

# **A Commented Translation on Rosa Montero's "Amor ciego"**

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my Mother and Father, Salam and Raji Khoury, who introduced me to the world of languages before I even uttered my first words. Thank you for the songs, stories, movies and the rich adventures. These memories will forever be my shadow. To my Father, who always told me through a translation of his own that, “The more languages you speak, the more persons you are.” (Arabic Proverb)*

## **Abstract**

This major research paper dissertation is an examination of how I accomplished a side-by-side Spanish to English translation of Spanish author Rosa Montero's short story, "Amor ciego", from the novel *Amantes y enemigos: Cuentos de parejas*. Firsthand, I introduce Montero's biography from her childhood into the vigorous career of a journalist and novelist, a set of her works and her writing style. Moreover, I execute a psychoanalysis of Montero's disturbingly complex protagonist and later centralize "Amor ciego" not only on a Spanish platform, but on a universal platform as well, which is what makes the tale more relatable to an English-speaking audience. I further speculate the reasons for which only very few of Montero's writings have been translated, including the many other Spanish women literary writers and women writers across the globe whose works have been neglected in translation. In addition to addressing women literary writers, I also lightly introduce the application of some contemporary feminist translation theories. Ultimately, I use this dissertation as an annotated translation to address how I applied contemporary and target-oriented theorist Eugene Albert Nida's theory of *dynamic equivalence* as a translation guide basis throughout my rendering of the short story.

### **Amor ciego (Montero)**

Tengo cuarenta años, soy muy fea y estoy casada con un ciego.

Supongo que algunos se reirán al leer esto; no sé por qué, pero la fealdad en la mujer suele despertar gran chirigota. A otros la frase les parecerá incluso romántica: tal vez les traiga memorias de la infancia, de cuando los cuentos nos hablaban de la hermosura oculta de las almas. Y así, los sapos se convertían en príncipes al calor de nuestros besos, la Bella se enamoraba de la Bestia, el Patito Feo guardaba en su interior un deslumbrante cisne y hasta el monstruo del doctor Frankenstein era apreciado en toda su dulce humanidad por el invidente que no se asustaba de su aspecto. La ceguera, en fin, podía ser la llave hacia la auténtica belleza: sin ver, Homero veía más que los demás mortales. Y yo, fea de solemnidad, horrorosa del todo, podría haber encontrado en mi

### **Blind Love (Khoury)**

I'm a forty year old woman. I'm atrociously ugly. And I'm married to a blind man.

Some may chuckle when they read this: but when a woman is ugly it's the cause for much joking. For some, the thought might even seem romantic, bringing back childhood memories of when fairy tales had the underlying message that true beauty came from within. In reference, a frog changed into a prince after it'd been kissed, Belle fell in love with the Beast, the Ugly Duckling matured into a beautiful swan, and lastly, Dr. Frankenstein's monster was valued for his kind soul by the blind that weren't afraid of his appearance. In short, blindness could've been the key to true beauty, because without sight, Homer saw more than most mortals. And then there's me, horrifyingly ugly and the most horrendous of all, who saw something in my blind husband, in the substantial man that he is, who was able to

marido ciego al hombre sustancial capaz de adorar mis virtudes profundas.

Pues bien, todo eso es pura filfa.

En primer lugar, si eres tan fea como yo lo soy, fea hasta el frenesí, hasta lo admirable, hasta el punto de interrumpir las conversaciones de los bares cuando entro (tengo dos ojitos como dos botones a ambos lados de una vasta cabezota; el pelo color rata, tan escaso que deja entrever la línea gris del cráneo; la boca sin labios, diminuta, con unos dientecillos afilados de tiburón pequeño, y la nariz aplastada, como de púgil), nadie deposita nunca en ti, eso puedo jurarlo, el deseo y la voluntad de creer que tu interior es bello. De modo que en realidad nadie te ama nunca, porque el amor es justamente eso: un espasmo de nuestra imaginación por el cual creemos reconocer en el otro al príncipe azul o la princesa rosa. Escogemos al prójimo como quien escoge una percha, y sobre ella colgamos el invento de nuestros sueños. Y da

adore me ever so deeply.

But then again, all of that is one big lie.

First of all, if you're as ugly as I am, which is painfully ugly, remarkably ugly, ugly enough to stop a bar conversation simply by setting foot inside (I have two little button eyes on either side of my ginormous head, mouse-coloured hair with a receding hairline where you can actually see the white of my scalp, thin lips, tiny shark-like teeth and a flat squished-up nose like a boxer), I can assure you that no one would dare to think that you're beautiful from within. In reality, no one will ever love you, because love is just this - a figment of our imagination in which we believe to see our Knight in Shining Armour or Fair Maiden. We choose friends in the same way we choose hangers; hangers onto which hold our dreams. I think it's a damn coincidence that people are always drawn to look for the pretty hangers and it's a goddamn coincidence that pretty girls, as idiotic as they

la maldita casualidad de que la gente siempre tiende a buscar perchas bonitas. Da la cochina casualidad de que a las niñas lindas, por muy necias que sean, siempre se les intuye un interior emocionante. Mientras que nadie se molesta en suponer un alma hermosa en una mujer canija y cabezota con los ojos demasiado separados. A veces esta certidumbre que acompaña mi fealdad escuece como una herida abierta: no es que no me vean, es que no me imaginan.

En cuanto a mi marido, sin duda se casó conmigo porque es ciego. Pero no porque su defecto le hubiera enriquecido con una mayor sintonía espiritual, con una sensibilidad superior para amarme y entenderme, sino porque su incapacidad le colocaba en desventaja en el competitivo mercado conyugal. Él siempre supo que soy horrorosa, y eso siempre le resultó mortificante. Al principio no nos llevábamos

are, are believed that their beauty is reflected on the inside. But yet, people don't think twice that a beautiful soul could be contained in a short, big-headed woman with wide-set eyes. Sometimes this thought will linger within my hideous body and sting like an open wound: it's not that they don't see me, it's that they don't picture me.

As for my husband, he only married me because he's blind, not because his handicap had rewarded him with a greater spiritual harmony and a better sense to love and understand me, but rather because his disability put him at a disadvantage in the competitive dating market. He's always known that I was appalling and this always tortured him. In the beginning, everything was fine between us: he's smart, competent (he's a Director at *ONCE*<sup>1</sup>) and was even sweet at times when we got married seven years ago. But he was convinced that he ended up with a notoriously hideous woman

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<sup>1</sup> The *ONCE* (*la organización nacional de los ciegos españoles*) is a national organization of social benefits in Spain for the blind and visually impaired.

tan mal: es listo, es capaz (trabaja como directivo de la ONCE) y cuando nos casamos, hace ya siete años, incluso fue dulce en ocasiones. Pero estaba convencido de haber tenido que cargar con una fea notoria por el simple hecho de ser invidente, y ese pensamiento se le pudrió dentro y le llenó de furia y de rencor. Yo también sabía que había cargado con un ciego porque soy medio monstra, pero la situación nunca me sacó de quicio como a él, no sé bien por qué. Tal vez sea cosa de mi sexo, del tradicional masoquismo femenino que nos hace aguantar lo inaguantable bajo el espejismo de un final feliz; o tal vez sea que él, en la opacidad de su mirada, dejó desbocar su imaginación y me creyó aún más horrenda de lo que en realidad soy, la Fealdad Suprema, la Fealdad Absoluta e Insufrible retumbando de una manera ensordecedora en la oscuridad de su cerebro.

A decir verdad, con el tiempo yo me había ido acostumbrando o quizá resignando a lo que soy. Me tengo por una mujer

based on the simple fact that he's blind, and the thought of this tore him apart on the inside and caused him much rage and resentment. I also knew that I had ended up with a blind man because I'm heinous, but I'm not sure why it infuriated him more than me. Maybe it's gender-related, maybe it's traditional female masochism under the illusion of a happy ending that makes us suppress the insuppressible. Or, it could possibly be that in the opacity in his gaze, he stopped letting his imagination wander and believed that I was even more horrendous than I actually am, the Queen of all Ugly, the absolutely and unbearably ugly, that silently echoed in the dark state of his mind.

To tell the truth, over time I had either accepted myself or given up on who I was. I consider myself to be intelligent, cultured and a professionally skilled woman. I'm a lawyer and partner for an insurance company. I'm perfectly aware of what my colleagues say about me behind my back. I know all about

inteligente, culta, profesionalmente competente. Soy abogada y miembro asociado en una compañía de seguros. Sé lo que mis compañeros dicen de mí a mis espaldas, las burlas, las bromas, los apodos: señora Quitahipos, la Ogra Mayor... Pero he tenido una carrera meteórica: que se fastidien. Empecé en el mundo de las pólizas desde abajo, como vendedora a domicilio. Con mi cara, nadie se atrevía a cerrarme la puerta en las narices: unos por conmiseración, como quien se reprime de maltratar al jorobado o al paralítico; y otros por fascinación, atrapados en la morbosa contemplación de un rostro tan difícil. Estos últimos eran mis mejores clientes; yo hablaba y hablaba mientras ellos me escrutaban mesmerizados, absortos en mis ojos pitarrosos (produzco más legañas que el ciudadano medio), y al final siempre firmaban el contrato sin discutir: la pura culpa que los corroía, culpa de mirarme y de disfrutarlo. Como si se hubieran permitido un placer prohibido, como si la fealdad fuera algo

the mockeries, the jokes and the nicknames: Ms. Cure-for-Hiccups, the Massive Ogre... but I've climbed the corporate ladder quickly which angered them. I started my career from the bottom working in insurance policy as a door- to-door saleswoman. With a face like mine, no one would dare slam the door in it: some sympathized for me like they would for a hunchback or a paralytic, whereas others were fascinated and taken aback in some sick way by such a rough-looking face. But these were my best clients of all, I would endlessly talk while they thoroughly scrutinized me, mesmerized by my appearance and engrossed by my crusty eyes (I tend to have more eye goop than the average Joe). And in the end, they always resorted to signing the contract without discussion because the pure guilt consumed them, the guilt of staring at me and enjoying every moment of it, as if they were entitled to such guilty pleasure, as if being ugly were something obscene. These clients helped me in some form or another

obsceno. O sea que el ser así me ayudó de algún modo en mi carrera.

Además de las virtudes ya mencionadas, tengo una comprensible mala leche que, bien manejada, pasa por ser un sentido del humor agudo y negro. De manera que suelo caer bien a la gente y tengo amigos. Siempre los tuve. Buenos amigos que me contaban, con los ojos en blanco, cuánto amaban a la tonta de turno sólo porque era mona. Pero este comportamiento lamentable es consustancial a los humanos: a decir verdad, incluso yo misma lo he practicado. Yo también he sentido temblar mi corazón ante un rostro hermoso, unas espaldas anchas, unas breves caderas. Y lo que más me fastidia no es que los hombres guapos me parezcan físicamente atractivos (esto sería una simple constatación objetiva), sino que al instante creo intuir en ellos los más delicados valores morales y psíquicos. El que un abdomen musculoso o unos labios sensuales te hagan deducir inmediatamente que su propietario es

throughout my career; and I have my appearance to thank for it.

In addition to the virtues I've already mentioned, I also have this bitchy tendency that others catch onto when properly expressed. It comes off as a witty and dark sense of humour that make people like me and that's how I attract friends. I've always had good friends that told me, all the while rolling their eyes, how much they loved the silly girl in me because she was cute. But this pathetic behaviour is essential for mankind and to tell the truth, I've even done it myself. I've also felt my heart beat violently before a handsome face, broad shoulders and a slender waist. But what bothers me most isn't the fact that I'm physically attracted to gorgeous men (that's objective), but rather that I immediately believe that I'm intuitive enough to see in them their most ethical values. Someone with a defined six-pack or soft lips makes you instantly believe that whoever is in possession of that body is kind, delicate,

un ser delicado, caballeroso, generoso, tierno, valiente e inteligente, me resulta uno de los más grandes y estúpidos enigmas de la creación. Mi marido tiene un abdomen de atleta, unos buenos labios. Pero me besó con ellos y no me convertí en princesa, no dejé de ser sapo. Y él, en quien imaginé todo tipo de virtudes, se fue revelando como un ser violento y amargado.

No tengo espejos en mi casa. Mi marido no los necesita y yo los odio. Sí hay espejos, claro, en los servicios del despacho; y normalmente me lavo las manos con la cabeza gacha. He aprendido a mirarme sin verme en los cristales de las ventanas, en los escaparates de las tiendas, en los retrovisores de los coches, en los ojos de los demás. Vivimos en una sociedad llena de reflejos: a poco que te descuidas, en cualquier esquina te asalta tu propia imagen. En estas circunstancias, yo hice lo posible por olvidarme de mí. No me las apañaba del todo mal. Tenía un buen trabajo, buenos amigos,

gentlemanly, generous, tender, brave and intelligent seems like one of the biggest and most foolish mysteries of our species. My husband has a toned abdomen and nice lips and when he kissed me, I remained a frog. And he, in whom I pictured all kinds of virtues, turned out to be aggressive and bitter.

I don't have any mirrors in my house because naturally my husband doesn't need them and I loathe them. If I come into contact with them in the washrooms at work, I'll wash my hands with my head bowed. I've learned to look at myself without actually seeing myself through the glare from windows, in rear view mirrors and in the eyes of others. We live in a society full of reflections, so if you're not careful, your own appearance can abruptly attack you on any given street corner which is why I did everything possible to forget who I am. I had a great job, loyal friends, books to read and movies to see. As for my husband, we peacefully hated each other. Life carried on this way: cold, slow and

libros que leer, películas que ver. En cuanto a mi marido, nos odiábamos tranquilamente. La vida transcurría así, fría, lenta y tenaz como un río de mercurio. Sólo a veces, en algún atardecer particularmente hermoso, se me llenaba la garganta de una congoja insoportable, del dolor de todas las palabras nunca dichas, de toda la belleza nunca compartida, de todo el deseo de amor nunca puesto en práctica. Entonces mi mente se decía: jamás, jamás, jamás. Y en cada jamás me quería morir. Pero luego esas turbaciones agudas se pasaban, de la misma manera que se pasa un ataque de tos, uno de esos ataques furiosos que te ponen al borde de la asfixia, para desaparecer instantes después sin dejar más recuerdo que una carraspera y una furtiva lágrima. Además, sé bien que incluso a los guapos les entran ganas de morirse algunas veces.

Hace unos cuantos meses, sin embargo, empecé a sentir una rara inquietud. Era como si me encontrara en la antesala del

tenacious like a flowing river of mercury. It was only at times, but particularly one evening with a beautiful dusk sky, that my throat filled with unbearable distress from the accumulated pain of all the unspoken words never expressed, of all the beautiful moments never shared and of all the desire to love that was never executed. Then my mind would keep repeating to me, “never”. And in every never, I wanted to die. But later the intense discomfort would go away the same way a coughing fit would when violent attacks nearly suffocate you and then disappear just moments after, merely leaving behind a hoarse voice and teary eyes. I’m convinced that even good-looking men experience something of a similar nature.

It's been a few months since I started feeling this severe anxiety overshadow me, like the feeling I get being in the waiting room at the dentist's office expecting to get called in when suddenly the fateful door opens and the assistant looks at me and says:

dentista, y me hubiera llegado el turno, y estuviera esperando a que en cualquier momento se abriera la fatídica puerta y apareciera la enfermera diciendo: “Pase usted” (el símil viene al caso porque me sangran las encías y mis diente-cillos de tiburón pequeño siempre me han planteado muchos problemas). Le hablé un día a Tomás de esta tribulación y esta congoja, y él dictaminó: “Ésa es la crisis de los cuarenta”. Tal vez fuera eso, tal vez no. El caso es que a menudo me ponía a llorar por las noches sin ton ni son, y empecé a pensar que tenía que separarme de mi marido. No sólo me sentía fea, sino enferma.

Tomás era el auditor. Venía de Barcelona, tenía treinta y seis años, era bajito y atractivo y, para colmo, se acababa de divorciar. Su llegada revolucionó la oficina: era el más joven, el más guapo. Mi linda secretaria (que se llama Linda) perdió enseguida las entendederas por él. Empezó a quedarse en blanco durante horas,

“Please come in” (I use this comparison because I go to the dentist regularly as my gums bleed constantly, not to mention my little shark teeth have always caused me many problems as well). One day I spoke to Tomás about how I was suffering from this malicious anxiety, to which he simply replied: “You’re having a midlife crisis”. It’s possible that I was, but the point is I often cried myself to sleep at night without rhyme or reason and I started thinking that I needed to separate from my husband. Not only did I feel ugly, I was starting to feel ill as well.

Tomás was an auditor, from Barcelona. He was thirty-six years old, short and stocky yet charmingly attractive and had recently been divorced. Because he was the youngest and the most handsome one around the office, you can only imagine how his arrival at our company really stirred things up. My secretary Linda immediately lost her mind when she laid eyes on him – she went blank gazing at the corner of the room as if

contemplando la esquina de la habitación con fijeza de autista. Se le caían los papeles, trasapelaba los contratos y dejaba las frases a medio musitar. Cuando Tomás aparecía por mi despacho, sus mejillas enrojecían violentamente y no atinaba a decir ni una palabra. Pero se ponía en pie y recorría atolondradamente la habitación de acá para allá, mostrando su palmito y meneando las bonitas caderas, la muy perra (toda bella, por muy tonta o tímida que sea, posee una formidable intuición de su belleza, una habilidad innata para lucirse). Yo asistía al espectáculo con curiosidad y cierto inevitable desagrado. No había dejado de advertir que Tomás venía mucho a vernos; primero con excusas relativas a su trabajo, después ya abiertamente, como si tan sólo quisiera charlar un ratito conmigo. A mí no me engañaba, por supuesto: estaba convencida de que Linda y él acabarían enroscados, desplomados el uno en el otro por la inevitable fuerza de gravedad de la guapeza.

she were autistic, lost her train of thought mid-sentence and her contracts went flying all over the room when she dropped them. When Tomás came into my office, she turned bright red and became mute. But that bitch stood right up and walked around my office from one corner to the next in a scatterbrained fashion so she could parade her sexy body, swinging her hips around (there's no question that she's flawless, but even as shy and ditsy as she comes off, she knows how attractive she is and Linda's a natural when it comes to flaunting it). I was simultaneously intrigued and disgusted by her little performance. Tomás often showed up unexpectedly at our door: at first, he had job-related excuses but then it became obvious as if he just wanted to chat with me. But I wasn't fooled one bit because I was certain that he and Linda would end up together under some inevitable force, because according to science, this is the law of beauty.

I have to admit that I found this to be

Y eso me fastidiaba un poco, he de reconocerlo. Lo cual era un sentimiento absurdo, porque nunca aspiré a nada con Tomás. Sí, era sensible a sus dientes blancos y a sus ojos azules maliciosos y a los cortos rizados que se le amontonaban sobre el recio cogote y a sus manos esbeltas de dedos largos y al lunar en la comisura izquierda de su boca y a los dos pelillos que asomaban por la borda de la camisa cuando se aflojaba la corbata y a sus sólidas nalgas y al antebrazo musculoso que un día toqué inadvertidamente y a su olor de hombre y a sus ojeras y a sus orejas y a la anchura de sus muñecas e incluso a la ternura de su calva incipiente (como verán, me fijaba en él); era sensible a sus encantos, digo, pero nunca se me ocurrió la desmesura de creerle a mi alcance. Los feos feísimos somos como aquellos pobres que pueden admirar la belleza de un Rolls Royce aun a sabiendas de que nunca se van a subir en un automóvil semejante. Los feos feísimos somos como los mendigos de Dickens, que aplastaban las

somewhat bothersome, which is absurd because I never aspired to pursue any type of relationship with Tomás. Yes, I had a weakness for his sparkling white teeth, intense blue eyes, the short curls that always stuck together on the fierce nape of his neck, the long fingers on his slim hands, the mole on the left corner of his mouth, the two tiny chest hairs that emerged from the top of his shirt when he loosened his tie, his tight butt, muscular forearm (that I accidentally touched one day), his manly smell, his ears, the bags under his eyes, the width of his wrists and even his tender bald spot (you can tell that I studied him well). I had a weakness for his endearing qualities, but never had it occurred to me in a million years that he could ever be within my league, let me explain: us excruciatingly ugly people are comparable to the impoverished who can admire the beauty of a Rolls Royce even though they're aware that they'll never be able to set foot in it. Us excruciatingly ugly people are like Dickens'

narices en las ventanas de las casas felices para atisbar el fulgor de la vida ajena. Ya sé que me estoy poniendo melodramática: antes no me permitía jamás la autoconmiseración y ahora desbordo. Debo de haberme perdonado. O quizá sea lo de la crisis de los cuarenta.

El caso es que un día Linda me pidió por favor por favor por favor que la ayudara. Quería que yo le diera mi opinión sobre el señor Vidaurra (o sea, sobre Tomás); porque como yo era tan buena psicóloga y tan sabia, y como Vidaurra venía tan a menudo a mi despacho... No necesité pedirle que se explicara: me bastó con poner una discreta cara de atención para que Linda volcase su corazón sobre la plaza pública. Ah, estaba muy enamoriscada de Tomás, y pensaba que a él le sucedía algo parecido; pero el hombre debía de ser muy indeciso o muy tímido y no había manera de que la cosa funcionara. Y qué cómo veía yo la situación y qué le aconsejaba...

panhandlers because they can squish their faces right up to the window of a beautiful home just to get a glimpse of the vibrancy of someone else's life. I know that I'm being melodramatic; I never tolerated self-pity and now I'm drowning in it. I really should have more self-compassion, or maybe I am just having a midlife crisis.

The point of all of this is that one day Linda asked me for a favour and profusely begged me to help her. She wanted to know what I thought of Mr. Vidaurra (meaning Tomás) because as I was good at analyzing people and very knowledgeable, and as Mr. Vidaurra often came over to my office... I didn't need further explanation from her. It was enough for me to put on a discreet and attentive face in order for Linda to pour her heart out. Naturally, she confessed that she was smitten by Tomás and was convinced that he had similar feelings for her, but the guy had to either be shy or uncertain of her so I didn't think there was a chance that this

Tal vez piensen ustedes que ésta es una conversación insólita entre una secretaria y su jefa (recuerden que yo tengo que ganarme amigos de otro modo: y un método muy eficaz es saber escuchar), pero aún les va a parecer más rara mi respuesta. Porque le dije que sí, que estaba claro que a Tomás le gustaba; que lo que tenía que hacer era escribirle una carta de amor, una carta bonita; y que, como sabía que ella no se las apañaba bien con lo literario, estaba dispuesta a redactarle la carta yo misma. ¿Qué cómo se me ocurrió tal barbaridad? Pues no sé, ya he dicho que soy leída y culta e incluso sensible bajo mi cabezota. Y pensé en el *Cyrano* y en probar a enamorar a un hombre con mis palabras. Quién sabe, quizá después de todo pudiera paladear siquiera un bocado de la gloria romántica. Quizá al cabo de los años Linda le dijera que fui yo. Así que me pasé dos días escribiendo tres folios hermosos; y luego Linda los copió con su letra y se los dio.

would work out. She wanted to know how I saw the whole situation and what I suggested that she do.

You're probably thinking that this is an unusual conversation for a boss and a secretary to be having (remember that I have to make friends in ways that are different from others and one of them is being a good listener). But what I'm about to tell you next will seem much stranger. Because I told her that I thought it was obvious that Tomás liked her and that what she should do is write him a romantic love letter, and because I knew that she wasn't the greatest writer, I personally offered to write it up myself for her. How did I come up with such a crazy idea? I'm not entirely certain. As I mentioned, I'm knowledgeable, cultured and even sensitive under this big old head, so I thought of *Cyrano* and wanted to try and make a man fall in love with my words. Who knows, maybe after all of this I would finally truly savour a mouthful of divine romance. Maybe

Eso fue un jueves. El viernes Tomás no vino, y el sábado por la tarde me llamó a mi casa: perdona que te moleste en fin de semana, ayer estuve enfermo, tengo que hacerte una consulta urgente de trabajo, me gustaría ir a verte. Era a principios de verano y mi marido estaba escuchando música sentado en la terraza. Ese día no nos hablábamos, no recuerdo ya por qué; le fui a decir que venía un compañero del trabajo y no se dignó contestarme. Yo tengo una voz bonita; tengo una voz rica y redonda, digna de otra garganta y otro cuello. Pero cuando me enfadaba con mi marido, cuando nos esforzábamos en odiarnos todo el día, el tono se me ponía pitudo y desagradable. Hasta eso me arrebatava por entonces el ciego: me robaba mí voz, mi único tesoro.

Así que cuando llegó Tomás yo no hacía más que carraspear. Nos sentamos en el sofá de la sala, saqué café y pastas, hablamos de un par de naderías. Al cabo me dijo que Linda le había mandado una carta muy

some time in the future, Linda will have told him it had been me all along. So, I spent two days writing three passionate pages. And Linda simply copied them from me in her own writing and gave the letter to him.

This all happened on a Thursday. Tomás didn't come into the office on Friday and on Saturday he called my house: "I'm sorry to bother you over the weekend, but I was sick yesterday and I have to urgently consult with you on a work matter so I need to see you." This was at the beginning of summer when my husband was out on balcony listening to music. That day we didn't speak, I don't exactly remember why, but I told him that a work colleague was coming over and he silently acknowledged me. I have a perfectly sweet voice worthy enough for the throat and neck that I was born with, but when I got mad at my husband, when we made it a point to hate each other over the course of a day, my tone of voice would be unpleasantly high-pitch. Even that, the blind

especial y que no sabía qué hacer, que me pedía consejo. Yo me esponjé de orgullo, descrucé las piernas, tosí un poco, me limpié una legaña disimuladamente con la punta de la servilleta. ¿Una carta muy especial?, repetí con rico paladeo. Sí, dijo él, una carta de amor, algo muy embarazoso, una niñería, si vieras la pobre qué cosas decía, tan adolescentes, tan cursis, tan idiotas; pero es que la pobre Linda tiene la mentalidad de una cría, es una inocente, una panoli, no toda una mujer, como tú eres.

Me quedé sin aliento: ¿mi carta una niñería? Enrojecí: cómo no me había imaginado que esto iba a pasar, cómo no me había dado cuenta antes, medio monstrua de mí, tan poco vivida en ese registro, tan poco amante, tan poco amada, virginal aún de corazón. La carta me había delatado, había desvelado mi inmadurez y mi ridícula tragedia: porque el dolor de amor suele resultar ridículo ante los ojos de los demás.

man was robbing me of my voice, my only treasure.

So up until Tomás arrived, I did nothing but clear my throat. We sat down on the couch in the living room and I brought out coffee and sweets while we idly chatted. He then admitted that Linda had sent him a special kind of letter and that he didn't know what he was going to do with it and asked me for my advice. I was utterly flattered; I uncrossed my legs, let out a light cough and cleaned out the crust from my eye with the corner of my napkin. "What kind of special letter?", I inquisitively asked. "A love letter, it was slightly embarrassing and childish, if you could see what the poor thing wrote, it was incredibly juvenile. Linda's a simpleton. She's not a real woman like you."

I was speechless. Did he just call my letter childish? I turned beet red. How could I not have known before? How did I not foresee this? I'm such a freak with barely any life lived in this body, barely a lover, barely

Pero no. Tomás no sabía que fui yo, Tomás no me creía capaz de una puerilidad de tal calibre, Tomás me había puesto una mano sobre el muslo y sonreía.

Repito: Tomás me había puesto una mano sobre el muslo.

Y sonreía, mirándome a los ojos como nunca soñé con ser mirada. Su mano era seca, tibia, suave. La mantenía abierta, con la palma hacia abajo, su carne sobre mi carne toda quieta. O más bien su carne sobre mis medias de farmacia contra las varices (aunque eran unas medias bastante bonitas, pese a todo). Entonces Tomás lanzó una ojeada al balcón: allí, al otro lado del cristal, pero apenas a cuatro metros de distancia, estaba mi marido de frente hacia nosotros, contemplándonos fijamente con sus ojos vacíos. Sin dejar de mirarle, Tomás arrastró suavemente su mano hacia arriba: la punta de sus dedos se metió por debajo del ruedo de mi falda. Yo era una tierra inexplorada de carne sensible. Me

loved, but a virgin in matters of the heart. The letter had given me away, it had revealed my immaturity and tragic past, because the pain that comes from love usually seems outlandish in the eyes of others.

But no, Tomás didn't suspect it was me and didn't believe that I could be capable of something so immature. Tomás placed his hand on my thigh and smiled.

I repeat: Tomás put his hand on *my* thigh.

And he smiled, staring into my eyes like I never would've dreamed of ever being looked at in this way. His hand was dry, warm and soft. He kept it open with the palm facing down, his flesh on mine was still. Better yet, his flesh was on the compression stockings that I wear for my varicose veins (they were still nice stockings regardless of the fact that they were used for medical purposes). Tomás glanced at the other side of the balcony through the window, and barely four metres away was my husband facing us and gazing

sorprendió descubrir el ignorado protagonismo de mis ingles, la furia de mi abdomen, la extrema voracidad de mi cintura. Por no hablar de esas suaves cavernas en donde todas las mujeres somos iguales (allí yo no era fea).

Hicimos el amor en el sofá, en silencio, sorbiendo los jadeos entre dientes. Sé bien que gran parte de su excitación residía en la presencia de mi marido, en sus ojos que nos veían sin ver, en el peligro y la perversidad de la situación. Todas las demás veces, porque hubo muchas otras, Tomás siempre buscó que cayera sobre nosotros esa mirada ciega; y cuando me ensartaba se volvía hacia él, hacia mi marido, y le contemplaba con cara de loco (el placer es así, te pone una expresión exorbitada). De modo que en sus brazos yo pasé en un santiamén de ser casi una virgen a ser considerablemente depravada. A gozar de la morbosa paradoja de un mirón que no mira.

with his bold stare and empty look in his eyes. As he kept his eyes on him, Tomás softly moved his hands upwards and put his fingertips inside the hem of my skirt. I was an unexplored territory of untouched flesh. I was surprised to discover the unknown protagonism of my groin, the strength of my abdomen and the tremendous lust in my waist, not to mention the smooth, hollow parts in which all women are equal (in these parts I certainly wasn't ugly).

We silently made love on the couch, hiding the panting under our breath. I know for a fact that a great part of his arousal was knowing that he was in the presence of my husband, in his eyes that were watching us but couldn't see the sinful act. Every other time, because there were many, Tomás would always look over to see if he was staring at us with his blank eyes, and when he was inside of me he would turn around and look at my husband and wildly stare at him (pleasure works this way, it gives you a demented

Pero a decir verdad lo que a mí más me encendía no era la presencia de mi marido, sino la de mi amante. La palabra amante viene de amar, es el sujeto de la acción, aquel que ama y que desea; y lo asombroso, lo soberbio, lo inconcebible, es que al fin era yo el objeto de ese verbo extranjero, de esa palabra ajena en mi existencia. Yo era la amada y la deseada, yo la reina de esos instantes de obcecación y gloria, yo la dueña, durante la eternidad de unos minutos, de los dientes blancos de Tomás y de sus ojos azules maliciosos y de los cortos rizos que se le amontonaban sobre el recio cogote y de sus manos esbeltas de dedos largos y del lunar en la comisura izquierda de su boca y de los dos pelillos que asomaban por la borda de la camisa cuando se aflojaba la corbata (cuando yo se la arrancaba) y de sus sólidas nalgas y del antebrazo musculoso y de su olor de hombre y de sus ojeras y la anchura de sus muñecas e incluso de la ternura de su calva incipiente. Todo mío.

look). When I was in his arms, I went from being almost a virgin to considerably depraved in the blink of an eye, to enjoy the sick paradox of a voyeur who can't actually see.

But to tell the truth, what excited me most wasn't the presence of my husband, but rather that of my lover. The term 'lover' derives from 'love', which is the subject of the action, that he who loves and desires. And the astonishing, magnificent, inconceivable thing is that in the end it was *me* that was the object of this foreign verb, of a word that's normally experienced by others and suddenly entered my existence. I was the loved and desired one, I was the queen of those moments of blind rage and shining light, the proprietor for eternity of just those brief moments with Tomás' sparkling white teeth, intense blue eyes, the short curls that always stuck together on the fierce nape of his neck, the long fingers on his slim hands, the mole on the left corner of his mouth, the two tiny chest

Pasaron las semanas y nosotros nos seguimos amando día tras día mientras mi marido escuchaba su concierto vespertino en la terraza. Al fin Tomás terminó su auditoría y tuvo que regresar a Barcelona. Nos despedimos una tarde con una intensidad carnal rayana en lo feroz, y luego, ya en la puerta, Tomás acarició mis insípidas mejillas y dijo que me echaría de menos. Y yo sé que es verdad. Así que derramé unas cuantas lágrimas y alguna que otra legaña mientras le veía bajar las escaleras, más por entusiasmo melodramático ante la escena que por un dolor auténtico ante su pérdida. Porque sé bien que la belleza es forzosamente efímera, y que teníamos que acabar antes o después con nuestra relación para que se mantuviera siempre hermosa. Aparte de que se acercaba el otoño y después vendría el invierno y mi marido ya no podría seguir saliendo a la terraza: y siempre sospeché que, sin su mirada, Tomás no me vería.

hairs that emerged from the top of his shirt when he loosened his tie (actually, when I would rip it off of him), his tight butt, muscular forearm, his manly smell, his ears, the bags under his eyes, the width of his wrists and even his tender bald spot. All of this was *mine*.

Weeks went by and we continued making love to each other everyday while my husband listened to the evening concert on the balcony. In the end, Tomás completed his audit and had to return to Barcelona. We had our final goodbye in an intensely raw and savage manner. When we were at the door, Tomás stroked my insipid cheeks and told me that he would miss me and I knew that he was sincere. I shed a few tears (some of them had eye crust) while I watched him go down the stairs with more melodramatic enthusiasm than with the genuine pain of loss. Because I recognize that beauty is inevitably short-lived and that we had to end our relationship sooner or later in order to preserve its beauty. Aside

Tal vez piensen que soy una criatura patética, lo cual no me importa lo más mínimo: es un prejuicio de ignorantes al que ya estoy acostumbrada. Tal vez crean que mi historia de amor con Tomás no fue hermosa, sino sórdida y siniestra. Pero yo no veo ninguna diferencia entre nuestra pasión y la de los demás. ¿Qué Tomás necesitaba para amarme la presencia fantasmal de mi marido? Desde luego; pero ¿no acarrear también los demás sus propios y secretos fantasmas a la cama? ¿Con quién nos acostamos todos nosotros cuando nos acostamos con nuestra pareja? Admito, por lo tanto, que Tomás me imagino; pero lo mismo hizo Romeo al imaginar a su Julieta. Nunca podré agradecerle lo bastante a Tomás que se tomara el trabajo de inventarme.

Desde esta historia clandestina, mi vida conyugal marcha mucho mejor. Supongo que mi marido intuyó algo: mientras vino Tomás siguió saliendo cada tarde a la terraza, aunque el verano avanzaba y en el balcón

from the fact that autumn was fast approaching and winter was around the corner, my husband would no longer be going out on the balcony, and I always suspected that, without his gaze, Tomás wouldn't see me.

I know you're probably thinking that I'm pathetic, but that doesn't even bother me in the least: this is nothing more than ignorant judgement to which I've already accustomed. You probably don't think that my love affair with Tomás was beautiful, only indecent and sinister. But I don't see any difference between the passion that we shared compared to that of others. That in order for Tomás to make love to me, he needed the phantasmal presence of my husband? Of course, but don't others also bring their own dirty little secrets to bed? Who are we sleeping with when we go to bed with our own partner? I have to admit though that I'm assuming Tomás imagined me in the same way Romeo did to Juliet and I can never thank him enough for

hacía un calor achicharrante; y allí permanecía, congestionado y sudoroso, mientras mi amante y yo nos devorábamos. Ahora mi marido está moreno y guapo de ese sol implacable del balcón; y me trata con deferencia, con interés, con coquetería, como si el deseo del otro (seguro que lo sabe, seguro que lo supo) hubiera encendido su propio deseo y el convencimiento de que yo valgo algo, y de que, por lo tanto, también lo vale él. Y como él se siente valioso y piensa que vale la pena quererme, yo he empezado a apreciar mí propia valía y por lo tanto a valorarlo a él. No sé si me siguen: es un juego de espejos. Pero me parece que he desatado un viejo nudo.

Ahora sigo siendo igual de medio monstrua, pero tengo recuerdos, memorias de la belleza que me amansan. Además, ya no se me crispa el tono casi nunca, de modo que puedo alardear de mi buena voz: el mejor atributo para que mi ciego me disfrute. ¿Quién habló de perversión? Cuando me

how much work it took for him to dream me up.

Since this illicit affair took place, my marriage has been transformed for the best. I can only assume that my husband suspected something because when Tomás would come over, he would continue going onto the balcony in the evening, even though the summer was at its hottest and the balcony was a fire pit. He would stay out there, congested and perspiring, while my lover and I devoured each other. My husband is now tanned and handsome from the merciless sun on the balcony and he now treats me with respect. He actually shows interest in me when he flirts, as if the desire of another man (I'm sure he knows, I'm sure he found out) had ignited something in him and his own desire and the conviction of that I'm worthy, and for that reason, that he is too. He now feels appreciated and thinks that it's worth loving me. I've also started to appreciate my own worth which leads me to appreciate him. I

encontraba reflejada en los ojos de Tomás, cuando me veía construida en su deseo, yo era por completo inocente. Porque uno siempre es inocente cuando ama, siempre regresa a la misma edad emocional, al umbral de la eterna adolescencia. Pura y hermosa fui porque deseé y me desearon. El amor es una mentira, pero funciona.

don't know if you're following me but this is much like smoke and mirrors and I'm convinced I've unravelled a tough knot.

At times, I still feel like somewhat of a monster, but I do have memories, beautiful memories that tame me. Furthermore, my tone of voice no longer cracks as much, so now I can boast my lovely voice. It's my best attribute for my handsome man to enjoy. Who said anything about perversion? When I would see my reflection in Tomás' eyes, when I saw myself created by his desire, I was completely innocent. Because one is always innocent when they love, you always return to the same emotional age, to the threshold of eternal adolescence. I was pure and beautiful because I sought desire and was desired in return. Love is a lie, but it works.

## Rosa Montero's Biography

Rosa María Montero Gayo was born in Madrid, Spain, on January 3, 1951 in an economically deprived household during the Francoist era. Her father, Pascual Montero, was a retired bullfighter, her mother, Amalia Gayo Montero, a housewife, and she had a brother five years her senior. Having contracted tuberculosis at the tender age of five years, among other long-term illnesses, she did not experience a normal childhood of playing make-believe with other children in the neighbourhood, where creating her own Neverland and living in a world of fantasy had no limitations. Rather, she was confined to solitude within the perimeters of her own bedroom, but sought escape into adventurous journeys with merely a pen, paper and many novels beyond her years. Thus, she was fully engaged in reading and writing and such became Montero's company and outlet for imagination: cowboys and Indians, crime stories and many other exciting themes that would come alive in an active and youthful mind. She finally attended school for the first time at nine years old in an all-girls school at the *Beatriz Galindo Institute* of Madrid and by the age of ten she was reading books for her age group, but her heart nonetheless still shifted towards a mature adventure, such as Richmal Crompton's *William Brown* series. By age seventeen, Francoist Spain was no longer and Montero was relieved to bury such a dark era behind her and shortly after began her academic career in Philosophy and Arts. Initially, she aspired to pursue a Psychology degree because she was self-labeling as crazy due to the recurring episodes of panic attacks she endured and wanted to investigate the science behind what was happening to her and why. Before long, she began studying Journalism because she had always loved to write considering she heavily feasted in this activity since childhood and it was a passionate domain that also allowed her to explore her curious nature. At the age of nineteen, she was already working as a Journalist, which she highly credits to "curing" her

anxiety and stopped experiencing panic attacks once she learned she was not alone and that others suffered similarly. By the age of 30, she had officially recuperated from her panic disorder once she became a publishing novelist and significantly recognizes publishing as putting an end to the disease that incapacitated her over the years. In reference to the protagonist that Montero births, it is interesting to draw a parallel between the author and her fictitious narrator, for they both felt imprisoned by their anxiety, however, their episodes came to an end after experiencing an epiphany; Montero through discovering her fate as a writer, and the narrator after recognizing her self-worth after her affair.

In a one-on-one interview with *TV Pública Argentina*, Montero discusses that as a writer, she believes her dreams trigger her ideas and that, “la novela es un sueño diurno” (*¿Qué fue de tu vida?* 0:54), like a controlled delirium in which images sporadically appear out of nowhere. Likewise, she says her books are born the same way dreams are created – through the unconscious. As she writes, she does not think about the prospective reader because, “uno escribe para el lector que lleva dentro” and what activates her thoughts are her self-interests (*¿Qué fue de tu vida?* 2:39). In relation to the protagonists in her works, Montero further confesses that in order to write and give light to her characters,

La novela se escribe desde otro lugar, tienes que convertirte. Decía Julio Ramón Ribeyro: una novela madura exige la muerte del autor... Dejar que pase a través de telas en la historia. Tienes que conseguir llegar advierte con el mismo cariño, la misma distancia con cabezazos personajes. Pese a que no llegas a este punto en donde colocas a esa distancia de tí mismo. Si no te encariñas con los personajes pensamos los más malvados, tú tienes que vivir dentro de los personajes. Y al vivir dentro de los personajes, algo de

cariño les tienes porque todos nos tenemos a nosotros mismos. Hasta el más malvado tiene que tener vida. (*¿Qué fue de tu vida?* 1:21)

An innocently naïve “hobby” that was once a sole source of self-entertainment as a child with a bright spirit and a pen, inevitably metamorphosed Montero into a high-ranked, award-winning journalist for Spain’s national and prestigious newspaper *El País* and a thriving, fast-paced career as one of the nation’s auspicious and best-selling fiction authors of some twenty novel-length works. Montero is, “[...] a prolific, successful and critically acclaimed writer – is marked by its diversity, in terms of both genre and technique, ranging from social realism, metafiction, hybrid biography to medieval romance and, especially of late, science fiction” (Squires 78). She is undoubtedly one of Spain’s best contemporary female writers as she has been producing extraordinary literature since the 1970s. Her fiction always voices a descriptive, perceptive and eloquently written message while addressing some of Spain’s relevant themes during and post-Franco’s dictatorship such as oppression, identity and patriarchy. Similarly, her novels convey universal themes, prominently examining matters of love, death, human struggle or growth, such as *La función Delta* (1981), *Te trataré como a una reina* (1983), *Bella y oscura* (1993), *La hija del Caníbal* (1997) and her children’s series *Las barbaridades de Bárbara* (1997). There was a demand for her works to be shared on an international platform; a reason for which her books have been translated into more than two dozen languages, some including English, Portuguese, Romanian, Italian, Croatian, Dutch, Turkish and Korean. By dismay, only three of her novels have been translated to date (none of which are recent), and that was my primary impetus for exploring this particular translation endeavour. Having read her literature leisurely over the years, I have long been interested in her writing and I eagerly delved deeper into her work when writing this dissertation. Her language is visceral and captivating which is

what largely connected me with her text and ignited a spark from within that lead me to the desire of sharing it with those who are not fluent in her mother tongue and with little knowledge of the cultural background; and discovering how to translate her message was a meaningful, fulfilling and stimulating experience. It was my gut that told me that I could not, not translate such a beautiful yet dark tale on the complex abstract of love.

### **Amantes y enemigos: Cuentos de parejas**

Montero's *Amantes y enemigos: Cuentos de parejas*; is a compilation of nineteen short stories (five remain unpublished), where the common thread linking these stories is the need for one another. In an interview with *El País*, Montero states that short stories (she has merely written a small handful) were never her forte as she felt more at ease with novel publishing. Because novels are longer, it gave her a greater sense of expression where she could broaden her adventures and take the reader on an incredible journey. However, over time, Montero had expressed that, "[...] he aprendido a amar el cuento más y más. Los cuentos son muy reveladores, sobre todo para mí misma, ya que en ellos, he descubierto la sustancia de lo que luego han sido muchas de mis novelas" (Fernández-Santos, *El País*). In this specific work, she not only narrates each story exclusively from a woman's point of view, but also writes from the point of view of men, children and monsters, "[...] que giran en torno al amor, el desamor, obsesiones, fantasmas, venganzas y rutinas [...]" (Fernández-Santos, *El País*). Identity, where one relationship begins and the next one ends, how a couples' needs can be a prison sentence, the problem with one's turbidity and self-destruction are among the many conflicts that interest Montero most with respect to relationships. Across all nineteen stories, the Madrid-native author indicates that they are all homogenous, unlike her novels, and that they portray a greater

evolution throughout. Lastly, among the set of short stories, *Amantes y enemigos* closes with “Amor ciego”, Montero’s favourite from this collection, as it is mine, and the main reason for which I justified to translate this in lieu of others and wanting to translate it faithfully for her, in her honour. Ultimately, I fiercely strived to create the English *doppelgänger* to the Spanish protagonist. Thus, in recent Twitter and email correspondence with the distinguished writer, I asked her, “¿qué espera de un traductor al traducir sus obras, o específicamente este cuento? ¿Qué quiere que haga el traductor para lograr una traducción parecida a su obra original?”.

Without hesitation, Montero replies,

Espero de un traductor en general, también en este cuento, es que sea fiel al espíritu del texto, no a la letra. Es decir, aspiro a algo difícilísimo que es que el traductor intente respetar el sonido de mi estilo, el ritmo, la musicalidad y los efectos además del significado, por supuesto. Y si para reproducir el efecto que yo he dado en español en la nueva lengua tiene que cambiar una palabra, que la cambie, no sé si me he explicado. El traductor que traduce totalmente pegado al texto que está traduciendo suele ser un mal traductor, porque la tradición literal no puede producir el mismo efecto (es decir, el efecto que el escritor ha buscado) en otra lengua. (Email communication 22 Feb 2018)

### **“Amor ciego”**

After *Amantes y enemigos: Cuentos de parejas* was published in 1998, “Amor ciego” was adapted into a play in Paris in 2001 and then in Bordeaux in 2003. Narrated in the first-person account, Montero powerfully conveys the tale of an unnamed protagonist (assumingly her anonymity is used for self-protection, or the fact that anyone could easily be the protagonist as for some, she can be regarded as strongly relatable), a gaspingly unattractive woman who

ironically has been married to a blindman for seven years in a mirrorless home; he does not need them and she despises the reminder of her reflection. They are an awkwardly matched couple as she only married her partner because he cannot see how ugly she truly is while he is married to her because his handicap has limited him from other women. The pitiful life of this successful lawyer changed drastically when her firm temporarily contracted an auditor from Barcelona, Tomás, with whom she develops an overattachment and unleashes her most inner desires when her wildest dreams come alive through a passionate love affair. Through her lover, she learned to lustfully experience once considered unexplored and repressed sexual territory and reject all patriarchal standards, all the while learning the unfortunate dark circumstances of relationships and love. “Amor ciego” can be read and directed to audiences universally as the story’s aim reflects little on Spain, its culture and history. There certainly are few elements of Spanish culture in which we partake upon reading it – but the most crucial of all is acknowledging Montero’s voice of her creatively invented protagonist’s view on love, which can be diversely understood, regardless of language and culture.

“Amor ciego” can be classified as a modern and bitter adult rendering of a fairy tale, and I have taken on Montero’s original text and transformed it into my own body of work, all the while attempting to maintain profound loyalty to the author as a *translatress*. It is a text of entertainment, even possibly regarded as a spiritual enlightenment and read for pleasure. I am certain that Montero has not written this short story neither to persuade or educate her audience, but merely to open the human eyes to *blind love* and demonstrate another reality that exists beyond our knowledge. Upon translating, I, myself, have attempted to maintain the same message as well. My intention was not to significantly alter her message projection, but to merely pithily shape it for an English-speaking readership by heavily incorporating a colloquially

idiomatic equivalence in relation to the original, all the while preserving exotic elements of the text in order to enlighten the reader of the cultural background. I would like to make note that, due to the fact that only three of Montero's full works have been translated into English, none of which are recent and this novel being one of her more recent publications, it was difficult for me as the translator and researcher to track down and gather qualitative data on the subject matter in relation to translation when only very few resources were available.

### **Psychoanalysis of Protagonist**

I deem it crucial to present the psychological complexity of the short story's unnamed female protagonist firsthand. Montero uses her academic background in psychology and journalism to create an emotionally unstable narcissist as the omniscient narrator who jeopardizes the potential risk of losing her job and tarnishing her reputation, let alone demolishing her marriage, in order to nurture her self-serving desires with a temporary work colleague, due to having fallen in an abyss during a midlife crisis. According to Freudian theory, Sigmund Freud (neurologist and father of psychoanalysis) suggests that psychoanalysis points to our desires – what is below the surface not only by investigating the mind, but rather the unconscious. The opening line is introductory to her life's course, “Tengo cuarenta años, soy muy fea y estoy casada con un ciego” (263). The narrator then proceeds to reveal herself, picking apart her physically unattractive attributes, “tengo dos ojitos como dos botones a ambos lados de una vasta cabezota; el pelo color rata, tan escaso que deja entrever la línea gris del cráneo; la boca sin labios, diminuta, con unos dientecillos afilados de tiburón pequeño, y la nariz aplastada, como de púgil” (263-264). She recognizes that she is no sight for sore eyes as a mere glimpse of her vileness can cause public disturbance, but she uses the pity she receives for her repulsiveness to

build her legal career. Rather than come to terms with her unpleasant face, she further suppresses it by avoiding the thought itself, and avoiding environmental triggers which could easily facilitate such a fearing reminder:

No tengo espejos en mi casa. Mi marido no los necesita y yo los odio. Sí hay espejos, claro, en los servicios del despacho; y normalmente me lavo las manos con la cabeza gacha. He aprendido a mirarme sin verme en los cristales de las ventanas, en los escaparates de las tiendas, en los retrovisores de los coches, en los ojos de los demás. Vivimos en una sociedad llena de reflejos: a poco que te descuidas, en cualquier esquina te asalta tu propia imagen. En estas circunstancias, yo hice lo posible por olvidarme de mí. No me las apañaba del todo mal. (267)

Working as a career-driven lawyer, she exerts her dominance subliminally because it shifts emphasis from her terrifying appearance. She also becomes significantly manipulative toward her work colleague, Linda, in order to pursue her own personal benefits. She demonstrates a reaction formation with Linda to become closer to her love interest, Tomás, although she despises her due to her physical beauty and obvious lack of intelligence. Because she suspects that Linda and Tomás are secretly courting, the narrator persuades Linda to allow her to write a love letter to Tomás so that she can indirectly express how she truly feels about him. She manages her *id* through manipulation – and additionally abuses her husband’s vision loss to pursue an ongoing extramarital affair with Tomás, with whom she displaces all of her repressed sexual desires. The scheming narrator is convinced that she and her husband project a mutual hatred because she is protecting her ego by attributing “her own undesirable characteristics to others” (Ryckman 31). She is hopelessly dissatisfied with her mundane life and becomes consciously negligent of her husband and marriage, for which she chooses to pursue

Tomás and with whom frequently exercises the pleasure principle and in the end the reader discovers that she is somewhat delusional believing that having cheated on her husband is justified for saving her marriage. Finally, it becomes transparent that she is hypocritical because she has always desired that mankind would see her for the kind-spirited woman she is from within, but immediately salivates over Tomás, while she descriptively enters in vivid details about his features and body within moments of first seeing him while she is completely ignorant of his temperament.

Sí, era sensible a sus dientes blancos y a sus ojos azules maliciosos y a los cortos rízos que se le amontonaban sobre el recio cogote y a sus manos esbeltas de dedos largos y al lunar en la comisura izquierda de su boca y a los dos pelillos que asomaban por la borda de la camisa cuando se aflojaba la corbata y a sus sólidas nalgas y al antebrazo musculoso que un día toqué inadvertidamente y a su olor de hombre y a sus ojeras y a sus orejas y a la anchura de sus muñecas e incluso a la ternura de su calva incipiente (como verán, me fijaba en él) [...] (269)

Psychoanalytically, it is apparent that her *id* forces have dominated her ego and have exerted complete control over her life. It can be further noted that the narrator makes no mention of her past, childhood, family or even the desire of bearing children with her husband when she lives in a patriarchal society where this is of common expectation. The reader merely discovers that she was lifeless before Tomás and is now a newly-birthing woman after Tomás. Ultimately, her *id* has undeniably shattered the docile silhouette alignment of the traditional woman in Spain. In sum, I would like to address that it is Montero's disturbingly psychoanalytic portrayal of the narrator through her language is what helped my attempt to successfully convey to my English-speaking audience.

## Lost in Translation: Spanish Female Writers

In global literature, only some three percent of novels are translated. Since 2008 until present, Spain has translated 282 novels into English, that stands at 5.72% of their publications being translated in a ten-year span. Of the 282 novels, 209 male authors were translated whereas 73 were female and an even split were translators of both genders. Accordingly, 73% of Spanish works that have been translated in the last decade were penned by males. Moreover, Spanish is the second most spoken language in the world with 400 million speakers, while English follows directly after as the third most spoken language in the world with 360 million native speakers, in addition to the 500 million who speak it as their second language and is widely-recognized as the prime international language of choice. Therefore, there are 860 million active English speakers, which is evidently just shy of the billion mark. If Montero is a staple in contemporary Spanish literature and the rest of Spanish-speaking world, then why has she not inundated library and bookstore shelves with English copies of her writing and stamped with her eminent name? Considering that she has won *El Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas* among many other awards, why has the English literary world failed to translate her? One may pose as to why only very few 'Monterian' works have been translated, and not more? Few theories revolve around these enquiries and an article from *The Guardian* addresses some. As previously stated, Montero is regally prominent in the Spanish-speaking world but unfortunately cannot carry over her stature with English speakers due to a lack of translation from her work. According to the database available by *Three Percent*, she is among a league of Spanish women, with the inclusion of universal women writers, who suffer from a growing translation disparity when scaled with male authors. What is notably curious is that statistics indicate that women read more than men, approximately 36% yearly on average, and that female writers attract an 80% female

readership. Thus, if women read more and also take preference to a female author, the statistics are deemed nonsensical. *Gynobibliophobia* (a fear or hatred of books written by women) is considered a potential cause to the disparity; as is the belief that there is an abundance of books that already exists in English thus there need not be more. It is further speculated that female writers are transnationally absent due to gender bias and the, “systematic dismissal of female writers that has insidiously affected everyone agents, editors, publicists, readers” (Cain, *The Guardian*). Even as mankind is progressively living in modern times, a woman’s text is still undervalued and there continues to be the preposterous belief encompassing the thought that books written by women are perceived as “domestic” and “unpolitical”, the reason for which:

Translated female authors have a particularly hard time finding their way to an English readership. In 2016, 33.8% of books translated into English were by women, compared with 63.8% by men, the University of Rochester’s *Three Percent* blog found recently. Of the last 10 years, 2008 was the worst, with only 23.4% of translated work by female authors – but that is only a little worse than the decade’s average, with 28.97% by women (1,147) against 68.50% by men (3,351), with the remaining work jointly authored titles. (Cain, *The Guardian*. 31 Aug 2017)

### **Contemporary Feminist Translation Theory**

Translation scholar Luise von Flotow categorizes ‘gender’ and ‘translation’ contextually as two individual fields of their own, however, ‘gender’ had rapidly emerged in North America in the 1960s during the ‘era of feminism’, meanwhile ‘translation’ had an explosive development in the 1980s (1997:5). Both categories ultimately merged, and subsequently, feminist translation theory was born. During this time, feminist theorists saw a pattern between translation, which

was once considered inferior in comparison to its original writing, and that of women, who were repressed in society and literature; which brought forth the fundamental aspect of feminist translation theory, to “identify and critique the tangle of concepts which relegates both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder. To do so, it must investigate the processes through which translation has come to be “feminized,” and attempt to trouble the structures of authority which have maintained this association” (Simon 1). Thus, feminist translators began to step forward to break these patriarchal grounds, including Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, who created a movement called ‘a translation project’ which challenged the traditional masculine discourse in which she thoughtfully applied every creative technique possible in order to represent feminine writing in a colourful language and loudly exposed the implicit sexism in language seen in many historical and contemporary literary sources.

Similarly, another translator and critic, Barbara Godard, took a stance in rejecting the dominant male voice and language in literature. She believed that a translator’s role was similar to that of a servant’s; an invisible hand would mechanically turn the word of one language into another. However, Godard advocated that feminist writing and translation needed to meet with commonality to produce *meaning*. Godard also believed translation was a three-dimensional activity, “as it not only operates between two languages, but performs the first language *in* the second language, here bringing it to feminist life” (von Flotow: 44). She also approached feminist translation as a means as expressing indifference, and cared little for fidelity or equivalence.

Feminist translation focalizes on critiquing patriarchal language and eliminating misogyny by feminist writers, where such can be achieved with shifting the syntax and hijacking a text and transforming it into a translator’s literary work. During my translation process, I can

attest that I went against the grain at times and often thought too much out of the box.

Translating in this manner may potentially label me as a feminist translator because I buried the patriarchy and the standard of translation by taking outrageous liberties to express my own perceptions.

### **Think-Aloud Protocol**

In a world full of translation, we are undeniably exposed among several diverse cultures and languages, ranging from literature and film to restaurant menus and street signs. It is astounding to discover, after thoroughly researching the history of translation, that dozens of translation theories exist while literary translation theorists continue to argue amongst one another which theory is most superior for professionals and scholars to practice.

Contrarily, I was naively convinced that the art of translation was a mere act of the *think-aloud protocol* (TAP). American academic scholar and translator Douglas Robinson once stated that contemporarily, no one follows translation theory anymore because it is simply outdated. Rather, translators rely on the notion of following the gut all the way through. TAP is principally connected with “gut instinct” as it externalizes thought processes and has always been considered a predominant model in translation practice. In the mid 1990s, translators and linguists, Paul Kussmaul and Sorja Tirkkonen-Condit, proceeded to conduct a study that investigates the TAPs and mental processes of students when they translate because “the think-aloud monologue method is very well suited for translation process research because there is a close affinity between translating and thinking aloud” (Kussmaul, Sorja Tirkkonen-Condit 180). Researchers studying TAP used a group of subjects and asked them to articulate every thought process that occurred while translating a text; the subjects were recorded and transcribed for

analytical purposes from different investigators. The reason for which this study was conducted is twofold: to utilize the results from the TAP sessions as potential models for successful translating; and determining the issues that arise from the TAPs for those training to become professional translators. Furthermore, researchers analyzed both monologues and dialogues from their subjects, and although “monologue protocols are still predominantly the main tool for gaining access to the translation process”, it was concluded that the “dialogue situation provided richer data than talking to oneself.” (Kussmaul, Sorja Tirkkonen-Condit 180). Results from the monologues versus dialogues in relation to TAPs during the study also seem to be true during my personal translation process of “Amor ciego”. I had experienced countless episodes of *translator’s block* due to challenges I faced throughout the text, reaching a point where I talked myself into many dead ends. However, after dialoguing the problems from the source text with academic colleagues and Spanish/English native speakers, it proved to be true that *thinking aloud* dialogue is in fact a more successful approach for an effective outcome to finding fitting solutions for the target text.

I had yet to discover the many philosophies and theories that define the complexity behind translation, as opposed to the straightforward process in which I had been using all throughout these years since producing translation texts in English in which I would ponder, “Does this sound okay? Or does it sound better/more natural if I express it like this”? The framework behind many translation theories had yet to be discovered by someone who formerly used a humble technique of deduction and “is that how it is phrased in English?” among common forms of translation execution.

## **Defining Translation**

*What is translation?* According to the *Real Academia Española*, the term *traducir*, deriving from the Latin's [traducĕre] can be defined as the following: i) Expresar en una lengua lo que está escrito o se ha expresado antes en otra; ii) Convertir, mudar, trocar; and iii) Explicar, interpretar. Furthermore, *traducción* can also be found in the *RAE*, deriving from Latin's [*traductio*, *-ōnis* 'acción de pasar de un punto a otro', 'traslado']. The term *translation* has several meanings associated with it, all of which described above are fitting to my navigation process.

Succinctly, the language used to translate is the *source language* (SL) and the language being translated into is the *target language* (TL). Moreover, these languages are used to translate texts in order to convert the *source text* (ST) into the desired *target language* (TL). In conjunction with the actual act of translating, a translator is obliged to consider a variety of factors before undertaking such a task, such as: the author's writing style, cultural terms, names and expressions, expectations of the reader, the audience to which it is directed and the point of view of the author are the many essential elements that are pondered upon beginning the translation journey of a text. (Dujman 82).

### **Applying Eugene A. Nida's Theory of Translation**

As I emerge into presenting contemporary translation theories, I would like to introduce Eugene Albert Nida and his concept of equivalence between a source text and target text. Additionally, I make mention of only the essential information that I extracted from his works that best pertained to my translation.

American translation theorist, linguist and Biblical scholar Nida has long been admired for his impactful contributions to the development of translation as a discipline and has been of the vanguard for target-oriented translation for the past five decades until present day as he began working from the 1940s onwards prominently in translating the Bible. His concepts of translation studies move to more of a scientific approach which incorporate theoretical linguist Noam Chomsky's linguistical work on transformational generative grammar, because Nida believed that grammar was an effective resolution when facing a translation problem. Thus, he developed a Chomskian approach to translation consisting of four stages: analysis, transfer, restructure and lastly, testing (which has been newly added). The translator first analyzes the essence of the message (by grammar, word meaning and word combination) from the source text, transfers the analysis of the message in a mental operation into the simplest and clearest form, restructures the message grammatically and semantically into the receptor language, and lastly, tests the product for its notion of accuracy of rendering, legibility, style and so on. One form of testing, suggested by Nida, would also be reading the text aloud, which is similar to the TAP mentioned above, and has been proven to be helpful and easily applicable for the translator.

Moreover, in the 1960s, Nida produced two substantial publications where he introduced his theory of translation: *Toward a Science of Translation* (1964) and *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969, co-authored with Charles R. Taber). Although his methods were primarily used for translating the Bible, Nida encouraged applying his rules and theory to all genres of translation. Both works propose the concepts of *formal equivalence* (also referred to as *formal correspondence*) and *dynamic equivalence* (his more recent work refers to it as *functional equivalence*) which have changed the landscape of translation in practice and in theory. Nida did not believe that identical equivalents' could exist, but believed in creating the closest equivalent

possible between the ST and the TT using the formal and dynamic equivalence approach. He defined formal equivalence as a source-oriented theory (which is the use of the source text as a translating guide) that, “focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content... One is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language” (Munday 42). Nida believed that a translation of formal equivalence should strive to sound as natural as possible and is considered to be from many translation scholars, although Nida had dismissed the term, a *word-for-word translation*. In summary, the notion of formal equivalence is focal to preserving the syntactical details of the source text while clenching onto its foreign features. As previously mentioned, “Amor ciego” reflects little on Spain and its culture as there are few elements of Spanish culture upon which we encounter upon reading – thus I wanted to preserve these foreign features in order to splash my translation with some exoticism in accordance with formal equivalence. In relation to character names, I contemplated whether to keep them as originally used by Montero, or to simply translate them into their English counterparts. Only two characters names were revealed throughout, being *Tomás* and *Linda*. I was internally conflicted and debated if I should keep *Tomás* or if I thought it was necessary to change it to *Thomas* as it would be culturally appropriate for an English audience. After being trapped in a state of indecisiveness, I decided to follow contemporary translation theorist Douglas Robinson’s theory on somatics and ultimately went with my gut and took an *intuitive leap* to use these names in their natural form and expressed *Tomás* in my translation in order to preserve its ethnicity. Moreover, in relation to the protagonist’s secretary *Linda*, as its name and spelling are equal in both Spanish and English, “Mi linda secretaria (que se llama Linda)...” (Montero 268), I thought out several options: I could simply keep the original name and void the content in parentheses in the translation, as

*Linda* means ‘beautiful’ in Spanish but does not contain any relevant meaning in English. Similar to *Tomás*, I decided not to replace her name because I figured that eventually the reader will discover, through Montero’s description of her, that she is literally a physically beautiful woman. In all, during this translation, I applied this theory of formal equivalence twice: I withheld from translating the character names mentioned above and kept the use of *ONCE* (*la organización nacional de los ciegos españoles*) into the English TT because I wanted my translation to emit some exotic flavour. I could have easily used ‘Thomas’ and ‘CNIB’ (Canadian National Institute of the Blind, which is essentially Canada’s equivalent of the *ONCE*) but it was of personal preference to preserve both terms because I enjoyed the richness and culture that it provided. Moreover, in reference to *ONCE*, I applied a *gloss translation* which is what Nida defined as a type of translation that aims to reproduce “as literally and meaningfully as possible the form and content of the original” (1964: 159) and can be used through footnotes or endnotes, which is what I used. The primary reason for which I carried over *ONCE* into the English translation was not only to portray some foreignization, but also to explain to the readership what the term means and allow them to think for themselves what its English equivalence is on their own. At last, although Nida advocated using this theory, he did address that, “the most significant errors made by translators result from trying to preserve formal correspondence rather than being concerned with functional equivalence” (1985: 124). Because formal equivalence trails a word-for-word approach, the theorist is not entirely fond of the procedure as it can result sounding like *translationese*.

Conversely, Nida strongly advocated his theory of *dynamic equivalence* more so than that of formal equivalence; his aim was to shift those away from using formal equivalence and force them into dynamic equivalence because he believed that it was more suitable for a variety of

translations. He defined dynamic equivalence as a principle in which the translator translates the meaning of the original text in such a way that the wording in the target text consequently triggers the same impact on the target reader as the wording in the source text has on its receptor; thus dynamic equivalence consequently creates an equivalent dynamic effect on both readers. This theory is target-oriented (using the readership as a guide for translating) and its objective is not for the ST and TT to have the exact same message, but rather, “that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptor and the message” (Chen 228). The purpose of a dynamic equivalent translation is to produce a natural-sounding expression and to translate from the thought of the author, not from the word per se. Although Nida rejected the following terminology as he established his own, dynamic equivalence is opposed to the “literal” or “word-for-word” rendering of the original text.

Over the years since I began my first translation assignments, I subconsciously possessed some type of covert theory of translation of dynamic equivalence, according to Nida (1991:19). My translation of “Blind Love” dominantly fell into the dynamic equivalence approach because it is natural sounding and does not follow too much syntactical closeness throughout in relation to the source text. As Spanish and English are two different languages and cultures, I had to resort using English idiomatic expressions in order to achieve translating in the TL context of the English culture. Therefore, because my translation is somewhat idiomatic, it is essential to indicate, that within the process of the transfer, Nida recommends that when dealing with idioms, they should not be analyzed as individual kernels (words), but rather be substituted by their functional equivalents in the target language. This was achieved throughout my translation, for example, when Montero wrote “*príncipe azul*” and “*princesa rosa*” in her text. Both could have

been translated into “blue prince” and “pink princess” under the principles of formal equivalence, however, rendering into English using the theory of dynamic equivalence reads far more naturally and understandable for an English audience which is the reason for which I chose to write “Knight in Shining Armour” and “Fair Maiden” as their functional English equivalent. Even though the words are different, alluding to fairy tale terms is what conveys the communicative message. Similarly, the following terms/expressions: “*ciudadano medio*”, “*enfermera*”, “*desbordo*” and “*crisis de los cuarenta*” were translated respectively as “average Joe”, “assistant”, “drowning” and “midlife crisis”. I could have simply used “average citizen”, “nurse”, “overflow” and “crisis in my 40s”, but I decided it was more appropriate to choose the first translation set because it reads with a more natural tone and is also more suitable for an English-speaking culture. Furthermore, when the narrator declares “*debo de haberme perdonado*” in reference to being harsh on herself, I had originally and easily translated it as “I should forgive myself” but upon revision, I had a change of heart and translated it as “I really should have more self-compassion” and kept it as such. In my opinion, both English renderings are justifiably correct, however as women are currently living in a time of exercising compassion onto others as well as self-compassion, learned through the mainstream yoga culture and practicing core spirituality, I believed it was culturally significant to choose “compassion” over “forgive” in this context. The following is also another example where the D-E is performed optimally in its equivalent state: “*Con mi cara, nadie se atrevía a cerrarme la puerta en las narices [...]*” (265), formally, its translation would read, “*With my face, no one dared to close the door in the noses*”, but due to the fact that this interlineal version mirrors the ST without much alteration to neither lexis nor syntax, it reads awkwardly unnatural and sounds painfully nonsensical through reading and aloud. Thus, this emphasized the importance of following a D-E

process, where I was able to restructure, test the syntax and use the English equivalent for this idiomatic expression as, “*With a face like mine, no one would dare slam the door in it*”. These examples similarly and repeatedly carry on throughout the course of my translation.

Nida states that the determining criteria in distinguishing a good translation from a bad one is dynamic equivalence. A bad translation will generally follow the approach of formal equivalence; its noblest intention is to preserve the syntactical structure of the source text, but consequently, has the ability to somehow destroy the message. Conversely, a good translator will pursue applying dynamic equivalence as their guide to achieving a quality translation. Nida also opines that the length of the translation compared to the original is also considered to be important because, “there is a tendency for all good translations to be somewhat longer than the originals” (1969: 163). This proved to be correct in my English text as there was a surplus difference of some 300+ words which I believe was lengthened because as I followed Nida’s approach to D-E from the notion of translating through the thoughts of the original author and not through words, I may have exerted a little more freedom than necessary in order to paint Montero’s canvas with my own brush. Nida further believed in the *expressive function*, which is, “One of the most essential, and yet often neglected elements in the expressive factor, for people must also feel as well as understand what is said” (1969: 25). With that said, I believe that my English translation is clearly comprehensible and would like to further believe that the next reader to look through my text will also sense the heart of the message that the protagonist conveys, which may derive from relatability. In sum, because the theorist has stated that, “The best translation does not sound like a translation” (1969: 12), I fully support this thought because I believe that a translation should not even appear to be one and that it is necessary for the target text to be read naturally, the same way in which the source text is read.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have translated “Amor ciego” from Spanish into English and have recounted the life and labours of Rosa Montero and the events that led to her recognition as one of Spain’s most prestigious novelists. I have dissected the temperament of the short story’s anonymous protagonist using Freudian psychoanalysis through Montero’s descriptive language; I have additionally discussed the benefits of *think-aloud protocol* for text rendering and have further explained some theories behind the reason for which few and not more of Montero’s works have been translated into English and address a similar stance for other Spanish Iberian female writers and global female writers. I further mention some contemporary feminist translation theories and address the stance that these theorists have taken on eliminating patriarchal language in translation in order to evoke an effervescent light on feminine discourse.

As aforementioned, a good translator will always, first and foremost, attempt to remain as “faithful” as possible to source text’s author when carrying out a translation. After personally communicating with Montero and understanding the desirable outcome of her translated texts, it was my personal mission to deliver the results that she sought, which was to carry out a “faithful translation” to the spirit and essence of her story and not to destroy it using a word-for-word approach. My only wish is that I have achieved her standard of a quality translation.

Executing a Spanish to English translation had its victories and challenges, but such challenges were skillfully addressed and remedied applying Eugene Nida’s theory of *dynamic equivalence*. My goal is to have captured fluency and naturalness of expression, as what Nida advocates, in order to fulfill my role of a “good translator”. I believe to have created a thorough

translation that essentially triggers the same impact on the target reader as the wording in the source text had on its receptor, thus performing an equivalent effect on both the source text and target text readers in Spanish as well as English. In addition, I hope to have symmetrically rendered Montero's narrator and brought her to life in the English language using Nida's principles.

Lastly, I would like to make mention of American literary historian David Damrosch, and that he once stated that without translation, world literature would simply not exist. I believe that without translation, we fail to capture the essence of our own identity, history and culture. Translation is essential because it is a means of bridging cultures and sharing ideas amongst different parts around the world, therefore in its absence, mankind would fall stagnant on spreading some of the most brilliant and informative ideas over the course of evolution.

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