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La traducción del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras en *Una mujer insignificante*, de Catalina Murillo

Trabajo final de graduación para aspirar al grado de
Magíster en Traducción Inglés-Español

presentado por

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**Nómina de participantes en la actividad final
del Trabajo de Graduación**

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de Catalina Murillo**

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Dedicatoria

A mis padres, Aurelia y Lorenzo, mis pilares, quienes siempre me han apoyado de cualquier forma posible, quienes me han motivado a seguir formándome como profesional, quienes han creído en mí y en mis sueños. Sin ustedes nada de esto sería posible ni yo sería la mitad de la persona que soy hoy. A mis hermanos, Carlos, Skarleth y Lorenzo, quienes han estado para mí en las buenas y en las malas, cuyo ejemplo de trabajo, resiliencia y esfuerzo me inspira a seguir adelante. A mi compañero y mejor amigo, Antony, quien ha estado a mi lado a lo largo de todo este camino de encontrar mi lugar en el mundo. Por último, a esa Valeria de hace algunos años, quien se sentía perdida e insegura, por no abandonar sus sueños, por perseguirlos y traernos hasta aquí.

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Resumen

Esta memoria de traducción se enmarca dentro del campo de la traducción literaria y aborda la traducción inversa de los elementos del chisme y de la interpelación al lector. El estudio se practicó sobre la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, de la escritora costarricense Catalina Murillo¹, en la cual se identificaron 50 segmentos en los que se interpela a las lectoras y 21 segmentos que incluyen elementos del chisme. A partir de los planteamientos teóricos de Hans J. Vermeer (2004) sobre el propósito (*skopos*) de la traducción, de Sherry Simon (1996) sobre el género en la traducción y de Basil Hatim e Ian Mason (1990) sobre la sociolingüística en la traducción, se delimitó que para la traducción de la novela *Una mujer insignificante* se buscaría analizar la cercanía de la narradora con las lectoras lograda mediante el uso de la interpelación a las lectoras y al chisme como elemento sociocultural. Se buscó identificar las particularidades del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras en la novela, utilizar estrategias idóneas para su traducción al inglés y analizar y valorar las decisiones tomadas en la traducción tomando en cuenta la cercanía entre la narradora de la novela y las lectoras. A partir de tales objetivos, se llevó a cabo un estudio contrastivo entre el texto original y su traducción. Los resultados muestran que la traducción al inglés de la novela mantiene en gran medida la naturalidad, fluidez y complicidad del original. Así, se concluye que se debe priorizar el efecto por sobre la forma en cuanto a la traducción del chisme y de la interpelación al lector, independientemente de las estrategias de traducción utilizadas, para lograr replicar la cercanía entre narradora y lectoras.

Palabras clave: chisme, interpelación al lector, cercanía autor-lector, traducción literaria

¹ Murillo, C. (2024). *Una mujer insignificante*. Alfaguara.

Abstract

This graduation project is framed within the field of literary translation and addresses the translation into English of gossip and authorial intrusion elements. The study was conducted on the novel *Una mujer insignificante* by Costa Rican author Catalina Murillo², in which fifty segments containing authorial intrusion and 21 segments including elements of gossip were identified in the novel. Starting from the theoretical approaches of Hans J. Vermeer (2004) about the function (*skopos*) of the translation, of Sherry Simon (1996) about gender in translation, and of Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990) about sociolinguistics in translation, an attempt was made to analyze in the translation the proximity between the female narrator and the female readers achieved in the novel with the use of authorial intrusion and gossip as a sociocultural element. It was sought to identify the peculiarities of gossip and authorial intrusion in the novel, to use suitable strategies for its English translation, and to analyze and assess the decisions made in the translation, taking into account the proximity between the narrator of the novel and the readers. Based on these objectives, a comparative descriptive study was carried out between the original text and its translation. The results show that the English translation of the novel keeps, to a large extent, the naturalness, smoothness, and complicity of the original. It is proposed as a conclusion that, when it comes to the translation of gossip and authorial intrusion and regardless of the translation strategies that were used, effect should be prioritized over form in order to replicate the proximity between narrator and reader.

Keywords: gossip, authorial intrusion, narrative distance, literary translation

² Murillo, C. (2024). *Una mujer insignificante*. Alfaguara.

Traducción

Insignificant Woman³

Catalina Murillo

Translated by Valeria María Lizano Alpízar

Gossip is not meant to be dedicated.

One evening, when I returned home, I found Águeda with her eyes like two sharp flames. She was seated on the living room couch with a different tinge to her usual nervousness, and, more than the usual distressed woman, she looked like a little girl waiting for permission to open a gift.

Before her eager eyes, on the round coffee table in the middle of the living room, there was a letter, a letter that was not addressed to her. She had no choice but to wait until Dr. Mauricio Zamora, the addressee, arrived and opened it.

As soon as she saw me, she screamed: “A letter from Jean Patin!” and kept staring intently at me, hoping that I would ask her to open the letter or, at least, that I would be as excited as her.

That much, no, but yes, at least a little. Jean Patin. That name was not unfamiliar to me. Jean Patin... Dad’s college friend from when he studied in France. I had heard his name a couple of times when my progenitors’ legendary journey to Strasbourg was reminisced during the family gatherings.

³ Murillo, C. (2024). *Una mujer insignificante*. Alfaguara.

They lost contact with each other (something impossible these days, but simple at the time), and out of the blue, more than a quarter of a century later, his letter was resting on the coffee table in the middle of the family's living room.

Dr. Mauricio Zamora, University of Costa Rica, was all that the address on the envelope read, and like so, it arrived at its destination: first, because we were few; second, because Dr. Zamora was a man with intellectual prestige, well-known in the small college's campus back then.

Águeda was a woman who was constantly buzzing. She experienced shock after shock from the most insignificant things; she was like a broken battery doll that gestured, blinked, laughed, and hiccupped as if suffering a short circuit, but during this trance, there always came a moment when she remembered that she had to pull herself together and, abruptly, she would make an effort to sharpen her manners up and behave like a lady with restrained gestures, like those French actresses that appear to be having a heart attack, an orgasm, or a diabetic coma.

Nevertheless, she sat there facing the white envelope and showed a different enthusiasm. Pure and transparent. I tremble when I recall it. I was 21 years old that evening. Águeda was my mother, and this is her story, a story that begins with that small piece of paper that traveled across the ocean, found its addressee, and disrupted my entire family's life.

*

It was night when Doctor Mauricio Zamora arrived at his house and found what I had hours earlier. Mother was lying down like a loyal puppy in front of the sealed envelope. "A letter from Jean Patin!" Águeda said again. "Good Jean," Father called out lazily, opening his little eyes more than usual.

He was Águeda's antithesis, a person who rarely made a fuss, as he used to call any gesture. The bear was his animal totem, and in certain ways, he emulated its movements and

tempo. I never heard him raise his voice, never saw him running, slapping, or smacking; I can't remember him making even one abrupt gesture. He didn't sing, hum, or whistle; his eyes didn't dance, nor his hands, let alone his feet.

Father sat down and calmly opened the envelope with extreme delicacy. He had regal manners, doubtlessly to conceal his absolute physical clumsiness. Inside there was only a letter, concise, intense, and despairing, like a message in a bottle.

Jean Patin told Mauricio that he was still living in Strasbourg, that he was no longer with the woman who once used to be his wife, and that he was expecting, *mom vieux*, to bring their friendship back to life.

Once Father had finished reading, Mother said: "I will write a letter to Jean Patin!" Águeda stood up like an inflatable punching bag, willing to do it immediately.

Jean Patin, Jean Patin, Jean Patin. No other topic was mentioned in Plato's cave.

*

Two letters headed to France. Doctor Zamora's letter, kind, if not accommodating, acknowledged having received Jean Patin's message and reflected upon a few philosophical matters; my mother's was more intimate. Two weeks would pass before they arrived. Assuming Jean Patin would answer at Águeda's speed, his response would arrive in a month.

In the following days, every after-lunch family chat brought memories back. We were a chatty family... Let's be clear. Dad would deliver the lecture, and eight ears, his wife and his three daughters, would listen, or pretend they were listening.

With the letter's arrival, the Strasbourg chapter was reopened and was about to become a record. When he was very young, had just married, and had a couple of months-old baby, Mauricio went to that city for his doctoral degree. Because—I hope you don't get disappointed—he was a doctor, *but* of philosophy.

Dad told us about Strasbourg, its history, its geography; a non-stop conference, 19th century-like, the vintage Europe he knew and the only one he would know, for reasons that would be revealed later.

Mauricio Zamora wrote his thesis on Bergson. He graduated with honors. He had a keen and analytical mind, as I was always told. It appears that he had a very high intellectual coefficient, something he wouldn't care about, but those were the test results. He learned French independently a couple of months before traveling on a scholarship. In his thesis defense, the president of the thesis committee corrected his writing in a paragraph, and Father, with ironic modesty (the only kind of modesty he had), enlightened him: "Professor, that paragraph is not mine; you are amending a quote by Bergson."

But enough about Bergson, his experience, his Nobel Prize, and his metaphysical gibberish. Jean Patin. That was what Mother wanted to talk about and what we wanted to hear about. "Ah, Good-Jean," sighed philosopher Zamora with a lenient smile. At home, he oversaw the minute. Father was not to be disturbed while speaking; Father was not to be bothered with nonsense, and everything aside from his intellectual world was nonsense; Father was not to be disrupted while reading and writing in his studio; Father was the head of the household and everything, even the rags used for mopping the floors, was paid for by the offspring of this mind.

What is regular grows regular. I felt pity for Father, not having sons, only little girls who, while he showed them the Bergsonian universe, were thinking: *Photo, photo!* And after Father's lunch conference, when Mauricio went to take his sacred nap, before clearing the table and doing the dishes, we ran behind Mother to snoop on Jean Patin's single existing portrait, kept in a drawer all those years, a tiny black-and-white passport photo.

“Look, look, look how handsome,” she said, showing a photo of a boy a little bit older than us. Maybe he was—don’t ask me. He looked like a young version of Jeremy Irons, and I have never fancied skinny men with dehydrated calf eyes.

*

The mail has arrived! Jean Patin’s second letter, this time via post office box. Inside an envelope addressed to Mauricio Zamora and mistress (he was not about to intrude between husband and wife) were two letters, one short and one long. The long one, addressed to his friend, read that he admired their long-lasting marriage, the last of a species; around him, everyone was divorced, like him, or married for the second or third time. He was not; he hadn’t found the *femme*, he told Mauricio. He gave up on his career in philosophy, Good-Jean, to go in for Physical Education; that “Good” underlaid the simplicity in Jean, as we understood too soon.

He concluded it with an affectionate hug (at that time, the word love was not the tagline that it is today), in a farewell exuding a melancholic spirit for that secure home, full of philosophy, healthy daughters, smart and diligent, and on top of that a great woman.

The short one was addressed to Águeda. A single tiny paragraph on an unfolded small piece of paper fit inside the envelope. In her letter, she told him that when her third and last daughter was born, she retired from her high school teaching job to devote herself to being a housewife. Jean replied that she had chosen the best part of living, Mom read exultantly. No one ever flattered her role as a mother, let alone as a housewife. The philosopher’s wife always goes barefoot.

The brief letter had a doodle on one margin, an angel—I think, I don’t remember quite precisely—and what matters is that that doodle had a meaning between the two of them; it was worth a thousand words, and it lit up a brightness in Águeda’s eyes that never went away.

Once again, Zamora's mistress ran away to write to Jean Patin. The philosopher had his studio, his inalienable Holy of Holies, whereas his wife slyly put hers together in a small multipurpose room in which a sewing machine (that no one ever used) could be folded down and attached below the table and, ta-da! it turned, like Wonder Woman, into a desk.

We didn't realize the simultaneous and furtive correspondence between Águeda and Jean back then. My mother spent hours locked away with a dictionary, writing with Salvatore's jargon, a combination of Spanish, French, and Latin, the languages they both spoke poorly.

Letters were sent and received until Mauricio's fears became a reality. In one of his missives, Jean said: *Come visit*. It was an invitation the philosopher was not willing to accept and did not, but he had to thank him for it.

Like little white birds, more letters flew from here to there, until one day, after them, you might know who fluttered into home.

We are three sisters; I'm the one in the middle. Therefore, I'm the scribe, the one who takes notes and lives to record.

Should I apologize? Should I ask for permission to say what I'm about to say? Though, to whom am I apologizing now? I'm not into talking with the dead; I'm afraid they may answer. Second, who can confirm that what I'm writing about actually happened? Memory equals invention. Third, apologize for what? Isn't this my story? It's a story that impacted mine, at least.

I give up. I admit that there is something indecent and disrespectful about telling the story of someone who kept her intimacy under lock and key; even I understand, with irrational reasoning, that memories are to be honored, kept clean, and defended.

So I resist. I do not apologize. Nor do I forgive myself.

Before Jean Patin arrives home, do come in, come in and look around, smell, feel, and listen to the creaking of silence. Our house is sunken in a pot-like piece of land, and to reach it, one has to go down a rocky trail of questionable intentions.

It has some thrill to it from the start: two identical doors. Some people believe there are two houses, but no. One is our entry door, and the other is the housekeeper's entrance, soon to become the door of vice.

The building is mainly made of dark wood, which sometimes looks still alive, like when it was a barely sentient tree. When the entry door is opened, visitors are welcomed by a passage so gloomy that its sides and end cannot be seen. Our home was dark, silent, and hidden, because that's how Father wanted us to be.

Here goes a terrifying detail: Father was melophobic. Is that how you say it? (I must speak with the Merriam-Webster Dictionary). He didn't listen to music—he didn't reject it openly—but he avoided it and certainly didn't look for it. He was pleased to recite that quote attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte: "Of all noises, I think music is the least disagreeable," and

our house felt shut down, with its enduring gloominess and waxy and moldy smell. Every wall was lined with books. It was more like a library.

And then one day, Jean Patin entered that door like an illuminating angel, bouncing a basketball. Of course, he did not arrive straight from France bouncing a ball, but that is how I inevitably remember him, wearing sportswear, though frankly, he was not as agile and vigorous as we imagined a physical education teacher would be.

Mother, my sisters, and I were so excited; Father, too; I remembered him mid-sentence. Far before the visitor's arrival, our house began to wake up. The Zamoras were not a large family; our home was not stirring or full of life. There are households with plenty of extras, high-school classmates, cousins, a left-alone uncle; in ours, there were none. We knew well that we weren't allowed to make a fuss, so we were anxious about inviting people. Besides, we didn't have a guest room, not that we wanted one. Jean Patin was assigned to the TV room, which was barely used due to Father's rules, exquisitely tidied up by Mother.

If Águeda behaved in the way she behaved because of the arrival of a letter, now you can imagine how she felt about the advent of the man himself. She was exultant, and I will relish the memory because I can count with the fingers of one hand the times that woman was like that. She looked beautiful, and it was beautiful to realize, recalling the memory, that she was excited but not fearful. It's unbelievable; I now understand that her self-confidence at that reunion was so incriminating. She knew, she knew...

She embellished the entire house, some flowers here, an ornament there, a table runner, a rug, period. She never was a conceited lady; she was warm and simple. She was so beautiful, I repeat, to take pleasure in it, with sparkling eyes and an invincible smile.

There is a particular memory of a moment of that day that insists on remaining clear in my mind. It isn't a notably striking memory, and since some weeks ago, after writing about it

in the morning, I erase it in the evening no matter what. But when I woke up this morning, I understood its deep significance.

Dusk. The airplane that's bringing Patin from the sky must be unfolding the landing gear. Father is on edge, speaking through the dining room's telephone with the airport, wanting to know if the flight will arrive on time.

A fact of great importance: We didn't have a car. The Doctor of Philosophy is completely useless; seeing him driving any vehicle is unthinkable, let alone one that weighs two thousand kilos with a combustion engine. If Father were in a movie, he would look like a clumsy cartoon... unless he was played by Peter Sellers. It is said that people who look alike on the outside are also alike on the inside. Doctor Zamora was identical to Inspector Clouseau, with the same face, build, and clumsiness. Not alike, identical.

Poor Águeda, too scatterbrained, too nervous, and too convinced that it was men's stuff, wasn't able to master a steering wheel either. Thus, neither could make the usual nice gesture of picking up a friend at the airport exit. That frustrated Mauricio a lot, but he was an athlete with his famous brain revolving around the subject. In a couple of phrases, he made the world seem like the useless and clumsy one, with him being the genius that—thanks to him, actually—deigned to apply the Socratic method with a flight attendant.

In my memory, there's the professor on the telephone, nervous and rigid, and beside him, his wife, nervous and fidgeting. What a couple. You want to know if the plane arrived? Yes, sir, it already landed. Was the French passenger Jean Patin in it? We cannot give you that information, sir. Father lets his annoyance show. Águeda starts talking with him through his other ear: "Ask this, ask that." Father gets angry at her, covers the transmitter, and scolds her like a little girl. "Shut up," he says, as you hear. When they were angry, they would speak like that to each other. "Shut up." It annoys me now that I remember, but it was habitual. Something

unusual, the reason why the memory survives in these pages, is that this time his wife, with an indelible smile, shrugs her shoulders and turns around to leave him alone with his anguish.

When she is about to leave, Father tells her, imperiously: “Stay here,” indicating that she was not to move from his side. He was a dictator of the worst kind, of those who perceive themselves as a hundred percent dependent on the people around.

Ah, but what I had never seen, nor did I see again: Mom pretends to zip her mouth and stays at his side, laughing without making any noise.

When I woke up this morning, I understood why this fragment insisted on remaining in this story. At that precise moment when Patin put his feet on the ground, Mauricio the First and the Last began to fall.

*

There it is! The red taxi stopped in the driveway. Father went up to receive it. I already said that our house was sunken. We waited on the doorframe of the entry door, squeezed in like four upside-down brooms. In the distance, barely illuminated by the street lighting, a slim body whose silver mane sparkled as the Moon bounced off the taxi.

The two men gave each other a long and tight hug. Then, both picked up a suitcase and walked towards us. I will never forget the image. One of them was a scholar, hunched up, flabby, with no feminine features but unusually delicate; the other, a pale white physical education teacher, tall, skinny, and fidgety; I don't know if I noticed it then or if I remember it now, but all of him fidgeted and he had watery puppy eyes.

Bonjour was actually *bonsoir*, and he was *enchanté* and we were *enchantées*. We, the daughters, spoke French, *bien sûr*, after almost five years in the French high school. We were a *démodé cliché*, inclined to sing *La Marseillaise* in a period when progressives sang *The Internationale*.

Águeda's French was to die laughing at, and she was the first to roar with laughter. She never mastered the guttural r, rather more guttural than an r, and to her exacerbated gestures were added those bellows when she spoke French. She looked beautiful, and she knew it; sorry, sorry, I know I have said it enough. It's just that it has been decades for me to understand what beauty was.

Now, it is difficult for me to know what a memory, an invention, a fusion, and a confusion are. Without a doubt, pertinently, that night's staging had my mother and the man laughing out loud, interacting since the very first minute with an ancient nonverbal language. It seemed like they had seen each other the day before. They laugh, drink wine, and read each other's minds. And Father is... bored.

So bored. He put on his indulgence face, which I was well acquainted with. Doctor Zamora soon realized he had little to no interest in that European visitor. Instead of talking for hours with my father about Kant, Bergson, and other ordinary boys, Jean Patin laughed with my mom about nonsense, mimicking rather than speaking, letting his simple sense of humor bloom, one that came from the Germans, his ancestors.

*

One day at noon, *beep-beep*, our guest was in a car. Jean Patin could do that kind of feat, like going all alone around these chaotic Central American cities, renting a *Jeep* and driving it, despite the potholes and the downpours, to the door of our house.

Jean was descending the walkway while yelling something. At first, we didn't understand it. "Let's go to the beach!" He was saying. Silence. Looks. It was time to reveal *it*. I have been kicking *it* forward; the Zamoras always reveal *it* to the last, although *it* was the origin of everything.

It was something that lived inside Mauricio. *It* was something sinister, but *it* was alluded to in the most mundane way possible: “Your father has vertigo,” or “He doesn’t like heights,” or, at most, a little bit more poetic: “He is afraid of the void.” That’s how *it* was always explained to me; I don’t remember when I heard about *it* for the first time, when *it* was revealed to me. *It* did not have a principle and was the state of things. Until I knew *it* indeed had a common name; *it* was a phobia, a Hitchcock-like phobia, shameless.

It had controlled Mauricio’s will since his early teenage years. It was a miracle that he could get on an airplane for his doctorate. Because of *it*, he finished his thesis in record time. During the two years he lived there, *it* watched him, always sticking out to remind him that if he wanted to return to his homeland, he would have to fly thirty thousand feet above sea level.

Unable to tackle *it*, not even to make an agreement with *it*, the philosopher came back, dug a hole, and buried himself and his family in it. He gave up on *it*, and he named that defeat freedom. *It* was the tyrant in our home, not my poor Mauricio.

Later, what usually happens when it comes to phobias happened: The more they are fed, the more they grow. The phobic framework narrowed, and if when Father was young, he dared to cross some little bridges and walk around the edge of slopes, now that he was presenting late-onset hypogonadism, he didn’t go up to a third floor, nor could he stand being near a balcony area.

Now explain *it* to people. Tell the good friend who just arrived in a roaring *Jeep*, willing to go around Costa Rica, that the *problem* has nothing to do with the tires. I believe it was Mother who quasi-exposed to him the famous matter, which, although never spoken about, never made exceptions.

Jean Patin went on a weekend trip with the four little Zamoras. Mauricio also went with us, us following all his instructions, that is, respecting all his restrictions: no drives around crags,

no going up viewpoints or crossing high bridges, something way too complicated in this country full of magnificent mountains and deep basins.

One evening, when he was left with forty-eight hours until his return to France, Jean Patin suggested going to the Irazú Volcano to see the sunset. Father declined; we did, too. “Let’s go!” Águeda got in the *Jeep* with a jump and *vroom-vroom*, there they went, dying with laughter, with a basket and a checkered picnic blanket, food, and a bottle of wine.

When they returned, it was already dark outside. Águeda was still blazing; indeed, she was at ease, though, *bzzz, bzzz*, her usual buzzing was reappearing.

We had Patin for three weeks. What a thing. If this tale were to end here, it wouldn’t be interesting nor have a reason for existence. However, I wish it would be just this. But...

But Águeda touched the Sky with her hands. Which is the worst thing that could happen. To a woman.

Mauritania. That's what we jokingly called our home back then when we entered our teenage years because we started to question the authority of the head of the family, which was our father's head.

When Jean Patin came into our lives, Mauricio's kingdom was pretty worn out; but my childhood and teenage years are memories of a house in the image of Father; a household of few always-closed windows; dark and silent. On the table, Father would talk, and we wouldn't interrupt, not even to ask for the salt.

With Jean's presence, our house went wild; doors and windows were all opened to receive that foreigner who, besides all of that, appeared one day with a musical machine and pressed *play* without a warning. Music, light, wine, roses, and laughter desecrated the kingdom, which was declining.

The philosopher languished, and nobody noticed it. Bigsista, my sister, did; she said she warned us: "Father is not okay." But we weren't paying attention to him. We were invested in other matters, and in the end, *it* had no mercy on Father and let us free, free to live our lives on the outside, in our 17, 21, and 24 years, ages in which being pretty didn't matter. We weren't, I guess, thank goodness.

Águeda was never the same. She continued cooking the three exquisite and warm meals for her husband and being a thrifty and reliable housewife, but... with another heart. Now, she would play music all day long. Father would get out of his studio and turn off the boom box; he would disconnect it because he didn't know where that *on/off* was, and as soon as he turned around, Mother would turn it on again. All his manias and stupidity, which always were considered part of his high range of intellect, were now seen—if at all—as the funny eccentricity of a nerd.

Depending on the day, the memories come in different shades. Sometimes, I laugh alone, reminiscing how Nana Mouskouri's high-pitched uvula would be cut off suddenly while the boom box wire would be left hanging like a hangman.

But since I entered upon the memories of someone else's life, I have become more aware that hell was inside that man. I have been threatening to write this story for thirty years, waiting for the moment I could do it with dry tears, and now that I'm counting the years, my eyes water and... I shiver.

Father, I'm your age.

*

The inevitable was also unavoidable. A few weeks after his departure, Jean Patin was on the attack: *Come*. He was inviting them again. *Come to Strasbourg, let's walk through the streets we met, and let's bring back those moments*.

How uncool, Jean Patin, closing his ears to the Zamorian wound, which was revealed to him in a code of trust. Inviting Mauricio and his fabulous wife to fly in the skies, even when he had observed how his friend couldn't even go to the beach, although... It was also true that no one ever fully comprehended *it*; very comprehensible incomprehension, because there was no way, not even by reasoning or by heart, to do it, and because if it was difficult to understand *it*, it was even more difficult to explain *it*, and we never found the words for *it*, nor did we call *it* by its psychiatrist catch-all: phobia.

Come, come, Jean Patin would say in a letter that oozed yearning. And this time, the philosopher accepted.

It was surprising, though not that much, because what is normal is predictable. It is way more surprising now, when recalling it. Father set a date, bought airplane tickets, and made an itinerary. The season of preparation Mauricio's style was opened. On the dining room table,

maps of France and Europe were unfolded, because the flight would make a stop in Amsterdam, a city we traveled through entirely—through the paper, I mean—and then we reviewed the journey they would make by different trains from that city to Strasbourg.

Mauricio bought a guide, and we saw pictures of the little hotel they would stay in before arriving in Strasbourg, where Jean Patin already had the guest room ready. Tulips, canals, windmills; back then, tourism didn't seem wrong among intellectuals.

It is important to place oneself in the '90s of the last century. Trips were to be cherished way before they happened, and big plans were to be made. Our family didn't have suitcases due to the circumstances already established. I have to add that back in the day, suitcases were luxury assets. They would be passed from one member of the family to another and were loaned by a brother-in-law or a colleague... The travelers were to be accompanied to the airport, and a farewell party for a three-week trip was to be thrown. Actually, it was because of that confounded party that *it* reappeared to ask Mauricio: *Where do you think you're going?*

I think the departure was on a Saturday. An aunt offered her place for the farewell party on about a Thursday. It was located on the other side of the city, forcing us to cross the bridge above the abyssal basin of the Virilla River. A friend came to drive us there. We didn't notice that Father looked like a mammal heading to the slaughterhouse. *I did, I did notice*, Bigsista would say, not lying. Dizziness, sweat. When the car was about to cross the bridge above the Virilla River, *it* appeared to prevent us from crossing. We had to stop in the middle of the freeway, hazard lights, U-turn. If he couldn't cross a bridge, there was no way he would get on a plane.

Vomit, anguish, insomnia. No, he couldn't do it. *It* wins. He found himself defeated. "But I wouldn't do that to you," Mother said Father told her. She would travel, he stated categorically.

And Águeda, modest and demure, but without thinking twice, took notice and took off.

Of all her secrets, the following are the ones Águeda would forgive me the least for making public. Her age, for example; she was older than she looked and much older than Father and Jean, who were seven years younger than her.

Mother was fifty-nine years old. Sixty-year-old Costa Rican women weren't as pious as her; nor housewives, as her; not in our social environment. But her life, or rather, her biography (which is her life coordinated in a story), is a succession of frustrations, of castrations, of open doors for everyone except for her, of unspeakable desires, as modest as they were, because even murmuring *I want* hurt.

It wasn't like Father said "I won't go, you go," and Águeda left on the next plane to Europe. The plans were canceled, part of the money was returned, and we all felt uneasy.

Ahem, I was twenty-one, an age known as that of the second selfishness. Nothing that would happen to my relatives would matter to me especially. At twenty-one one feels too insecure, and unknown, to pity someone. It's a cycle that ends at twenty-eight, when one feels able to be reborn to the world again. I would think about my parents as two clumsy old geezers when speaking about what since then I consider the second most important thing in this world: knowing how to live.

I come back to this whole story when I'm about to turn the age of someone whom I called old geezer; but back then, it was nowhere near my greatest interest. We were all cut off, like someone who has gathered momentum to do a big jump, changes their mind, and stops at the edge with an excess of adrenaline.

Don't dare to imagine Águeda taking control of her trip; she took control of very few things in her life except the kitchen, which then seemed contemptible to me and now, priceless. It was not only because of her paralyzing uselessness that she let somebody else plan the trip but also because it was unthinkable that an honest woman would go alone to see a man on the

other side of the world. Águeda's dreamy and deserved trip to Europe worked out because her husband planned and paid for everything. She had been married to the prestigious scholar for more than two decades and they didn't even go to Mexico, whereas her neighbors and other wives and lovers were at least taken to San Andrés Island. She could have taken a tour, but I don't remember if this was even mentioned. It would be a pious trip with a required stop at Jean Patin's place.

And now, please welcome, Gumersinda. Mom's everlasting friend. They were the same age, but she was given that name and looked way older. Gumersinda fancied going to Notre Dame and Lourdes, and finishing the journey in Strasbourg, where Doctor Zamora's old college friend would receive them.

It can't be said that Gumersinda was an old spinster because she was a Franciscan Sister of the Third Order, and only those who don't want to be old spinsters are old spinsters; it also can't be said that Gumersinda would play the role of a chaperone—or yes, she would, because indeed, without Gumer, the perfect wife wouldn't have traveled.

Being a chaperone was a commendable job, and this Franciscan Sister was experienced in it, precisely because of her friend's lengthy and harmless relationship with Mauricio, because now it is easy to confirm that it was harmless. Back then, Águeda's virginity was subjected to an amount of vigilance proportionate to the calamity it would have been if it were to be lost. Her mother, father, and four brothers would have preferred for her to get an unusual gangrenous hymen cancer rather than her being stretched open willingly.

"I'm going to church with Gumer," Águeda would say, or to teach catechism, or to share food with the poor. So, they would go out together, walk five hundred meters and Águeda would meet Mauricio to go for a coffee. One time they even went to the movie theater—all three, of course, they couldn't risk someone going and telling my grandparents.

The whole *custodia virginitatis* mechanism was excessive and ridiculous, considering Águeda was already in her thirties; but despite that, my grandparents didn't relax. We found out about Gumersinda's wingwoman job between laughs and jokes because it ended with an unstained white dress. Otherwise, three reincarnations would be needed for it to be remembered with *costumbrista* humor.

The subconscious, what a thing. Those anecdotes came to light during dinner the night before Águeda's and her friend's trip to France. Gumer would be the chaperone again. We knew it without realizing it. Águeda would laugh and drink wine non-stop; Mauricio would smile obligingly, not bothering to hide how tedious he found the conversation.

Mother came out on top by substituting her friend for her husband as her traveling companion. Gumersinda didn't stress about a thing; she would laugh with Gumersinda about everything, they saw themselves as two characters in a comedy, those in which two town ladies go to Paris. Everything that would have caused anguish, impotence, and ridicule in the philosopher, was the reason for Águeda's and Gumersinda's laughs. There were other times, true, we weren't searched like terrorists before getting on a plane for example; either way, it was as if they were traveling on the wings of a celestial angel. Everything that could go wrong went right; let me tell you, Gumersinda even lost her passport the first day they were in Paris. She went around Paris without her identity papers and she was allowed to get on the plane to return home unidentified. This should count as a miracle for her possible beatification.

In such a way one morning a scream was heard: "The taxi has arrived!", a scream that was always a reason for a bilirubin rush there in Mauritanian land. Father and daughters helped the women get their suitcases inside. The philosopher was about to start a conference about the principles of the lever; Águeda got tangled with a strap and almost killed herself, but never in a

million years would that happen if, deep down, one didn't want to leave. Águeda did a cat-like somersault, landed on her feet, and with shock in her eyes she exclaimed: *mee-owww!*

Ha, ha, ha! Gumersinda laughed at that and at any other nonsense her friend would do, inciting the clown who lived caged inside Águeda.

Din, paraphernalia, laughs, rumba coming out of the taxi, dogs barking, doors closed, Águeda and Gumersinda cross themselves, take each other's hands, and begin to pray an Our Father. The engine starts. The taxi goes away playing typical music and leaving a trail of trumpets and air freshener.

The three young, long-haired, and hormonal daughters say bye-bye to their daddy and flutter to their classes, their businesses, and their boyfriends.

The father stays there in the cement of the driveway. Sometimes, the world shuts up. Mauricio, dejected, walks down the rocky path and goes into the gloomy house.

Finally, Father, the house is all yours.

Mauricio is not so sure now. About adoring the silence.

“If I don’t marry her, I won’t marry anyone.”

A teenage version of Mauricio was walking around the hectic paths of a '70s college when he saw a busty girl with a dark brown mane who left him captivated. She had a modest, flirtatious, and insecure walk—three adjectives that are not here thoughtlessly, but carefully selected, and which form an irresistible mixture for a certain type of man.

She wasn’t a hippie, nor a daddy’s girl; she wasn’t uncouth, nor a lady with oligarchic last names. She was made for him. She would be the one, or no one else would, Mauricio declared cockily so his friend walking beside him would hear. I found out about this recently. Immersed in family inquiry, I ended up with that famous friend, who told me about it, full of secondhand pride. Men think stories begin with a sperm. If they only knew...

I always thought that Mother and Father were each other's only one. I thought that they didn’t have many options to pick from, that they weren’t allowed to ask for anything from a partner, that was what I thought, with him so ugly and her so timid. It’s clear I underestimated two factors, despite how much I suffer from them: one, Mauricio’s successful intelligence, and two, that he was trained since birth to be a despot.

Leave the prequels aside. Every story is a sequel. When you start pulling the string, farther and farther, you’ll find nothing but pain and confusion which resulted in more pain and confusion, which would result in more pain and confusion, no matter where you hold the string.

My paternal grandmother, Mauricia, born in the late nineteenth century, unlike many women, did get what she wanted: to give birth to a superman. She got married at almost forty to a very old man who agreed to give her a son—one and no more, he warned. The baby would have to be a boy, my grandmother thought before the act, during the act, and after the act; she didn’t wish the misfortune of giving birth to a girl; it was already calamity enough being a woman (born of a single woman, by the way). That’s why messiahs come to this planet, to

redeem women; to finally give them their own man, all theirs, new and ready to be used for the first time.

Bigستا once said that it was a miracle that Father didn't end up hiding grandmother's corpse in a basement and stabbing women in the shower; she said philosophy saved him from psychosis, I didn't quite catch onto why. She said that the philosophical knowledge was like giving a mouse plushie to a cat for it to play, instead of it torturing mice of flesh and blood, and little whiskers.

Considered from a certain psychiatric perspective, it is undeniable that Mauricia's son's childhood, little Mauricio, was pretty sinister. In practical terms, they lived alone, unconditionally, with the goal of living happily ever after. It seems (I'm uncertain about this) that as soon as her only child was born, my grandmother sent my grandfather to "the crazy's room;" that's what it was called, the quotation marks do not indicate irony. In almost every middle or lower-class house there was a little room on the back side, the end of the hall, sometimes even outside, across the backyard. It was well-known what today we try to ignore. Without fail, there will always be a relative who won't be able to thrive and will be left hanging in the rearview mirror like an accessory. It has always been known because it has always been like that; for that reason, everything was planned for keeping them in the house. Only the rich could afford to send off the relatives who didn't fit in to their country house, a convent, or a retirement home abroad. Now, my poor paternal grandfather ended up in the crazy's room for being sane, because there was no room for him in the symbiosis that his wife and his son enjoyed.

No one ever told little Mauricio to brush his teeth, to take a shower, not to put his elbows on the table, or even not to speak while eating. In that house, they would do as he would say or as his mother would make him say. At seven, he told Mauricia: "I don't want to go to school." She answered: "Then don't go." And during all his primary school years, the kid stayed in his

imaginary world, just with his mommy, no need for more. This process could have made an idiot of him, but it made him the opposite of an idiot, that is to say a genius.

Geography, Spanish, math, he would learn everything with Mauricia, who knew little, although she pretended to know nothing. At twelve Mauricio would study to teach his mother, he would even put her up to the test in a game that wasn't a game. Multiplication, division, history of Costa Rica, geography, the kid would test his mother. At the end of the school year, he took the tests corresponding to his level and obtained the best results among all the students in the country.

Aristotle and Alexander the Great all at once, or father and son all at once, that was that kid-man who, at twenty-two, pronounced: "If I don't marry her, I won't marry anyone." His wishes were commands. That's how it had always been for him. And right there—modest, flirtatious, and insecure—Águeda was walking by, whose wishes were her messes.

*

I remember the days without Águeda as the most harmonious on the Mauritanian Island. I'll say it without sugarcoating: If our house was dedicated to reading, studying, intellectual reflection, and withdrawal, Águeda's absence had the same effect as when servants who keep life's machine oiled so as not to disturb leave—invisible but perceptible.

"I got born before they invented women," said Ursula K. Le Guin, born a few months before Águeda. I could say I was born during that invention. Those were times of bleeding paradoxes, like this one: Águeda was more of a male chauvinist than her husband. She was the one who used to control us and believed that it was more important for us to get married than to study.

Mauricio was what was known as a free thinker. This daring affirmation forces me to note down the concept precisely. Free thinker: an individual who claims that their reason for

existence has absolute independence from all supernatural approaches. Come on, he was an atheist, just for starters. What's true is that reasoning prevailed and was stronger than anything else, especially if it was the reasoning of the strongest.

Among the few memories I have of the philosopher showing a visceral mood (specifically, anger), there is one time when Mother didn't want to let me go to the beach with my boyfriend and Dad said to her: "Live your life and let your daughters live theirs." He was furious.

For a long time, I thought his rage was because he was defending my freedom; then I realized that more than furious, he was exhausted. Because Águeda was exhausting. Frustrated, unoccupied, and neurotic, she did nothing more than control her daughters and envy them, probably and comprehensibly.

"Let them live their lives!", my father roared, but what he was begging was: *Let us live*. And Águeda, without knowing it, took notice. *Without knowing it*.

Those were three pleasant weeks, for us three sisters. Águeda was like the purring sound of the fridge, one values and thanks when it shuts up. How dare I. Give birth to a daughter, raise and love her just for her to one day write these brutalities. I am too brave or too coward, I ask.

I was about to say that Mauricio had probably also enjoyed Águeda's vacations, when that memory crossed my mind carrying all its darkness. I didn't see it back then and I don't blame myself; I feel guilty now about what I'm about to tell.

Father didn't spend those twenty-one nights at home. I don't remember it, because I didn't care; he had an affair, I suspected it; fidelity does not exist, it was well-known back then as it is now. Instead of all of that, I found out too late that those days my Mr. Father was in the *c eremonie des adieux* with his lover.

She was a philosopher and, as one, she reasoned incorrectly about the so-called matters of the heart. Mauricio was left home alone, and she considered that that was the appropriate occasion for giving him an ultimatum: *Your wife or me*. It was the least opportune moment.

They broke up. In the eyes of the young lover operated the habitual cowardice of a man who prefers not to swap the devil he knows for the devil he doesn't. It was still too early to realize that the philosopher, instead of deciding which one to choose, was giving up on both. On every female. On everything.

He was fifty-something and, I must give the fact away: Professor Mauricio Zamora had just retired. It is not odd that we saw him as an elder. The university was his life, and he decided to leave it, in the middle of the climax. I attributed so little importance to that event that I don't know its underlying motive, only his official version: He wasn't valued in the university, he said. He would rather leave everything behind to write a novel.

Now I understand that *it* stuck in its treacherous nose. *It* wasn't satisfied with the "fear of heights" which locked Mauricio away; *it* stopped being literal, to invade all metaphorical spaces. A phobia is a fatal attraction, so fatal that it passes off as repulsion. One day I found out that Mauricio's "fear" (how naïve this word sounds now) when crossing a bridge had to do with not holding up the provocation of the abyss. Just as someone who suffers from arachnophobia is afraid of fearing that much, so much, that it's preferable to stick their hand once and for all between the eight hairy legs; likewise, Mauricio's panic was about losing control and succumbing to the temptation of throwing himself from the bridge.

During Águeda's absence, some days, in the after-lunch conversation, Doctor Zamora would read to his three daughters fragments of the novel in the making.

The book was inspired by the best novel of all times according to Father, *The Magic Mountain*, Cartago Mountains version. I remember that when sex was mentioned it used

metaphors like “the golden chalice” to refer to a blonde pubis. Because of that, I’m certain that Mauricio’s collapse was total, it came from all directions: love, family, work, and, on top of that, he realized that his novel wasn’t good and that he had made a monumental mistake by giving up on teaching, his true vocation and his biggest talent. Philosopher Zamora was able to make one understand the *Dasein* in an afternoon coffee.

While I’m writing this novel, I’m the same age he was when he couldn’t write his own.

I get frightened when I see that sentence on the screen of my computer. It can’t be that I have just written that. The keyboard burns me. I’m about to go blind. I won’t write more. For today.

“Ladies and gentlemen, in a few minutes we will be landing on Juan Santamaría’s International Airport.”

“God and Saint Mary willing,” Águeda added, and all the *tico* passengers cracked up. People used to clap when the little wheels of the airplane touched the runway; can you believe it? The last decades’ changes have turned this into a period novel.

Beauty looks like happiness. Well, well, so that could be Águeda, a lively, flirtatious, demure, modest, and cunning woman, all in one, in the same rosy and chubby body without insecurities, with pure eyes.

When a person is in love they reach the peak of their essence, their state of highest understanding with the world. The person in love is receptive, they are open to everything, beauty, pleasure, and love for others and themselves. Being in love fully places us in the present and gives us back certainty in its greatest sense, the certainty that things are as they should be, Osho says, do not think for a moment that I dare to record this.

I can already see you, my busy female readers, half-closing your eyes, supporting Aristotle’s school and his thesis that being in love is a state of temporary stupidity.

(By the way, in the same way as Cervantes addressed the unoccupied reader, I hope optimistically for the day that I can address the female unoccupied reader without everyone going for my jugular. Being an unoccupied woman, ah, we haven’t conquered that freedom yet.)

Lights, music, wine, action! Águeda returned to the house, disturbing the silence and the darkness. She couldn’t stop talking, laughing, and choking on her own saliva, then she would cough and hiccup because of that, and she would laugh even more. Her husband seemed like her father, a father resigned to having a charming daughter but low in intellect; he appeared satisfied with her being happy, although, to his eyes, it was an insignificant happiness. He was relieved, as you may see.

Mother's new energy reconquered the island. Every day seemed like a party, every day wine would be drunk at noon and dinner, and every day she would prepare different delicious exotic dishes. I'm pleased to use that word to refer to, for example, sauerkraut.

Águeda arrived from France with her suitcase full of CDs that we would listen to on the device Jean would give as a present to the family. The new Águeda would sing and dance from early in the morning, while showering, cooking breakfast, cooking lunch, while, while. While what.

The philosopher, lord and master of the fief, would now escape by the corners like a little mole to his studio, where he would spend most of the day. He established pre-naps; he read somewhere it was a very healthy habit so he would doze before and after lunch, and later he would also do it before dinner.

With that *Nouveau Régime* of open windows and doors, the house turned out to be cold and windy to the cave philosopher, though it was far from being it. He would be all wrapped up warm with a vest and a scarf, sometimes, around his low-cut daughters and heated wife.

Those were the last death rattles of the regime and the women on the island started living more at their own will. He would lock himself up as always, but more. Father Bear would sleep most of the day. He stopped reading to us fragments of his novel. We had no idea.

Águeda was very religious. I write this four-word sentence and doubt. Was she very religious? That's how I perceived her back then. What happens now is that certain forms of religiousness seem like an obsession to me, so I'm facing that difficulty, telling the story of years ago, with today's perspective. She was indeed Catholic; she went to church every week, and she believed in the existence of a God written with a capital G and with a beard, for sure. However, she wasn't as prudish as I thought. She believed a woman must conserve her virginity until marriage, ah, and most importantly: she believed marriage must last until death. Mind you,

she would only apply this axiom to her marriage. That was the nice thing about Águeda: she was so compassionate, generous, with zero censure and inquiry, and, excepting her daughters, she wouldn't tell others how to live their lives. And still, she would tell her daughters how to do so with tears in her eyes, afraid God might claim those souls, created by him, brought up badly by her, given to the devil.

As I was saying, Águeda was religious, and yes, I maintain it, because I suppose that was the religiousness in her at that time. It was the consciousness put outside of her, incarnated in a Man who, at the end of the day, saw her with the eyes of a permissive father.

One afternoon, in the peace of the kitchen, while drinking coffee, Águeda said to me: "Something very funny happened in Strasbourg," and told me that good Gumersinda would go to sleep early so she and Patin could stay up until late drinking wine and chatting, during the wonderful spring nights—I add. On one of those early mornings, when Águeda tiptoed into the guest room where good Gumersinda was surely already snoring, she found her awakened, lamp on, eyes open. *Ahhh!* Águeda screamed, red-handed. "What's going on?" Good Gumersinda asked, alarmed—she had just woken up to go the bathroom for a moment. Águeda placed her hands on her belly and exclaimed one of her typical ridiculous remarks: "Gumersinda, I'm pregnant!"

Cuas, cuas, cuas, Mother told me she laughed with Gumer at her nonsense. That's how Cartago women would say *ha, ha, ha: cuas, cuas, cuas*. How innocent, I thought at that moment and all these years, until now that I reconsider it and confirm that I was the innocent one: I hadn't caught all my mother was saying with that pseudo-joke.

The letters between Jean Patin and Águeda continued coming and going. What would happen next was a question nobody asked, or that was what I believed; now I can suppose that Águeda didn't think about there being another thing, not even being able to say it as a

confessional secret. Luckily one can only sin of thought, word, and deed, not of imagination. What would happen? What *could* happen?

Well, in the end, we all understood that Mauricio Zamora, father, husband, and lover, was saying his goodbyes. It seems like this is one of those Broadway musicals in which the character who gets in the way is a dead character. Not at all. Mauricio had quite a lot of presence in this story, more relevant when dead rather than alive.

*

Being trapped, the husband had to confess many things to his wife; the most important one was that he had been feeling bad for weeks, for months, actually. All that French food with its respective wine wasn't good for his stomach; also, he was tired, exhausted, through the twenty-four hours of the day, he couldn't even rest at night, between nightmares, stomach cramps, and gastroesophageal reflux. And he was cold, all the time, everywhere, even below this severe sun.

This wasn't enough to open our eyes, because neither Mother nor ourselves had eyes for him. He had to tell his wife that one morning he went to the bathroom and blood and a black petroleum-like stain came out of his body for us to abruptly realize that this man was dying. Three months, the doctor said, and Father—as he was—a disciplined, methodical, and responsible man, had only three months.

He brought the four thoughtless females who lived with him together, at five in the afternoon on a Sunday. Everything was involuntarily solemn. The solemnness came from our silence, from our lack of capacity to respond; as I said, his cunning dictatorship had been weakening months ago, but with his imminent death, none could confront him.

Doctor Zamora told us that the greatest privilege for a philosopher was to welcome death as he would do it, facing it, with his eyes open and fully lucid. The greatest philosophical act

was dying, he said, a meeting with the absolute truth. I started crying and he responded to my tears by making his very famous face (he would frown as if he were licking baking soda) of poorly concealed annoyance.

Right there our learned father opened a book and read to us the *Phaedo* from beginning to end. I have never read it again, not to alter my memories of that twilight. Socrates, about to drink hemlock, says goodbye to his pupils, and—I think—he makes fun of them, of their sadness and fear of being without him. One of the youngest starts crying, which makes him effeminate, not suitable enough for the noble philosophical duty.

To this day, this farewell seems like a great sly violence to me. But now recalling—imagining?—the four of us seated in a circle around Father, in the living room of wooden floors and walls, with its little windows with floral curtains, a steaming teapot in the round coffee table in the middle of the room, makes me reconsider that act, which emerges full of meaning. I must read the *Phaedo* again.

*

As soon as he found out about the lost cause, Jean Patin called us via telephone to announce: “I’m coming,” an initiative which was refused immediately. It seems like Father told him: “Come later, when you have more time.” It wasn’t difficult for Jean Patin to understand that that was not his moment, that it was not his moment *yet*.

The letters between him and Mother continued their traffic; Jean Patin became that imaginary friend who helps to catalyze intimate writing. Águeda would write and write some sort of diary that crossed the ocean, never to return.

I remember Father’s three months of death throes as very calm days. Agony means fighting, but he laid down his weapons and gave up since the beginning. Only one memory of an outburst, this one: One afternoon, Águeda came into my room without knocking. This would

never ever happen. In my house, since we were little girls, we all had our own room with a door bolt, and since I can remember, one had to knock on the door before opening it.

Plaf! The door is opened and Águeda enters with a haunting gaze, but not a crazy haunting gaze, more like a mystic one. “What is this, how does one thrive in this pain, help us, lord, guide us, explain to us the reasons for your holy will!” She exclaimed, Shakespearian, going around circles in my room, and having had the last word, without looking me in the eyes, she left, leaving the door open.

I always thought that my immaturity and selfishness, common for my age of that time, were the things that stopped me from empathizing with her back then; but that monologue still remains enigmatic to me today. The only thing that occurs to me is that perhaps Águeda was trying to shape a pain she supposed she was feeling, without truly feeling it. Or the contrary: She felt pain but couldn’t understand its shape.

Some weeks later, when we were leaving the house to head to the church where the funeral would be officiated, Águeda, full of self-pity, sighed: “Oh! If my mother could see me now.” (At that point, my four grandparents had already died.) Later, when we were entering the church packed with people, between the bells ringing, surrounded by the entourage, Águeda was murmuring: “For whom the bells are ringing, ah, for my dear Mauricio.” Her drama makes me think that she was starting to feel the problem she would have to face: being the impeccable widow of Doctor Mauricio Zamora for all eternity.

That night, the four of us come home late—weird, more lights than normal are on. We get inside and there is a cake on the round coffee table in the living room. There are two lit candles on the cake, a six and a zero.

Father died at the dawn of Mother's birthday. She was turning sixty. Nobody remembered it, just her; she and the pale person behind the cake, barely illuminated by the candles.

Who else could it be?

Jean Patin.

There is—there was, nobody knows where it is now—a picture of Águeda in which she is in a carriage, between clouds and feathers, her lips covered with lipstick, her long blonde mane in the air... and on her back, two wings made out of paper-mâché. Let's not get confused. This carriage is part of Holy Week's processions from almost a century ago. The blonde little angel is seven years old, she has a few more years left for this ostentation; as soon as she stops being a child, no more carriages and lipstick on her lips, and the wings, out of the question.

When puberty hit her, her hair suddenly darkened until it was a huge dark and curly mass (which I inherited), and I wonder if that contributed to her not feeling pretty anymore. The fact that she considered herself ugly is key in the story of her life, because it had to do with miss Águeda not having many suitors; that's what single women were called, no matter their age.

She was twenty-eight when a young boy still in the making dug his heels in on her. Mauricio was far from being a man, if he ever was. He wasn't handsome, tall, or strong, and to top it all off, he didn't have a good posture. He would walk with his splendid aquiline nose (which I inherited) pointing to the ground. He was neither a doctor, considered a sacred profession there in Cartago, nor a lawyer or engineer. Instead, he would work on that unmanly thing of reflecting on why there is being and not just the void.

Miss Águeda is getting married! The news was received between surprise and laughter. It isn't understandable today, but back then, a spinster getting married was unusual and—ew—a little bit grotesque.

For a long time, I considered that that little man in the making, the eccentric, philosophical, poetry-and-wine-talks lover, had rescued that woman who was starting to smell like naphthalene and incense. He not only took her out of prudish Cartago to take her to the capital (San José), to the surroundings of the university campus, buzzing with a considerable culture and bohemian life, but he also took her to Europe! At thirty-six, Miss Águeda would walk around *Parc de l'Orangerie*, in Strasbourg, a place she hadn't visited even in her dreams.

But in a couple, who saves who? One asks themselves this question and everything turns confusing. I have just confirmed that in my adolescence and prime of youth, I thought Mauricio had saved Águeda. On the contrary, later, when I stopped believing in men that save women, my mother's married life seemed to me, like many other women's, a submission story. A submission that, justly, starts to slack off more and more until my father set Águeda free with a not insignificant widow's pension.

The life of an old lady could be the one told next. But living in freedom, *hélas*, cannot be learned from night to day, nor vice versa.

*

Pop! Clink. Cheers! There was not a single day in which a bottle would not be uncorked there in the ancient kingdom of whispering shadows, now restructured into a house of music and laughter. It was seen as something very scandalous, it was on everyone's lips, the family's dishonor, that Frenchy was making our mourning more pleasant. But this female narrator of yours remembers nothing about it.

Jean Patin continued using the guest room, *I guess*. I didn't lend the slightest importance to those matters, so my memory lent it less. How difficult it is to remember what didn't matter to us. What I do remember is that, out of the three sisters, at least I felt relieved. It was worrying to think about what it would be like for widowed Águeda. Father had his world, she didn't. But

still, there's more. Mother had tried to raise her three daughters with the same Cartago morals she was raised with. It was Father, as I already said, who defended our equatorial freedom several times, if you know what I mean. Him being dead, I could already picture us as the Brönte sisters, writing in the attic, watching the storks flying through a dormer window.

That man was a gift of life for all of us. The house always had its doors open, the kitchen was transformed into a focal point, and there were visitors; the people who bothered us so much in the past now were welcomed. With the money from the life insurance, Águeda bought a tremendous four-by-four car, not some junker, and Jean Patin would take us everywhere, crossing bridges and cliffs.

Jean Patin offered to teach me how to drive. We ended up crashing into Mrs. I don't remember's rose bush, a very serious neighbor, but *ha ha ha*, everything was laughter with Jean and even Mrs. What's-her-name laughed with us.

I was twenty-one, I already said it, and I repeat it because at that age—now I realize it—I understood things through my hormones. Seeing Jean composed and understanding while we were embedded among the roses, I had a flash of concern. *What if this man is in love with me?* The question crossed my mind. But as fast as it came, it was resolved. No, that wouldn't be the Achilles heel of my mother's lover.

What about the mourning? We were among wine and roses while Father was still warm beneath the earth, being food for the worms. "The timing of the heart is what it is," said Yesenia with rhyme and reason, the hairdresser of the neighboring town who would come to our house to style Mother's hair. She was delighted with Jean as well; she cut his hair and cackled with him without knowing a bit of French. Yesenia was the ex-lover of a married man and a single mother, so she knew what she was talking about. To this day, those intricacies are not understood in her dimension. The father of the hairdresser, when he found out "the thing about his daughter,"

condemned her and got depressed. As if that alone would not quite ruin the lives of his relatives, including his future grandson, he committed suicide, just for you to see that I'm not exaggerating. At that time, one was risking a lot with sperms that weren't blessed with holy water.

*

“Guys, Jean and Mommy have been in love for the past thirty years!” My sister, known as the Great Bear, came to us one day with that wild guess. She said that she put two and two together and that it was obvious. A little picture of Jean Patin kept between towels, our young father frequently going to Paris with the excuse of studying and leaving Águeda in Strasbourg alone with Good Jean; if not, how had she learned so much French? She never left the house nor had friends. It was obvious; they were both so in love *in illo tempore*, claimed Bigsista, and he was way more in love, with that pinch of spiciness added by the obligation of respecting a married woman. She looked like Liz Taylor, as he told us one day, and I'm not saying she didn't.

With his friend being dead, the forbidden woman, the woman of his dreams, *The woman*, was finally available. Jean Patin was not about postponements, guys. Bigsista didn't say that, but it's clear now.

We don't have secrets in our family—that would be the nicest way of saying it—it's impossible to keep something between two or three people. Everything leaks. I don't remember how and when we found out that on the last telephone call he had with Patin, Father told him: “*Mon vieux*, you have a family here.” And to his wife, he said: “You won't be left alone, you'll see.”

Larán, larán. Larán, larán. Listen to those larans with the song of the *Little House on the Prairie*. Visualize the summer grass and three girls with braids and flowing dresses. Jean Patin might have imagined something like that when his dying friend told him that he had a family there. He would cross the Atlantic to introduce himself before his destiny and say “Present.”

Then it turned out to be that, instead of grass, he found the winding path of a cave and four hairy bears, but it wasn't an obstacle, but rather an incentive for: *Pop! Clink*. Cheers! Let the celebration continue.

Every day seemed like a party, we always thought of something to celebrate, even if it was an unsuspected saint's day. Jean Patin's stay was a phenomenal period that we all welcomed as if we had been waiting for since always.

I don't deny that there were moments in which an odd aversion escaped from Águeda, suppressed and wrongly directed. It was a brief shadow that bloomed when she would lose control over her gestures. My hypothesis is that her daughters bothered her, from time to time. Other times she would love them or remember that she had to love them to be up to the loving mother Jean Patin expected her to be.

But in the outcome, they were three splendid months in which we all pretended to be a happy family, one without eccentricities, who bless the food, go out on Sundays, and do not dare to write inappropriate books.

My maternal grandmother said a few days before dying that one lives ninety years (in her case) to have a few moments of happiness.

Three months.

Pas mal.

*

Jean Patin was gone and Mother fell on us with all her weight. The annoying lady was back. How boring. She was all paranoid. She said the neighbors looked strangely at her, that all of them smiled falsely and maliciously at her, that people approached her to ask her how she was and ended up asking; "And the Frenchman?"

I can accept that it was uncomfortable when people came to express their condolences and found a radiant woman accompanied by a gray-haired foreigner with good posture. They won't hold hands, by god, and as it was already stated, Jean used the guest room. For all intents and purposes, he was a good friend who had come to support and chastely console the mourners.

It is unknown if they had sex during those months, legends say that they didn't. Who cared? We, the daughters, did. That man's arrival at our house signified a victory for the three little Zamoras, as some told us we were called by some others. Our mother had to give up and stop making puritanical complaints; she had to accept that our father's liberal vision was sensible.

No way. Águeda was convinced that that man was captivated by her purity, unbreakable morals, and mystic religiousness. The Frenchman, by the way, turned out to be Catholic. See, bad luck. Then, when Patin left, Mother got obsessed with them getting married not only by law but also by the same old god.

The marriage would involve a bad and a good thing, we never knew which was which. One: if Águeda remarried, she would lose her widow's pension, and two: Patin was divorced. Uh-huh, and? Therefore, they would need to start the crusade of requesting a papal audience to ask for the annulment of young Jean's marriage. They would have to say that his marriage hadn't been consummated, Águeda suggested, with certainty.

Ridiculous old woman, I thought back then, which makes me say now: One should not write their mother's story before being the same age the mother was in said story. The *Cartaga* accomplished a lot. Who, at sixty years old, can break apart their beliefs, pillars, and core ideas?

This doesn't mean that we, the daughters, weren't exhausted. Mother was unbearable; she couldn't stop giving further thought to the subject, chasing us through the house to ask for advice; she wanted to be validated but would insist, "No, my sweethearts, one does not have sexual intercourse before the sacrament." We would laugh in her face and leave her talking

alone, waiting for her to climb up on a plane and go away to face the pope and all his curia as soon as possible.

In those months before her trip to Strasbourg, one day, I caught myself fantasizing that I would rather have become a bereaved daughter of such a restless woman and live a peaceful life with a widower philosopher who wouldn't stick his nose in someone else's business. Today, I can write this because I do it with a Zen smile, no longer afraid of being hit by lightning.

Finally, there was a date for Águeda's trip. Yesenia cut her hair, dyed it, removed her body hair, and went to buy sexy lingerie with her. By that time, the humble hairdresser was her only possible confidant. She couldn't tell much even to Gumersida. She was supposed, with her suitcase full of lace panties, to go to the Vatican, my respectable mother.

"Oh! If my mother could see me now." Águeda murmured a soliloquy, dressed in black and white while entering her husband's funeral. Remember? *Oh, if she could see you now*, I wanted to tell her when she would bring up the marriage nonsense, and when she would try to cover up that she was crazy with the desire to meet her lover. Luckily, I didn't have a daughter like me.

She lived all of that all alone. She didn't have sisters, and she couldn't bring up the subject to his brothers, my uncles, not even years later. The neighbors, no way. Among the people who surrounded her, Father's colleagues were the most open-minded, and still no; for them, Águeda was that great housewife in the life of a great man; the great man being dead, there was nothing to talk about with the widow. Her daughters, yes, we would encourage her, wishing for the day of her departure to come, so we could finally rest from that inquisitorial court.

The farewell was private, not to say secret. How did Águeda explain her trip to France, where we know who was waiting, to her sisters-in-law, aunts, and other acquaintances? If she

had been frivolous, like other people I'm not going to mention, she could have said she was taking a tour to the Holy Land and everything would have been solved. But Águeda believed in a god whose followers had stringent norms regarding the venereal zones.

Here goes a very eloquent memory. The four of us were seated at the table. Águeda was so nervous. This time she had the feat of organizing her trip by herself, she bought the ticket, the itinerary, the visas—all those matters that even, having been born forty years later, get me anxious.

Águeda would start her trip in Amsterdam, where Jean Patin would be waiting for her, in other words, the Frenchy heartthrob would already be there. They would walk around that wonderful city Águeda didn't know and then drive Jean's car to Strasbourg, stopping by the small towns. The Vatican was well-known to be a secret destination.

Mother, extremely nervous, wouldn't stop asking if everything was okay with the passport and the visa and if we had confirmed the taxi that would pick her up the next day. The luxurious four-by-four car was a metallic sculpture receiving sun and rain in front of the cave.

Bigستا was starting to lose her patience minute by minute and that crooked baking soda gesture inherited by the Doctor appeared in her mouth. Let's say I had kind of an intuition about that. This woman doesn't know that she is happy, as happy as one can be. Without hesitating, I raised my glass and toasted out loud, "For a wonderful trip, Mommy!"

What for? You would have to picture her. Águeda opened all the floodgates. She started to shout, not little screams or cries, more like a wolf howling. I felt tenderness towards her, though I don't deny it was a little scary. Since when did that dynamite lady lay underground? And mainly, for how long?

Águeda left to bury herself in Jean Patin's arms, we assumed. We never saw the Águeda from that last dinner again.

I tell this today and still notice shards of guilt. We sent Águeda to France to get her out of our way, I tell myself, my cricket tells me; nobody detained her, nobody even contained her. But these hurtful ideas barely haunt me. Do you know why?

Because I didn't give birth to my mother, no sir.

*

Father died. Mother left. We were alone in a house that was neither fish nor fowl, neither Plato's cave nor the garden of earthly delights. The rose bush became a thicket, some things got damaged and no one would repair them. It rained, there were leaks, we placed buckets underneath them. We forgot to pay the checks, so the telephone and the electricity services got cut off.

"Why don't you answer my letters?" Águeda would ask exasperatedly. She was supposed to be away for a month and no more. Initially, she would collect call once a week; then she stopped doing it. I don't keep any of her letters. I don't know where they are, or what they said, but I do remember that they were fake and affected. She would narrate her Strasbourg walks with Jean Patin, forcing an archaic poetic tone, religious and mystic, emulating Father every two lines. Until she stopped writing and calling.

What is part of a story and what isn't? What stays and what goes? One day a memory could seem happy to me, the next day it won't; the *buts* and *whys* are useless now. Telling a story that happened is like solving a puzzle without the reference photo, ah, but the pieces are what they are.

Bigستا resembled Doctor Zamora more and more, not in his philosophical disposition, but in his annoyed grimace that stayed embedded in her. She became angry and hard-working.

One morning, I found the two female bears swimming in a sea of books. Bigستا's idea was to classify Father's hundreds, I mean thousands, of books on the bookshelves. One couldn't

walk naturally in the hallways of the house. There were deer trails among the piles of books spread around the floors.

And those females, blessed them, were at least busy with something. I said I found them one morning in the bookshelves project, but it was in the middle of the afternoon. I would wander at night and sleep during the day. I took the right to move to the principal bedroom and would sleep comfortably in the king-size bed, the same one the philosopher died in.

I vaguely remember something that never happened to me again: I was there but I wasn't. I would open my eyes around noon, and nothing was nothing. I wasn't in any mood; I wasn't even sad. I wasn't anywhere but I was, and being was enough for me.

Me, me, me.

So much of me.

For so little of me.

*

After seven months, *ring, ring*. The telephone. I had hung a macrame hammock in the middle of the living room, above the sea of books. A few meters away, on the dining room table, the Great and Little female bears were working on classifying them. We were wearing the most comfortable clothes ever: Father's pajamas. *Ring, ring*. I stood up from the hammock and jumped on the couches and chairs so as not to step on the greatest philosophers of humanity; I went to take the call. It was Águeda.

I turned to see my sisters and announced:

“She's back!”

Águeda's return saved us. From what can one be saved? I have always wondered, but I have never gotten the answer. But Mother's return saved us. The house was tidy and clean again; if a house is somehow like a ship, the favorable winds came back, and the house refloated. Or,

thinking about it now, with less poetry, it could be that mothers have to peck at their babies so they do not languish in the nest.

The Águeda who returned wasn't that oscillating bee who went away, and neither was the one with the duck's laugh; she was more of a woman. I laugh at saying it that way; it seems to me that my sixty-year-old mother had matured in those last months. She had a peaceful look in her eyes, I thought. But it wasn't peace, no way.

As soon as Águeda landed in Costa Rica, my older sister left the house with all the books. She was not to return; the books did. She carried them around the world, offering them to different public and private libraries, and as she couldn't get rid of them, one day she returned them to their native home. What's important is that daughter number one was saved!

Jean Patin would come two weeks after Águeda, so all the machinery set to work, gardeners, plumbers, and builders. Jean had to postpone his arrival because his mother got sick, which allowed for the undertaking of bigger projects. Águeda demolished an entire wall of the living room and turned it into a large window. Like an avalanche, the sunlight entered the kingdom of shadows.

One month later once Jean Patin had to postpone his trip, Águeda dared to start a kitchen reform and turned it into, as it is now, the warm and throbbing heart of the house.

There, we would have long evenings of coffee that ended in uncorking at dusk. Sometimes only mom and I; others with my friends, or hers, or both. We were at the kitchen's new large wooden table when Águeda said: "My girls, I didn't go to Amsterdam."

Jean Patin was waiting for her with a rose in his hand. As soon as he saw her getting out, he ran to her, hugged her with all his strength, and kissed her on her mouth. From there, they went without stops straight to the flirtatious inn he had booked. Lobby, wooden stairs, hallway, the door opens, and finally: one bed only.

“I didn't go to Amsterdam,” Águeda said to Yesenia and me with a nasty and demure look all at once. Out of her three daughters, she only had this complicity with me. My oldest sister would come to visit regularly, more than anything, to scold Águeda, to tell her things should be done differently as she did them, whatever they were, and if Jean Patin was mentioned, she would frown. As for my younger sister... I'll explain it later. Now, let's keep up with the tiny Amsterdam inn.

There, they were enclosed, letting out the passion accumulated for three decades, during seven nights and days. They didn't even go out to eat, though they weren't that hungry. Everybody, we all had run this type of marathon, except for me; I mean, at that time. My mother would talk about experiences this female bear in the middle only knew from movies and hadn't experienced yet.

Águeda would speak about it without saying much, and Yesenia would laugh quietly, but laugh. I would celebrate that life had given that present to my mommy. That was my Águeda! Then, the Águeda, still obsessed with the pope annulling Jean's first and only marriage for them to get married on an altar officially recognized by the Vatican, between other fixations, would always reappear.

One day, Águeda told me that she and Jean Patin went to talk with the priest of the little church Jean used to attend with his mother in Strasbourg. The lovers told him about their situation and asked for his blessing. I don't remember what Águeda said about the priest's response; maybe she didn't tell me, or perhaps the poor priest didn't have anything to say. I picture him listening to that woman in her sixties and that man in his fifties presenting their problems. “What do we do, Father? We are burning with our sins”

In contrast, I remember Águeda's imitation when telling me that, after that conversation with the town's priest, she and Jean Patin went to the little church at noon while a wedding was

being celebrated. What is more, now I remember, Águeda told me that what happened was the priest's idea. The priest ended his boring speech, for poorer, in sickness, until death, and when he declared the couple husband and wife—Águeda said, "Sign me too"—the accomplice priest looked at them and (Águeda crossed her eyes and draw crosses in the air) officialized their marriage too.

"Excellent, one less thing to worry about." Yours truly responded something like that.

I never believed Águeda's longing to get married. She was very careful not to lose her widow's pension, I think, and I say this praising the last good sense she demonstrated. By the way, she returned from France with a wedding ring on the corresponding finger. This fact will have some relevance later.

But her eyes. Something in her eyes. Something happened to my mother and the little girl with a mental age of fifteen years old who departed, never came back.

*

Two to three months passed since Águeda's return when finally, "Jean Patin is coming!" All the palace protocols were activated. Even my older sister was enthusiastic about the news and came to get involved, to give her opinion about the preparations.

I was fascinated with the imminent return of the days of wine and roses, even more with Águeda's vitality being back. Today, many years later, I'm amazed to realize how much importance I lent to that woman's happiness.

Wines, cheeses, candles, and *Operation Yesenia* full extras (nails, hair, feet, pores). The Dionysian air went through the house like warm blood, until one morning Águeda woke up with a fit. The bed.

Where was Jean Patin going to sleep? In the big king-size bed, of course not. Águeda was going to change the bed and was wondering if she could fit Patin in the bedroom or if she

would have to prepare the guest room... Oh, Mother. The question was fake, to me, but Águeda almost organized an episcopal conference.

That's why, now entering the scene, Fray. He was a Franciscan Catalan close to our family, insoluble from all my nice childhood memories. Fray would follow Father's phobia rules and take us to the beach in the monastery's little minibus, avoiding bridges and cliffs. Fray taught me how to swim. Our family's lack of *yang* was something else, even a priest had to come to compensate for it.

He had known Águeda since puberty, and since then, he heard her confessions there in Cartago. He knew her like nobody else and carried her secrets to the grave as his duty. When Águeda became a widow, Fray would come to hear her confessions at our house. They would be locked in the philosopher's studio for hours, and I understood a little later that this priest, who had studied psychology, rather than giving her the absolution, would give her psychiatric contention.

Fray may have told her things she didn't want to hear because, after a long session with him (four to five hours), Águeda would still have the same doubt about the same matter she had before entering the confessional. Fray had just left through one of the two doors, and Águeda was already following me in the hallways of the house, what about putting Jean Patin in her bedroom, what about the neighbors, if she said that she was married her pension would be canceled; if she didn't say that she was married, how could she let a man in the house. I was far from having Fray's Franciscan patience.

Luckily, as the second arrival of the man was approaching, joy, excitement, and a festive spirit took over the house and managed to exhume the Águeda with radiant teeth. Eves are the best part of love; no one can deny it. Enjoy the eves, my ladies, for they are the only thing we have; a man is not as much ours as the eves.

Not at that moment, but much later, almost yesterday, I understood that I was the most excited about Jean Patin's coming. Ahead, there were days of talking and laughing in French, of going out in the four-by-four, and this time, learning how to drive.

I'll be honest: A widow was a heavy burden, too. Águeda was not a woman of intellectual or artistic interests; she didn't have a job or hobbies, except writing letters to Jean. She neither drove nor adored the sea or the mountains; she wasn't greedy, she didn't want to make money, nor did she have to, she didn't have orchids to take care of. Águeda, nothing.

This nothingness can be seen as the waiting room for enlightenment there in Tibet's surroundings. Here, on its antipodean, it is considered the entrance hall of the depression. Jean Patin and Águeda were meant to be each other's mutual light of the corollary of their lives. That's how it had to be, it couldn't be otherwise.

Patin was approaching, and the house knew it. It was standing straight, dazzling, and tinkling.

Ring, Ring.

"Hello?" Águeda answered the call. I have never again heard a similar hello in my life, it sounded like a hotline hello.

Jean Patin! Calling from the airport, the female bears thought.

Indeed, it was Jean. But he wasn't in any airport.

Águeda's face. It fell apart; it broke down. All that was upward expression lines melted and curved downward.

He was in Strasbourg. He was calling to say that he wasn't coming.

What? How? Why?

I don't know if there was a little earthquake right at that moment, something normal in this country. What is true is that *brrr*, I swear, the house had the chills.

A quiet afternoon, a few years ago, in the solitude of a studio I rented near the family's cave, I was watching the rain through the window when I had a crystal clear feeling: I want to live with my mother.

I kept my daydream entertained, and it did nothing more than get better. I imagined us, two ladies who time had made closer in age, coexisting, each one with her bedroom, studio, and bathroom, in the big cave house built by Doctor Zamora, reformed now, illuminated and ventilated, receiving selected visits once a week, like widowed countesses or spinsters from Paris.

Around my fifties, sex stopped being interesting to me, and consequently, I stopped falling in love. Or perhaps it was the other way around, and when I was unable to fall in love, I stopped being interested in sex. Anyway, it makes no difference. Águeda and I —finally!— with our bodies at ease, two ladies would coexist in a praiseworthy balance of respect and company

I called the Great Bear, and I told her about the fantasy I had just had. She said, “You need professional help.” We both cackled, I did more, because I had more to hide. In our generation and social class, the daughter who lived with her mother was unsuccessful. That one who, over her thirties, lived with her mother (either a spinster or not, divorced or not, with children or not, lesbian or not) was a ruin who had not been able to be even the imitation of the almighty woman in vogue, that archetype of a skinny blond consumerist and nymphomaniac who would leave women frustrated. Success and failure are like yin and yang; they circle each other, twist and turn, and like The Woodsmen of San Juan, they want bread before it's gone.

I hung up with Bigsista and continued watching the rain, convinced with all my heart that there's no better destiny for a woman than to get old with her elder mother. I know, I know, I was out of my mind. My sister and I still laugh at this memory. However...

However, the primitive rain transports me from one window to another. The Mauritanian Island is silent, pleasantly silent, not like that subjugating mutism of the Zamorian law. Father's death marked in many ways a liberation; I would be a dishonorable narrator if I were to deny it.

Mother is in her room, I am in mine; at four o'clock, we get out and meet in the big kitchen to have afternoon coffee. In this touching memory, sometimes there is Gumersinda, Yesenia, or some good friend. Then I realize that I'm reminiscing exceptional afternoons, ones my memory clings to like a red-hot nail. It must have been a few occasions that I want to remember as an entire life. But it wasn't like that.

"Every *but* is a misunderstood *because*," I read somewhere a long time ago, and it remained tattooed in my mind. Now I understand that I reminisce about a long season of peaceful and inspiring afternoons *because* it wasn't like that. Then, it is not a memory, or it is. They are memories that didn't happen. If reminiscing is looking over by the heart, it is just that, to look over each day with a different screening.

The truth is that: *ring, ring, brrr*, after Patin's call that got the house shivering, everything that drove me to leave the nest was triggered; not like a chick trying to avoid its mother's pecks, if only, but like rats on a ship. The beginning of the end was unleashed. *An* ending in this eternal *to-be-continued* that are the stories when told by women.

*

After seven days in Amsterdam, Patin and Zamora's widow set off to the remote place in Strasbourg where Jean had his single-man residence. On the road, they experienced the funniest things, according to Águeda. The truth is that those lovers' foolish jokes are like drunk people's jokes, non-transferable.

Águeda's gestures that used to rile Doctor Zamora up made Jean Patin drool. So Águeda would act even more like herself and let loose her histrionic qualities that we didn't know of, not with that nice name. Jean Patin would celebrate her funny faces, all her tomfoolery; her inattentiveness, which would irritate her daughters so much, would make him laugh until his eyes flooded with salty water.

Could that be falling in love? Letting loose, not just for the hell of it, but when seeing the reflection of our most authentic self in the other person's eyes, and not in anybody else's. Águeda loved herself for the first and only time in her life when she saw her reflection in Jean's gray-like-winter-lakes eyes, I have spoken.

We learned in bits and pieces what had happened during our mother's long stay in Strasbourg. Not by coincidence, the first anecdote that comes to my mind is the one of the tiger. There was a *kermesse* near Jean's neighborhood, and he suggested they go. How cheerful, how much fun. It is difficult to imagine the *Ancient Régime* where Águeda used to live. When in his right mind, or wrong, did the philosopher take her to a neighborhood festival? Let's remember that just a few months ago, Mrs. Águeda had to be seated quietly when Socrates' death was being read.

Jean Patin took a rifle and, *bang!* He won a plushie, a tiger as big as a pillow, smooth and shiny new, and gave it to his girlfriend. They walked around the festival and then went to Jean's mother's place, which he visited every Sunday.

They got in, Águeda placed the tiger on the living room couch. Meanwhile, Madame Patin's cat, a stout little feline who had been keeping the good lady company ever since she was widowed ten years before, appeared in the window. The animal, when finding the new lord and master of the house in its spot on the couch, raised its hackles like a cartoon cat, turned around there on the windowsill, jumped out, and went away.

Águeda cackled then and every time she told the anecdote for the following months. But it turns out that the cat never returned. Patin's father's widow was left alone, waiting, watching the snow through the window. Laugh now.

The anecdote jumps like a rabbit between these lines because, *ring, ring*, the house's telephone rang when we were waiting for the *ding-dong* of the doorbell instead, and it was Jean Patin, not from the airport but from Strasbourg. Jean wasn't coming or giving a new arrival date: his mother had died.

The days went by. I write this phrase and pause. I reconsider it. The days went by, as it is said, as if they ever stop. Better: The days filed by without paying attention to us. Águeda and Jean stopped writing letters to each other; they went from paper to telephone, a gigantic change if analyzed deeply. Águeda would not stay entertained writing letters to a quasi-imaginary Jean. That was how a woman who portrayed herself as a Flaubert's character, to her regret, turned into the protagonist of a tropicalized Bergman.

How curious, now I don't remember why no one ever suggested that Águeda take a plane at once and join her new husband in the wake of her new mother-in-law's death. My memories are mixed up, but I think that Jean Patin said it wasn't worth it because he was soon to come. Or maybe he didn't say anything. Truly, I think no one ever said anything, not to me.

Everything was really weird, including Águeda's coldness and indifference towards her pseudo-mother-in-law's death, a good person with whom, it was supposed, she had a nice relationship, not like with my paternal grandmother.

Jean Patin got divorced almost immediately after getting married because the girl who he walked to the altar with ended up being schizophrenic. Since then, Jean had no other woman, and his mother was relieved when, at his age, a sixty-year-old Latin-American woman appeared to pamper her only child like no French woman would do.

Sometimes, that was the narrative; sometimes it wasn't. As I said, we learned about what had happened in those months of coexistence in Strasbourg like Egyptologists gathering papyrus. The versions of the story depended completely upon Águeda's mood of the day when she told them.

And that's it. I can't keep postponing what I have to say, what has been imperative to get out of my system, the reason why I sat down to write, after years of wandering narrative, for lack of a better name for the many times I told this story to whatever ears would listen wherever I went.

*

"The shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story," said the Jesuit Anthony de Mello, honorably excommunicated. We transform what has occurred, what we call real life, into a story, for what? To reach, if not the truth, at least one truth.

What's important is not the reality, but the truth, right? I put this idea here as a precept, prior to the revelation I'm about to make: the Little Bear is a male. He has always been, it doesn't have to do with a gender transition, we were born two females and one male, and we still are.

"There's a tribe in Africa," as many rambles start, including this one, where all its people are female in their childhood; later on, on their puberty, they are divided into women or men, according to their gender and, at the end of their reproductive years, they are all perceived as women again. A colleague of mine guaranteed having read about it in a book written by Jung. Real or not, the handy African tribe is really accurate.

When adolescence hit, Águeda's offspring were no longer a package of three, and the roles got divided. On the one hand were two sisters whose mother was compelled to keep a close eye on their sexuality, and on the other hand was a third creature nobody paid too much attention to until the moment of doing what is done with the boys in this country came (to mess them up,

I thought, but it is not something that exclusively happens to them; to make a man out of them, I thought, but that neither was it): to worship them, that's what is done. Castrating them while being worshiped, to be specific.

There was a difference between being Águeda's son and being Águeda's daughter. I remember uncountable times in which this difference was appalling. I can almost see her: Águeda, spread all over her bed, in her bedroom in the darkness; on the floor, a bucket with water and ice cubes where she would damp a small cloth to place it on her forehead. *Ow, ow, ow*, she would groan with her eyes closed, introducing Sor Juana's free verses between the *ows*. Rather be mute than vulgar.

Having said that, if at that moment the Male Cub would arrive home, back from the university or somewhere else at whatever hour (he was not asked for explanations), Águeda would change her face and sit up full of energy to serve him food, or she would ask me: "Serve your brother." I'm lying, she never said that to me, but that phrase is so distasteful that I note it down here because it was said to many women of my generation, as unseasonable as it sounds, and because Águeda heard it many times in her adolescence, needless to say.

The Male Cub had the good luck—I guess it's good luck—of not being the only child of someone like Águeda or Mauricia, and the good luck—I guess as well—of being the son of a father who was never going to waste his precious philosophizing time into making a man out of his little one.

On Mauritanian Island, no one ever noticed the Male Cub—luckily, maybe—and when the alpha male died, we discovered that he had been carving out a life for himself. He made two great moves, without us necessarily noticing it: he took Doctor Zamora's studio, where he added a bathroom, a *kitchenette*, and an independent door to the street, and he learned how to drive. In

such a way, as long as Jean Patin's silver mane didn't appear by the door, he would come and go on the four-by-four and get in and out of the house as if it was an apartment hotel.

I had to introduce this metamorphosis because, in real life, when the Great Bear had gone and the Little Cub sort of did too, I was left alone. Alone with Águeda. And no. Except for Jean Patin, I don't wish that on anyone.

*

The first anniversary of the death of the great philosopher was coming. Death was an effective advertising act. The Royal Spanish Academy, the university, and even all the little countryside schools in the depths of Cartago invited us to homages, ceremonies, and assemblies with tea, coffee, and their corresponding canapés.

As the date was getting closer, Águeda was going stark raving mad. How is it possible that I remember us like two English women reading poems on rainy afternoons if there was not a single minute of peacefulness? Águeda would chase me from all the house hallways like a plain chachalaca, trying to fix in her mind what couldn't be fixed in practice. Her biggest worry: What would she tell people? That she was married? Engaged? We would be in the church, in the middle of the official ceremony with the university's dean, and what about her? What color would she wear? That uneasiness was incomprehensible to me. I would make innocent jokes to her. "Wear black in the front and red in the back," and she would *cuas, cuas, cuas*, pretend to laugh, a convulsive laughter to vent and to not lose my attention.

Jean Patin's arrival stopped being a wish to become a threat. There is no way of knowing it for sure, but I understood that Águeda talked him out of coming on those specific dates. International calls would come and go (especially go) and finally, there was peace when a travel plan was cleared up. Jean Patin would sell his house and his mother's house and would arrive by Christmas, not temporarily, but to stay in Costa Rica.

That must be the period I remember so fondly, two poets writing with the long-lasting rain, in those months before the arrival of the man. The best part of love is that one, I repeat, and what's more: the best part of marriage is watching as your man walks out through the door every morning. Tell me if I'm wrong.

December arrived, which in Costa Rica is like the sky opens finally to give us a respite from the rain, it is a fresh breeze that lasts the blink of an eye before the summer shows no mercy. In December, even the most lifeless person comes back to life. But Águeda was acting weird. She was quiet, I mean, she was acting *sooo* weird, although. Although she acquired a good habit. She would wake up early, put her tennis shoes on, and walk all around the neighborhood before breakfast. She would return all sweaty, with a puffy face and glassy eyes; she would eat breakfast hungrily, I can confirm it, and the rest of the day, weird.

I don't even remember how I found out that, once again, Jean Patin wasn't coming. I have lost the timeline, which is understandable—I hope you haven't imagined me having a logbook. Jean Patin used some explanation, perhaps that he was coming in January, I'm almost certain about it, because I remember that the waiting never ceased.

One day, I entered the kitchen and heard Yesenia's spontaneous laughter and three artificial *ha's*, which were Agueda's laughter at the time. They went shopping together and, when returning home, they met a neighbor who (kindly?) asked Águeda about the Frenchman. Like this: "And the Frenchman?"

Águeda gave her standard response: "He'll come soon; his mother passed away; he's selling their lands and getting some papers in order..." But when they got home, she told Yesenia: "The next time she asks, I'll tell her that Jean's mother's rose from the dead!" Yesenia would roar with laughter. It didn't sound like a good joke to me back then. Today I realized that Mrs. Agueda's sense of humor wasn't lacking, it was rooted in pain.

I wished so much that this story would end up with *and they lived happily ever after...* I thought everyone wished the same, that we all wanted love stories to work out, survive, and remain... The utopia of love cannot be maintained all alone, we all have to support it, damn it. However, at this moment, the possibility that the neighbor's question about the Frenchman wasn't sincere crosses my mind.

It is impossible to remember the pain without hurting. With a lot of resistance, but accepting the truth, I return to that time. On top of that, while I'm writing these lines, I don't know if by harmony or by irony, the trade winds blow and I remember that December at home. The sun is cheerful, the breeze is cheerful, the smell of coffee and tamales is cheerful, and the Christmas tree and the poinsettias are too; everything is cheerful but my mother's heart.

January. Another year started, new and ready to be used for the first time, like a blank page; that's how women in their twenties perceive the start of a new year. Agueda's anxiety was uncontrollable. I remember her chasing me from all the hallways and corners of the house; and I remember myself avoiding her to the same extent.

I would open the door of my room in the morning and, *ah!*, there she was in front of my room, waiting for me to show up to start what I can accurately call a monologue. She would follow and chase me until I would run away to the street and, at night, when I would return as late as possible, *ah!*, there was Águeda, sneaky behind the door, acting normal but waiting for me to talk, and talk, and talk.

"I called Jean," she would say. That would be the trigger of her chatter (up to this day, I can feel a knot in my stomach when I write *I called Jean*). "I called Jean Patin, I greeted him, asked him about his health, he asked me about you..." Sometimes she would start like that, restrained, but it didn't matter, soon, it would result in severe Agueditis, chasing me by the hallways of the house, talking non-stop. She would tell me about her conversations with Jean,

the ones she had had, the ones she would have, and the ones she would like to have. She only trusted and had a mutual understanding with me to tell me every single thing, she would say (lie and lie), and right after: “He said that... so I responded that... but he says that... and I say that... and he says, and I say, and he says, and I say,” Águeda would say, and then she would go on to ask me about what to say in the next international early morning call because “I will tell him that... and if he answers that... so I will say that... and if he... I ask you because you’re so wise,” she would finish without fail, making her emotional indigent tricks so obvious, which was worse. “What do you think?” She would ask me sometimes with words, sometimes only with two eyes like black holes. She wouldn’t listen to me, so what this wise woman said made no difference. “He said, so I said, and he said, and I responded...” Just like that, every day, all the time.

Good Gumersinda confessed something to me not long ago. Águeda would call her once a day minimum. “I called Jean,” Águeda would start. Gumersinda’s confession: “I would put the telephone on my nightstand and leave her talking alone while I prayed the rosary.” *Ego te absolvo*, woman.

The other fixation of the poor widow was what the people would say, which was more like what they were already saying. Initially, it was funny to me, then I got tired of that nonsense, her nonsense; I couldn’t see at that time that the neighbors’ nonsense also mattered. Many years later, I found out that, indeed, some neighbors, her spinster aunts, and Father’s half-sister condemned her joyful widow behavior and shut her out. I never knew the actual dimensions of the purgatory she was in. She felt like Madame Bovary, and we know how that lady ended up.

“And the Frenchman?” the neighbor asked again one day. Do you know that sign of pointing to the sky with the middle finger? Águeda turned around violently to face her and pointed to the sky with her middle finger, showing her wedding ring.

Our neighborhood was beautiful, with wide streets and sidewalks with front yards covered with trees. Águeda still had the habit of going for a walk before the sun was high in the sky. One day I found out that the neighbors, who would see her walking each morning, would call her the Diurnal Weeping Woman. What a lack of imagination, and how unimportant that lack of imagination was as compared to the whiplash I felt when I found out that Águeda—my mother—would go out every early morning to walk, and cry, and cry, and cry.

I did the only thing I knew in life.

I packed my bags.

Goodbye, Mother.

Águeda was left alone, going around in circles on the desolated island like a ghost, talking with a piece of plastic, which was what the wireless telephone was.

Oblivion is distance. Not the contrary. Though distance helps. Águeda became secondary in my life, and I became secondary in hers... if I hadn't always been. Once, I trapped her and forced her to accept that I hadn't ever been too important to her. However, now I wonder how reliable a confession is when obtained like that.

I moved to Madrid, using a random excuse. A scholarship in necromancy would have been enough. Distance helps, and for my own sake, international calls were still really expensive (reserved for the man himself, I guess). WhatsApp didn't exist and Águeda never learned to use her email. I found myself safe from the, well, maternal bombing, there in the mother country.

So, the season "Letters to the Daughter" began. I received one letter from her per week, but they were from a transmuted Águeda who would write about the concept of time in Saint Augustine, about love in Saint John of the Cross, about Teresa of Ávila. Sometimes she would talk about the garden, about the rose bush blooming, about the Andean alder which had to be cut because they were afraid of it getting tangled in the power lines, but she would get off track rapidly. I would imagine her all alone in the large house, seated in front of the window, writing while the usual downpour would fall. I made peace with that Águeda.

What an actress she was. I can see it clearly now, though I already knew it. *Ah* (I sigh), I preferred that Águeda over her other versions, and I was pleased to admire her, more likely pleased with the idea that I had an admirable mother; an admiration that, I confess, I never felt.

Months later, I got an email from Bigsista, alias: the buzzkill. She said Mother was being mysterious, that she was happy out of the blue, without apparent reason. *And Mother said, and I said, and Mother said, and I said*, the Great Bear would write page after page. *Phew*, I dodged the bullet, I thought. I escaped not only from Águeda fluttering around me like a European roller, but also from being the ear that doesn't seem to know how to close itself.

Poor Great Bear, always having harebrained Lacanian ideas. *You have to learn how to stop listening*, I replied to one of her emails and she celebrated the joke by writing *ha ha ha* in red. She would respond to my plain emails using other colors. She would say that what was actually weird was that Águeda was quiet, and that she had even asked about her stuff! It was unusual, it's true. Águeda would usually (if not always) look at you and say: "How's everything?" And then she wouldn't let you respond and would return to her stuff.

But a few days later, a new email that felt like a bucket of water, and after the water was poured over me, the bucket hit me as well. *Ah, I told you so*, the Great Bear said. This time, Águeda preferred not to say a word, poorly concealing her enthusiasm, but in the end, the reason for her mysterious tranquility came to light. Jean Patin had given her an arrival date again.

And? I replied to her email, annoyed with my sister and her love for drama. That was good news, damn. *At least she's not announcing it this time, a minimal sign of sanity*, I wrote in green and continued reading.

And *toujours non*, it read at the end of the email, an inner joke we had, only that at that time it didn't make me laugh even a little. Jean Patin didn't even call this time. At his silence on the eve of his chimerical arrival, Águeda honorably took the phone, mind you, with the good excuse of telling him that he would not have to take a taxi, that she would go with the Male Cub to pick him up at the airport. Just as well, she made the call. With it, she found that *he wasn't coming*.

The Weeping Woman would once again walk around the neighborhood on her postmodern morning schedule.

*

What was wrong with Jean Patin? What about their breathtaking love? Why would he say that he was coming and then not? I hadn't realized back then, or until now that I've opened

my eyes, that placing an ocean between my mother and me made me lose perspective. I perceived Águeda as a lost high schooler, governed by last century's ineffectiveness, and felt like clearing things up between woman and man. In Madrid, as if I had nothing better to do, I called Jean Patin.

“Teddy...!” He said in French, with a deep nostalgia that went through me. He said it was nice to hear from me and asked about my life without much interest to show his excitement. I responded quickly. “What about you?” I asked; I don't remember what he said or if he said something at all. So I asked my next question: “Why did you disappear from our lives, Jean?” I'm sure I asked. However, I don't remember his answer!

Unoccupied female readers, you can confirm that I don't usually use exclamation marks as impressionist brush strokes, but with that little stick I'm barely transmitting what I'm feeling now when realizing that I only remember that! My surprise has nothing to do with what he told me (not anymore), but instead with my memory, which I brag about, that denies to remember more. He probably said things I didn't want to hear, and only what he said at the end stayed with me: that he was feeling lonely, so lonely, that he thought about us every day, that he missed us, that he loved Águeda with all his heart, and that he loved me and my siblings too, with all of his heart too, I think.

Águeda! As soon as I hung up with Jean, I called my mother and kicked the beehive. In the cold telephone booth in my Madrilenian neighborhood, while I was impatiently hearing the telephone beeping there in the tropical morning, I thought: *Oh Águeda, so clumsy, so immature.* There was the love of her life loving and missing her while she was being so stubborn with her prudishness, with her Catholic nonsense, making excuses not to jump onto his arms, depressed in her house, or going around in circles like a spinning top toy in the neighborhood. “Hello?”

“Águeda! What’s going on? If you and Jean Patin love and miss each other, why aren’t you together?” That’s how I asked it, once and for all, because I wanted an answer now! I felt as if someone would have arrived in time at the crypt to tell Romeo: “Stop, she’s not dead, she’s in an induced coma.” *Ha*, I smile—a little—at the memory.

“Why? Águeda, why didn’t you take a flight when his mother died? Why don’t you take it now? If he says he misses and loves you, why aren’t you together if that’s what you want? Why, why, why?”

So, I got what I deserved. Águeda wasn’t even surprised that I had taken the telephone to call her lover, nor was she interested in the call, and, of course, she didn’t hear or answer any of my questions. She didn’t even say *good morning* (me neither, but it’s different); immediately she started: “Last month I wrote him a letter and as he didn’t reply, I called him. We talk... (she would always make a pause there, perhaps waiting for the other person to show enthusiasm about wanting to know what they had talked about) we talk, and I said that... and then he said that... and I said, and he said, and I...”

The zeros would rise. This time I was paying for the international call.

*

After talking with Jean, I called Águeda impulsively, and that dizzy conversation, which I hung up as soon as I could, happened. I went outside, walked distressed to my place, and wrote to the Great Bear, telling her who-knows-what that I don’t want to remember. I don’t know what I was expecting with that call and that email. I think, as embarrassed as I feel now when admitting it, that I was hoping to fix that love story, despite Águeda. I would get my mother to grow old with the man she loved, now that I knew he loved her too.

The buzzkill’s answer came immediately to my inbox. *And now he loves us too!* She wrote, followed by an emoji with tears of laughter. I remember that sentence clearly; I mean,

how could I forget it? *Was he drunk?* The Great Bear asked and wrapped it up concisely: *Mother changed a phobic for an alcoholic.*

I was petrified. It has always happened to me, and it still happens today. I create lucid versions—according to me—of my stories, but now I can tell that I’m the one who can’t see clearly, that I’m the worst option for telling nothing. How could I have missed it? It was obvious now, Jean Patin was an alcoholic.

My mind projected many images as ends that were not loose anymore: the international calls that would always happen before dawn in France, Jean Patin sleeping until really late when he was staying in our house, his watery eyes and his shivering, his heart attack, or attacks, I think they were more than one; his cystic loneliness, and to make matters worse, his—now pristine—inability to be in contact with the real world, with the real people, with the three little bears and the mother who bore them.

Not everything was a product of your imagination, beloved mommy. I thought you were crazy (and you were), but not all the madness was yours, not everything was a delusion of yours. During those calls, a man was whispering to you with a silky voice *Je t’aime, Aguedá, je t’aime*. One cannot help but succumb to that chant.

Stirring her up was what I regretted the most. From then on, she started calling me regularly, and not to discuss the trinitarian mystery or the apocryphal gospel.

I sent the Great Bear a furious email, canceling Jean Patin, as it is said now; *shitty alcoholic*, I said back then, *French rabble*. I felt abandoned and betrayed.

Wait a minute, the Great Bear replied and proceeded to explain that 1) alcoholism was just her hypothesis; 2) it was neither necessary nor enough to explain the madness that heated up between them; and 3) there's always a lid for every pot. Our mother had had two lids, who

were worlds apart; one couldn't be separated from her without dying, and the other one couldn't stay at her side.

*

“Mauricio, Mauricio, Mauricio of my life!” Águeda wakes up in the depths of the night calling out loud for the man who was her husband for twenty-five years, from whom she was separated by the only one who is accepted to do such a thing, Death.

Águeda told the Great Bear about this, who then told me about it, and now I put it in a book to keep the secret. “I knew it was impossible to skip mourning like that,” the Great Bear added severely to the story.

I was affected. Without a doubt, I also fueled the illusion of avoiding the pain of Mauricio's death by transforming it into wine, music, and open windows. On the other hand, I must confess that I felt relief when I knew that my mother had mutated her sorrow for Patán into pain for her former husband. Let's not fool ourselves, mourning for a dead man is easier and more bearable than for one who is alive and—worse—kicking.

I expressed this relief to my sister via email, confident that things would be more bearable from now on, that Mother would be focusing on a more real pain, on a more organic track, *blah, blah, blah*, all babbling, because it turns out that Bigsista forgot a small detail. The sobbing and screaming before dawn... happened in Strasbourg.

Did your moms also do that? Telling each daughter a different version, even different episodes? There's more: Águeda was capable of modifying the facts in order to obtain the reaction she was looking for. I had known that trick of hers since I was very young, but it didn't come to my mind that she had done the same with the Strasbourg chronicles.

She would say that we had a mutual understanding, and she would say the same to my sister, as I found out later. I would get the passionate, party, traveling chronicles, and my sister

would get the consequences. And to my brother? Oh, no, that was women's stuff, men have bigger goals and aspirations. I have seen mothers laying down on a couch, apparently dying, sprinting up when their son enters the chambers.

The scene of Águeda waking up before dawn there in faraway France, in the bed of an unknown *monsieur*, calling out loud for Mauricio, was an image that my eyes never saw, but that I could never get out of my retinas.

The seven Strasbourg months went from being a simple movie of walks, laughter, and plushies, to one that was way too much even for me. Where was it beginning? Where was its ending? Which tone to use when telling it? We will not cry at this point for the mother in question.

When Águeda returned to Costa Rica, to the cave, to the only place in the world she called and felt like *her house*, saying that Jean Patin would arrive two weeks later, did she believe it? Maybe she had a bad feeling about it, that it had ended; perhaps she did believe it and was confident about her lifetime lover having the same patient resignation with her that the weak philosopher had.

She gave everyone a different version. Not long ago (and I mean fifteen days ago in the middle of this immensity), I ran to interview the few sources still alive to reconstruct this story. One of Águeda's cousins, as nervous as her but more collected, told me that Águeda shared with her that Jean Patin once said that she should return to her children if she believed they needed her that much. It is impossible to grasp something out of all this he-said-she-said situation. Águeda's twisting of the story reached levels that, at this moment, don't fail to amaze me.

The three little bears as the reason for her separation from Jean is admissible if and when we acknowledge that it has nothing to do with maternal love. Instead, it was guilt, the same that

made her scream in the darkness, “Mauricio, Mauricio,” the name of a person she never desired, never loved, never got excited about.

In short, Strasbourg had more moon than honey, as expected. Another thing is that when I was twenty-something, I still believed that out of the *amour fou*, time would remove the *fou* and the *amour* would survive forever after.

So many Águedas just to come to this one. The broken one. Pages and pages to come to this, this knowledge that many twenty-something girls are born with. Yesterday, one of Águeda’s granddaughters (who was also in Guigui’s belly), told me that having a boyfriend was boring and a waste of time. If Granny Águeda could hear her. The curse is broken.

Love is not what it used to be.

What used to be a woman in love one hundred years ago is a poorly medicated woman today.

Calm, finally. Jean Patin disappeared from our conversations, letters, and calls. Águeda became friends with a group of widows like her, I mean, insignificant widows of important men.

She would have fun with those ladies; if not, they would have fun with her. She took out her cunning clown gifts and would say things that made her friends laugh, covering their mouths since they weren't used to cross themselves. They would go to the movie theater, drink wine, and go to the symphony orchestra's concerts and the church. They were moderate Catholics, moderate because of years of marriage and useless sacrifices. They used to say the overused sentence "I will never wash a pair of boxers ever again," all of them except for Águeda. She still wanted a love full of "passion, madness, and frenzy," as she would say with an ambiguous, monotonous tone impossible to transcribe.

They all sold or rented out the big houses they once possessed and moved to small and practical apartments, easy to clean and take care of, except for Águeda. She hung on to that big old house with six rooms, three bathrooms, two enormous gardens, waiting, as we know now, waiting, waiting...

Águeda didn't write to me that much and would call only a few times a year for my birthday or Christmas. She didn't miss me, as far as I know; I didn't miss her, as far as I know. The Great Bear disagrees with both statements, of course.

Calm, finally, I said a few lines ago. Calm for me. On the other side of this blue planet, the Great Bear was still dealing with Águeda and would give me reports about it. "Águeda is not okay, Águeda won't stop complaining, she has everything to enjoy her life but even so. Águeda should move to a smaller place, rent out the house, travel the world, visit you, at least! Águeda should go to the psychologist. Águeda should do this, Águeda should do that, Águeda should, should." Águeda always should.

Águeda is going to México with some friends, the Great Bear announced in an email. *Águeda left for México*, she told me in another one. *Águeda arrived from México*, third email. And still, Bigsista would say, not even one moment of joy, not even one smile; she left complaining and returned complaining. Her friends organized everything, every little thing, because Águeda's symbolic incompetence on those matters didn't diminish over the years. She would let herself go, without feeling embarrassed about it. For that matter, she felt that it was what she deserved.

Águeda didn't talk to me about that trip. Not long ago, I became aware that the colorful fabric that covers the worn-out couch on which I write these lines was brought by her from México. She attended a seminar about Anthony de Mello with her friends. Águeda tried to be happy. Everyone around her tried to make her happy. Her friendship with the neighbors and her cousins was based on that, taking the funny and witty Águeda out of the arms of depression and sorrow. But Anthony's legacy of wisdom went in one of her ears and out of the other.

"Don't you miss your other daughter?" The Great Bear asked her trickily. I had gone to Spain for three months and had ended up living there for five years. No mother of that time could answer that question with a no. My sister started to implement the trip. She was trying to get rid of the burden, at least for a while.

Preparations, plans, dates. *Águeda is flying over the ocean*, my sister sent me an email when she returned to her house. Emails couldn't be sent via cell phone yet.

An old lady left the arrival gate of Barajas. Águeda was very wrinkly, she had gained weight, and she had the tedious movements of someone who was not the owner of her body anymore. Her eyes had darkened, and her gaze was her mother's, sometimes disinterested, at other times fierce, the gaze of that grandmother of whom I have few memories, all unpleasant.

A taxi. To my tiny apartment. During that time, I would work a lot and earn pretty good money under the Damocles syndrome, the fear of being fired always hanging over my head. Almost immediately I felt overwhelmed by her visit. I don't know what the origin of the word remorse is, but I feel as if I'm being spied on when remembering how lonely I left her; I would leave early and arrive home late, and I did not make exceptions for her, nor asked for permission to be absent from work. But what does it matter now? It was nothing compared to the thing that I can't postpone any longer. I must tell it. Now.

Let's suppose that Águeda landed in Madrid on a Friday or so. The first weekend we walked around, ate like fatties, and drank wine, a lot, until our teeth were purple and Águeda's eyes were closing. I showed her the neighborhood, the drugstore, the phone booth I used—less and less—when I had to make international calls, into which we entered for her to call to Costa Rica and inform that she had arrived safely.

On Monday, I went to work. I gave Águeda her own set of keys and directions about the elevator and the subway, but it gave me the impression that she wouldn't be able to step on the sidewalk without me. Seven years had passed since her last stay in Europe, but Jean Patán was in charge of her back then. Seven years, an entire cycle of cellular renovation, since Jean Patin left her at the airport telling her he would arrive in two weeks. But let's get back on track (how difficult it is for me!).

On Monday, when I was returning home, I found her well and she even told me that she had gone outside and, with the help of a couple who lived downstairs, an elder couple, Águeda said, she went to a nearby church, she prayed, went to the market... That was something Águeda had that none of her daughters inherited. She was charming for her humbleness; she could have just ended up lost on a sidewalk when someone would appear ready to help her.

Very well. We sat down to eat dinner. She told me she went to the phone booth. My stomach still winds when I remember the following sentence: “I called Jean.” I look up, my eyes meet with hers, eager again, with something of her old shine between my grandmother’s droopy eyelids. Águeda looks at me, waiting for me to ask her about their conversation, which I don’t. She starts: “I told him that I’m here, in Madrid, and I said that, so he said that, and I said that, and that you, and that I, and so he...”

Female reader of mine, right now, I need this book to open up like big jaws and threaten to devour you raw; I need you to look up and not be where you thought you were, it is neither night nor day, there’s no floor nor sky; something like that, because otherwise, I can’t explain to you what I felt.

In front of me, there was a wrinkly old woman, talking about a man who she hadn’t seen for seven years, I repeat, seven, since he left her in Strasbourg airport, talking about him as if they had just kissed goodbye, *chérie*, sounding out my opinion, my advice, my course of action. Her eyes, as ellipses.

An abyss appeared between the two of us. I saw her at the end of a tunnel, as if seeing on the wrong side of a binocular, while she was talking non-stop.

She’s crazy, she’s crazy, my mother is crazy.

“What would you do? What would you say?” Dot, dot, dot.

“Mother.” Ellipses.

Her eyelids, half closed; her gaze, defeated.

“Mother.”

“What happened, sweetie, what happened? Why are you crying?”

I started crying like an unstoppable waterfall, crying and talking, talking and crying. “Don’t you see it, mommy? Everything is in your head; you are talking about a man who

disappeared many years ago as if you had seen him yesterday. Don't you see this is madness?" Maybe I didn't say that last part. "I don't know what to do, what to say to you." I cried and cried.

Have you tried telling someone they're crazy? It is well known that it doesn't work. But I did it, among tears. "Mother, mommy, it seems to me that... I feel that... that... You are out of your mind."

Águeda looked at me with sweet and intense eyes. She took off from her finger the golden ring with its little diamond, the engagement ring Jean Patin had given her, and gave it to me, solemn as Quixote giving up his weapons. "Take it," she said, "here today, before you, my daughter, I declare finished my relationship with Jean Patin."

*

Águeda was, when she *was*, in Madrid for a month, which felt eternal. Every time we went somewhere, it was as if her spirit was wandering in another world, in another time. She didn't mention him again, but I could see in her gaze, more disturbed than ever, that one Águeda was walking beside me and another was walking around some Strasbourg park's gardens, anxiously looking for something.

I took an old lady to Barajas airport. She hadn't dyed her hair for those weeks, she had gained more weight, she walked dragging her feet, grabbing her purse as if it were a shield and... with something lost forever.

What a relief I felt when the day of her departure came. Day by day, Águeda was a heavier package nobody wanted to carry. Seven years ago, did Jean feel the same? I ask now, here. Recalling is entangling. What a mystery, for me, to confirm that this is the most painful memory I have of the only woman in the world I have called mother.

She passed through customs and immigration and got lost among the people. She had a smile I knew very well, her fearful smile, begging. A smile asking for help.

The kindness of the strangers.

Anyone, anybody, help, please.

“I don’t love him; I don’t love him! How will I marry him if I don’t love him?” In the middle of the night in Cartago, the screams of a woman are heard. Everything was heard within a block. Nights were silent and houses had walls made of a material similar to cardboard after the 1910 earthquake.

The screams come from a not-so-young Águeda on the eve of her wedding to a Zamora boy. Such screams have gone through a century to come here because this was told to me by one of my mother’s cousins, the one I recently visited, who back then was very little, ah, but the story, that one, is everlasting. And *Cartago tremenda est*.

By themselves, lives have no meaning. Or it can also be said this way: we tell stories to provide meaning. Things happen, happen, and happen, and we—women—are the ones who, by narrating, give them *meaning*, in so many ways of the word meaning.

The left hemisphere of the brain is happy with the chronological sense; the right hemisphere is not logical, not even with the sense of time. Sometimes, I believe this story has its deepest meaning in a sixty-year-old woman waking up before dawn in a mythological country, mythological for her. “Where am I? What’s this room? Who is this stranger sleeping by my side?” She starts shouting out: “Mauricio, Mauricio, Mauricio of my life!”

The story continues, back in time, more and more, until reaching another night. The woman is not a little girl, she is thirty-four years old. Her sweet wedding dress is on a hanger; beside her, her mother and a spinster aunt who lives in the house try, not to comfort or cheer her up, but to shut her up. The immaculate Águeda howls. “I don’t love him, I don’t love him, how will I marry him tomorrow if I don’t even like him!” The screams echo in the Cartago night, the city is dark, guarded by the dominating Irazú Volcano painted in the foggy sky.

The end.

Or it could end in the honeymoon.

“The Honeymoon should last a year. It’s the right of the newlywed man to take a year to make the woman he took as wife happy,” the Bible says, that great book, when it feels like it.

On the eve of the wedding, Águeda was groaning like a cow going to the slaughterhouse. But, on the morning of the wedding day, once invested as a bride, like a natural actress, she gets in the scene and here we go.

They get married. The bells of the church ring. The wedded get out, Águeda with her smile we know, the defensive smile of bewilderment; Mauricio walks on the rain of rice with his acceptance of the mundane gesture. So, the last sequence of the movie starts.

Inside, at night, in a mountain hotel. Águeda’s mouth is even virgin. Her parent’s strict vigilance wasn’t challenged by any desire; she had no sexual desire for her fiancé; on the contrary, young Mauricio was burning. Águeda has huge breasts that he is longing to suckle. He takes off his thick nearsighted glasses. She sees for the first time his chelonian little eyes. Perhaps he is a virgin too; he got married in order to undress that—a—woman and take her to his bed.

My imagination becomes black. It can’t do it or stand it. Poor Águeda, her honeymoon was a big sham for her. She had two options: to commit suicide or go crazy.

Sorrow breaks off my chest, and for it, I couldn’t finish a story right there and like that; for it, the seven days in Amsterdam explode illuminated like fireworks and require me to be the culmination of this story, whatever that is. Seven days out of thirty thousand in her life.

*

Becoming a woman is a misfortune, don’t deny it. People used to call Águeda *Guigui*, in that always so ephemeral period of androgyny during childhood. Guigui was a weak and scruffy little goat, left to her fate. She was the youngest of her four handsome brothers to whom she didn’t have the slightest importance.

Today, Guigui would be a TV series heroine. Guigui would get into the neighboring yards, including the yard of the Franciscan monastery, to steal fruits and eggs; that wasn't what was heroic, but that there was no wall, gate, or barbed wire that could stop her. Guigui was all-terrain. When the water currents would come from north to south by the deep curbs of Cartago, Guigui would get in the flood and let herself go like in a waterpark. Guigui would run in the highest part of the ruins of Cartago's old church, this is already chilling, but there is more: How could she get up there? Not long ago, according to what her cousin told me, I went to inspect the place. Guigui must have gotten up there climbing by the porous volcanic stones, like a salamander.

Once, Guigui swallowed a living frog. Once, she got off a bus in motion through a window. Guigui would slip away to go to the sides of Irazú Volcano, towards the tuberculous sanitarium, where she would sneak in with some snacks to share with the patients. Guigui was a ragamuffin with a body like rubber and unwavering health, and inside of her, there I was, yes.

The human female is born possessing all the oocytes she will have in her life; so, the egg cell where I would develop was goat-like jumping a century ago in Cartago, inside Guigui's firm like a tambourine tummy. Mythological Guigui, half animal, half *Cartaga*.

Then, womanhood arrived, the dreadful hour of becoming something worse than a woman: a lady. Guigui disappeared, the most fabulous Águedas of all was erased forever. "Put your knees together, sit up straight, cover your mouth, don't shout, don't whistle, a lady does not laugh like that." She would be under the strict vigilance of her mother and father. What does Águeda want? What does she like about life? What does she know to do? How is she doing at school? In what does she take pleasure in? How good she recites, how good she sings... Nobody ever cared about that, nobody at all, which is extreme, because there's always someone, a half-brother in crime, a quirky aunt, a disobedient priest. But there wasn't that someone in Águeda's

life. When Jean Patin reappeared, finding remains of Guigui in that sixty-year-old woman with Margaret Thatcher's hairstyle, was a palaeontologic job.

*

Águeda returned to Costa Rica, leaving the ring to me, which was still an engagement ring, and what an engagement. The JP issue disappeared, to the point that, as you can confirm, he wasn't even mentioned. Águeda would call me sometimes to say: "I know I shouldn't say it, but I miss you." Decades had to pass by for me to be taken aback by these apologies. We were a renowned philosopher's family, intellectuality *über alles*. No sentimentalities. Either way, men don't cry; nor do women, if they happen to be multineuronal.

One day, a text message from the Great Bear. *Yesterday, I had to run through all San José's drugstores searching for Águeda's antidepressants*, she told me. I responded: *What antidepressants?*

The one she has taken since forever.

How is it that mom takes antidepressants.

That's why I prefer letters over these choppy text messages. (By that time, chats did exist.) *Do you remember mom's headaches?*

Yes.

What did she take for that? she asked me pedagogically.

What do I know.

Like a whirlwind, my sister would take me to the past. Águeda's mythical headaches had some perks. Mother would lock herself up in her bedroom and disappear for hours; she would leave herself in peace, and what's better, she would leave us all in peace.

Headaches were a mercy for twentieth-century women, they were their only license for disappearing from the world for a while. For her headaches, she took pills which, I got to know

too late, were antidepressants. Águeda's history would have to be revisited, tinted by the psychotropic drugs she had taken since her twenties.

I picture the family doctors of Cartago, wandering around like Santa Claus's pharmaceutical versions on misty nights, on their sleigh giving out colorful pills to the pubescent females.

The worrying episode had happened the night before, around the ominous three a.m. My brother heard a noise, like the front door opening, and went to see what it was. He found Águeda on the doorframe wearing a robe, with a lifeless gaze, pointing outside. "What happened, Mother?" He asked. Águeda would only moan and point to the distance. My brother guided her gently to her bed and wasn't sure if she was awake or sleepwalking. We, female bears, took refuge in this beneficial doubt with relief.

The next day I called her via telephone. She told me that she didn't remember a thing and, appealing to my comical understanding, tried to make me laugh with her about what had happened. She laughed, but it wasn't as it used to be before, the laughter of JP's era. Now it was aggressive, a leave-me-alone laughter. Leave me alone, but the Great Bear, like a courageous daughter, had to go looking for her dose in the drugstore of the other provinces. Probably, due to the shortage of her usual medication, Mother would have taken any other or a mix of drugs, swallowing them with some great whisky, the reason for her madness.

After the abnormal episode, Águeda came out of the depression closet, so to speak. She felt no more resentment on calling it depression, almost in a worshiping way. Depression was so omnipresent and omnipotent that it was like, in some way, some kind of company. Depression came to rule her life and Águeda tried it to rule the lives of the people around her. She wouldn't say anything to me but would call the Great Bear more than seven times a week to complain

about something. She visited psychiatrists, priests, and shamans of all sorts, I guess not to get rid of depression but to give it a poetic form. Something which, I'm so sorry, she didn't achieve.

*

Your mother is acting weird.

One morning I turned on my computer and that small sentence appeared in my sister's chat. She threw the hook, to see if I would fall for it. I hadn't heard from them both, Mother and the Great Bear, for months, and I was grateful for the truce, because either it was one complaining about depression, or the other complaining about the depressed woman.

But it ended up being that the Great Bear thought that Águeda was acting weird because she was happy, she would wake up early in the morning to go for her walks, she had repaired some things in the house and was all smiles, she didn't complain, nor call the Great Bear a couple of times a day for some excuse; what is more, she didn't call her in one hundred and twenty hours.

So, that's good, right?

The Great Bear's response: *Hmmm.*

Poor Bigsista, poor bigsistas of the world, they are the point of the spear, the missile defense; everything that is an Amazon jungle for the older sister, is a Sunday walk for the younger; what is drama for the older, is an operetta for the younger. Once, I expressed these ideas with a group of friends and none agreed with me. Whatever, poor Bigsista, I insist, always at Águeda's drift.

Some days later, at dawn in the Iberian Peninsula, another phrase on the sorority chat:

I knew it, said the Great Sister, who sees everything with her great eye.

It turns out that Águeda asked her older daughter to help her by going to the post office to pick up the telephone bills (do you remember? One would have to pick them up at the post

office and pay them at the bank) and the Great Bear found a file of calls to France. The bills would come in a closed envelope, but Águeda, was human, couldn't keep a secret let alone one like that, so now I don't remember the details, but Águeda had all the intention for the Great Bear to find out what she was about, I have no doubt about it.

So that's the deal. Águeda and Jean Patin were talking. Águeda did and didn't want to let on; she did and didn't say much. But she was happy and yes, she finally revealed to her older daughter that Jean Patin was coming. "Did he say when?"

"Yes, but no, Águeda didn't give more away." Then: red telephone. The Great Bear wasn't satisfied this time with an email. She sounded so worried and now I don't recall if it was because of the possibility of Jean Patin not going to Costa Rica or because of the contrary. Or—now I get it—because of both.

The days went by and I meditated, meditations I sent to the Great Bear via email. A decade hadn't gone by in vain, I could imagine Jean Patin ten years older, wanting to go live in the tropics with that crazy woman with big cheerful eyes, time would have made him forget about the bad memories and refloated the good ones, like her tender juvenile nipples, excuse my shamelessness, I write these lines feeling worried, but it is relevant.

In the last years, Águeda would blab sometimes, like a pressure cooker that hisses and stops, hisses and stops from time to time, she would say that kind of things, that she liked alfalfa because it smelled like semen, or that Jean would worship her fifteen-year-old-like rosy fluffy nipples.

(How curious, these phrases seem inappropriate and cringy to me, despite their deep innocence. Perhaps it is because one never wants to see their mother as a woman, I say to myself, but it's not true, we daughters do nothing more but evaluate our mothers as women. The truth is that we don't want to be questioned as women by our mothers).

Going back to where we were before the story of my mother's tender nipples appeared, the Great Bear found my scriptwriter's juggling scrip reasonable and, though she wasn't so convinced, she signed up to the lines of those who cherished the hope of the heavy and unmanageable Aguedanian package to grow old beside a Frenchman with a bit of *savoir vivre*.

A few weeks later...

I don't wanna tell ya but I told ya.

A message from the Great Bear on our chat. I didn't even have time to ask what had happened.

Águeda's ecstatic state continued growing until it was too much for her to keep it to herself and as a secret. She didn't say a thing to me; to my brother, who still lived with her, either; to her friends, not a word. The uncontainable and expandable Águeda was boiling inside. So, the Great Bear took pity on her and offered her understanding, an ear, and help with the preparations and the reception. Jean Patin had already bought the ticket. It was the end of January. "When is he arriving?" asked the Great Bear. I can picture her with a planner in her hands, frowning, ready to take notes on the list of things to do before the around-the-corner visit. The Great Bear has her gaze on the paper she is writing in. Then she hears offstage Águeda's answer to her question.

"On February 30th."

Not long ago, on a sleepless night, I started wondering what love is, if it is not attachment or dependency, what is it? Who do I love? And after a thorough examination, I concluded that I didn't love, nor had I ever loved someone.

Have I ever loved Águeda? If love is this visceral squeezing, tinged with a gray cloak and a sensation of missing tears which are more like an evocation, the memory of a crying forever felt but never let out; if that is love, I loved Águeda so much, so so much. More than anyone in the world.

Águeda said: "On February 30th," and the Great Bear looked up from the notebook where she was writing in. *Are you kidding me?* She asked with her eyes and not with her mouth. Águeda hadn't caught it yet. The Great Bear had to give her the dead blow. "Mother, February 30th doesn't exist."

No, it wasn't a mistake; yes, Águeda heard well, and Jean Patin didn't get confused. We never investigated much about this, because it was evident what had happened. Águeda herself understood it right away. Fed up (we guessed), Jean Patin said to that annoying woman who called him in the late hours, "Yes, of course, I will go, you know when? On February 30th!" *Click*. He hung up, I guess, concluding with his refusal. It hurts when I think about it, but perhaps Jean would also leave the telephone upside down like a cockroach while Águeda's unstoppable tiny voice would come out through the little holes of the receiver.

There's another possibility, of Jean making fun of Águeda, which has a brazenness not common on him. There are other possibilities in the middle; for example, that when he said February 30th to scare her, the one who ended up being scared was him, confirming how crazy that woman was. That woman who hurt him no more than a disillusionment does.

This time, Águeda sunk in a different kind of suffering. A muted, blind, and deaf suffering. She neither talked with anyone nor went out to cry on the streets. In fact, we couldn't measure the amount of pain in her as viper venom until a few months later.

My sister, to distract her, began to convince her with the idea of a trip to Madrid. "Go to Madrid, you haven't gone for three years, go, go." Águeda said neither yes nor no, so the Great Bear started the plan. And when the Great Bear starts a plan, nothing can stop her.

*

There are days I remember you in a certain way and others in another, my Águeda. Sometimes, if it rains in the morning, you come to my mind and I want to cry, and if at the end of the afternoon, the sun comes out, I remember you with a smile, going to the evening mass as if it were a party, all dressed up and perfumed with pitch. Sometimes it's rainy, sometimes it's sunny; sometimes everything goes very well, sometimes very bad; so, remembering wavers, as well as my spirits. Like a feather on the wind, my quill.

This book could be many others. If I had written it ten years ago, it would be very different from this one; or maybe not so much. However, I don't have to go long back in time. I have been postponing the narration of Águeda's second visit to Madrid for days because some days I remember how moved I was waiting for her, and others, how annoyed even before her arrival.

If that small letter of a few lines that only read on its envelope "Dr. Mauricio Zamora, University of Costa Rica" hadn't found its destination, if it had gotten lost like many other letters... What burdens me are the chances (the singing of the *yigüirro*, a new wrinkle on my face identical to one Águeda had in the same spot) that wake one or another spirit in me and disrupt the narration. Out of all the books this one could have been, it was condemned to be just one.

Unless I would never stop writing it, like it happens to some daughters.

It was Thursday. Águeda would land the next day, at noon. This time, I was less overwhelmed by her visit, I had a flexible job, I lived in a spacious apartment in the city, I was coping better in Madrid. I do remember that I couldn't *feel* that Águeda was coming. My hypothesis (now) is that when I saw her leaving, the last time three years ago, I convinced myself that I wouldn't see her again and she became a fantasy to me. But it won't be necessary to devise it, I understood everything when my cellphone rang in the middle of the *Gran Vía*, in Madrid. It was the Great Bear, out of her mind.

Águeda woke up that morning, got in the shower, and noticed a lump under her arm. A lump the size of a ping-pong ball. The Male Cub hurried to take her to the doctor, who clicked his tongue, shook his head, and said he didn't like it "And you, madam, won't be going anywhere."

By that time, we didn't know anything else, but Bigsista told me about it, yelling by the phone, anyone would have thought the airplane had crashed. I remember I ended up calming her down.

I also remember that I always knew it, I can't explain it, and it has never happened to me again, but when I hung up with my sister, I thought: that was it. That's why I never felt as if I was waiting for her. Perhaps mother and daughter can have telepathic communication, and we both knew that no, despite the Great Bear's preparations, she wasn't going to Madrid.

It was cancer, of course, a cancer that hurried up to appear on the edge of the hatch before Águeda would start a trip that she never wanted to take. She needed surgery urgently. They would open her up and see it. Four days later, Águeda and her son woke up before dawn to go to the hospital. The night before, Fray anointed her with the sacramental oil. The morning in

question, the Great Bear passed by to say goodbye, people used to do that; sometimes relatives would say their goodbyes right at the doors of the operating room.

Not long ago, I became aware that, when she was about to get in the car—the four-by-four four—to take the seat she always used in her own car, the passenger seat; before my brother would start the car, Águeda turned around and said to my older sister, without knowing if they would see each other again:

“Jean Patin was the one who killed me.”

*

Sometimes, many times, in Cartago, the only way for a man to get into a woman is with a scalpel. Even when he is the husband. One of Águeda’s second or third cousin was opened up by her husband, who was a surgeon, to see what the persistent pain she complained about was. He searched, searched, found nothing, and closed her up with thread and needle, but a malpractice with the anesthesia left her stupid for life, like tamed after a super orgasm, one would say, but it would be inaccurate.

Also, way too many times, in Cartago, the only way for a man and a woman to speak alone, in the soft gloom, about intimate topics, is in the confessional, with her kneeling before him.

Well, this eroticist luck saved our protagonist’s life. You would have to see the way, between obscenity and distress, in which Águeda gave herself to Doctor So And So, a handsome oncologist with an Italian last name. “I put my breast in his hands,” Águeda told me via telephone, cracking up, a few days after the surgery. She was a bit euphoric, as any time life had scared her.

Undoubtedly, anyone would like to have, if getting sick, Águeda’s faith in the witch doctors. God and man, would say Costa Rican grandmas, and for Águeda, that was a doctor.

Her absolute trust in a man wearing a white coat healed her. They sliced her breast from the root. Holy remedy.

On those distressing days, I was so far, in Madrid, and on the internet's labyrinth, I saw a photo of Saint Águeda, with her breasts placed on a tray like buxom cakes. The photo annoyed me, without a doubt, but something curious happened: I understood that Águeda wouldn't die because of this. The offering was done.

Madness would have saved her from cancer, but cancer saved her from madness and on its way saved her life. "February 30th doesn't exist," her older daughter said, and right there Águeda could have made *crack* and left this world behind, gotten mad, ran the streets, as she used to tell us, scolding us when we were kids. "One of these days, I'll go mad and run the streets nude." She used to say. Nude means naked, if someone doesn't know. If she had said naked that would have been terrifying; I remember that saying of hers and I cracked up still now in front of the keyboard.

Águeda could have gotten mad when hearing "February 30th doesn't exist," or driven everyone else mad, as she would have done at another time. I'm not talking about going mad halfheartedly, going outside literally naked, tits exposed, singing in French, what do I know, I don't want my imagination to run wild. You know, going wild ambulance and shot style. Then, she wouldn't have gotten sick.

I'm very bold when claiming this. If that's what you are thinking, you are right; but I perceive this phenomenon with such evidence that I must express it. Back then, during Águeda's convalescence, one day, a nurse whispered in my ear: "Behind every breast cancer there's an asshole," according to an endless number of histories she heard in hospital beds. "I cannot be this daring. It's just that it seems that, if neurons don't go crazy, cells do." And that's what we call cancer.

This time Águeda understood Jean Patin's rejection without palliative care, with the necessary and clear strength of a scalpel. She swallowed her suffering in silence, alone and shameful, until she couldn't bear it anymore, and cancer arrived just in time to tell her: "Don't worry, you don't have to pretend anymore, let others take care of you." Which was what she always wanted and that's what she did. And cancer turned out to be the remedy, I don't know how else to say it.

*

Five in the morning, I just jump out of bed excited about what I "have to" write today.

Águeda, love of mine. Beautiful Águeda, full of life; Águeda after the calvary. Águeda, to whom a demon had been extracted from.

The surgery, the chemo, the vomits, and the diet were part of a purifying process. Venom attacked venom, and Águeda was limpid; her skin, more than white, was translucent; her big eyes were bigger and twinkling. As a reward after concluding her chemotherapy cycle, Águeda went to Madrid on her own initiative, willing to see me and hang out.

This time, exiting through the automatic doors of Barajas, I saw a woman with pearlescent grey hair, styled with a bob; a beautiful skinny woman, walking lively. The best part: she wasn't euphoric or anxious, just attentive. Full of life and placid at the same time. My mother.

She was the one who wanted to visit me. Back then I lived on a fourth floor without an elevator, and Águeda would go up and down the stairs without problems, in her seventies which, then, seemed like too many years.

Why do my memories and feelings about her, as beautiful as they are, have to come, without fail, surrounded with thorns? The Águeda who was less Águeda was the only one I admired, the only one I felt proud of. I feel guilty about it, or I am, I should say. Too much speech for my part about accepting other human beings and respecting their free will... and

writing about this I confirm that I was the one who never accepted the person who was on the other end of the umbilical cord.

My friends in Madrid accused me of having made up a fat, clumsy, with puffy hair, strong perfume, smeared lips, endlessly complaining and unsatisfied woman. They meet another one, but I warn: forcibly. Águeda was more like the Águeda of my dreams because she had no other option. Her hair had just started growing back after the chemo, and it was suggested to her not to dye it; her chest was flat, barely bulky because of a discreet padded bra, which made her look younger and graceful; also, she looked skinny and crystalline. She was joyful, enjoying herself, or more precisely, she still was, but now without complaining, without anxiety, without her fear of everything going wrong. She had risen, willing to suck the last elixir of life, dressed in jeans and tennis shoes.

In Madrid, I played with fire when I brought Jean Patin's issue back, which, finally, was in the past. Or that was what I wanted to verify, as someone who does the final trial and mentions the windmill to Quixote.

It was a quiet night on a small roof in Argumosa. Right there, Águeda told me about what I understood would be the climax of this novel. Oh, oh, I'm tearing up, even when I always advise to write after having cried, I woke up in such a happy mood today, and now here I am crying... Crying of excitement. I don't know if life is a blink of an eye, but I do know that that's what remains of life: a blink.

Look, a mother and daughter are seated in front of each other on a small, round table covered with a colorful tablecloth and big cups of wine. On their back, there's a fountain. There's some breeze, and the light of a streetlamp, when passing through the branches of a tree, splits off in bright spots that cover them as in an impressionist night. That image, as light, keeps

traveling; there they go, there they are seated facing each other, through space, daughter and mother, at twenty light years from here.

Images are nothing without words. What light? We are beings of words. I don't remember quite well what I said to her. I do know that I wanted to help her get rid of the guilt and social judgment (which she suffered from, as I found out with astonishment a few years ago); I also know that I wanted to make clear to her that I admired her for having dared to live such romance. I hoped (I didn't tell her this) that she could sing like that, *non, rien de rien, je ne regrette rien*. In other words, I hadn't understood anything at all.

Águeda told me that if she had known that things would turn out as they did, she would have preferred the letter to never arrive at its destination. That was her answer. My ears still hurt.

A woman who got married displeased, who could never rein—not even word—her desires; a woman who always lived under some kind of oppression, would rather give up on the blink of pleasure and ecstasy that life gave her, so as not to suffer what she suffered on the other blink that life is.

There were so many different Águedas, all condemned to live inside the same Águeda.

Águeda survived cancer and her next version was more like the last one. She gained weight grotesquely, returned to her puffy and dyed hair, and wore her perfume and big gold jewelry that seemed too repulsive for me in general, but in more wrinkly and spotted hands and neck. There was no trace of the contemporary woman who had visited me the last time.

“Do you know what?” Said to me a friend who was on the verge of dying because of an illness when she was very young. “One forgets; at first, you are living an epiphany, grateful for every breath, for the simplest and wonderful fact of being alive; but as time goes by, that seer state fades away and one day you confirm, disappointed, that you are back to being who you used to be.”

Moreover, her youngest son, who had been her most stable company at the end of the day, got married and moved out of the house. Águeda got what most women of her generation wish for more than anything in the world: to live alone, queens of their own one-person kingdom. Most women, except for her.

She was now into masses and daily prayers. Just like when, in that comic strip of Susanita, from Mafalda, she is flustering the poor bearded man seated in a cloud with her gossip, Águeda would be locked up for two consecutive hours with the priest. Finally, a man willing to listen! She didn't meditate; she wasn't looking to contact something superior, elevated, transcendental; that's what I thought, but no. For Águeda, praying was shutting herself up alone (her only way of bearing being with herself) to feel sorry with God and to ask him for the accompanying list of requests.

Her eternal dissatisfaction also returned, her sighs, her distracted gaze, her depressive state, although at first, she didn't dare to call it that way, because it was incompatible with her religiousness. Complaining, someone like her, to whom God, among other favors, had freed from cancer, would have been like *offending the Lord*, as it is said and as she used to say.

However, she would complain by doing somersaults, ways of getting away with it, and one of my aunts told her that depression was an illness, and as one, a cross she could dedicate to God. Something like that, I don't know the argumentative scheme, I know the result, I'm about to see it with my own eyes, because: "Mom is not okay."

Morning WhatsApp from Bigsista. She told me that before dawn, at about—guess what—three a.m., Águeda went out to the street, wearing slippers and a flannel rope which she used to sleep in, and shouting she ended up in Mrs. I don't remember's place, the crushed roses neighbor. "Where are my kids?" Águeda asked desperately, "I have three little kids, my little bears, where are they? Someone stole them from me."

The next day, she barely remembered it, or that's what she said, defensively. I doubt it because pretending to be distracted or forgetful was an old tactic of hers. She said she had had a nightmare, that was all, that we shouldn't make a fuss about it; she dreamed that her kids were with their father, but right then she remembered that Mauricio was dead and felt panic.

Because of some personal reasons, after three sad lustrums in Madrid, I was considering going to Costa Rica for a sabbatical period. Read carefully, I'm being careful not to write: returning to Costa Rica. Ninety-nine percent of this life consists of how one tells oneself the tale. I was going to tour my homeland for some months while, as every seven years, I would think about what new turn to give to my life, I said to myself.

Now, from the cabin in the Costa Rican tropical cloud forest, where I write these lines, I smile when thinking about that trip I made to postpone a decision, to which first step I was taking.

In short, once more, suitcases.

Me, suitcases.

Since the sun came out today, warm and whitish at five in the morning, these words hammered into my head: Returning to Mauritius. The title of a poem that doesn't stop to get written in my head.

I went inside the house through the old front door, which opened like a wolf's mouth serrated with books. Right there, a character to whom I had no choice but to give a space in this story, welcomed me. Sometimes I change names, but I don't make them up. She was called Plutonia. She was from Nicaragua's wildest regions, which is an overstatement. She was illiterate, with a disturbing mix of savage and servile.

Plutonia welcomed me, addressing me as Mrs., by the door of visitors, because the kitchen door, which was the real joy of the house, was closed. When passing through the hallways, I smelled mold and pee. The bookshelves barely had books, they had trivial and religious figurines. Then, on the left, the living room, its curtains were closed like in the cave period, and, laying on the couch, there was Águeda.

That's the worst memory I have of her. Apart from being obese and misshapen, she looked up at me with my grandmother's fierce set of eyes. She was delighted to see me, that's undeniable, but that did not impede her from immediately saying to me: "You're ugly and fat."

"Mrs. Águeda, how do you say such a thing to your daughter," Plutonia scolded her.

And for that intervention neither heard when I said: "Look who's talking."

I would give that type of answer to my mother, as much as I regret it now that I remember it. Truly, about the act of forgiving, what's more difficult is forgiving oneself.

Águeda and Plutonia. May this be the last picture card of Mauricio's Island... Both of them could be in a sketch in which either one would die laughing or feel terrified. What a fall. Águeda would sleep until very late and wake up demanding her breakfast which, each day, was

like a three-star hotel buffet. Eggs, bread, cheeses, cold cuts, jams, and to gobble up all of that, she would end it with a digestive, she would say, an amaretto or a cognac.

Plutonia, a woman a bit younger than her employer, was short and compact, without a gram of fat between her small and defined muscles. She would take a chamomile tea without sugar and a corn tortilla with salt for breakfast. If Águeda had seen through a crystal ball that the company for her last years would be a woman... a woman like that one.

On the large table of the dining room, where Águeda would now take the head, Plutonia would serve the three daily meals (each time with extreme ceremony, cloth napkin, and a bell for Águeda to inform when to take out her plate and give her the dessert). There, between bottles of wine and liquors, lay our civilization's apotheosis: mounds of boxes, jars, blister packs, everything that—we are told—maintains a modern person alive. There was medication for her blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, sleep, low spirits, euphoric spirits, neck allergy, dry eyes, difficult digestion, nail fungus, rash, dandruff, flatulence, sneezes, tears; for every vital sign.

I always exaggerate everything, I know it and now you do too, but Águeda's survival seemed to me like a horrifying metaphor for what we call progress. Surviving until the nineties and more, for this.

*

Last night, I lay awake. In the darkness, Águeda's stare, like my grandmother's, came to me and I kept reflecting, thinking that Águeda lived most of her life under those eyes; since the moment her crotch had to be looked after, until her marriage, when she was more than thirty years old.

If you have plants, you may have noticed that they get pretty under pretty glances and barely survive under glances like my grandmother's. I pity and forgive Águeda for being that glance's daughter; and for being its granddaughter, I will do the same with myself.

I may pity this grandmother as well. Her life—like everyone else's? I wonder—could be transferred to a book, a book without transatlantic trips, pearls, perfumes, or wine, but with more plenitude; well, no, plenitude is a big word, but with a strong spirit derived from the flawless and lacking from ambiguity boast of getting up every morning to accomplish with every day's effort.

I was also in her belly, a microscopic Russian doll, inside Águeda's belly when she floated on the amniotic fluid. Águeda, who was in my great-grandmother's belly, who was in my great-great-grandmother's...

Fall, I said some lines above, demoralized before that giant like a devouring jellyfish Águeda. However, I had to accept that it had another name a little later. The scenes I had to witness between Águeda and Plutonia are, some of them, extremely outrageous, and the reason why I won't be telling much about this stage is because I soon understood that the word was another: dementia.

I have always bragged about not restricting my words and humor at all; today, something superior than me makes me comprehend that it is not right to publish what I obtained—let's say—by spying, because, for practical effects, that's what happened. Águeda didn't have inhibitors and was an uncovered psyche.

I don't pretend to plant a morbid intrigue, so I clarify quickly that Águeda's dementia didn't take its typical drift of sexual obscenity, but of power. Like that, I confirmed a suspicion that never abandoned me, and what happened is that, in her deeper self, a well of anger always

survived, the conscience of being unjustly looked down on, as well as envy and rivalry towards all those women she couldn't feel compassion for, that is to say, a lot of women, too many.

This is what I found in the place I used to call my house: a gigantic child of one hundred kilos, capricious and rude, with an Indigenous without malice at her service. Águeda would give her absurd orders and when she didn't obey them, Águeda would roar with pleasure when saying: "I give the orders here," taking delight in that first-person singular. Other times, Águeda would look at the thin Indigenous and mutter: "Poor thing..." as people used to address their pets to show affection.

Every day, lunch and dinner were made for a big family, and every day, huge amounts of leftovers were thrown away. They didn't eat together, or have coffee, much less walk around the block; they only prayed the Angelus every afternoon at six. "Mrs. Águeda, don't be that bad, tell me when you want to use the bathroom."

"I do what I want." The boss would respond and *splish*, she would pee herself, and Plutonia would clean up, over and over again.

"Where did that tiger come from?" I asked her one day. The tiger plushie, lumpy and dull, still dominated her bed; Plutonia would put it between her pillows after tidying up her room each morning. "I don't know," she said, "I think someone gifted it to me on one of my birthdays."

"Who? Daddy?"

"I don't know," she said. "Jean Patin, wasn't it?" I said. She looked at me confused.

"Who?"

He was forgotten at last. The name didn't even ring a bell.

However, all the cast would go to oblivion. Jean Patin was the first one, in order of disappearance.

Plutonia was the only one who cried when Águeda was sent to a nursing home, one of the few which accepted people who weren't in full possession of their mental faculties. Plutonia would cry and ask us not to; when she understood that she couldn't stop us from doing it, she said that she was going to stay in the house waiting for her return. Perhaps Plutonia was my mother's most orphaned child, and that house was the closest thing to a home for her.

Everything was in its place. All that seemed so aberrant in Mauritania, was harmonious, understandable, and expectable in the nursing home. "Good morning, my sweetheart, how is my beautiful girl?" That's how the service ladies, the nurses, the masseur, the hairdresser, and even the doctor who visited twice a week treated her. That's to say, they treated her like a baby, from top to bottom, as the jargon says. She was a well-taken-care-of baby, not a big baby seated on its throne caressing a tiger plushie with one hand and with a big cup of cognac in the other.

She lost weight. Her meals and her hours of sleep were monitored, without a doubt by psychotropic drugs, I don't fool myself about this, but the holy legal drugs did their job; besides, they had already underpinned all her life for withdrawing them now.

This is a topic I won't dig into here. By that time, I understood that people live all their adulthood medicated, with lots of pills, sedentary, alcoholic, gluttonous, depressed, uh-huh, but they think that their old age would be inspired by health, calm, and wisdom.

*

The last Águeda appears on the scene. Please welcome, Aguedita, who I thought I would never see, a sweet old lady. Everything in her softened. Her twisted gaze disappeared, and her ardent and restless one never reappeared, nor those half-close Middle Age martyr eyes she had after many hours of migraine and its corresponding pills. An old lady with a distant gaze, not a lost one, and not lacking serenity. Just a damn torment was left in her life. "Come on now, take

me to Cartago, my mother is going to scold me,” she told me a couple of times. Luckily, this would also go into the black hole. Perhaps forgetting is a remedy, instead of an illness.

On one of my last visits, when she couldn’t recognize anyone, the most animal thing that I can remember happened between us, since I can’t remember the bloody moment of my birth.

I arrived at the nursing home on a weekday in the afternoon. Elder men and women were seated in their wheelchairs, some of them were playing board games, others were absorbed on the TV screen. Águeda was huddled, indifferent to the bingo card she had in front of her. I saw her from afar, and I want to say very far, from the other side of the room, which was very spacious, and right then she looked up and saw me, and without knowing who I was, she knew I was someone.

Her gaze lighted up, sorry for the cliché, but it was just like that; her spiritless eyes, lighted up when finding out something, something they didn’t know what it was, but it was something. She didn’t look away from me during my journey through the large room and, when I sat down at her side, although she didn’t even know my name and barely could speak, she knew I was part of her.

Blood is thicker than water, I have heard since always, but that proverb—maybe because I haven’t given birth—never meant anything to me. Until that moment. Looking at each other’s eyes, in one second, we went half a century back and we both remember that we had once eaten through the same mouth, felt through the same skin, and breathed the same air.

It was an ineffable and beastly communication. Something that can be understood without words, like in a dream, where nobody opens their mouth, there are just stares, exhalations, and gestures one knows that knows. Like one. Two. Both of us knew. Like two, one. For a moment, time opened, and we were one, the same. One who had been becoming flesh for millennia. What we were saying to each other, I don’t know.

Since, indeed, I have never known what love is. Unless it is just that.

*

Three-thirty in the morning.

Ring, ring.

As I'm nobody's mother, I always turn off my cell phone when going to sleep.

Ring, ring.

The landline of one friend's house, where I temporarily live in Cartago, rings.

Ring, ring.

It is the Great Bear. "They just called me from the nursing home to tell me that Mom passed away," she says.

It is not bad news, but it moves me as if it were.

Taxi. A thirty-minute trip. It is getting light outside and, as a prayer, I'm expressing my gratitude, I don't know if towards Águeda or to whom or to what, for this ending. The last check-ups indicated that she was healthy; I mean, all the parameters were under control. Dementia didn't stop her from living, let's say, for ten more years. It would be a decade of seeing Águeda's soul fading away, in a mummified body.

I arrived at the nursing home, I went to her room, and I remember two opposing things. One, telling myself: *You are in front of your mother's dead body*, and two, feeling so much peace.

A simple and mysterious fact. Was it just me, or Águeda was smiling? It seemed to me that she had a faint smile... But I said nothing, it could have been a muscle clenching due to an ailment on the recently dead, or a *post-mortem* ritual unknown to me; as well as eyelids are shut down, someone may have curled up her lips for her to look happy.

Book titles sometimes come up by themselves, weightless, organic. Therefore, they are a star on the horizon; it isn't about reaching it, but about letting oneself be guided through the pallid path it traces. Insignificant woman. I thought about titling this novel that way, way before Águeda passed away. Now those two words are under my name, not under hers.

The life of a Central-American woman born in the early twentieth century; that life's tale was always alien to her. She had so little on her hands and did so little when she could. Her only redemption was submission and martyrdom. Águeda, who reigned only when the island was deserted. Here I am, closing the curtains of this book. *A woman who was never the most important person to anyone*, I wrote on a notepad many years ago, the same amount of years that had to pass by for me to understand that I don't understand.

That I don't know why that title sprang up; that, as it usually happens to me, writing goes ahead of me and I'm panting behind it, picking up the crumbs, putting two and two together.

I write and write.

To see if one day everything makes sense.

*

We buried our mother's white and smooth body that same evening, in the niche beside Mauricio Zamora's. The Male Cub told us not to rush things, that we should wait until the next day. But we didn't listen to him, and at times, when I get distracted, I wonder if we had buried her alive. Then, my legs loosen up and I fell a bite on the pit of my stomach.

By the way, we carried to the tomb a big, sealed folder wrapped in plastic that read, in her scrawling writing, "private, do not open." Inside it, we supposed, there were Jean Patin's letters, photos and souvenirs of their trips, and notebooks with her notes taken on the rainy evenings when she tried to express her memories. Look how sure we were about that folder having nothing valuable, that it ended up in the tomb with her.

A couple of days later, the female bears went to the nursing home to finish packing her personal effects, as they are called. “This? And this thing? And that?” We would put everything in bags and boxes like when the set is cleaned up because the performance has ended. “And the tiger? What do we do with it?” asked the Great Bear, sighing. To me, the trash was its clear destiny, as it is for everything that doesn’t *work*; everything, dust and ashes, on eternity’s humus.

“Oh,” the Great Bear sighed, “oh, oh,” with every small thing. I put the tiger in the trash. A tricky game, I know. I put everything in the trash without consideration because I have words and their mirage of immortality.

We were doing that when the caregiver who had found Águeda dead approached to tell us something. “It was so weird,” she said, “I had just done my round on these hallways, I had just visited Aguedita and she was okay, very pretty, asleep. I continued with the round and when I returned through the hallway I heard a laugh, not a loud laugh, a giggle. One hears few laughs in here and much less at those hours. Aguedita woke up, I thought. So, I went inside her room again and that’s when I found her... Didn’t you see that your mother had a smile on her face?”

Insignificant woman. Naughty Águeda. So you laughed at the very end.

Memoria de traducción

Capítulo 1. Introducción

La traducción del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras en *Una mujer insignificante*, de Catalina Murillo, es un trabajo de graduación en la modalidad de memoria de traducción para la Maestría Profesional en Traducción Inglés-Español de la Universidad Nacional (UNA), Heredia, Costa Rica, ofrecida por la Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje. Según la modalidad escogida, se generó una traducción inversa (español-inglés) de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, de la reconocida autora costarricense Catalina Murillo⁴. Este texto se seleccionó principalmente porque es una obra literaria escrita por una mujer costarricense, porque fue incorporada a la literatura costarricense recientemente y porque no contaba con una traducción previa al inglés. Otro motivo importante por el cual esta novela fue seleccionada es porque se quería llevar la literatura costarricense, específicamente por y para mujeres, a diferentes lectoras en el ámbito internacional por medio de su traducción al inglés.

En la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, la narradora nos cuenta la historia de su madre, una mujer que fue insignificante hasta para ella misma. A través de la exploración de la relación de esta madre con su esposo, sus hijas e hijo, sus amistades, su amigo francés y su propia madre, podemos entender el porqué del título de esta obra literaria con la que muchas mujeres, tanto madres como hijas, pueden identificarse. La autora ha revelado que escribió esta novela teniendo en mente tanto a sus amigas como a sus lectoras meta. La voz de la narradora, que acude al chisme y a la interpelación a las lectoras, genera cercanía y atrapa al lector de una manera magistral.

Además de los criterios de selección del texto mencionados al inicio de esta introducción, el chisme y la interpelación al lector son dos temas que no han sido explorados a profundidad

⁴ Murillo, C. (2024). *Una mujer insignificante*. Alfaguara.

desde la traductología al día de hoy. Es por ello que este texto representa una oportunidad para generar un aporte a este campo de estudio. De igual forma, con esta traducción se aumentan las posibilidades de expandir el alcance de la novela al abrir la posibilidad de que sea llevada a ferias internacionales del libro con el objetivo de que las editoriales en inglés se interesen en ella y que consecuentemente esta sirva para promover la literatura costarricense entre los lectores angloparlantes.

Debido a la relativa falta de estudios traductológicos acerca de la traducción del chisme y de la interpelación al lector, surge la necesidad de generar un trabajo de graduación que ejemplifique las estrategias utilizadas para que la cercanía con el lector lograda a partir de estos dos elementos no se pierda en la lengua meta (LM). El chisme puede considerarse como un fenómeno social y cultural que puede variar según la lengua y la ubicación geográfica; con esto podemos entender que el chisme no se va a presentar de la misma manera en todos los idiomas por lo que se requiere de sensibilidad en la traducción para que este no pierda su efecto u propósito: generar tensión, expectación, anticipo, interés, entre otras sensaciones en el lector.

Con respecto a la interpelación al lector, este tema ha sido explorado desde el campo de la literatura como una estrategia narrativa que rompe las barreras de lo ficticio para incluir al lector en la historia. Para la traducción de este elemento, es necesario comprender el propósito del mismo con el fin de emularlo en la traducción, el cual, en *Una mujer insignificante*, y según la autora, es crear cercanía con sus lectoras. El hablarle directamente a las lectoras, en femenino, no es casualidad en esta novela, por lo que para su traducción se deben tener en cuenta las estrategias traductológicas relacionadas con el género femenino para respetar este aspecto en el texto meta (TM).

Después de identificar los problemas de investigación, la falta de estudios traductológicos relacionados al chisme y a la interpelación al lector, se prosiguió a plantear los objetivos de esta memoria de traducción, los cuales se presentan a continuación:

Objetivo general

Analizar el efecto de cercanía entre la narradora y las lectoras en la traducción inversa al inglés del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras en la novela literaria *Una mujer insignificante*, de la autora costarricense Catalina Murillo.

Objetivos específicos

1. Identificar las particularidades del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras en la narración como discurso discursivo-literario empleado en la novela, con el fin de seleccionar las estrategias de traducción pertinentes para su abordaje.
2. Emplear y explicar procedimientos de traducción que permitan mantener la cercanía entre la figura del narrador y del destinatario de la traducción.
3. Analizar y valorar la pertinencia de las decisiones tomadas en el proceso de traducción referidas a los elementos del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras.

Para cumplir con los objetivos de este trabajo de graduación, fue pertinente contar con un marco teórico que fundamentara las decisiones traductológicas que se tomaron al traducir. Este marco teórico se nutre de las ideas de los teóricos Hans J. Vermeer (*Skopos*), Sherry Simon (el género en la traducción) y Basil Hatim e Ian Mason (la sociolingüística en la traducción). La teoría del *Skopos* tiene un papel fundamental ya que la traducción de la novela se realizó con un propósito en mente: mantener la cercanía con el lector. Conocer acerca del género en la traducción y las teorías alrededor de este tema fue necesario a la hora de tomar decisiones con respecto a la interpelación a las lectoras. Las teorías de la sociolingüística en la traducción

permitieron ver los objetos de estudio, el chisme principalmente, desde una perspectiva social y cultural para entender cómo este puede cambiar debido a estos dos factores.

Luego de seguir todos los procedimientos para la traducción del texto en cuestión, los cuales se detallan en el marco metodológico, se procedió con la etapa investigativa. En ella se determina que esta es una investigación cualitativa debido a que se analizan datos no numéricos; que es un estudio de caso ya que se traduce una novela en específico y se analizan determinados segmentos de esta; y que este análisis es de carácter descriptivo porque busca describir lo que se hizo sin pretender ser una guía. Como última etapa, se categorizan los segmentos seleccionados en los que se presentan elementos del chisme e interpelación al lector, se determinan las estrategias utilizadas y se valora, desde la perspectiva de la traductora y de la lectora de la memoria de traducción, si la cercanía con el lector se mantiene o, si por el contrario, se pierde.

Las principales contribuciones para el campo traductológico, más específicamente en el ámbito literario, que esta memoria de traducción aporta son la ejemplificación de las diferentes estrategias de traducción para traducir el chisme y la interpelación al lector a partir de la traducción de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*. También se logra recalcar la importancia de una traducción fiel al texto original (TO) para lograr mantener la cercanía con el lector. Por último, se incentiva a que más traductores estudien el chisme y la interpelación al lector desde la traducción a otros idiomas, culturas y contextos sociales para que así se conozcan diferentes perspectivas y metodologías para abordar estos retos en la traducción literaria.

Con respecto a la organización, este trabajo cuenta con un capítulo de revisión bibliográfica compuesto por diferentes estudios en los cuales se identifican los antecedentes y vacíos con respecto a los temas de investigación. Seguidamente, está el capítulo del marco teórico en el que se presentan las teorías más relevantes que sustentan este trabajo, seguido del

capítulo del marco metodológico, en el que se exponen los procedimientos que se llevaron a cabo para la traducción y la investigación. Después de estos, se presenta el capítulo de análisis que se divide en dos secciones, en la primera se analiza la interpelación al lector presente en la novela y en la segunda, el chisme incluido en ella. Finalmente, se encuentran las conclusiones de este trabajo de graduación y los aportes de este para el campo de la traductología.

Capítulo 2. Revisión bibliográfica

La siguiente revisión bibliográfica, en la cual se presentan los antecedentes y vacíos acerca del tema de estudio de este proyecto, está dividida en los siguientes cuatro subtemas: interpelación al lector en la traducción (*authorial intrusion*), traducción del chisme, traducción del género femenino y traducción inversa (español-inglés). Se consultó en diferentes repositorios en línea utilizando palabras clave como traducción, interpelación al lector, apelación al lector, chisme, género gramatical, traducción inversa y direccionalidad en traducción. Fueron considerados alrededor de veinte estudios, los cuales incluyen libros, tesis, artículos académicos y *blogs*.

Interpelación al lector en la traducción (*authorial intrusion*)

En “From Digressions to Intrusions: Authorial Commentary” in the Novel, Dawson (2016) expone los tipos y funciones de la interpelación al lector como recurso narrativo. El autor enumera seis diferentes maneras en las que se puede interpelar al lector: 1) cuando el autor se dirige directamente hacia el lector; 2) con intervenciones gnómicas que establecen correlación entre un mundo ficticio y el mundo real; 3) con la evaluación de los personajes y sus acciones; 4) con intervenciones conscientes acerca del acto narrativo; 5) con comentarios metaficcionales acerca de la obra y su forma genérica; y 6) con la inserción del autor como un personaje por medio de la metalepsis. Dawson señala que además de darle atención al acto narrativo, interpelar al lector conlleva prestarle atención a la ficcionalidad de la obra en sí. Dawson aporta una explicación profunda acerca de la interpelación al lector, mas no acerca de las diferencias que pueden existir al utilizar esta técnica en diferentes idiomas.

Hill (2017) explora en su ensayo “The Exile’s Epic Path to Healing: Authorial Intrusion” in *Purgatorio and Omeros*, cómo la interpelación al lector impacta tanto al lector como al autor en la obra de dos poetas: Dante Alighieri y Derek Walcott. La autora se centra en el tipo de

interpelación al lector en la que el autor se inserta a sí mismo en la historia al convertirse en un personaje. Ella argumenta que, generalmente, en la ficción se espera que el autor esté separado de sus personajes, por lo que el tipo de interpelación a la que ella se refiere se distingue de las demás al no querer moralizar, sermonear o aportar explicaciones. Hill puntualiza qué se hubiera perdido si dichos poetas no hubieran interpelado al lector al convertirse en personajes de sus propias obras. Por medio de estas “intrusiones”, los autores tuvieron la oportunidad de reescribir su historia personal y la historia en general; además de servir como un recordatorio para sus lectores de que las voces no deben ser silenciadas y de que cada quien tiene control sobre su propia historia. Este ensayo, si bien estudia específicamente un solo tipo de interpelación, deja entrever el poder narrativo que utilizar esta técnica les aporta a las obras, mas no lo aborda desde la traducción.

Marcos (2019), en su entrada titulada “Hablar al lector” en el *blog* Escuela de Escritores, se refiere al origen de esta práctica literaria, la cual se remonta al tiempo en el que solo existía la producción oral. La finalidad de interpelar al lector era darle verosimilitud a la historia; el autor sostiene que, los lectores, al sentirse apelados, percibían al narrador como una persona por lo que confiaban en sus palabras. También, se indica que ya no es una técnica comúnmente utilizada debido al efecto de extrañeza que crea. Sin embargo, Marcos propone que, si lo que se busca en la obra es provocar alguna sensación en concreto en el lector al romper la cuarta pared, como hacer sentir al lector parte de la historia, este es un recurso sumamente funcional. Aunque Marcos nos da una perspectiva amplia acerca de la utilidad de la interpelación al lector y nos habla de sus orígenes, igual que en otros trabajos mencionados anteriormente, no se analiza este tema desde un enfoque traductológico.

Traducción del chisme

Bush (2014), en su ensayo “Imagined Bodies: Reading Gossip as Fiction”, describe al chisme, sus características, las similitudes presentes en la emisión del chisme y la ficción en literatura y entre el receptor del chisme y el lector de ficción. La autora afirma que el chisme se origina de la oralidad pero que se puede presentar por escrito; también, que este requiere de un emisor, el sujeto de quien se trata el mensaje, y de un receptor. Además, sostiene que el chisme es un acto íntimo que trata temas que no deben decirse abiertamente o que podrían no ser ciertos. Con esto, la autora plantea que el chisme se desarrolla de la misma manera en la que leemos un libro; de manera privada mientras se imagina lo que ocurre con los personajes. Con respecto a la narrativa del chisme, Bush (2014) considera que se presenta el factor de misterio, ya que muchas veces no podemos verificar los detalles o solo se nos dice acerca de lo más relevante en la historia, lo que incita a un involucramiento mayor por parte del receptor. Aunque sea un valioso aporte para entender cómo funciona el chisme y cómo se relaciona este con la literatura, este ensayo no trata el tema cultural con respecto al chisme ni cómo este puede variar en diferentes idiomas.

López Rodríguez (2018), en su artículo “El chisme: estrategias discursivas desplegadas en su construcción”, publicado en la revista *Estudios de Lingüística Aplicada*, investiga y analiza las estrategias discursivas utilizadas en el chisme como interacción oral en un contexto específico de una mujer mexicana de cincuenta años y sus vecinas. Los resultados de dicho estudio apuntan a que hay al menos cuatro componentes básicos presentes en el chisme: “el enfoque en la tercera persona, la exposición del comportamiento probatorio, la emisión de comentarios valorativos y la puesta en juego de elementos interactivos” (Conclusiones, párr. 4). Con respecto a la emisión de comentarios valorativos, la autora enfatiza que estos están permeados por estrategias de mitigación tales como los eufemismos, la modalización, el uso de

diminutivos y los elementos prosódicos. López Rodríguez concluye que “los chismes son posibles en la medida en que se despliegan estrategias discursivas que están bajo el cuidado constante de la mitigación y que se corroboran o se modifican constantemente gracias al uso de las estrategias interactivas” (Conclusiones, párr. 8). La autora analiza a profundidad el chisme como interacción oral, no como interacción escrita presente en la narrativa literaria, lo cual se pretende hacer en el presente proyecto.

Blanco Ramos (2020), en “Aquel romance bárbaro: el chisme como imaginario popular” en la novela *Una de dos*, de Daniel Sada, para la revista *Humanidades*, analiza la construcción del imaginario del chisme dentro del lenguaje narrativo de un escritor mexicano. En su análisis, el autor explica que, en la narración, el chisme se manifiesta por medio del relato de comportamientos probatorios descritos de manera peyorativa. Además, también indica que, desde el análisis realizado a la narrativa del autor mexicano, el chisme se da desde la deconstrucción de lo hegemónico del discurso, lo cual incluye la oralidad cotidiana, las peculiaridades lingüísticas, las prácticas populares, los hábitos, los valores y las creencias. El autor nos da una idea de cómo realizar un análisis del chisme presente en la narrativa literaria en español, sin embargo; no aborda las diferencias que pueden existir entre los idiomas español e inglés con respecto a este fenómeno cultural.

Traducción del género femenino

Simon (1996), en *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, profundiza en el tema del género gramatical en la traducción. La autora advierte que el género no suele ser un elemento significativo para la traducción debido a que las categorías gramaticales forman parte de las normas estructurales de una lengua. No obstante, se deja en evidencia que el género gramatical puede contener significado en ciertos casos (pp. 16-17). También, Simon afirma que aunque en inglés se utilicen pronombres “neutros”, estos

implícitamente se refieren a un género en específico y que este suele ser el masculino (p. 18). Por medio de referencias hacia otros autores, Simon deja entrever el descontento con cómo se ha manejado la traducción del género gramatical a lo largo de los años y la importancia que esto implica para el feminismo.

Sapriisa Vargas (2016), en su trabajo de investigación para aspirar al grado de Magíster en Traducción Inglés-Español, *El Lenguaje inclusivo; Análisis de estrategias de traducción sobre el género gramatical en la traducción al inglés de El país bajo mi piel de Gioconda Belli*, analiza las estrategias de traducción sobre el género gramatical en la obra *El país bajo mi piel* y su traducción *The Country Under my Skin*. Para dicho análisis, Sapriisa Varas seleccionó varias muestras en las que se evidenciaba la problemática del género gramatical en la traducción y dio respuesta a las dudas acerca de las decisiones tomadas y de cómo estas afectan al mensaje del texto original. De las estrategias traductológicas mencionadas por la autora están las siguientes: omisión, adición, traducción comunicativa y el uso de términos en formato itálicas.

Investigar acerca de las estrategias o perspectivas con las que se ha abordado la traducción del género femenino resulta pertinente para la traducción de *Una mujer insignificante*, ya que se trata de un libro dirigido a las mujeres (las lectoras), lo cual es un factor relevante para su traducción al inglés.

Traducción inversa (español-inglés)

Con respecto a la traducción inversa, Posey (2009), en su artículo “The Advantages of L2 Translation in *The Cat in the Hat: A Closer Look at Translation Directionality*”, examina las ventajas que traducir a la segunda lengua (L2) le proporciona al traductor. De acuerdo con la autora, el traductor que traduce a su L2 es más competente en cuanto a aspectos culturales; es menos probable que interprete de manera errónea el TO; y es más cuidadoso a la hora de utilizar la LM en sus traducciones (pp. 91-92). Con esto, la autora defiende el hecho de que los

programas universitarios que forman a profesionales de la traducción deben brindarles a sus estudiantes estrategias y técnicas que les ayuden a dominar la sintáctica y semántica de la L2. Posey no niega el hecho de que la traducción inversa puede resultar más desafiante para el traductor; sin embargo, señala que, igual que un escritor buscando mejorar sus habilidades, el traductor puede hacer lo mismo con sus habilidades de traducción a la L2 (p. 90).

Según Pokorn (2011), en “Directionality”, publicado en *Handbook of Translation Studies, Volume 2*, durante muchos años la traducción inversa ha sido considerada inferior debido al supuesto de que el traductor puede dominar únicamente su lengua materna (L1) por lo que debería traducir solo en esa dirección (p. 37). Aun así, estas suposiciones se han puesto en duda ya que el ser hablante nativo de una lengua no garantiza una mejor calidad en la traducción; además se ha demostrado la necesidad de la traducción inversa en diferentes mercados, así como su relevancia en la enseñanza de la traducción, por lo que la marginalidad de esta práctica ha disminuido (pp. 38-39).

Schwieter y Ferreira (2017), en su artículo “Directionality in Translation” publicado en *The Handbook of Translation and Cognition*, proponen que cuando se habla de direccionalidad en traducción no solo hablamos de idioma y cultura, sino que también deben tenerse en cuenta la lingüística y las variaciones dialécticas dentro de un mismo idioma. Con este argumento se refuerza la idea de que un hablante nativo de una lengua en específico puede que no sea el más indicado para traducir hacia su propia lengua si este no conoce acerca de las variedades de esta, lo cual pone en duda los supuestos acerca de la práctica de traducción inversa y el tabú que se le atribuye (p. 96).

En el documento “Estudio exploratorio-descriptivo sobre la direccionalidad en traducción: perspectiva del traductor en formación”, elaborado por Horcas Rufían (2020), se declara que “las actitudes hacia la direccionalidad en traducción varían dependiendo de varios

factores como la cultura de traducción” (p. 348). En el caso de España, donde el estudio fue llevado a cabo, la traducción inversa (A-B) es marginalizada en la formación de traductores. Para este estudio participaron seis traductores en formación y algunas de sus perspectivas acerca de la traducción inversa son que las clases en las que se enfatiza esta práctica resultan beneficiosas para su aprendizaje de la lengua B y que un equilibrio entre las clases B-A (traducción directa) y A-B, les permitiría adquirir una competencia traductora “plena y suficiente” para su incorporación en el mercado laboral y para enfrentar los retos que se les presenten en los procesos traductológicos (p. 349).

Con esto podemos entender que la traducción inversa significa un proceso que posibilita al traductor ampliar sus conocimientos y mejorar su competencia traductora en general. Sin duda, a pesar de las opiniones negativas acerca de esta práctica que han surgido a lo largo del tiempo, es evidente que un traductor puede traducir desde y hacia su L2 siempre y cuando tenga los conocimientos y sensibilidad necesarios para generar textos naturales y adecuados para el público meta.

Con respecto a la traducción de la interpelación al lector, los estudios consultados describen este recurso narrativo, su origen y su utilidad; sin embargo, no la exploran desde la traductología, tomando en cuenta los cambios que esta puede sufrir de un idioma a otro. En los estudios mencionados acerca del chisme, este tema se aborda desde la interacción oral y la literatura, más no desde la traducción; el chisme puede variar en diferentes culturas e idiomas, por lo que analizarlo en la traducción resulta pertinente. Por su parte, la traducción del género femenino ha sido un tema relevante para la traducción feminista desde hace décadas; tener una perspectiva clara de cómo esto ha influido en la traducción y en la sociedad en general permite generar traducciones que se adapten a las generaciones actuales y que den voz a escritoras que quieran dar un mensaje feminista con sus obras. Por último, desde la visión de los autores

mencionados, la traducción inversa ha sido un tema controvertido, ya que se pone en duda la capacidad de traducción hacia la L2; aun así, es una práctica que trae beneficios al traductor en formación, ampliando sus habilidades traductológicas.

Tomar en cuenta estudios acerca de la interpelación al lector, el chisme, la traducción del género gramatical y la traducción inversa es necesario para el presente estudio ya que, al pretender analizar la interpelación al lector y el chisme presentes en la traducción de la obra *Una mujer insignificante*, es pertinente conocer acerca de cómo estos elementos han sido analizados anteriormente y qué vacíos han quedado con respecto a ellos. Por otro lado, tener en cuenta estudios relacionados a la traducción del género gramatical y a la traducción inversa permite crear consciencia de la traducción de la obra ya mencionada, que originalmente fue escrita en español, ya que esta cuenta con géneros gramaticales que se deben expresar en el texto traducido para mayor fidelidad al efecto y al mensaje del TO.

Capítulo 3. Marco teórico

Este capítulo tiene como objetivo fundamentar teóricamente las decisiones de traducción tomadas en el trabajo, proporcionando un sustento conceptual que permita posteriormente analizar y justificar las estrategias empleadas para conservar la cercanía con la lectora en la traducción inversa de *Una mujer insignificante* por medio de la traducción del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras. Las teorías seleccionadas (*Skopos*, feminismo y traducción, y sociolingüística) ayudan a abordar los elementos del chisme e interpelación a la lectora desde perspectivas funcionales, de género y socioculturales.

Las principales fuentes consultadas con respecto a las teorías de traducción incluyen los siguientes libros: *Introducing translation studies: Theories and applications*, de Jeremy Munday (2008), *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, de Christiane Nord (2014), *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, de Sherry Simon (1996), y *Discourse and the Translator*, de Basil Hatim e Ian Mason (1990). Estas obras aportan recursos para analizar la traducción desde enfoques funcionalistas, feministas y sociolingüísticos.

En este marco teórico se contextualizan las teorías, se detallan sus postulados clave, se explica su relevancia para el estudio y, además, se exploran los conceptos de chisme y de interpelación al lector. Se estructura en torno a tres enfoques fundamentales para el análisis traductológico: la teoría *Skopos*, los estudios feministas de traducción y la perspectiva sociolingüística aplicada a la traducción. Estos enfoques permiten analizar y justificar las decisiones de traducción tomadas para conservar la cercanía con la lectora en la versión en inglés de *Una mujer insignificante*, particularmente en lo que respecta a los recursos de chisme e interpelación a las lectoras como estrategia narrativa.

La teoría *Skopos*, desarrollada por Hans J. Vermeer en el marco del funcionalismo alemán durante la década de 1980, postula que el propósito (*skopos*) de la traducción determina las estrategias a emplear. Este enfoque surge como reacción contra los modelos lingüísticos tradicionales que priorizaban la equivalencia formal, proponiendo en cambio que la adecuación al texto meta debe prevalecer sobre la fidelidad literal al TO. Dentro de la escuela funcionalista, la teoría *Skopos* se complementa con otros modelos como el análisis textual de Christiane Nord, que se centra en comprender el TO y su contexto antes de traducirlo, y la teoría de la acción traslativa de Justa Holz-Mänttari, cuyo propósito es transferir mensajes a través de barreras culturales y del lenguaje mediante el análisis de los roles de los participantes y las condiciones situacionales, ofreciendo un marco flexible para abordar traducciones donde la función comunicativa es prioritaria (Munday, 2008; Nord, 2014).

Por su parte, los estudios feministas de traducción, representados por teóricas como Sherry Simon (1996) y Luise von Flotow (1996), examinan cómo las estructuras de género influyen en los procesos de traducción y recepción textual. Vinculados al giro cultural en los Estudios de Traducción, estos trabajos critican la tradicional invisibilización de la mujer tanto como autora como sujeto traducido, y proponen estrategias de re-escritura que subviertan el lenguaje sexista o recuperen voces femeninas marginadas (Simon, 1996). Este enfoque resulta particularmente relevante para analizar la interpelación directa a las lectoras en la novela de Murillo, donde el uso del discurso femenino construye una relación de complicidad género-específica.

Finalmente, la perspectiva sociolingüística de la traducción, desarrollada por autores como Basil Hatim e Ian Mason (1990), en la que se subraya la importancia del traductor y de su función como mediador entre dos culturas, proporciona recursos para analizar cómo factores sociales como el género, la clase o la ideología se manifiestan en las elecciones traductológicas

(Hatim y Mason, 1990). Este marco es especialmente útil para abordar el chisme como fenómeno discursivo, ya que permite examinar sus rasgos de oralidad, sus códigos culturales implícitos y su función pragmática dentro de la narración. La sociolingüística aplicada a la traducción se relaciona estrechamente con la pragmática traductológica y la teoría del discurso, ofreciendo un enfoque multidimensional para textos con marcados rasgos de variación lingüística (Hatim y Mason, 1990).

La selección de estas tres perspectivas teóricas se justifica por su complementariedad en el análisis del caso de estudio. La teoría *Skopos* proporciona el marco general para priorizar la función comunicativa de mantener la cercanía con la lectora, permitiendo desviaciones controladas del TO cuando sea necesario. El feminismo en traducción ofrece los recursos conceptuales para analizar y preservar la dimensión de género en las estrategias de interpelación, evitando la neutralización de su carga de género. Por último, la sociolingüística permite abordar el chisme como acto de habla complejo, donde aspectos como el registro coloquial, la deixis y la intención pragmática requieren soluciones creativas en la lengua meta.

Con respecto al concepto de chisme, según la Real Academia Española (29 de mayo de 2025), este es una “Noticia verdadera o falsa, o comentario con que generalmente se pretende indisponer a unas personas con otras o se murmura de alguna”. También Epstein (2011), en *Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit*, menciona que el chisme suele ser visto como falso y lleno de malicia; aun así, asegura que puede ser una verdad seductora; con esto se refiere a que el chisme es atractivo, encantador y a veces ilusorio. Según el autor, aunque el chisme puede llegar a ser malo o incluso vicioso, también puede ser una forma de valioso entretenimiento (p. xiii). Por otra parte, en su columna, “El chisme es una herramienta social”, para el periódico digital *Delfino*, Robleto Gutiérrez (2021) hace referencia al libro *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (1998), de Robin Dunbar, en el que se explora el chisme como un recurso social.

Robleto expresa que el chisme es una forma de entretenimiento para el ser humano en la que se puede llegar a establecer intimidad para así crear alianzas y otros vínculos (párr. 3). Esto último nos permite entender cómo al utilizar el chisme en una obra literaria se puede producir ese efecto de cercanía con el autor.

La interpelación al lector, o *authorial intrusion* en inglés, es un recurso literario en el que el autor se dirige directamente a sus lectores, interrumpiendo así el curso natural del texto. Se rompe lo que se conoce como la “cuarta pared” al ofrecer comentarios, explicaciones u opiniones personales. Esta técnica suele usarse para proporcionar contexto adicional o clarificaciones, lo cual crea una sensación de intimidad y conexión con el lector (Literary Devices, 2018).

Esta articulación teórica no solo proporciona un sustento conceptual para las elecciones traductológicas, sino que también establece un marco coherente para analizar el TM resultante. Al evaluar la traducción final, se podrá examinar sistemáticamente cómo cada decisión responde a los principios de adecuación funcional (*Skopos*), preservación de la perspectiva de género (feminismo) y reproducción de rasgos sociolingüísticos (sociolingüística), garantizando así una aproximación multidimensional al desafío de traducir la voz narrativa particular de Catalina Murillo.

Capítulo 4. Marco metodológico

En este capítulo se presentan en primer lugar, la *etapa traductiva*, en la cual se detallan los procedimientos para la traducción de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, desde su selección como texto a traducir, hasta las diferentes fases para su traducción, revisión y edición. Y, en segundo lugar, la *etapa investigativa*, en la que se especifican el método de investigación, el tipo de estudio, la perspectiva para el análisis, la muestra a analizar y los procedimientos generales para su análisis.

Etapa traductiva

El primer paso para iniciar con la etapa traductiva de esta memoria de traducción fue seleccionar el texto a traducir. Los requerimientos para la selección del texto fueron los siguientes: que fuera un texto que no hubiera sido traducido anteriormente, que tuviera una extensión mínima de 70 páginas, y que tuviera relevancia de índole cultural, científica, artística-literaria, histórica, política o filosófica. Por cuestiones de preferencia personal, se optó por la selección de un texto literario en español y de una autora costarricense; y se hizo una investigación inicial acerca de autoras literarias costarricenses y de sus obras publicadas.

Una vez se consideró la opción de traducir la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, publicada en 2024, de la costarricense Catalina Murillo, se procedió a contactar a la autora por medio de su correo electrónico, disponible en su página web. Luego de comentarle a la autora los aspectos generales de la memoria de traducción y de la traducción por realizar, la autora se mostró anuente a colaborar para llevar a cabo la traducción de su novela. Para efectos legales, la autora firmó una nota de autorización que dejara en claro que daba su consentimiento para que se realizara dicha traducción, la cual no sería utilizada con fines lucrativos a menos de que ambas partes, autora y traductora, así lo decidieran.

Antes de iniciar con la traducción del TO, se realizó una lectura inicial. En esta lectura se prestó atención a los posibles retos traductológicos, se buscaron en el *Diccionario de la lengua española* los términos desconocidos, y se marcaron las frases idiomáticas a las cuales se les tendría que buscar un equivalente en inglés. Luego, después de haber leído la totalidad de la novela y de haberla comprendido de inicio a fin, se empezó a realizar, de manera manual, el primer borrador de la traducción. Las fuentes que se consultaron para la traducción fueron diccionarios monolingües (*Diccionario de la lengua española* de la Real Academia Española, 2025, y *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2025), diccionarios bilingües (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2025, *Linguee*, 2025, y *Word Reference.com*, 2025), búsquedas en Google para ver el uso de ciertos términos en contexto, herramientas como Google Books Ngram Viewer (2025), para decidir entre términos similares, y páginas web como *Learn English Today* (2025), para consultar modismos del idioma inglés.

Mientras se iba traduciendo la novela, la profesora tutora de esta memoria de traducción y un estudiante asistente hablante nativo del inglés, que la misma maestría se encargó de contactar, la iban revisando por segmentos con el fin de aportar su retroalimentación, sugerir cambios pertinentes para que esta se percibiera como natural en la lengua meta y para asegurarse de que ninguna parte de la novela hubiera sido omitida. Las recomendaciones de estas dos personas facilitaron el proceso de valoración y aceptación de cambios, el cual también se iba realizando por segmentos a la vez que se seguía con el resto de la traducción.

Una vez que toda la novela fue traducida al inglés y se hubieran realizado todos los cambios sugeridos por los revisores, esta se dejó reposar por un par de meses. Cuando hubo pasado el tiempo pertinente, se hizo una revisión personal de la traducción: se iban leyendo el TO y el TT al mismo tiempo. Además, se hicieron cambios tomando en cuenta los dos temas de análisis para la memoria de traducción: el chisme y la interpelación a las lectoras. Una vez

identificados estos recursos narrativos dentro de ambos textos, se prestó suma atención a las estrategias utilizadas para su traducción, lo cual sería fundamental para la parte investigativa de esta memoria de traducción.

Etapa investigativa

Haciendo referencia al objetivo general de esta memoria de traducción, para la etapa investigativa resultaba pertinente identificar la interpelación a las lectoras y los elementos del chisme presentes en el TO para así utilizar estrategias de traducción pertinentes para que la cercanía con la lectora se mantuviera en el TT. La interpelación al lector y el chisme como recursos discursivos en la literatura fueron consultados en diferentes fuentes bibliográficas para entender cómo y desde qué áreas del conocimiento fueron abordados dichos temas.

Esta es una investigación cualitativa ya que se basa en el análisis de los segmentos de una novela en la cual se incluyen elementos de chisme y se interpela a las lectoras, con el fin de cumplir con el propósito de la traducción, mantener la cercanía con la lectora en el TT. Este método también fue seleccionado ya que toma en cuenta el análisis a profundidad de la literatura, lo cual fue fundamental en este trabajo para entender cómo se habían abordado los temas a analizar, identificar los vacíos relacionados con estos y abordarlos para generar un aporte al campo traductológico.

El análisis realizado tiene una intención descriptiva, ya que se describen los procedimientos y las estrategias utilizadas para la traducción de la novela, específicamente del chisme y de la interpelación a la lectora. Este estudio no busca convertirse en una guía que deba seguirse para casos similares, sino aportar ideas o ejemplos específicos de cómo se mantuvo la cercanía con la lectora, consecuencia del chisme y de la interpelación a la lectora en la traducción de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*.

Para la selección de segmentos del TO por analizar, se llevó a cabo una lectura detenida del TO junto con su traducción al inglés para identificar los ejemplos que formarían parte de las tablas. Dichos ejemplos se marcaron en ambos textos con el fin de encontrarlos con mayor facilidad y consultarlos en las distintas ocasiones en que esto fuera necesario.

El primer paso que se realizó para el análisis fue la observación o identificación de los segmentos del TO en los que se presentaran los temas de estudio. Luego, se realizó una comparación entre la versión original y la versión traducida de dichos segmentos, y se valoró hasta qué punto, por medio de la traducción de la interpelación a las lectoras y del chisme, se mantuvo la cercanía con la lectora.

Los análisis fueron realizados tomando en cuenta las referencias bibliográficas que se logró localizar con respecto a los temas de investigación. Se encontraron similitudes y diferencias entre los segmentos, se clasificaron de acuerdo con ellas y se explicaron las decisiones tomadas para la traducción.

Para evaluar la validez y fiabilidad de las traducciones, además de la perspectiva personal como una traductora en formación, se tomó en cuenta la opinión de la lectora de esta memoria de investigación, una traductora experimentada y profesora de la Maestría en Traducción Inglés-Español, con respecto a la interrogante realizada para cada uno de los segmentos en que se tradujeron los elementos del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras: ¿Se mantiene o se neutraliza la cercanía con la lectora en la traducción?

En este capítulo se han presentado las diferentes etapas de la traducción y del análisis, dejando así en claro las bases para los siguientes capítulos de análisis y buscando dejar aquí plasmado el procedimiento seguido que podría servir de apoyo para futuras memorias de traducción.

Capítulo 5. Análisis de la traducción de la interpelación a las lectoras

En la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, Catalina Murillo hace uso de la interpelación a las lectoras mediante la voz de la narradora con el fin de crear cercanía con sus lectoras. En otras palabras, la autora les habla directamente a sus “ocupadas lectoras” como si fueran parte de la novela misma; da la sensación de que la narradora le cuenta la historia de su madre a sus amigas. Precisamente, según la autora, esta fue su intención al utilizar la interpelación a la lectora. Se analiza tal aspecto en la traducción elaborada.

Como se expondrá más adelante, en esta novela la autora utiliza la interpelación a las lectoras de diferentes formas. Algunas veces la autora intuye lo que sus lectoras están pensando, utiliza el modo imperativo para transportarlas a algún escenario, para retarlas o para darles órdenes, les hace preguntas, les presenta a nuevos personajes, les hace saber que ella es la narradora de la historia y se refiere a ellas como, por ejemplo, “mis ocupadas lectoras”. Categorizar cada una de las maneras en las que la autora interpela a sus lectoras resulta una labor un tanto complicada debido a la gran variedad de posibilidades en las que este recurso se puede presentar. Esto quiere decir que la traducción de dichas interpelaciones puede variar dependiendo de la sensibilidad del traductor y de la intención que este interprete con respecto a esta interacción entre el autor y el lector del TO.

Varios autores se han referido a este recurso utilizado en la narrativa. Dawson (2016) señala que la interpelación al lector es una interrupción a la narrativa y que esta afecta en diferentes medidas a la ilusión de ficcionalidad (p. 145). Hill (2017) señala que la interpelación al lector ocurre cuando el autor interrumpe el curso de una historia para brindarle sus pensamientos al lector (p. 106). Marcos (2019) expone que “Este recurso se emplea cuando el narrador introduce expresiones como: «Querido lector...», «Podremos ver...», «Tal y como pueden (podéis, puedes) comprobar...», «El lector quizás piense...», etc.” (párr. 2).

Ahora, para la traducción de *Una mujer insignificante*, se quiso replicar el efecto de cercanía con la narradora por medio de la interpelación a las lectoras, por lo que se tomó en cuenta la teoría de *Skopos* de Hans J. Vermeer. En su teoría, Vermeer nos dice que el propósito de un texto es fundamental y que la traducción debe ser adecuada a este, por lo que se deben considerar las diferencias culturales entre el TO y el TT (2004). Como ya fue mencionado, la autora utilizó dicho recurso narrativo con el fin de crear cercanía con sus lectoras, lo cual sería la función comunicativa específica en el TO. El propósito de la traducción fue mantener esa cercanía tomando en cuenta las diferencias culturales entre el lector original y el lector meta.

Además de la teoría *Skopos*, se consideraron las ideas con respecto a la traducción feminista, porque la autora se centra en interpelar a sus lectoras mujeres, por lo que entra en juego la traducción del género gramatical. Según Simon (1996), la traducción feminista busca identificar y criticar los conceptos que dejan a la mujer y a la traducción en lo más bajo de la escalera social y literaria (p. 1). En el capítulo “Challenging Grammatical Gender” de *Gender in Translation*, Simon habla acerca de la traducción del género gramatical y de cómo diferentes traductoras han abordado el tema, lo cual resultó relevante para la traducción de *Una mujer insignificante*.

Con el fin de analizar la interpelación a las lectoras presente a lo largo de la novela, primero se seleccionaron todos los segmentos en los que la autora hizo uso de esta. Seguidamente se identificaron esos mismos segmentos en la traducción y se clasificaron en seis diferentes categorías. Después de esto, se determinó si necesitaban algún ajuste para cumplir con el propósito de la traducción: generar cercanía con la narradora tomando en cuenta el contexto del lector meta y respetando el género gramatical del TO.

En total, se identificó un total de cincuenta segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante* en los que se hace uso de la interpelación a las lectoras. Cada uno de estos

segmentos cuenta con su traducción al inglés y se clasifica según su tipo o forma. Las interpelaciones al lector presentes en la novela dejan entrever que la narradora sabe que está narrando una historia. El tipo de interpelación que ocurre en la novela, según Dawson (2016), sería el autor dirigiéndose directamente hacia el lector. Se identificó que los cincuenta segmentos que forman parte de este análisis tienen una función apelativa o conativa. Según Bühler (como se citó en Niño Rojas, 2013), la función apelativa es aquella en la que se busca influir en las actitudes, pensamientos y conductas del interlocutor. Esta puede incluir órdenes, encuestas, razonamientos, solicitudes, deseos reiterativos o solicitudes con emotividad (p. 132). Según Jacobson (1973, como se citó en Niño Rojas, 2013); la función apelativa busca obtener una reacción por parte del destinatario del mensaje, en otras palabras, trata de influir en su conducta (p. 133).

Los cincuenta segmentos que incluyen interpelaciones fueron divididos en seis categorías dependiendo de su forma o tipo, esto con el fin de encontrar algún patrón en la traducción al inglés. La Tabla 1 consiste en un grupo de segmentos con intenciones variadas que no caben dentro de las otras categorías. La Tabla 2 contiene segmentos en modo imperativo. La Tabla 3 presenta segmentos interrogativos. La Tabla 4 tiene segmentos en los que se introducen o presentan nuevos personajes. La Tabla 5 consiste en los segmentos en los que la narradora explicita su función como narradora de la novela. Por último, la Tabla 6 se conforma de los segmentos en los que la narradora se menciona a sus lectoras.

La Tabla 1 muestra los segmentos de la novela que tienen intenciones variadas. Para el segmento 1, “espero no se decepcionen” se tradujo como “I hope you don’t get disappointed”, en este caso ocurre una modulación de verbo (“decepcionen”) por adjetivo (“disappointed”) y se agrega el sujeto en la oración para respetar las reglas gramaticales del inglés. La intención identificada de este segmento, la cual era esperar cierta respuesta por parte del lector, se

mantiene sin problemas. Para el segmento 2, “ya se imagine quién” se tradujo como “you might know who”, este segmento se coloca hasta el final de la oración en español y para que tuviera un orden más adecuado en la oración en la traducción se colocó antes de “fluttered into home”. La intención de este segmento, querer asumir lo que piensa el lector, se mantiene.

En el segmento 3, “tal cual lo oyen” se tradujo como “as you hear”, se hace omisión del pronombre “lo” ya que queda implícito y se integra el uso del sujeto en inglés, además, se usa un equivalente para traducir “tal cual”. En el segmento 4, “con decirles” se tradujo como “let me tell you”, aquí se agrega “let me” amplificando el verbo para que suene más natural que una traducción más literal como “by telling you” que pierde la intención de relatar un dato cómico e inesperado.

Para el segmento 5, “aunque no lo crean” se traduce como “can you believe it?”, se utiliza una equivalencia del modismo con el fin de que se mantenga la intención de señalar un dato como real y que este suene natural en la lengua meta. En este caso, se puede señalar que la traducción, al incluir una pregunta retórica, se vuelve un poco más personal ya que se toma en cuenta al lector. Para el segmento 6, “si me entienden” se traduce como “if you know what I mean”, se utiliza igualmente una equivalencia que mantiene el tono coloquial, el efecto de complicidad y la intención de comprensión entre la narradora y el lector.

En el segmento 7, “para que vean que no exagero” se tradujo como “just for you to see that I’m not exaggerating”, se refuerza la apelación con la inclusión de “just”, se agregan los pronombres en inglés, y el tiempo verbal cambia de presente (“no exagero”) a presente continuo (“I’m not exaggerating”) lo cual agrega fluidez en la traducción. La intención, dar pruebas de algo, se mantiene. En el segmento 8 se agrega el pronombre (“You”) y el pronombre de objeto (“her”), además, con el fin de volver la lectura un poco más comprensible para el lector se utiliza una modulación de una visión figurada a una directa, en lugar de “verla”, el verbo cambia por

“imaginarla”. La intención, intentar poner la imagen del personaje en la mente del lector, se mantiene.

Para el segmento 9, “espero no me hayan imaginado” se traduce como “I hope you haven’t imagined me”, se agrega el sujeto, se omite el verbo reflexivo (me), se mantiene el tiempo verbal (pretérito perfecto), y se agrega el pronombre de objeto (“me”). La intención de esperar algo del lector se mantiene en la traducción. Para el segmento 10, “como pueden comprobar” se traduce como “as you can confirm”, se agrega el pronombre (“you”) y se utiliza una equivalencia para el verbo “comprobar”. En este caso, la intención de probar un punto se mantiene también.

En el segmento 11, “Tendrían que ver ustedes” se tradujo como “You would have to see”, el sujeto de este segmento se coloca al inicio en la traducción para así respetar el orden de las oraciones en inglés. La intención de este segmento, que invita a visualizar una escena, se mantiene. En el segmento 12, “ya me entienden” se tradujo como “You know”. Este modismo se traduce con una equivalencia idiomática y se coloca al inicio y no al final del segmento en la traducción para asegurar la comprensión del lector. La intención, asumir que el lector entiende lo que se le dice, se conserva.

Para el segmento 13, la traducción agrega los pronombres y se hacen ajustes lingüísticos como la sustitución del verbo “tener” por “estar”. La intención de darle la razón al lector se mantiene. Para el segmento 14, “lo sé yo y ahora lo saben ustedes” se traduce como “I know it and now you do too”, el pronombre “yo” se coloca al inicio en inglés y “lo saben” se omite y se sustituye por “too” para evitar la repetición innecesaria en inglés. La intención de hacer saber un dato personal de la narradora al lector se conserva.

Por último, en el segmento 15, “Si ustedes tienen plantas, habrán notado que” se tradujo como “If you have plants, you may have noticed that” se traduce de manera bastante literal a

excepción de que se agrega el sujeto “you” después de la coma, una vez más para respetar la estructura de las oraciones en inglés. La intención de este segmento, hacer una analogía para asegurar la comprensión del lector, se conserva en la traducción.

Tabla 1

Interpelación a las lectoras (intenciones variadas)

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	Porque — <i>espero no se decepcionen</i> — era doctor pero en Filosofía. (p. 12)	Because— <i>I hope you don't get disappointed</i> — he was a doctor, but of philosophy. (p. 4)
2	Más cartas, cual blancas pajaritas, volaron para allá y para acá, hasta que un día, detrás de ellas, entró en nuestro domicilio revoloteando <i>ya se imaginan quién</i> . (p. 16)	Like little white birds, more letters flew from here to there, until one day, after them, <i>you might know who</i> fluttered into home. (p. 7)
3	Cállese, le dice, <i>tal cual lo oyen</i> . (p. 21)	“Shut up,” he says, <i>as you hear</i> . (p. 10)
4	... <i>con decirles</i> que el primer día en París Gumersinda perdió el pasaporte. (p. 37)	... <i>let me tell you</i> , Gumersinda even lost her passport the first day they were in Paris. (p. 21)
5	Se aplaudía cuando las rueditas del avión tocaban pista, <i>aunque no lo crean</i> . (p. 47)	People used to clap when the little wheels of the airplane touched the runway; <i>can you believe it?</i> (p. 29)
6	Fue papá, como ya dije, quien varias veces salió a defender nuestra libertad ecuatorial, <i>si me entienden</i> . (p. 60)	It was Father, as I already said, who defended our equatorial freedom several times, <i>if you know what I mean</i> . (p. 37)
7	... como si con eso no estropeará suficiente la vida de sus seres queridos, incluyendo la del nieto por venir, se suicidó, <i>para que vean que no exagero</i> . (p. 61)	As if that alone would not quite ruin the lives of his relatives, including his future grandson, he committed suicide, <i>just for you to see that I'm not exaggerating</i> . (p. 38)
8	Tendrían que verla. (p. 68)	You would have to picture her. (p. 42)
9	He perdido la cronología, lo cual es comprensible, <i>espero no me hayan imaginado</i> llevando una bitácora. (p. 89)	I have lost the timeline, which is understandable— <i>I hope you haven't imagined me</i> having a logbook. (p. 57)
10	El tema Jotapé desapareció, al punto de que, <i>como pueden comprobar</i> , ni se le nombraba. (p. 120)	The JP issue disappeared, to the point that, <i>as you can confirm</i> , he wasn't even mentioned. (p. 78)
11	<i>Tendrían que ver ustedes</i> la manera, entre la obscenidad y el martirio, con que se entregó Águeda al doctor Fulanetto de Tal... (p. 132)	<i>You would have to see</i> the way, between obscenity and distress, in which Águeda gave herself to Doctor So And So... (p. 86)

12	Enloquecer de ambulancia, de inyección, <i>ya me entienden.</i> (p. 133)	<i>You know, going wild ambulance and shot style.</i> (p. 87)
13	Si eso están pensando, tienen razón... (p. 131)	If that's what you are thinking, you are right... (p. 87)
14	Exagerada siempre he sido, <i>lo sé yo y ahora lo saben ustedes</i> , pero esa sobrevida de Águeda me resulta una metáfora espeluznante de lo que llamamos progreso. (p. 144)	I always exaggerate everything, <i>I know it and now you do too</i> , but Águeda's survival seemed to me like a horrifying metaphor about what we call progress. (p. 94)
15	<i>Si ustedes tienen plantas, habrán notado que las matitas se ponen lindas bajo las miradas lindas y apenas si sobreviven bajo miradas como la de mi abuela.</i> (p. 144)	<i>If you have plants, you may have noticed that they get pretty under pretty glances and barely survive under glances like my grandmother's.</i> (p. 95)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

Los segmentos de la Tabla 2 destacan por el uso de estructuras imperativas o exhortativas que interpelan directamente a las lectoras, ya sea para guiar su atención o para decirles qué hacer a lo largo de la lectura. En el segmento 1, el pronombre de objeto se pasa hasta el final en la traducción para que este sea gramaticalmente correcto y se mantiene la estructura en imperativo. En el segmento 2, los verbos se mantienen en imperativo en la traducción y se agrega “do” al inicio para reforzar el efecto imperativo, además, la traducción captura el tono de invitación teatral.

Para el segmento 3, “no vayan a imaginar” se traduce como “don't dare to imagine”, se añade un matiz de desafío más fuerte que el original y el imperativo se mantiene. Para el segmento 4, “no vayan a creer” se traduce como “do not think for a moment”, se mantiene la advertencia presente en el original al añadir “for a moment” y el imperativo se mantiene. Para el segmento 5, el plural en primera persona del original se mantiene mediante el uso de “Let's” y el imperativo se conserva. Para el segmento 6, los verbos en imperativo se mantienen en la traducción.

En el segmento 7, el verbo “Vean” se tradujo como “See”, en este caso, aunque el imperativo se conserva este pierde el plural explícito que se logra en español. En el segmento 8, “volvamos” se tradujo utilizando una modulación de una visión figurada a una direct como “let’s keep up”, no se utilizó una traducción más literal como “let’s go back” para que se lograra entender que a lo que se vuelve es al tema del hotel y no al hotel en sí. Una vez más se añade “let’s” para conservar la primera persona en plural y se mantiene el imperativo. Lo mismo sucede con el segmento 9, “recordemos” se tradujo como “let’s remember”.

Para el segmento 10 se mantiene el imperativo del original aunque se pierde el plural explícito del español. Para el segmento 11, “díganme si no” se traduce como “tell me if I’m wrong”, se mantiene el verbo imperativo, se utiliza una equivalencia idiomática ya que ambas frases piden confirmación al lector y en inglés se añade “I’m wrong” para mayor claridad. Como se ha percibido en otros segmentos, en este también se pierde el plural explícito que se logra en el original. Para el segmento 12, “No nos engañemos” se traduce como “Let’s not fool ourselves”, se añade una vez más el “Let’s” para conservar la primera persona en plural y se mantiene el verbo imperativo.

En el segmento 13, “no me lo nieguen” se tradujo como “don’t deny it”, se mantiene el imperativo y se omite el pronombre personal “me” que en este caso se percibió como innecesario para la traducción. En el segmento 14, el verbo en imperativo se conserva en la traducción aunque se pierde el plural explícito en este. En el segmento 15, “adivinen” se tradujo como “guess what”, se conserva el imperativo y se logra mantener el tono coloquial por medio de la equivalencia idiomática que añade “what”; esta es una fórmula común en inglés lo cual le aporta naturalidad a la traducción.

Para el segmento 16, “Lean bien” se traduce como “Read carefully”, en este caso el adverbio “bien” se cambia por “carefully”, una opción más natural que “Read well”. El imperativo se mantiene, pero el plural se pierde debido a que no es una diferenciación que se hace en los verbos en plural en inglés. Para el segmento 17, el verbo en imperativo se traduce de manera literal, pero se pierde el plural explícito como sucede con los demás segmentos.

De estos segmentos se puede concluir que los imperativos directos se traducen de forma literal para mantener su fuerza apelativa y que el plural explícito en estos verbos se pierde debido a que en inglés esta diferencia no se marca. Se destaca el uso de “Let’s” en aquellos imperativos en los que la narradora se incluye a sí misma. También, en algunos casos se usan equivalentes idiomáticos según el caso para aportar naturalidad o se agregan ciertas fórmulas para agregar fuerza al imperativo. En general, la traducción logra mantener el carácter conversacional y apelativo de la narradora. Las adaptaciones son mínimas y responden a diferencias naturales entre ambos idiomas.

Tabla 2

Interpelación a las lectoras (en forma imperativa)

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	... a mí no me pregunten... (p. 14)	... don't ask me. (p. 6)
2	... <i>pasen, pasen y vean, huelan, palpén y escuchen</i> los crujidos del silencio. (p. 17)	... <i>do come in, come in and look around, smell, feel, and hear</i> the creaking of silence. (p. 8)
3	<i>No vayan a imaginar</i> a Águeda agarrando las riendas de su viaje... (p. 34)	<i>Don't dare to imagine</i> Águeda taking control of her trip... (p. 19)
4	... <i>no vayan a creer</i> que me atrevo yo a consignar tanto. (p. 47)	... <i>do not think for a moment</i> that I dare to record this. (p. 29)
5	... no nos confundamos. (p. 47)	Let's not get confused. (p. 35)
6	Larán, larán. Larán, larán. <i>Escuchen</i> esos laranés con la tonadilla de la <i>Casita de la pradera</i> . <i>Visualicen</i> unos pastos en verano y	Larán, larán. Larán, larán. <i>Listen to</i> those larans with the song of the <i>Little House on the Prairie</i> . <i>Visualize</i> the summer grass and

	tres niñas de trencitas y vestidos vaporosos. (p. 62)	three girls with braids and flowing dresses. (p. 38)
7	... vean qué mala suerte. (p. 64)	See, bad luck. (p. 40)
8	Ahora, <i>volvamos</i> al hotelito amsterdamés. (p. 73)	Now, <i>let's keep up</i> with the tiny Amsterdam inn. (p. 46)
9	... <i>recordemos que</i> hacía apenas unos meses a doña Águeda la tenían sentada calladita mientras le leían la muerte de Sócrates. (p. 82)	<i>Let's remember that</i> just a few months ago, Mrs. Águeda had to be seated quietly when Socrates' death was being read. (p. 52)
10	Ríanse ahora. (p. 83)	Laugh now. (p. 53)
11	... la mejor parte del matrimonio es ver alejarse al hombre por la puerta cada mañana, <i>díganme si no</i> . (p. 89)	... the best part of marriage is watching as your man walks out through the door every morning. <i>Tell me if I'm wrong</i> . (p. 57)
12	<i>No nos engañemos</i> , es más sencillo y más llevadero el duelo por un hombre muerto que por uno que sigue vivo y peor si coleando. (p. 103)	<i>Let's not fool ourselves</i> , mourning for a dead man is easier and more bearable than for one who is alive and—worse—kicking. (p. 66)
13	La desgracia es tener que hacerse mujer, <i>no me lo nieguen</i> . (p. 118)	Becoming a woman is a misfortune, <i>don't deny it</i> . (p. 76)
14	<i>Veán</i> a madre e hija sentadas frente a frente en una mesita redonda con un mantel de colores, con sendas copas de vino. (p. 136)	<i>Look</i> , a mother and daughter are seated in front of each other on a small, round table covered with a colorful tablecloth and big cups of wine. (p. 89)
15	Me contaba que, en la pasada madrugada, a eso de las — <i>adivinen</i> — tres a. m... (p. 140)	She told me that before dawn at about— <i>guess what</i> —three a.m... (p. 92)
16	<i>Lean bien</i> , mucho me he cuidado de decir: regresar a Costa Rica. (p. 141)	<i>Read carefully</i> , I'm being careful not to write: returning to Costa Rica. (p. 92)
17	<i>Veán</i> cuán seguras estábamos de que nada de lo que había en aquel fólter tenía valor, que a la tumba se fue con ella. (p. 153)	<i>Look</i> how sure we were about that folder having nothing valuable, that it ended up in the tomb with her. (p. 100)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

Los segmentos de la Tabla 3 emplean preguntas directas o retóricas para interpelar a las lectoras, ya sea para confirmar conocimiento compartido, generar reflexión o establecer complicidad. En el segmento 1, “¿melófono, se dice?” se tradujo como “Is that how you say it?”, en este caso ocurre una adaptación idiomática, en el original existe la duda de un término y en

la versión en inglés esto se reformula como una pregunta directa al lector; se mantiene la pregunta pero se le añade claridad y el término del que se duda se añade antes de la pregunta. En el segmento 2, la pregunta se conserva, pero el verbo en plural se pierde ya que esto no es posible en inglés. Esta breve pregunta para activar el conocimiento previo del lector se posiciona al final del segmento después de mencionar el recuerdo para que se entienda que eso es lo que deben recordar.

Para el segmento 3, se utiliza una traducción literal de la pregunta con los ajustes pertinentes de los signos de interrogación como en todos los demás casos. Para el segmento 4, sucede lo mismo; “right?” es la fórmula natural en inglés para buscar acuerdo, igual que “¿cierto?” en español. Para el segmento 5, la pregunta se conserva y se hace una precisión léxica: “sign” es más específico que “gesto” en este contexto.

En el segmento 6, la traducción de la pregunta es casi literal y se conserva el plural “your moms”, clave para la complicidad generacional. En el segmento 7 podemos ver un paralelismo, la estructura en presente perfecto “Have you tried” refleja el mismo tiempo verbal del original. En el segmento 8, la traducción expande ligeramente la pregunta con “do you remember?” en lugar de solo “remember?” para generar fluidez y naturalidad.

En general, las preguntas se traducen de forma literal cuando el inglés lo permite, se hacen adaptaciones naturales y se prioriza la naturalidad en inglés. De estos segmentos traducidos se puede decir que la traducción refleja consistentemente el diálogo implícito con las lectoras, clave para el estilo confesional e irónico de la autora.

La Tabla 4 cuenta con dos segmentos de la novela, en los cuales se le presentan personajes directamente al lector, utilizando fórmulas propias de presentaciones públicas que buscan captar la atención y generar expectativa. Para ambos segmentos, sus dos versiones

Tabla 3*Interpelación a las lectoras (en forma interrogativa)*

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	... papá era ¿melófono, se dice? (p. 18)	Father was melophobic. <i>Is that how you say it?</i> (p. 8)
2	... ¿recuerdan?, murmuró en soliloquio Águeda, vestida de blanco y negro, entrando al funeral de su marido. (p. 66)	Águeda murmured a soliloquy, dressed in black and white while entering her husband's funeral. <i>Remember?</i> (p. 41)
3	Pero estas ideas hirientes me rondan poco. ¿Saben por qué? (p. 68)	But these hurtful ideas barely haunt me. <i>Do you know why?</i> (p. 43)
4	Lo importante no es la realidad, sino la verdad, ¿cierto? (p. 85)	What's important is not the reality, but the truth, <i>right?</i> (p. 54)
5	¿Conocen ese gesto de apuntar al cielo con el dedo corazón? (p. 93).	Do you know that sign of pointing to the sky with the middle finger? (p. 59)
6	¿Las mamás de ustedes también hacían eso?, eso de contarle a cada hija una versión distinta, incluso episodios distintos. (p. 103)	<i>Did your moms also do that?</i> Telling each daughter a different version, even different episodes? (p. 66)
7	¿Han probado decirle a una persona que está loca? De poco sirve, es bien sabido. (p. 112)	<i>Have you tried telling someone they're crazy?</i> It is well known that it doesn't work. (p. 73)
8	Resulta que Águeda le pidió a su hija mayor que le ayudara yendo al correo a recoger los recibos telefónicos (¿recuerdan?, llegaban en papel al apartado postal y se iban a pagar al banco)... (p. 123)	It turns out that Águeda asked her older daughter to help her by going to the post office to pick up the telephone bills (<i>do you remember?</i> One would have to pick them up at the post office and pay them at the bank)... (pp. 80-81)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

utilizan una fórmula de presentación típica de espectáculos. En inglés se refuerza la naturalidad con “please” que además añade cortesía protocolaria.

Las traducciones de estos segmentos logran mantener el tono entre formal y confidencial, conservan el efecto de complicidad con el lector y transmiten adecuadamente el carácter "escénico" de estas presentaciones. Estos pasajes funcionan como recursos metateatrales en la novela, y sus traducciones mantienen ese efecto de “puesta en escena” de los personajes ante los ojos del lector.

Tabla 4*Interpelación a las lectoras (presentación de personajes)*

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	<i>Ahora, con ustedes</i> , Gumersinda. (p. 35)	<i>And now, please welcome</i> , Gumersinda. (p. 20)
2	<i>Con ustedes</i> , Aguedita, una que nunca creí que vería, una dulce ancianita. (p. 148)	<i>Please welcome</i> , Aguedita, who I thought I would never see, a sweet old lady. (p. 97)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

Los segmentos de la Tabla 5 destacan por su metanarración explícita, donde la voz narrativa reflexiona sobre su propio acto de narrar, interpelando directamente a las lectoras. La función apelativa aquí es doble: 1) establecer complicidad y 2) enfatizar la subjetividad del relato. Los segmentos 1 y 2 explicitan el acto de narrar. En el caso del segmento 1, la traducción especifica el género de la narradora con “female narrator” y conserva la complicidad con “of yours”. En el segmento 2, se hace una adaptación idiomática. “Yours truly” captura el tono confesional y evita la literalidad forzada.

Los segmentos 3 y 4 muestran autoconciencia narrativa. Para el segmento 3, “escribo estas líneas con congoja” se traduce como “I write these lines feeling worried”, para “conjoja” se hace una transposición de sustantivo a adjetivo (“worried”) y se añade el verbo “feeling” para añadir fluidez a la traducción. Para el segmento 4, “perdón por el lugar común” se traduce como “sorry for the cliché”, el “lugar común” del que hablaba la narradora era la mirada, la cual se iluminó, siendo este un cliché para demostrar ilusión por lo que en la traducción esto se explicita para agregar mayor claridad en la traducción.

En la traducción de estos segmentos se logra mantener el diálogo con el lector y la autoconciencia narrativa. Se prioriza la naturalidad del inglés sobre el literalismo y se hace uso de la explicitación en algunos casos para hacer saber al lector que la narradora es mujer o para aclarar algún aspecto de la narración.

Tabla 5*Interpelación a las lectoras (explicitación de la narradora)*

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	<i>Pero quien les narra, de eso, no recuerda nada de nada. (p. 59)</i>	<i>But this female narrator of yours remembers nothing about it. (p. 36)</i>
2	<i>Algo así respondió esta que les narra. (p. 74)</i>	<i>Yours truly responded something like that. (p. 47)</i>
3	<i>... perdónenme la impudicia, escribo estas líneas con congoja, pero es relevante. (p. 124)</i>	<i>... excuse my shamelessness, I write these lines feeling worried, but it is relevant. (p. 81)</i>
4	<i>Su mirada se iluminó, perdón por el lugar común, es que es tal cual... (p. 149)</i>	<i>Her gaze lighted up, sorry for the cliché, but it was just like that... (p. 98)</i>

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

Por último, la Tabla 6 contiene segmentos que destacan por la mención explícita de las lectoras. La autora utiliza un tono confesional y coloquial, reforzando la relación entre la narradora y la lectora. En el segmento 1, la narradora imagina la reacción de las lectoras, creando complicidad mediante un tono irónico y académico. Para su traducción al inglés, se mantienen el posesivo y la especificidad de género. En el segmento 2, el apelativo afectivo “señoras mías”, que invita a una reflexión melancólica, se traduce de manera literal con “my ladies”.

Para el segmento 3, “Desocupadas lectoras” se traduce como “Unoccupied female readers”, una vez más se explicita el género femenino por medio de “female”. Para el segmento 4, ocurre una invocación dramática a la lectora para sumergirla en una experiencia literaria visceral, “Lectora mía” se traduce como “Female reader of mine”, se explicita el género de la misma manera como con los segmentos anteriores.

En estos cuatro segmentos, se hace explícito que la lectora es mujer, esto porque “reader” es neutro en inglés, se puede estar hablando de un hombre o de una mujer lectora, al añadir “female” este hecho se hace más evidente. Además, se mantiene la cercanía al mantenerse los posesivos en la traducción.

Tabla 6*Interpelación a las lectoras (mención a las lectoras)*

N.	Texto traducido	Texto traducido
1	Ya las puedo ver, <i>mis ocupadas lectoras</i> , entornando los ojos, más adeptas a la escuela de Aristóteles y su tesis de que el enamoramiento es un estado de estupidez transitoria. (p. 48)	I can already see you, <i>my busy female readers</i> , half-closing your eyes, supporting Aristotle's school and his thesis that being in love is a state of temporary stupidity. (p. 29)
2	Disfruten las vísperas, <i>señoras mías</i> , pues son lo único que tenemos... (p. 77)	Enjoy the eves, <i>my ladies</i> , for they are the only thing we have... (p. 48)
3	<i>Desocupadas lectoras</i> , a ustedes les consta que no soy de andar poniendo puntos de exclamación como pinceladas impresionistas... (p. 98)	<i>Unoccupied female readers</i> , you can confirm that I don't usually use exclamation marks as impressionist brush strokes... (p. 63)
4	<i>Lectora mía</i> , necesito que en este momento este libro se abra como unas grandes fauces y amenace con devorarte cruda; que levantes la mirada y no estés donde creías, ni es de noche, ni es de día, no hay suelo ni cielo; algo así, porque no puedo de otra forma explicarte lo que sentí. (pp. 111-112)	<i>Female reader of mine</i> , right now, I need this book to open up like big jaws and threaten to devour you raw; I need you to look up and not be where you thought you were, it is neither night nor day, there's no floor nor sky; something like that, because otherwise, I can't explain to you what I felt. (p. 72)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

El análisis de la traducción de la interpelación a las lectoras en *Una mujer insignificante* demuestra que esta estrategia narrativa cumple una función apelativa clave en la novela, ya que establece un diálogo cercano, íntimo y, en ocasiones, irónico con las lectoras. La autora, Catalina Murillo, utiliza este recurso para romper la cuarta pared, generando complicidad y reflexión, lo cual refuerza la crítica social y la perspectiva feminista de la obra.

En la traducción al inglés, se priorizó mantener este efecto de cercanía. Además, se consideraron los aportes de la traducción feminista, especialmente en lo relativo al género gramatical, para preservar la interpelación dirigida específicamente a las mujeres.

El estudio de los cincuenta segmentos seleccionados permitió clasificar las interpelaciones en seis categorías según su tipo: intenciones variadas, en forma imperativa, en forma interrogativa, presentación de personajes, explicitación de la narradora y mención a las

lectoras. En cada caso, se evaluaron las estrategias de traducción, observando que las estructuras imperativas se tradujeron de manera literal cuando fue posible, aunque en algunos casos se adaptaron o amplificaron para mantener la naturalidad del inglés. Las preguntas retóricas o directas se conservan y en ciertos casos se ajustó la sintaxis para mayor fluidez. Las presentaciones de personajes se tradujeron mayormente por medio de equivalencias idiomáticas, y para la metanarración se utilizó la explicitación para el género gramatical femenino. Y para las menciones directas a las lectoras también se utilizó la explicitación del género gramatical.

En términos generales, la traducción logró preservar la voz narrativa, el tono confesional y la función conativa del texto original, aunque con algunas adaptaciones necesarias debido a diferencias lingüísticas. Este análisis confirma que la interpelación a las lectoras es un recurso narrativo que está presente en *Una mujer insignificante*, y su traducción exitosa al inglés dependió de un equilibrio entre fidelidad al original y adaptación lingüística a la lengua y al contexto meta, siempre con el objetivo de mantener la conexión emocional e intelectual con las lectoras anglófonas.

Capítulo 6. Análisis de la traducción del chisme

En la novela *Una mujer insignificante* se pueden encontrar elementos narrativos relacionados con el chisme, específicamente con el chisme entre mujeres. La narradora de esta novela utiliza dichos elementos con el fin de crear cercanía con sus lectoras; una de las características principales del chisme es que genera complicidad entre sus interlocutores. Debido a las diferencias culturales y sociales alrededor del chisme, este juega un papel fundamental a la hora de realizar la traducción al inglés de esta obra literaria. Como el propósito de la traducción es mantener la cercanía con las lectoras del TT, fue necesario hacer un análisis de los elementos del chisme que se encuentran en el TO para determinar si efectivamente esa cercanía se mantuvo o se neutralizó en la traducción.

Autores como Bush (2014), López (2018) y Blanco (2020) se han referido al chisme desde el ámbito literario, el discurso oral y una novela literaria respectivamente. En conjunto, estos autores identificaron elementos que se presentan en el chisme; entre estos, los más relevantes son el misterio, el enfoque en una tercera persona, el comportamiento probatorio, los comentarios valorativos, los elementos interactivos y la mitigación.

El chisme como elemento narrativo resulta un aspecto interesante a estudiar para la traducción, ya que está directamente relacionado con factores sociales y culturales, los cuales pueden variar dependiendo del contexto meta. Hatim y Mason (1990), en *Discourse and the Translator*, exploran la traducción desde una perspectiva discursiva, integrando teorías lingüísticas, pragmáticas y semióticas para analizar cómo los traductores median entre culturas y contextos sociales. Por esta razón, las perspectivas de estos dos autores son fundamentales en el análisis de la traducción del chisme en *Una mujer insignificante*.

En el tercer capítulo (Context in Translating: Register Analysis) de *Discourse and the Translator* se explora el tenor y el contexto social. En el caso del chisme, el tenor, la relación

entre los hablantes, es relevante ya que esto tiene que ver con la complicidad que se tiene cuando se comparte un chisme. De igual forma, el registro (formal o informal) juega un papel muy importante. Dependiendo de la cultura, el chisme puede ser emitido de maneras diferentes, por lo que la traducción debe ajustarse al público meta.

El quinto capítulo (*Translating Text as Action: The Pragmatic Dimension of Context*) del libro (Hatim y Mason, 1990) trata sobre la pragmática y los actos de habla. Podemos decir que el chisme funciona como un acto de habla con fuerza ilocutiva; tiene una intención o un propósito comunicativo. Si eso es lo que se busca, esa intención, ya sea informar, manipular o entretener, puede preservarse en la traducción al igual que el tono que se utiliza (coloquial, irónico, malicioso).

La semiótica y los estereotipos en el discurso son expuestos en el sexto capítulo del libro (Hatim y Mason, 1990). Estos aspectos se relacionan con el chisme, ya que estos suelen reforzar estereotipos, por lo que la traducción puede manejar estos signos culturales para evitar malentendidos. En el capítulo siete, se habla acerca de la intertextualidad; el chisme suele basarse en referencias culturales compartidas, por lo que para la traducción, el traductor puede decidir si explicitar o adaptar dichas referencias culturales.

Tomando en cuenta las perspectivas de Hatim y Mason (1990) con respecto al discurso y la traducción, y a los autores que se han referido al chisme desde el ámbito literario y oral, es que se procede a realizar un análisis de los segmentos del TO y del TT que resaltan esos elementos del chisme descritos anteriormente.

Para este análisis, se seleccionó un total de veintiún segmentos del TO con su respectiva traducción al inglés, en los cuales se presentan elementos del chisme. Tomando en cuenta que podría decirse que la novela completa es un chisme. La dedicatoria de la misma nos lo indica: “Los chismes no se dedican” (Murillo, 2024). Se seleccionaron segmentos en los que se

utilizaban fórmulas comunes del chisme oral o situaciones que suelen ser temáticas típicas del chisme (secretos, escándalos, temas tabúes, comportamientos inapropiados). Estos segmentos se clasificaron en tres categorías. La primera categoría consta de nueve segmentos en los que se utiliza la figura retórica prolepsis; la segunda categoría contiene seis segmentos en los que se realizan suposiciones; y la tercera categoría está formada por seis segmentos que incluyen frases comunes utilizadas en el chisme.

La Tabla 7 muestra los segmentos de la novela en los que se utiliza la prolepsis como parte del chisme. La prolepsis es un “Pasaje de una obra literaria que anticipa una escena posterior rompiendo la secuencia cronológica” (*Diccionario de la lengua española*). Esta figura retórica logra agregar misterio y anticipación a la narrativa; ambos elementos del chisme, como fue mencionado anteriormente. Para la traducción de estos segmentos, se puso especial atención al efecto de misterio de estos en el TO.

Para el segmento 1 se optó por una modulación al haber un cambio en algunos términos como en “por qué” por “reasons” y “se sabrá” por “would be revealed”. Esta prolepsis adquiere un tono más poético en la lengua meta que una opción más literal como “later you will know why”. Para el segmento 2, se mantiene el registro coloquial de “Va” (propio de la oralidad) con “Here goes”, se añade “Here” para que esta oración no quede incompleta. Para el segmento 3, “los que vienen a continuación” se traduce como “the following”, se omite “los que vienen” ya que esto queda explícito.

En el segmento 4 se utiliza una traducción literal y se añade una coma que agrega más suspenso al segmento. En el segmento 5, ocurre lo mismo que en el segmento 2, “Aquí va” se traduce de manera literal con “Here goes”. En el segmento 6, también se utiliza una traducción literal, pero “El dato” se sustituye por “This fact”, lo cual añade claridad en el TT. En el segmento 7 la narradora explicita su urgencia por continuar con la historia. Para su traducción

“Y ya” se traduce con el equivalente “And that’s it” que captura el efecto de impaciencia del original, “No puedo seguir postergando lo que tengo que contar” se traduce de manera literal y el verbo “contar” cambia por “say”.

Para el segmento 8, “It was nothing compared to the thing I can’t postpone any longer” se separa de la pregunta que se hace la narradora al inicio de este segmento, y se divide de “I must tell it now”, esto para que la traducción adquiriera mayor fluidez. Se utiliza “must” en lugar de “have to” para agregar aún más urgencia. Para el segmento 9 se utiliza una equivalencia pragmática. “Let’s get back on track”, además de añadir el plural, es un modismo natural en inglés.

Para la traducción de los segmentos que contienen prolepsis predominan las estrategias de literalismo, modulación y equivalencias idiomáticas. En cuanto al registro oral del original se preserva. El TT logra mantener la función fáctica (engancha al lector) y la tensión proléptica. La voz narrativa (culpable, urgente) se preserva en clave anglófona. En general, la traducción refleja bien el carácter de chisme de la novela. La prolepsis, como recurso central, se traslada eficazmente.

En la Tabla 8, se presentan los segmentos del TO y del TT en los que se evidencia la suposición por parte de la narradora de la novela. La suposición, o como lo han llamado otros autores “comportamiento probatorio”, es parte esencial de un chisme ya que quien lo emite no es el protagonista de dichas acciones, por lo que no cuenta con todos los detalles de primera mano. En los seis segmentos que muestran suposición explícitamente en la novela, la narradora utiliza frases como “no se sabe”, “supongo”, “hemos de suponer”, o directamente hace referencia a que la información le fue proporcionada por una tercera persona.

Tabla 7*Prolepsis como elemento del chisme*

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	... más adelante se sabrá por qué. (p. 13)	... for reasons that would be revealed later. (p. 5)
2	<i>Va</i> un detalle atronador. (p. 18)	<i>Here goes</i> a terrifying detail. (p. 8)
3	De todos sus secretos, <i>los que vienen a continuación</i> son los que menos me perdonaría Águeda que haga públicos. (p. 33)	Of all her secrets, <i>the following</i> are the ones Águeda would forgive me the least for making public. (p. 19)
4	Pero aún hay más. (p. 59)	But still, there's more. (pp. 36-37)
5	<i>Aquí va</i> un recuerdo muy elocuente. (p. 67)	<i>Here goes</i> a very eloquent memory. (p. 42)
6	El dato tendrá cierta relevancia más adelante. (p. 74)	This fact will have some relevance later. (p. 47)
7	<i>Y ya. No puedo seguir postergando lo que tengo que contar</i> , lo que me ha sido imperioso sacarme de dentro, eso que me hizo sentarme a escribir, tras años de narrativa errante, por así llamar a las tantas veces que conté esta historia a las orejas que quisieron escucharla ahí adonde fui. (p. 85)	<i>And that's it. I can't keep postponing what I have to say</i> , what has been imperative to get out of my system, the reason why I sat down to write, after years of wandering narrative, for lack of a better name for the many times I told this story to whatever ears would listen wherever I went. (p. 54)
8	Pero a qué viene ahora esto, <i>esto que no es nada comparado con lo que no puedo postergar y me toca contar</i> . Ya. (p. 110)	But what does it matter now? <i>It was nothing compared to the thing that I can't postpone any longer. I must tell it. Now.</i> (p. 71)
9	<i>Pero a lo que iba</i> (¡cómo me cuesta!). (p. 111)	<i>But let's get back on track</i> (how difficult it is for me!). (p. 71)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

Para la traducción del segmento 1, “no se sabe” se traduce de manera literal con “It is unknown” y se traslada al inicio del segmento, “cuenta la leyenda que no” se traduce como “legends say that they didn’t”, se utiliza una explicitación para añadir claridad con “they didn’t”. Para el segmento 2, el segmento entre paréntesis se traduce como “reserved for the man himself, I guess”, se utiliza un equivalente para “el mismísimo” y “supongo” se traduce de manera literal añadiendo el sujeto “I”. Para el segmento 3, se cambia la voz activa a la pasiva en “this was told

to me by” y ocurre una simplificación de “prima hermana” por “cousin” ya que esto no suele ser información relevante para culturas angloparlantes.

En el segmento 4, de igual forma que en el segmento anterior, se simplifica “prima segunda” por “cousin”, “la prima” se cambia por “her cousin” para explicitar de que prima se está hablando y se hacen ajustes gramaticales para que la oración tenga un orden adecuado en inglés. En el segmento 5, “hemos de suponer” se tradujo como “we guessed”, se cambia el tiempo verbal ya que en pasado esta suposición se entiende mejor. Por último, en el segmento 6 se da una traducción literal manteniendo la ambigüedad con “I guess”, y nuevamente se agrega el sujeto para respetar las reglas gramaticales del inglés.

Tabla 8

Suposición como elemento del chisme

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	Si tuvieron sexo en esos meses <i>no se sabe, cuenta la leyenda que no.</i> (p. 64)	<i>It is unknown</i> if they had sex during those months, <i>legends say that they didn't.</i> (p. 40)
2	... las llamadas internacionales seguían siendo carísimas (<i>reservadas para el mismísimo, supongo</i>)... (p. 95)	... international calls were still really expensive (<i>reserved for the man himself, I guess</i>). (p. 61)
3	Tales gritos han atravesado un siglo y llegado hasta aquí porque <i>me los contó la prima hermana de mi madre</i> , esa que visité hace poco, que entonces era muy pequeña, ah, pero el cuento, ese, es imperecedero. (p. 115)	Such screams have gone through a century to come here because <i>this was told to me by one of my mother's cousins</i> , the one I recently visited, who back then was very little, ah, but the story, that one, is everlasting. (p. 75)
4	... esto ya da escalofríos, pero hay más: ¿cómo subía hasta ahí? Hace poco, <i>por lo que me contó la prima segunda</i> , fui a inspeccionar la zona. (p. 118)	... this is already chilling, but there is more: How could she get up there? Not long ago, <i>according to what her cousin told me</i> , I went to inspect the place. (p. 77)
5	Harto (<i>hemos de suponer</i>), Jean Patin le dijo a esa necia que lo llamaba a deshoras... (p. 127)	Fed up (<i>we guessed</i>), Jean Patin said to that annoying woman who called him in the late hours... (p. 83)
6	Y colgaría, <i>supongo</i> , sellando su negativa. (p. 128)	He hung up, <i>I guess</i> , concluding with his refusal. (p. 83)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

En la Tabla 9 se presentan seis segmentos de la novela en los cuales se utilizan fórmulas lingüísticas estereotipadas del chisme. Las frases coloquiales típicas del chisme que emplea la autora invitan a la complicidad, expresan escepticismo, revelan giros inesperados o expresan ironía o sarcasmo.

El segmento 1 presenta una fórmula retórica que implica obviedad y complicidad. Para su traducción se optó por una modulación; se utiliza una pregunta retórica diferente pero equivalente. Para el segmento 2 se utiliza la equivalencia funcional para “Uh-huh, and?” que reproduce el tono despectivo. La traducción mantiene la oralidad y el desdén. El segmento 3 trata de la revelación de un giro inesperado. “Pero resulta que” se tradujo con una equivalencia idiomática “But it turns out”. Lo mismo sucede con el segmento 4.

Para el segmento 5 se utilizó una equivalencia. Para el segmento 6, en el que se expresa incredulidad, se utilizó una traducción literal para “o eso dijo”, “or that’s what she said” añade “what” y “she” para mayor claridad y naturalidad en el TT. Para estos segmentos, se notó que mayormente se utilizó la equivalencia para lograr reproducir la oralidad y la ironía en el TT.

Tabla 9

Frases comunes del chisme

N.	Texto original	Texto traducido
1	Quién iba a ser. (p. 56)	Who else could it be? (p. 35)
2	Patin era divorciado. <i>Ajá, ¿y?</i> . (p. 65)	Patin was divorced. <i>Uh-huh, and?</i> (p. 40)
3	<i>Pero resulta que</i> el gato nunca volvió. (p. 83)	<i>But it turns out that</i> the cat never returned. (p. 53)
4	<i>... pues resulta que</i> la Bigsista omitió un detallito. (p. 103)	<i>... because it turns out that</i> Bigsista forgot a small detail. (p. 66)
5	Conque esas teníamos. (p. 124)	So that’s the deal. (p. 81)
6	Al día siguiente, poco recordaba, <i>o eso dijo</i> , a la defensiva. (p. 141)	The next day, she barely remembered it, <i>or that’s what she said</i> , defensively. (p. 92)

Nota. Esta tabla contiene segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, (Murillo, 2024), y de su respectiva traducción al inglés, la cual es propia.

Después de haber realizado el análisis de los segmentos de la novela *Una mujer insignificante* en los cuales se utiliza la prolepsis, la suposición y frases comunes del chisme, se concluye que su traducción al inglés mantiene la estructura informativa y la intención general del chisme. En cuanto al registro y la oralidad, en el TT logra adaptar las expresiones coloquiales del español para que sean adecuadas en la lengua meta. Las estructuras prolépticas y el suspenso se traducen bien en términos de información anticipada. Finalmente, la complicidad con el lector se mantiene en buena medida.

El análisis de los elementos del chisme entre mujeres en *Una mujer insignificante* y su traducción al inglés revela que este recurso narrativo cumple una función esencial en la novela: generar complicidad, intriga y cercanía con las lectoras. Catalina Murillo emplea estrategias propias del discurso oral, como la prolepsis, las suposiciones y fórmulas coloquiales, para recrear un tono confidencial, casi de conversación íntima.

Al trasladar estos elementos al inglés, en la traducción se enfrentó desafíos culturales y lingüísticos, ya que el chisme, como acto comunicativo, está profundamente arraigado en convenciones sociales y registros idiomáticos, en este caso costarricenses, que no siempre tienen equivalencia directa. El estudio de los veintiún segmentos seleccionados permitió identificar tres tendencias principales: en el caso de la prolepsis y el suspenso, se mantuvo la tensión narrativa mediante la modulación y la literalidad. En cuanto a suposiciones y ambigüedad, las fórmulas de rumor ("no se sabe", "supongo") se tradujeron de manera literal con algunas adaptaciones idiomáticas. Finalmente, para las fórmulas coloquiales y la ironía, las frases estereotipadas del chisme se adaptaron con equivalencias.

La traducción logró preservar la función central del chisme: involucrar a las lectoras en una narración participativa. Si bien el inglés no siempre reproduce la viveza coloquial del español, las estrategias empleadas, como el literalismo selectivo, las equivalencias idiomáticas

y las modulaciones, aseguraron que el tono confesional y la crítica social de la obra se mantuvieran intactos.

En conclusión, el chisme en *Una mujer insignificante* no es un mero recurso estilístico, sino un mecanismo narrativo feminista que desafía las estructuras literarias tradicionales. Su traducción exigió un equilibrio entre fidelidad al original y naturalidad en el texto meta, priorizando siempre el propósito comunicativo de generar intimidad con las lectoras. El resultado final refleja con éxito la voz cómplice de la narradora, demostrando que el chisme, como acto de resistencia narrativa, trasciende fronteras lingüísticas.

Capítulo 7. Conclusiones

En este capítulo se presentan las conclusiones obtenidas del proceso de elaboración de esta memoria de traducción. Es indispensable recalcar que la discusión de resultados es necesaria para que los vacíos y las áreas de mejora que esta memoria presenta sean atendidos en el futuro. A continuación, se encuentran los siguientes apartados que forman parte de este capítulo de conclusiones: Resumen de resultados principales, Discusión (interpretación de resultados), Implicaciones, Limitaciones y consideraciones y Recomendaciones.

Resumen de resultados principales

Para la traducción de la interpelación a las lectoras se prestó especial atención a la función e intención de los diferentes segmentos en los que se utiliza este recurso narrativo. Teniendo esto en cuenta, a partir de las seis categorías utilizadas (con intenciones variadas, en forma imperativa, en forma interrogativa, presentación de personajes, metanarración y mención directa a las lectoras), y por medio del análisis comparativo de los segmentos del TO con los del TT, los resultados indican que hay ciertas tendencias en cuanto a la traducción al inglés de la interpelación en la novela *Una mujer insignificante*. Cuando fue posible y esto no interfería con la naturalidad del texto en la lengua meta se utilizó la literalidad, se hicieron ciertas adaptaciones para ajustar el texto al lector angloparlante, la transposición fue necesaria en algunas circunstancias para darle fluidez al texto, y, en la medida de lo posible, se mantuvo la teatralidad, la complicidad y el humor por medio de expresiones coloquiales, el uso de posesivos y de frases idiomáticas equivalentes a las de la lengua original del TO.

En cuanto a la traducción del chisme, en especial del chisme entre mujeres, como un elemento sociocultural presente en la novela *Una mujer insignificante*, los resultados obtenidos a partir del análisis del TT al ser comparado con el TO indican que para lograr una correcta adaptación de este fenómeno se debe tener como prioridad la cultura de llegada. Para atender

este reto de traducción se utilizaron estrategias como la literalidad, la adaptación, la modulación y la equivalencia; se veló por mantener el suspenso, la tensión, la oralidad del chisme, y por buscar equivalentes en la lengua meta para las frases coloquiales y típicas del chisme. La traducción presenta muchos aciertos con respecto a cómo se abordó la interpelación a las lectoras y al chisme en cuanto a la cercanía con la narradora.

Discusión (Interpretación de resultados)

Tal y como Hans J. Vermeer presenta en su teoría *Skopos*, el propósito de la traducción es fundamental en la labor de un traductor; en este caso, como el propósito de esta traducción era conservar la cercanía entre la narradora y las lectoras en la traducción inversa del chisme y de la interpelación a las lectoras en la novela literaria *Una mujer insignificante*, resultó necesario entender el uso particular de estos recursos en la narrativa de esta novela y en su traducción al inglés para valorar si esa cercanía con la narradora se mantuvo o se vio afectada en la traducción.

La experiencia lectora con respecto a la cercanía con el texto puede variar de lector a lector. La traductora, que a su vez funge como lectora y revisora de su propia traducción, puede tener una interpretación particular acerca de su propio trabajo, por lo que se recalca que la presente discusión de resultados se plantea en esa perspectiva. Si bien cada lector puede tener diferentes opiniones acerca de qué tan cercano o lejano siente al narrador de una historia, hay ciertos elementos que hacen que un narrador se acerque a los lectores. Para la traducción de dichos elementos, la prioridad se le da al efecto y no tanto a la forma. Se busca serle fiel al efecto del TO teniendo en cuenta a la población meta, ya que la cercanía que ahora se buscará es con los lectores meta y no con los lectores originales.

Hay tendencias en cuanto a la traducción de la interpelación al lector y del chisme; sin embargo, lo importante no es identificar cuál estrategia es mejor para cada caso, sino buscar que los lectores meta tengan una experiencia lectora lo más similar posible a la de los lectores

originales. Para ello, indagar acerca de cómo funciona en la literatura en inglés la interpelación y el chisme es indispensable. Se debe buscar naturalidad en esos elementos que hacen que la narradora, en este caso, se sienta como una confidente.

Implicaciones

Es importante considerar que cada autor literario tiene su propio estilo de escritura, los resultados aquí presentes fueron obtenidos por medio del análisis de la traducción de una sola obra literaria; otros autores pueden hacer uso de los elementos analizados de diferentes maneras. Así como cada autor tiene su propio estilo, cada traductor, en especial en el campo de la traducción literaria, puede generar una traducción totalmente distinta a la del otro y esto no va a significar que una u otra traducción esté mejor que la otra.

En este caso en particular, cada segmento que incluía elementos de la interpelación a las lectoras y del chisme fue analizado cuidadosamente y de manera individual, y aunque en algunos casos las soluciones traductológicas utilizadas aplicaban para más de un segmento, en el proceso de traducción no se intentó seguir un patrón o utilizar una estrategia en particular sino que se buscó recrear el efecto del original.

Limitaciones y consideraciones

Una de las principales limitaciones de esta memoria de traducción es que los segmentos que se analizaron son parte de una misma novela, por lo que los resultados no se deberían generalizar ni aplicar a futuras traducciones sin el debido análisis de la obra en cuestión. Así, otros autores pueden utilizar la interpelación al lector y el chisme de maneras totalmente distintas: dependería de la sensibilidad del traductor y de su interpretación del texto en cuestión para lograr su objetivo a la hora de traducir dichos elementos. Además, no fue posible compartir la traducción con lectores angloparlantes para que valoraran qué tan cercana sintieron la voz de la narradora.

Recomendaciones

Para futuros estudios de investigación, sería interesante que se explorase el uso de la interpelación al lector y del chisme en la literatura en diferentes lenguas y culturas, con el fin de comprender mejor las diferencias que existen en torno a estos recursos narrativos o fenómenos culturales y cómo dichas diferencias deben reflejarse en la traducción literaria.

A modo de conclusión general, se considera que llevar a cabo una memoria de traducción es una oportunidad invaluable para el traductor en formación. Esta tarea permite indagar en una temática específica de los vacíos que se encuentran en la literatura y ayuda a desarrollar y pulir no solo las habilidades como traductor sino también el pensamiento crítico acerca de la labor traductológica. Aportar al campo de la traductología desde la experiencia fortalece a la comunidad de traductores y le agrega valor a este oficio tan fundamental para la comunicación entre las diferentes comunidades del mundo. Desde la traducción literaria, se espera que esta memoria logre contribuir con futuros estudios en este ámbito.

Finalmente, llevar a cabo la traducción de una obra literaria costarricense es una oportunidad invaluable para conectar con autores de nuestro país y llevar sus voces a diferentes partes del mundo. No solo se denota la disponibilidad que tienen los autores costarricenses para colaborar con este tipo de proyectos, sino que también se refleja su calidad humana y sus aportes artísticos para con el país.

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Anexo 1

Texto original

ALEAGUARA

Catalina Murillo

Una mujer insignificante

Narrativa Hispánica



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