastic fiction (*Le Visage Vert*, *Le Visage Vert*, *Fantastic Fiction*, *Tercera Fundación*) were also scrutinised. These platforms include databases generated by users, and often provide much more up-to-date information on new publications or on works that have been out of print for some time.

³ The fantastic will be here understood as the irruption of the supernatural within a realistic setting. Born with Romanticism and the English Gothic novel, the fantastic narrative form developed by the end of the 18th century within the predominant scientific positivism model of thought and as a reaction to the over-confidence in Reason as an explanation of the world. Its evolution is marked by canonical works by E.T.A. Hoffman, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, by Guy de Maupassant's short stories, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Lovecraft's writings and the short stories by Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar. In contrast with the North American all-inclusive paradigm of the fantastic as an umbrella term for any deviation of realism (including myths, fairy tales, magical realism and scifi), European theorists such as Castex, Caillois, Todorov, Bessière, Bozzetto, Campora and Roas, among other authors, have advocated a restricted definition of the fantastic as a specific form of the supernatural in fiction on the basis that not every narrative form where a supernatural element appears or a supernatural event takes place is constructed in the same way.

All these sources helped in the identification of 110 anthologies published between 1946 to 2016, out of which 16% are in English; 30% in French and 54% in Spanish. This corpus compiles data on 152 female authors from 22 different nationalities.

The focus of the empirical study was the presence of women authors in anthologies written and published in Spanish. Some parameters were discarded, since they did not provide meaningful statistical results. For example, in the search for a plurality of Hispanic canons and thus for potential asymmetries in the composition of Hispanic 'national' canons versus a 'pan-Hispanic' canon, it was noticed that from a gender perspective the variable 'national/international'-oriented Hispanic anthologies did not provide meaningful statistical results. Out of the different parameters that were analysed, the following were considered as providing relevant information concerning gender: the ratio between male and female authors indexed in the anthology, the date of publication (is there a significant increase of women authors present over time?), the gender of the editor (does a female editor seek to balance the genders?), the number of copies available in Spanish libraries (which books are more widely available and what is the gender ration in those books?) and the specific female authors mentioned, including their nationality (are there women authors who are more widely present across the corpus studied and, if so, where are they from?).

2.2. Difficulties and limitations

In this process of data collection, several methodological difficulties were identified. These constraints are meaningful from a comparative literature perspective, since they indicate divergences in how the fantastic is understood and marketed across the three cultures.

A striking fact emerging from this process is that of the disparate number of anthologies identified in the different languages using identical search criteria. Three times more works were identified in Spanish than in English, despite the fact that the same archival platforms and criteria for selection were used. A plausible explanation is the different approaches to the fantastic as narrative form in these two cultures. The terms *fantastique* and *lo fantástico* are employed in a very similar manner in the French and Hispanic context (as a narrative form distinct from other supernatural forms, in that within a realistic world an impossible exception irrupts). However, the data collected demonstrates that the criteria employed in this study – which sought to limit the corpus to a restricted understanding of the fantastic as opposed to the Anglo-American umbrella term – would not work for a study in the Anglophone context. The market of anthologies in English presents two opposing trends: on the one hand, there are plenty of anthologies that combine the term ‘fantastic’ (as understood in this article) with other forms of the supernatural, such as sci-fi and *fantasy*. On the other, a great number of volumes are dedicated to a specific supernatural theme or motif, or restricted to a subgenre (for instance, the *ghost story*). In this way, this study had to exclude well-known anthologies such as *The Virago Book of Ghost Stories* (ed. Dalby 1987), *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories* (eds. Cox y Gilbert 1986) and *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories: from Elizabeth G. to A. Bierce* (ed. Newton 2010). In these volumes the inclusion of female writers outnumbers the average 13% (section 3.1.), mainly thanks to the tradition of the *ghost story*, greatly indebted to the writings of British and North-American women authors.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Gender Representation in the Hispanic Canon

What is the percentage of women authors represented in the Spanish and Spanish-American canon?

The average percentage of female writers included in Spanish-language anthologies gathering the work Latin American and Spanish authors – whether these anthologies had a Panhispanic focus (for example *Antología del cuento fantástico hispanoamericano siglo XX*, ed. Hahn, 1990) or were limited their domain to a single country (for example, *La realidad oculta: cuentos fantásticos españoles del siglo XX*, eds. Roas y Casas, 2008) – was 14% female, versus 86% of male authors.⁴ This percentage is consistent with the average of female versus male writers across the total number of anthologies in Spanish, English and French (13:87 in total).

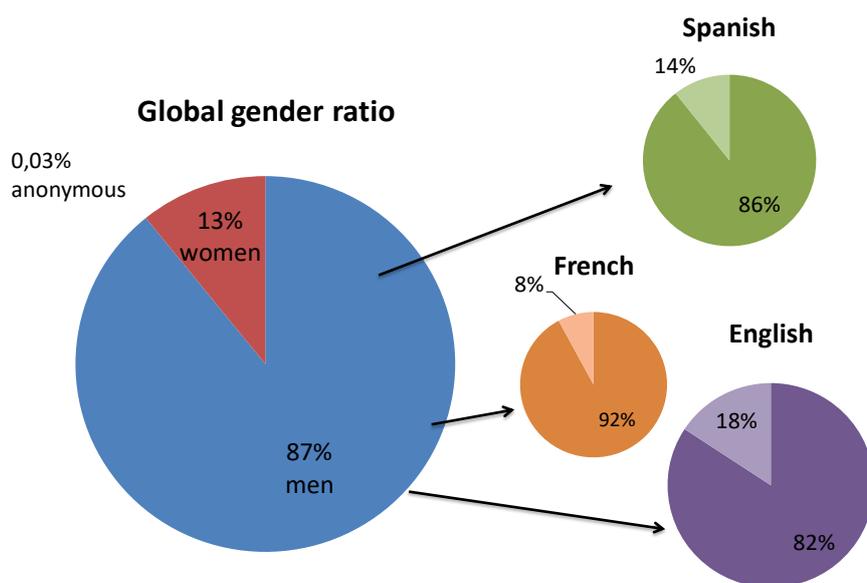
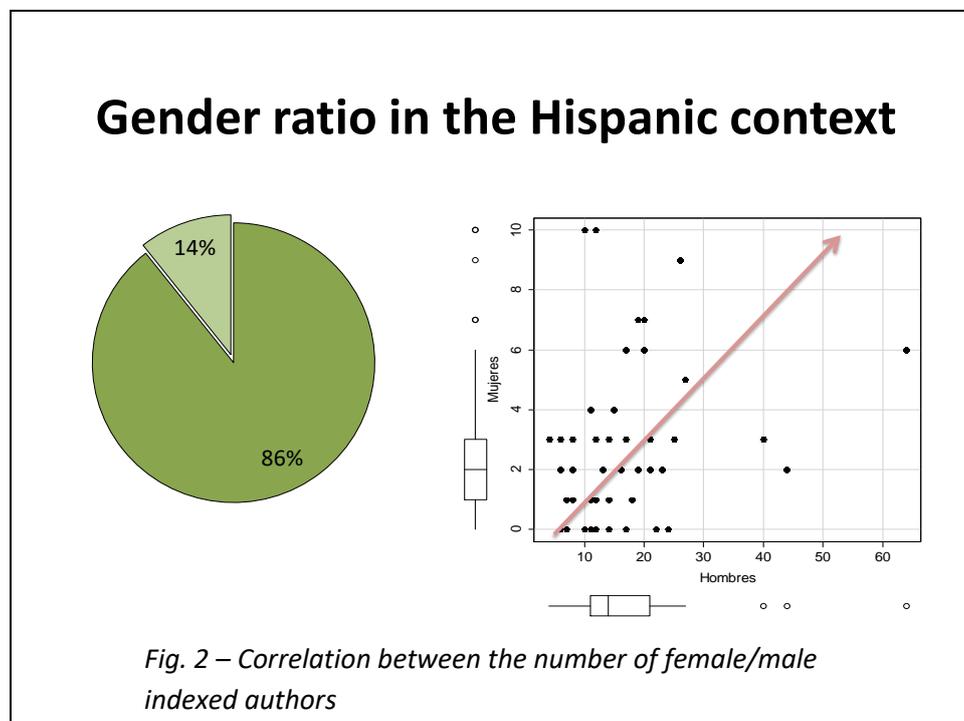


Fig. 1 – Global gender ratio: male and female authors indexed in the anthologies

It is important to note that this percentage functions as an *average* number and is not a data finding that would allow us to predict the gender ratio of future anthologies;

⁴ This is the average ratio. In the data gathered, there were anthologies that presented a gender balance, for instance *La tienda de los sueños: Un siglo de cuento fantástico mexicano* (10:10) (ed. Chimal, 2016), and many other volumes that included no women authors.

that is, it is not a percentage that is found consistently across the analysed anthologies (if such proportion existed, the dots indicating the male/female ratio would be concentrated around the pink arrow in figure 2 below). This means that the ratio of male/female authors is not correlated. Figure 2 suggests that the gender factor does not seem to be taken as a criterion when elaborating the index of authors included in an anthology (for example, that editors would deliberately include at least 2 women for each 8 male authors). This aspect will be also reflected in the analysis of the introductions to the various anthologies, as can be seen in section 4.1.



3.2. Gender presence in Spanish university libraries

Does presence in anthologies of the fantastic correspond to their availability? How many of these anthologies are available to scholars in Spain and in what quantity?

Not all the compiled anthologies in this study have the same weight within the canon of the Hispanic fantastic. As Sullá indicates, a variable that needs to be taken into

account is 'la función de la institución que administra el canon' (1998: 22). This variable was studied in relation to the number of copies of these anthologies available in the libraries of Spanish universities, according to the REBIUN catalogue (fig. 3).

Working from an assumption that the more copies of a volume available in Spanish universities, the more this volume is used on their degree and masters programmes, this study identifies the anthologies of which greater numbers of copies were available: *Cuentos fantásticos en la España del Realismo* (2006, with only a 8% of female authors, item 9 in graphic), *Cuentos fantásticos modernistas de Hispanoamérica* (2003, with no female author, item 17) and *Antología Española de Literatura Fantástica* (1992, with only a 3% of female authors, item 2). Those with by far the greatest distribution, with 62 and 50 copies respectively, were the famous *Antología de la literatura fantástica* by Borges, Bioy Casares and Ocampo and *Cuentos fantásticos del siglo XIX*, edited by Italo Calvino (1983), both of which contain very limited female-produced content, as mentioned in the introduction to this article.

With these results taken into account, the visibility of women authors in Spain (as indicated by their availability in Spanish libraries) does not correlate with the presence of women writers in the anthologies of the Hispanic fantastic. It is in fact much lower than the 14% threshold that was previously mentioned as an average in section 3.1.

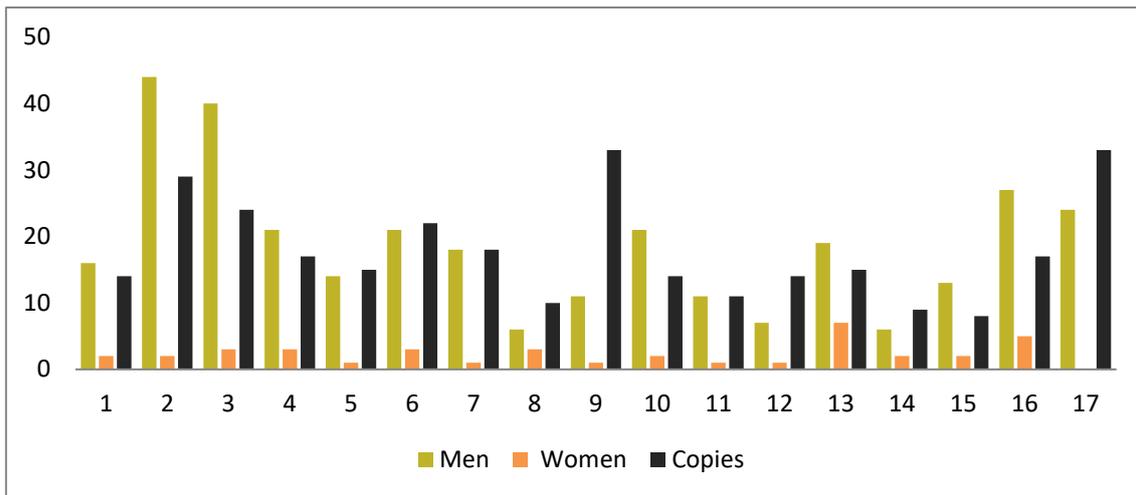


Fig. 3 – Anthologies with more than 7 copies in Spanish libraries

3.3. Diachronic variable

Are there statistically significant differences in the representation of female authors over time?

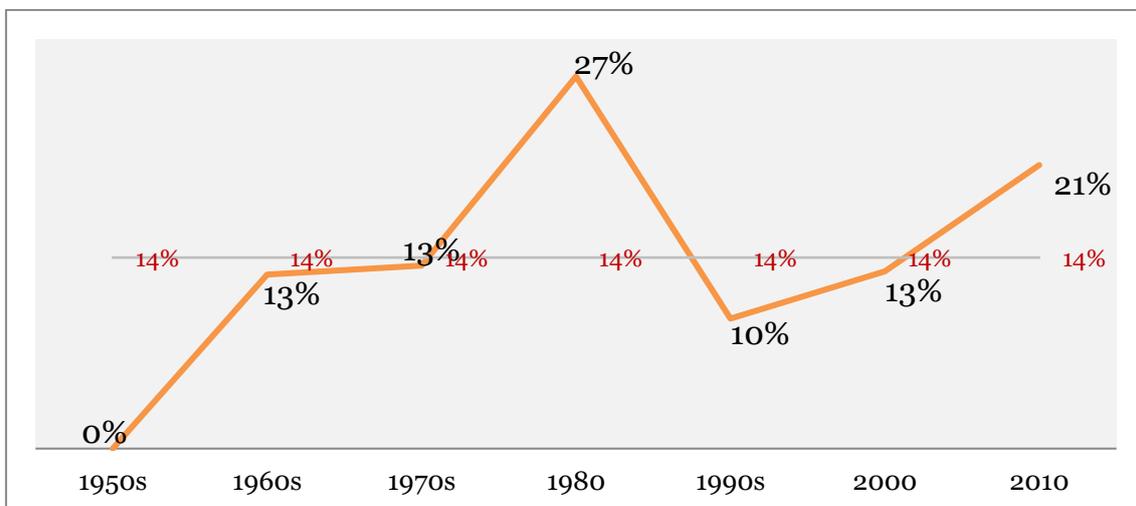


Fig. 4 – Percentage of female writers indexed in Hispanic anthologies since the 1940s

The outcome of this section was expected to (hopefully) indicate a constantly ascending curve that attested to a progressive inclusion of women writers within anthologies dedicated to the Hispanic fantastic. However, the data presented different results. The first anthologies in which women authors were indexed appeared in the

1960s; however, there is no significant ascending trend until the 1990s. Indeed, the 14% threshold was passed only in the last decade. Although equal gender representation is far from being reached, the percentage has risen to 21%. The graphic shows a peak in the 1980s, which can be attributed to the scant publication of anthologies during that decade, with only two anthologies out of the total data recorded in this study, one of these being *Cuentos fantásticos mexicanos* (María Elvira Bermúdez, Francisco Tario, 1986), which contains an exceptionally high ratio of four male to three female authors.

3.4. Gender of the editor

Does the gender of the editor have a statistically remarkable influence on the ratio of female/male authors in the anthologies of the Hispanic fantastic?

In the editorial domain there is also a significant underrepresentation of female figures. Of the anthologies published in Spanish, only 22% are compiled by women and 8% by a team containing at least one woman.

When the influence of the gender of the editor was studied, results indicated that there was no correlation between the gender of the editor and the proportion of female authors included in the anthology. There is even a slight decrease in female representation in the anthologies edited by female editors (11% female authors in female-edited volumes in contrast to the 14% threshold). If there was an implicit assumption that a female editor would seek to balance the genders when compiling an anthology on the fantastic, the data shows that it is not the case.

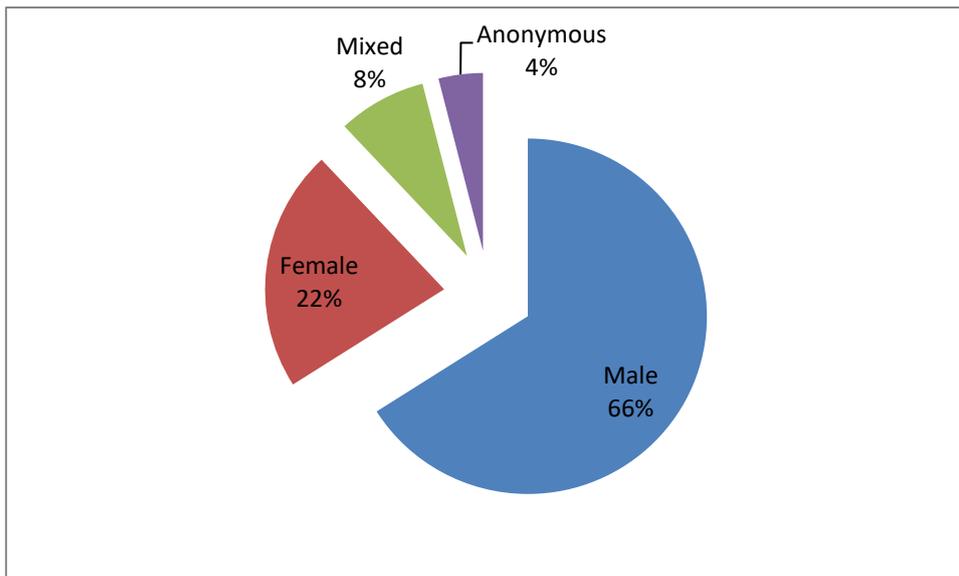


Fig. 5 – Ratio of female/male editors of Hispanic anthologies

3.5. Canon of female Hispanic authors

Who are the most cited Hispanic female authors in the total number of anthologies in Spanish? Is there any country that predominates?

The data collected in this respect makes it impossible to speak of an existing canon of female authors in the Hispanic fantastic. This is due to the fact that there is great disparity in and dispersion of the female authors anthologised.

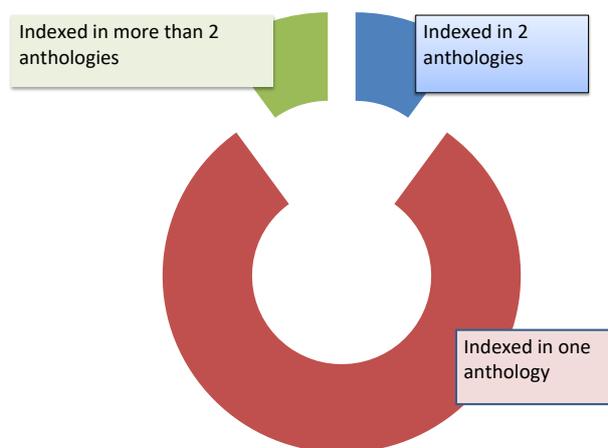


Fig. 6 – Number of times women authors are indexed in different anthologies

Out of the 71 authors from Spain and Spanish America that feature in the corpus of anthologies in Spanish, only 15 are included in more than two anthologies. The most cited authors are: Silvina Ocampo (nine times, representing 8.6% of the total number of short stories by women authors included in the works studied here), Juana Manuela Gorriti (six times, 5.7%), Elena Garro (five times, 4.8%), Amparo Dávila (four times, 3.8%), Emilia Pardo Bazán (four times, 3.8%), Ana María Matute (three times, 2.9%) and Rosa Chacel (three times, 2.9%). The most frequent nationalities are displayed in Fig. 7.

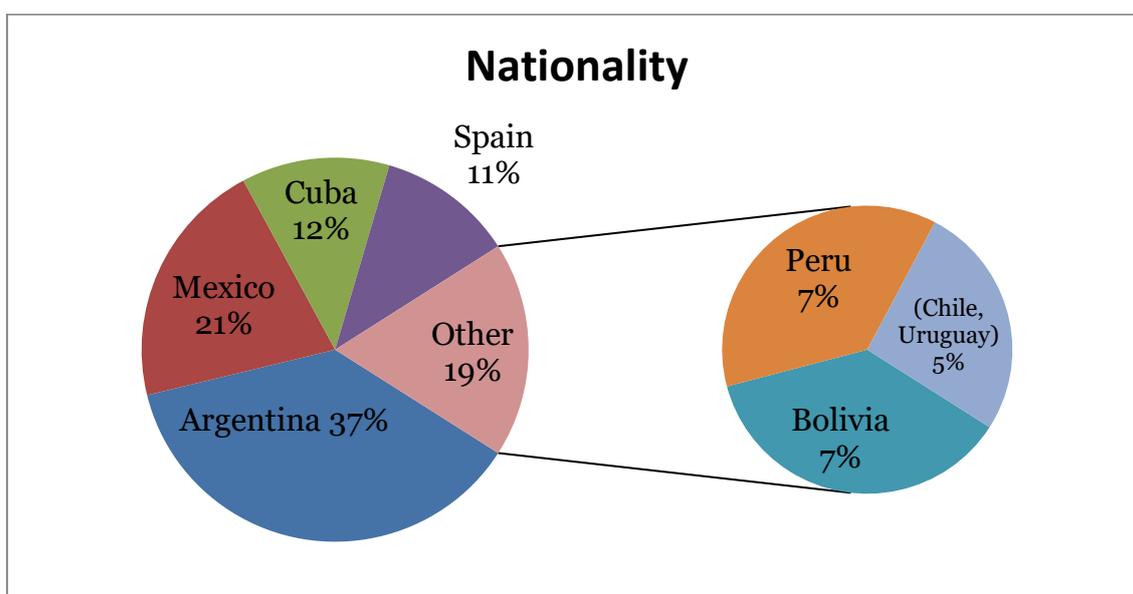


Fig. 7 – Most frequently occurring nationalities of indexed women authors

3.6. Comparison with French and English anthologies

When contrasting these results with the anthologies in French and English, it can be observed that the global proportion is very similar: 87% of indexed male vs. 13% female authors on average across the three languages. The Spanish model (86:14) is very close to the English one (82:18) but there are significant differences with the French ratio (92:8). One of the possible explanations is that most of the French-

language anthologies found using the selection criteria outlined in section 2.1 were produced between the 1940s and the 1970s, some of which are foundational and still referential in current research on the French fantastic (e.g. *Anthologie du conte fantastique français*, Castex 1947). The other conclusions mentioned in the previous sections also apply to the anthologies in French and English: there is no predictable ratio of male:female authors, from a statistical angle, the editor's gender does not seem to have an influence on the gender presence of the selected authors in the anthologies, and the total average of 13% has been passed only in the past two decades, with a significant increase in this present decade (21% since 2010), though women writers are still far removed from a gender-balanced representation.

4. CANON IN THE PARATEXTUAL DISCOURSES

In order to complement these statistical results with the analysis of further paratextual materials, in the next section the processes of canon formation are approached from a qualitative angle, identifying how female authors are presented in these anthologies, in, for example, introductions, prologues, forewords, authors' biographical notes, footnotes, covers and back covers. The data analysed in the following sections is extracted for the most part from the few identified anthologies or sections within the corpus that provide some material concerning women writers. Whereas some of the observations that follow still indicate an underlying patriarchal discourse even in the anthologies with a more fair gender ratio, these anthologies can be credited as being rare exceptions that have attempted to render visible some of the key women authors of the fantastic.

4.1. Balance and Imbalance

As might be expected, in most of the anthologies analysed for this project the anthologist expresses in an explicit manner the canonising intention behind the volume. The anthologies are designed to provide a ‘representative’ selection (a word that occurs repeatedly, as illustrated in the extracts below) of the fantastic within the bounds of several parameters, and remain conspicuously silent on the question of gender-balance. The parameters in question are generally those of a periodisation of the fantastic in a given Hispanic country or across Hispanic traditions, or the identification of texts that give an account of how the fantastic is written according to a specific aesthetic or literary movement:

Se ha intentado que los relatos seleccionados fueran representativos de cada grupo temático, pero que al mismo tiempo resultaran sugerentes para los lectores de hoy. (Trancón 1999: 20)

[...] el afán de reunir un corpus que fuera lo más representativo posible de la calidad que tiene el género en nuestro Continente. (Sardiñas and Morales 2000: 29)

The majority of the introductions or prologues follow a similar structure: they start with a definition of the fantastic, in which several key theoretical studies (which happen to be written almost exclusively by male scholars) are highlighted. An overview on this narrative form within the discussed national or international domain is provided. The names of and works by well-known, illustrious (male) authors are mentioned as referents, as are the most characteristic themes and motives. The introductions to the anthologies usually seek to challenge the characterisation of the fantastic as an anomaly or exception within a literary tradition, instead aiming to establish scholarly groundings that indicate that there exists a history of literature of the fantastic in either Spain, Latin America or the combined Spanish-speaking regions, depending on the geographical

focus of the volume (e.g. 'Demuestran, esos relatos, pese a lo que algunas voces no han querido ver, el interés por lo fantástico y, asimismo la larga historia de esta literatura en el panorama hispanoamericano', Roas 2003: 36). This initial establishment of a tradition of a literature of the fantastic is generally followed by the presentation of the selection criteria for that particular edition: literary excellence of the texts, the specific geographical and temporal domain that the volume seeks to cover and the overall aim that the anthology pursues. Within these criteria for selection, a concept that often reoccurs is that of 'balance', whether this be of themes, countries or periods. For instance, it is emphasised that the editors have sought to provide a 'conjunto geográficamente balanceado de textos' (Sardiñas and Morales 2000: 30) or a balanced perspective on the different generations of writers. Gender is omitted as a criterion necessary for achieving this balance and is an aspect overlooked also by those scholars who review these anthologies for academic journals, another further area deserving critical scrutiny but that lies outside the scope of this article. Even in those volumes in which the anthologists admit to some 'imbalances' or 'desigualdades' (Phillips-López 2003: 49), the uneven gender representation is ignored even though it remains the most obvious imbalance in the studied volumes.

4.2. Satellites

Another area that has been analysed in the discourse of paratexts is the rhetorical trends that recur in the introduction to the indexed women authors. There are plenty of examples in which the female authors are introduced in conjunction with a male author: this inevitably presents the woman author as – in the worst cases – dependant on or validated by a referential male intellectual or – in the best cases – as associated with a male figure who asserts the female's position within the intellectual sphere. These

trends reflect ‘processes of exclusion or mere tokenism’ (Winders 1991: 12) of women intellectuals in general.⁵

The most astonishing example is that of Elena Garro’s *Reencuentro de personajes*, published by Dárcena in 2016. This volume came initially with a book band that was later removed by the publishing house due to the upheaval it caused within social networks and which presented her as: ‘Mujer de Octavio Paz, amante de Bioy Casares, inspiradora de García Márquez y admirada por Borges’.⁶

There are further – and less obvious – examples of this type of discourse that relegates women authors to the role of objects in a literary canon dominated and validated by the male subject. In those anthologies in which some women writers are included, in the limited textual space that is available to establish the importance of these women authors formulas such as ‘She was the wife/friend/lover of [male intellectual]’, or ‘acclaimed/discovered by [male intellectual]’ are frequent:

Muestra del creciente interés hacia su obra es la publicación en Londres de sus cuentos selectos con el título de *Leopoldina’s Dream* (1988), con un prefacio de Jorge Luis Borges. (Hahn 2006: 323)

El gran crítico español Amado Alonso vislumbró tempranamente la singularidad de la escritura de María Luisa Bombal al prologar *La última niebla* (1934) [...] (ibid.: 166)

Similarly, in international anthologies on the fantastic:

[On Ann Bridge] Like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who praised some of her early work, she was interested in the paranormal [...] (Mangel 1990: 347).

⁵ Winders provides the paradigmatic example of Simone de Beauvoir, who is first ‘[...] associated in the popular mind with Jean-Paul Sartre’ before her own intellectual contribution is discussed (Stromberg in Winders, 1991: 12) in the leading textbook *European Intellectual History since 1789*.

⁶ Even in the feminist-oriented anthology of Hispanic short stories *Other Fires* (Manguel 1986), the introduction to Elena Garro concludes with ‘She married (and then divorced) the poet Octavio Paz’ (1986: 220). These types of discursive strategies make us wonder whether the same would have been noted in reverse: would Elena Garro be mentioned in a short biographical note to Octavio Paz?

[On Vernon Lee] C'est au cours de ses voyages en Angleterre qu'elle fit la connaissance de Rossetti, d'Oscar Wilde, de H.G. Wells qui devinrent ses amis. (Richter 1995: 82)

[Or the opening lines of Edith Wharton's introduction] Dans sa représentation de la ploutocratie et de l'aristocratie américaines, du milieu rigide et fermé que constituait la High Society new-yorkaise du siècle dernier, elle n'a qu'un rival: Henry James. (Richter 1995: 136)

As noted in the two last passages, this type of satellite discourse can be identified even in gender-oriented anthologies such as Ann Richter's *Le fantastique féminin* (1995). While the highlighting of the intellectual or personal connections amongst peers is certainly a common procedure in anthologies, this matrix of affinities is uneven and male-dominated. It is rarely the case that male authors are presented and the quality of their literary work validated in terms of their rivalry with a female writer or of their relationships to the female intellectuals they met during their lifetime.

The phenomenon of constantly referencing a validating male figure is analogous in many ways to Virginia Woolf's concept of 'women as mirror' and to Simone de Beauvoir's argument of man occupying in the central position of a cultural system and woman 'as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being [...] He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other' (1992: 47). This man-dominated intertextuality can also be read in terms of what Victoria Ocampo referred to as the omnipresent presence of a biased male witness, one of the core ideas of her feminist speech in 1936, the year in which she founded the Women's Union.⁷ More recently, the scholar and writer Remedios Zafra has emphasised this same idea: '[...] ser presentadas

⁷ 'Until the present, we have heard principally from male witnesses concerning women, witnesses that a court of law would not allow since they would be considered suspect, male witnesses whose testimony is biased. The woman herself has scarcely uttered a word' (Ocampo in Meyer 1990: 139).

como esposas, amantes o amigas de un hombre ha sido una contundente forma de neutralización como creadoras. «Ser de» alguien no es lo mismo que «ser»' (2017: 155).

4.3. Centre and Margin

Another identifiable trend concerns the presence of a discourse that juxtaposes canonical versus marginal writers and tends to position women within the second of these two categories.⁸ In this respect, it is useful to recall Harris's distinction between a *diachronic* and a *nonce* group of authors in canon theory. The first one, distinguished by its stability ('the glacially changing core') contrasts with the second one, a 'rapidly changing periphery [...] only a minuscule part of which will eventually become part of the diachronic canon' (1991: 113). While in many ways this 'nonce' position of women writers is a statement of the obvious given the limited role that women authors have been allowed to play in the history of the Hispanic fantastic, the lack of further critical engagement with this fact establishes a dangerous binomial of 'obras fundamentales' (written by male authors) and secondary, less well-known writings. The back cover of *Relatos fantásticos hispanoamericanos* provides one of the many examples of this phenomenon: 'A lo largo de treinta narraciones, no sólo de clásicos de la narrativa fantástica del Continente como Darío, Lugones, Quiroga, Borges, Bioy Casares o Cortázar, sino también de autores menos conocidos o más recientes en el género, como Amparo Dávila, Silvina Ocampo, José Emilio Pacheco, Abelardo Castillo o María Elena Llana' (Sardiñas and Morales 2003). These types of seemingly neutral statements obviate the imprint of the 'fundamental' authors and conceal the specific contribution (formal, thematic, structural, etc.) of these 'more marginal' writers.

Following a similar discursive line are references to the role of some female writers as 'precursora', 'inspiradora' or 'antecedente'. For instance, María Luisa

⁸ A certain counterbalancing of this discourse is occurring in some of the 21st century anthologies that highlight the central position of some women authors in the contemporary fantastic canon (e.g. Cristina Fernández Cubas in *La realidad oculta* or Pilar Pedraza in *Perturbaciones*).

Bombal's *La amortajada* (1941) is presented as possibly having inspired Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (Hahn 2006: 166) and Gertrudis de Avellaneda as deserving of rescue 'como un temprano y valioso antecedente de la narrativa fantástica de Hispanoamérica' (Sardiñas and Morales 2003: 34). Juana Manuela Gorriti 'está considerada la precursora de la literatura fantástica en el Río de la Plata' (ibid. 92) but the tradition as such is embodied by Lugones, in whose work 'se distinguen elementos característicos de la narrativa fantástica del siglo XIX' (ibid. 138). There is nothing reproachable about this statement, since the works of Avellaneda and Gorriti precede by a few decades those of Lugones, whose fantastic production is indeed more extensive. Nevertheless, it is worth considering how by assigning the role to these female authors of forerunner or facilitator of subsequent, more established and prestigious narrative models, these authors are inevitably set against and placed in a less dominant position to a male-authored canon of the fantastic personified by authors such as Lugones, Borges or Cortázar, who constitute the centre of gravity. For instance, in the aforementioned anthology by Sardiñas and Morales, no male author is described as a 'forerunner' and more assertive terms (such as 'creador') are employed to introduce early fantastic writings by male authors (e.g. 'Roa Bárcena figura como el creador del cuento literario mexicano', ibid. 117).

A similar predominating male-intertextual discourse can be observed in international anthologies that include texts beyond the Hispanic sphere. Often when the short story of a female writer is presented a large part of the relevant introduction is devoted not to highlighting the contribution of that writer but rather to indicating the stylistic or thematic parallelisms of her work with the writings of a male author (to whom more textual space is generally devoted). For example, when introducing Grace Amundson's 'The Child Who Believed', Mangel dedicates two paragraphs to the

Borgesian idea of time. Only in the third paragraph is Amundson's story introduced, where it is also considered in relation to another canonical (male) author: H.G. Wells (Mangel, 1990: 1). As noted in section 4.2., this type of intertextuality is unidirectional, since the work of male authors is rarely discussed in relation to female-influenced aesthetic features. This male-centred intertextuality can be read in parallel with Karl Erik Rosengren's method studying the canon as cross-referencing (1968). The empirical data he gathers registers the amount of mentions an author has in reviews concerning other writers published in Swedish newspapers and periodicals. This technique reveals an assumed frame of reference in a given literary system. The canon thus can be identified by counting the number of references to authors or texts the reader's knowledge of whom is taken for granted, or, as Fokkema puts it 'only writers who are well known can be referred to for reasons of comparison or explanation' (1996: 58). In the discourse of the analysed paratexts, the frame of reference is unquestionably male.

4.4. Literary excellence and other add-ons

A further characteristic identified in the presentation of women authors regards the remarks added to the criteria of aesthetic merit (remarks that are rarely present in the more factual and merit-focused descriptions of their male counterparts).

Two main non-literary areas recur in the introductions to female writers: their contribution as feminists and the personal context that drove them to write a particular piece (this generally being a mental breakdown or the struggles of family life).

A representative case of the first thematic group is the 'personalidad extravagante' of Juana Manuela Gorriti presented as connected to that of George Sand ('vestía con atuendo masculino, como hiciera la romántica francesa George Sand', López Martín 2006: 38). The reader also learns across these volumes that Gorriti 'fundó un colegio de primeras letras para alumnos de ambos sexos' (ibid.: 38), that Pedraza's

literature ‘participa de un feminismo sadiano’ (Muñoz Rengel 2009: 88), that Sinclair ‘was an ardent supporter of women’s suffrage’ (Manguel 1990: 200) and that Gilman published *Women and Economics* in 1898 and founded a feminist magazine and the Women’s Peace Party in 1915 (1990: 762).

The second thematic group is much more problematic. Personal circumstances are often presented as having shaped an author’s style. In the case of Gorritti, for example, the reader is told that ‘el exilio, la ruptura de su matrimonio, la muerte prematura de dos hijos - la dotaron de un carácter sólido y una fina sensibilidad’ (López Martín 2006: 38). The tendency to cite a female author’s biography as inspiration or even as justification for her creativity can also be identified in other international anthologies of the fantastic. In *White Fire*, the reader learns that Amparo Dávila’s stories ‘describe the struggles of family life’ (Manguel 1986: 122), that Charlotte Perkins Gilman ‘tried to overcome her depression by writing’ (Manguel 1986: 762), Antonia White ‘suffered two failed marriages and a mental breakdown, but her husband encouraged her to continue another novel’ (Manguel 1986: 305) and that May Sinclair ‘exemplified in her early years the abused Victorian heroine of the previous age. Her bankrupt father was an alcoholic who lived apart from the rest of the family, her five brothers suffered from heart disease, and May Sinclair, being the only girl, was in charge of nursing them and keeping house’ (1986: 200). Consciously or unconsciously, this type of discourse evokes the much-criticised opposition between innate (male) genius versus the (female) self-made hardworking intellectual.

4.5. A *feminine* fantastic?

Some anthologies directly tackled the question of whether there is a feminine poetics of the supernatural and thus a *feminine* way of writing the fantastic. This is particularly the case of Ann Richter’s anthology *Le fantastique feminine* (1995).

Starting from the assumption of a binary experience of the world ('Nous croyons, quant à nous, qu'il existe un mode de vivre et de penser typiquement féminin', 1995: 10), Richter outlines the foundations of a gendered poetics of the fantastic that is exemplified by the international selection of stories in her anthology. Richter's argument is thus clearly based on a gender difference: 'Car les femmes (puissent-elles ne jamais l'oublier) ont l'art de parler *autrement*' (1995: 10), and to emphasise her point she identifies a series of antagonist couples in the history of the fantastic, such as Henry James versus Edith Wharton, Jorge Luis Borges versus Silvina Ocampo. A female way of writing the fantastic is therefore juxtaposed to a masculine-fantastic, which according to Richter is more anchored in the rational. Richter (1995: 9-28) aligns the concept of the feminine fantastic with the attributes that she considers *feminine*: mystery, seduction, darkness, the subconscious, intimacy and introspection, a drive towards nature as the lost paradise and the recurrence of the theme of the metamorphosis in its many (and subversive) variations (see also Richter 2017). Without stating that these traits are specifically *female*, some of these characteristics configuring an alleged *feminine* poetics of the fantastic are also identifiable in Hispanic anthologies. For example, the connection between Cristina Peri Rossi's fantastic and the erotic and dreamlike (Muñoz Rengel 2009: 50); Julia Otxoa's work as 'lo onírico, lo extraño, lo ambiguo, lo irracional' (ibid.: 90) and Laura Freixas' stories as 'fruto de una libre imaginación soñadora' (ibid.: 124).

Richter's anthology deserves the credit for being one the very few volumes dedicated solely to the contribution of women writers to the fantastic canon. It also deserves to be praised for the extratextual materials that she provides in the introductory sections to each of the anthologised stories, where the influence of these women writers on canonical male writers is demonstrated. Richter proposes an alternative canon of the

fantastic, based on the assumption of a different aesthetic practice influenced by a history of gender-based conditioning factors. However, taking this anthology as the paradigm that proclaims the existence of a *feminine* fantastic, one should ponder whether this approach might in fact be perpetuating some clichés associated with femininity while also falling into the trap of a binary and reductionist aesthetics (writing like a woman/writing like a man) that has already been much criticised by feminists. The extent to which a focus on the domestic and the irrational as distinctively *feminine* sets up problematic gendered-focused oppositions such as universal/public vs. domestic and male/rational/logos vs. female/irrational/Eros ('Elles détiennent le privilège de penser autrement qu'avec la raison', Richter 1995: 10) should also be considered.⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research on the fantastic canon will not surprise readers familiar with gender theory, since they have already been denounced by feminists who have scrutinised processes of canon formation in literature. Nevertheless, the question of gender and canon in the context of the Hispanic fantastic had been overlooked, an omission that has inspired this research project, which had three primary aims: to raise concerns about the lack of critical engagement with the key names that serve as referents for the fantastic in the Hispanic context, by considering 'what is it that makes certain texts having a better chance of surviving longer than others?' (Fokkema 1996: 59); to generate an empirical platform with data that can be drawn upon in further research seeking to address similar questions; and, since the literature of the fantastic has become identified almost exclusively with writers who are male, to provide a

⁹ The emphasis on the oneiric quality of texts written by women dangerously recalls the sexist anecdote mentioned by Manguel in his introduction to the work of English writer and musician Sylvia Townsend Warner. In 1925 her work was praised and published by an editor because '[i]t was unusual to find a woman writing so objectively' (1990: 127).

critical framework that might motivate our intervention in the existing canon as educators and researchers.

As to the original question of whether there is a genealogy of the female fantastic, the answer is undoubtedly affirmative. However, the statistical analysis of the data suggests that it cannot be claimed that there is a canon of women authors in the Hispanic fantastic, since the representation of women writers in anthologies is minimal. There is no consensus as to which women writers act as referential and there is thus a lack of common female frames of reference and of models, following Harris' criteria that define a literary canon (1991). In addition, the discursive analysis of the paratextual materials indicates certain trends and patterns that provide a starting point for a critical enquiry regarding the ('nonce') positioning of the female within the canon and the presentation of female contributions to a male-centred history of the fantastic. These trends reflect a male-dominated intertextuality, a recurrent satellite-effect in relation to a male intellectual that implies a need for a masculine validation, the presentation of female authors as facilitators of (precursors to) a male-embodied core canon (female forerunner of a tradition vs. male *creator* of a tradition), the inclusion of biographical information unrelated to their aesthetic and literary contribution as an assumed added-value and the risk of postulating an alternative *feminine* fantastic that perpetuates fundamental binary oppositions of patriarchal logic such as culture/nature and rational/irrational.

Criticism of fantastic literature in the Hispanic cultural spheres should continue to engage with the canon from a feminist perspective, by critically reflecting on aspects such as why some authors are considered more worthy than others of canonical enshrinement, who recommends certain texts for inclusion, which and how secondary sources are consulted to prepare an anthology and who controls their circulation – and

by remembering the fact that in the fantastic canon, as this article shows, gender is a central question that has been conspicuously silenced.¹⁰

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¹⁰ As stated in the introduction to this special issue, in the past years there have been a number of anthologies including exclusively women writers within the domains of the fantastic and science fiction, such as *Deuda temporal, antología de narradoras cubanas de ciencia ficción* (eds. Chaviano, Lima, Vicente 2015), *La imaginación: la loca de la casa* (ed. Fernández 2015) and *Alucinadas I, II and III: Ciencia ficción escrita por mujeres* (eds. Jurado and Lara 2014; eds. Atuña and Díaz Eiriz 2016; eds. Angulo and Clemente 2017), as well as anthologies with a clear feminist focus, for example *Las otras: antología de mujeres artificiales* (ed. López Pellisa 2018).

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