

Examining Themes of Gender in the Short Fiction of Carme Riera through
Translation

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of gender in three versions of Carme Riera's short story "Te entrego, amor, la mar como una ofrenda" [I Leave You, My Love, the Sea as an Offering] – the Spanish-language source text, and my own translations into English and French. As romance languages such as Spanish and French exhibit grammatical gender in ways that English does not, texts written in these languages are able to play on the interaction between the gender of the words themselves and the themes of social gender in a way that an English-language text ostensibly cannot. This project explores the effect of the linguistic category of grammatical gender on the themes of social gender through the process of translation, with special attention paid to the ways in which this interaction can present obstacles in the transfer and adaptation of the text across languages.

Dedication

To my family and friends, especially Mom and Dad, Jackie, and my Nate. I could not have done this without your support, encouragement, and love.

Thank you so much – merci beaucoup – ¡muchas gracias!

Acknowledgments

I would like to gratefully acknowledge those who accompanied me as I completed my thesis. I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my Supervisor, Doctor Anne Malena, without whose enthusiasm, guidance, and fruitful discussions this project would have been drastically different. Translation is (still) fun!

I would like to thank my committee members for their hard work and valuable comments, as well as Dolores Fuentes Gutiérrez whose passion inspired this project as a whole.

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Section I: Translation Project

Mis ojos, que eran los tuyos, porque yo veía el mundo tal y como tú lo mirabas, captaron los matices, las formas, los colores, los detalles que a ti te sorprendían. Me preocupaba tanto mantener tu atención que, incluso, me esforzaba en adivinar y traducir tus impresiones, haciéndolas pasar por mías en una manera casi inconsciente.

Mes yeux, qui étaient les tiens puisque je voyais le monde tel que tu le regardais, saisissaient les nuances, les formes, les couleurs, les détails qui, toi, te surprenaient. Je voulais tellement garder ton attention que j'allais jusqu'à m'efforcer de deviner et de traduire tes impressions en les faisant passer pour les miennes d'une façon presque inconsciente.

[My eyes, which were yours, because I saw the world just as you looked at it, captured the shades, the forms, the colours, the details that surprised you. I was so worried about keeping your attention that I would even make the effort to guess and translate your impressions, making them pass for my own in an almost unconscious way.]

This excerpt, taken from the short story that follows, can be considered to describe the seduction that the reader undergoes throughout the process of reading it. Though it references a romantic relationship between two people, it also parallels the translator's submission to the text. For reasons that will be discovered in the subsequent analysis, my translations are presented here first and without more explanation than this, in an attempt to reproduce to the greatest extent the 'surprise' that initially inspired the project.

Translation into French: “Je te laisse, mon amour, la mer comme une offrande”

D’ici, depuis cette fenêtre, je ne peux pas voir la mer. Mon regard tombe du haut d’un précipice de ciment – fleurs mourantes sur les balcons, auvents corrodés par le soleil – vers l’asphalte et le tourbillon de la circulation. Mon regard est braqué vers le ciel, criblé d’antennes où des nuages noirâtres s’effilochent en écheveaux décolorés... Au loin se devine, au delà du cercle de béton et du grillage des télévisions, la pointe de l’aiguille du temple de Tibidabo. J’ai beau chercher en parcourant des yeux les limites du paysage, je ne vois ni l’ombre de la mer, ni un reflet, ni même une rumeur. J’oublie souvent que ma fenêtre s’ouvre sur le nord et que la mer habite le sud, de l’autre côté de la ville. Là-bas, endeuillée, graisseuse et pestilentielle, la vieille nourrice berce des bateaux de marchandises, des yachts et des bateaux vedette, tous ancrés dans la rade. Désormais, elle ne chante plus de berceuses ; il y a quelque temps que toutes les caresses s’échappent entre ses doigts et que ses yeux aveugles ne perçoivent plus la lumière. Là-bas, elle subit l’agonie d’être un miroir sans reflet ; une lame métallique opaque sans couleur ni transparence, qui accueille en son giron pelures et déchets en plastique, entre les caillots impudiques d’une menstruation huileuse.

Cette mer ne ressemble en rien à la nôtre et cependant, je l’aime. Je l’aime et elle me manque. Peut-être que parce qu’en la regardant, je me rends compte que d’une mer à l’autre, d’un bord à l’autre, il y a moins de distance que d’une ville à l’autre. Et tu demeures de l’autre côté.

Je me languis de la mer. Je me languis de l’immensité bleue, de la petite immensité bleutée qui paraissait pénétrer dans la cabine, à travers l’œil-de-bœuf, cette fameuse journée de printemps à l’heure de midi, le chemin vers l’île. Pardonne-moi.

J'allais te demander si tu te souvenais, seulement pour le plaisir de t'entendre me dire que oui, que souvent tes yeux aussi se mouillent dans le bleu inquiétant de cette mer, qui est la nôtre, alors que tu te perds dans les inhalations de souvenirs lointains, déjà un peu rances. Combien d'années se sont écoulées depuis ce voyage ? Je renonce à les compter bien que je puisse peut-être te donner le calcul exact des heures, des minutes et des secondes, comme s'il s'agissait d'un problème de mathématiques élémentaires. Cela ne doit pas t'étonner : j'ai fabriqué un calendrier à usage personnel où les années, les mois et les jours ont commencé dès l'instant précis où le bleu était parfait, ton corps de soie, la lumière qui s'infiltrait, tiède, douce et tellement suave. Nous étions plus jeunes, avec moins de conscience et avec l'innocence débordante, perverse, presque maligne, d'un ange rebelle. Ces mots me font souffrir. Je me rends compte qu'ils peuvent t'inciter à penser que j'ai des remords. Tranquillise-toi, je m'entends parfaitement avec ma conscience. J'avais quinze ans... Une chanson à la mode parlait des jeunes filles en fleur ; et tu me la chantaient pour me faire enrager. J'avais quinze ans et c'est à ce fait que je dois, sans doute, notre rupture. D'un autre côté, j'aime savoir que je suis venue te rejoindre au moment le plus critique de mon adolescence, quand je commençais à être femme et que ton influence était décisive pour que je puisse devenir celle que je suis maintenant. Pendant ce cours de cinquième année, j'ai troqué mes chaussettes pour des bas de soie ; j'ai étreint mes premières chaussures à talon haut ainsi qu'une robe de fête – elle était rouge, de velours, légèrement décolletée. Je l'ai mise plusieurs vendredis pour aller au concert du Théâtre Principal. Nous avions des billets gratuits puisque le Patronat du Conseil Général les envoyait toutes les semaines à l'Institut. Tu détestais les interprétations de cet orchestre provincial qui luttait à tour de bras avec des violons, des

trompettes et des timbales. Cependant, tu venais et tu t'asseyais près de notre loge. Tu fermais les yeux pendant que les lumières étaient éteintes et que seule la scène restait illuminée. De temps en temps je percevais un clignement d'oeil, tu entrouvrais les paupières et me regardais en biais... Un jour – alors que nous sortions d'un « méconcert », nous avons écouté une mauvaise version de Bach – tu m'as dit que je te transperçais du regard. Tu m'as demandé ce que je voulais obtenir de toi avec ce regard tellement profond, comme si je cherchais ton âme. Je t'ai répondu – je te jure que j'étais sincère – que je regarde toujours ainsi quand quelqu'un attire mon attention. C'est à ce moment-là que, pour la première fois, tu as posé les mains sur mes cheveux : tu m'as fait trembler des pieds à la tête et j'en avais honte. J'aimais tellement tes mains ! Elles sont si jolies encore : tes longs doigts, ta peau très blanche, tes ongles soigneusement entretenus. Je me sentais heureuse quand tu me prenais la main et que nous nous promenions en ville, comme des amoureux. Tu m'as montré des vieux coins que tu avais découverts dans ton adolescence quand est né en toi le goût pour les promenades à la tombée de la nuit. Mes yeux, qui étaient les tiens puisque je voyais le monde tel que tu le regardais, saisissaient les nuances, les formes, les couleurs, les détails qui, toi, te surprenaient. Je voulais tellement garder ton attention que j'allais jusqu'à m'efforcer de deviner et de traduire tes impressions en les faisant passer pour les miennes d'une façon presque inconsciente. Même aujourd'hui, à dix ans de distance, je suis capable de m'enthousiasmer en parcourant, les yeux fermés, sans même bouger d'ici, le quartier marin du Puig – les côtes, les escabeaux, les fontaines publiques – qui te rappelaient un certain recoin du port de Naples. Les enfants allaient nus, jouant avec des boîtes vides, maltraitant les chats, et les femmes, sales, avec leurs robes de chambre et leurs tignasses,

papotaient en hurlant depuis les seuils des maisons. Je peux aussi – il ne me manque que ton contact – suivre tes pas lents dans les vieilles rues pavées, avec des façades majestueuses, chemin de la cathédrale... Je traverse la Puerta del Mar, je m'enfonce dans la nef centrale, j'aspire la forte odeur d'encens.

Certains après-midis, nous allions à la campagne. L'eau débordait des canaux d'irrigation, et les amandiers simulaient les crêtes légères de vagues écumeuses et blanches entre leurs branches. L'hiver, obstiné à démentir le calendrier, nous tournait le dos et s'enfonçait à travers la campagne, jusque dans les montagnes. Dans la plaine, le printemps se devinait déjà entre les vacillements des pétales qui se battaient pour retrouver leur profil dans l'ancienne mémoire de la terre, là où les tubercules ou les racines se cachaient. Avec toi, j'ai connu deux villages abandonnés – Biniparraix, inhabité à cause des fantômes qui effrayaient les voisins avec leurs visites mystérieuses – et Biniarroy, ravagé par une tempête. Il n'y avait pas de route pour se rendre jusque là, à peine quelques chemins bergers difficilement praticables, qui se perdaient au milieu des sentiers obscurs qui montaient, pour ensuite s'enfoncer dans les petits bois de chênes verts et de fourrés qui sentaient le romarin. Nous n'avions pas l'habitude de parler pendant l'excursion. Ton bras me prenait par la taille, parfois j'inclinais ma tête contre ton épaule et tu m'embrassais comme personne ne me l'a plus jamais fait.

J'allais découvrant le monde en même temps que l'amour me découvrait à moi-même pour me faire sien. Ni dans les livres, ni dans les films, je n'apprenais à vivre l'histoire de notre histoire. J'apprenais à vivre, j'apprenais à mourir peu à peu, bien qu'à ce moment-là, je ne l'aie pas su, quand, serrée dans tes bras, je niais le passage du temps : je voulais rester à tes côtés sans cesser de sentir, pour aucun instant, le frôlement de ta

peau. Le monde vu de tes bras était beau et triste, il avait une couleur indéfinissable, bleu lilâtre, parfois phosphorescent, sous un maquillage de néon.

Le brouillard agonise, dense, lent, dans la rue, se volatilise dans les égouts, il s'estompe entre les voitures stationnées. La tristesse de ces heures, tenaillée dans les battements, arrêtée dans les larmes, me renvoie à toi, avare surtout de ce bonheur greffé dans les baisers que nous aimions tellement. Nous aimions tant, tant de choses ! La terre humide après la pluie, l'ardent éclatement des coquelicots dans les champs de blé, les terrasses des cafés ensoleillées, les plages désertes, les nuits de nos rendez-vous imaginaires et l'amour par-dessous tout, l'amour dont, à cette époque, nous ne parlions jamais.

Notre relation a duré huit mois et six jours exactement. Elle s'est rompue par la faute du scandale et de ta peur d'affronter une double responsabilité. Tu n'avais pas la force suffisante, ni assez de confiance en moi. Elle t'obsédait, l'idée que je puisse un jour te reprocher cet amour que nous appelions amitié. Ils te menaçaient au nom de la morale et des bonnes mœurs, ils t'ont parlé de comportement corrompu, de perversion des mineurs. Tu as reçu des notes anonymes avec des insultes morbides... Je devais supporter la risée et des commentaires à mi-voix. Plus d'une fois, mes camarades ont changé le thème de leur conversation en me voyant approcher, mais personne, sauf mon père, n'a osé me parler face à face et affronter la réalité. Je me souviens toujours du rictus de son visage crispé, du ton aigre de sa voix, mais j'ai oublié ses mots. Je retiens seulement deux phrases qui, comme la mélodie accrocheuse d'un message publicitaire, m'ont souvent accompagnée : « C'est le chemin de la dépravation. Je t'enverrai à Barcelone si cela dure un jour de plus ». Maintenant, je peux tout t'expliquer. À cette époque, je t'aurais fait

beaucoup de mal et je voulais éviter à tout prix que tu souffres. Je t'ai menti : personne ne m'avait rien dit. Tout le monde se comportait normalement comme ils le faisaient auparavant et mon père m'a envoyée passer l'été hors de l'île comme récompense pour les bonnes notes obtenues aux examens de juin.

La désolation aura toujours pour moi le visage de ces jours-là : j'étais convoquée par des loches et des limaces, je mangeais des sandwiches exquis aux champignons vénéneux et des fruits remplis de vers. Je goutais des gâteaux qui dissimulaient dans la meringue un couteau sans manche et des vins qui cachaient parfaitement qu'ils étaient faits de crachats. Ils me gavaient de fortifiants et de conseils. Vide, impuissante, détruite, j'ai commencé à tout détester ; les gens, la ville, l'été qui commençait lentement, les paysages que j'avais tellement aimés. Je suis même allée jusqu'à désirer des moignons absurdes au lieu de branches dans les arbres et des champs ravagés, transformés en décharges à l'odeur fétide. Et cependant, je gardais intacte cette énorme capacité d'amour qui se nourrissait uniquement de toi et qui, sans laisser la moindre trace sur quoi que ce soit, te revenait intégralement. Le dernier après-midi, nous étions sur le Paseo Marítimo, nous avons garé la voiture à côté du port des yachts, je me suis mise à pleurer en cherchant refuge dans tes bras qui me rejetaient. La contredanse des milliers de lumières se reflétant dans la baie me chatouillait les yeux. Entre les larmes, je voyais des bouts de bateaux et des morceaux de mer. Tu avais les nerfs à fleur de peau. La tension épuisante des derniers jours mettait sur ton visage un rictus tragique. Tu ne voulais pas me regarder. Te retournant enfin et d'un geste désespéré, tu as passé la main dans mes cheveux comme la première fois. J'ai fermé les yeux et je t'ai dit que je t'aimais. Tu m'as fait taire. Les

mots sortaient mécaniquement de ta bouche comme si quelqu'un te les dictait : « Ceci ne peut pas continuer. Notre relation n'a aucun sens. »

Soudain, le grondement de la mer a envahi mes oreilles – je ne t'écoutais plus – et elle m'a trainée après elle, m'abandonnant au milieu des vagues. L'eau frappait à la vitre de l'œil-de-bœuf. Le calme du ciel se reflétait en un bleu tellement intense qu'il me blessait les yeux sans que je puisse savoir si c'était la couleur de la mer ou bien celle de ton regard. Je n'avais pas besoin comme les autres fois de dissimuler mon besoin de toi, ni de déguiser une caresse suppliante sous un frôlement furtif. J'étais à tes côtés, seule, dans ta cabine. Mes camarades n'auraient pas remarqué mon absence puisqu'ils étaient occupés à prendre un bain de soleil sur le pont. J'avais tout le temps du monde devant moi... La traversée a duré tellement longtemps et je me sentais rageusement heureuse. Je me suis étendue à ton côté sur la couchette. L'écume des vagues, les ailes de goéland, les traces des dauphins nous tenaient compagnie à travers la vitre ronde de notre œil-de-bœuf en forme de pleine lune, une lune cependant de midi. Lentement, tu a commencé à te déshabiller. Tu enlevais tes vêtements sans me regarder, avec un geste qui se voulait naturel et qui, je le devine maintenant, était imprégné d'une candeur dépravée. Tu as pris un drap pour te couvrir. Peut-être que tu avais peur de moi, peur que je regarde ton corps nu, t'imaginant peut-être un instant que j'allais partir en courant, effrayée par le spectacle qui pour la première fois m'était offert. Je t'assure que je n'avais pas peur. Mon cœur battait avec beaucoup de force et à l'intérieur de moi, les voiles du rêve le plus exquis étaient en train de se retirer. Ton corps m'a toujours paru beau. Je sentais, à cette époque, l'envie de me rassasier les yeux en le regardant aussi longtemps que je le désirais. Pour cette raison, j'ai ôté le drap. Et il est apparu, parfait comme une statue que je sculptais

moi-même en cet instant, parce que c'étaient mes yeux qui pour la première fois ciselaient et polissaient son contour. Mes yeux le voyaient comme personne ne l'avait vu auparavant. Puis, selon un vieux rite, mes doigts ont dansé sur ta peau, ils ont glissé, amoureux et délicats, pour se remettre à dessiner une par une les formes de ton corps. Et les baisers bloqués, les baisers tant de fois étouffés à fleur de lèvres, avant de naître, pouvaient enfin se répandre librement, trembler insatiablement, hésiter au bord de l'espace délimité ou trébucher sur les frontières qui les empêchaient de pénétrer plus à l'intérieur... Après, tu m'as demandé, non pas avec la voix mais avec le toucher, la permission de me déshabiller. Tu voulais le faire toi-même, tu insistais pour savourer les moments qui nous séparaient de l'instant où, enfin, tu me verrais nue ; prolongeant ces moments pour les perpétuer, ces minutes pour qu'elles durent une éternité malgré l'urgence de ton désir. De seconde en seconde – dans la montre de nos veines, c'était la plénitude du midi – mon corps tremblait, caressé par tes mains, nous nous rapprochions comme si un son très fort nous appelait vers un endroit ineffable et mystérieux, un endroit hors du temps, de l'espace – un midi, un bateau – fait cependant à notre mesure et où nous allions tomber, incurables. Sans salut puisque c'était la seule manière de nous sauver parce que là-bas, dans les profondeurs, dans le royaume de l'absolu, de l'ineffable, nous attendait la beauté qui se confondait avec notre image entrelacée dans le miroir immense que la mer s'efforçait de reproduire. Et là, dans cet abri sûr, le pli le plus intime du corps, l'aventure a commencé, non celle des sens, mais celle de l'esprit qui me porterait vers l'élan le plus profond de ton être, proche maintenant et à jamais du mystère de l'amour et de la mort.

J'allais et je venais de la petite cabine à ta voiture. Du passé présent au présent momentané. Je me réfugiais dans l'ancienne tendresse de ta voix pour que tes mots rugueux me fassent moins de mal. Tu avais décidé de ne pas me voir pendant l'été, tu voulais que personne ne te reproche d'avoir marqué ma vie pour toujours. Tu as démarré la voiture. Je t'ai demandé si nous pouvions rester. J'avais besoin de te promettre de toute ma force que je ne t'oublierais jamais. Ton visage triste portait une expression distante lorsque tu m'as interdit de t'écrire, me demandant ainsi tout le contraire de ce que je t'offrais : l'oubli.

J'ai passé l'été sur une plage à la mode, chez ma tante et mon oncle. Les loisirs – me baigner, prendre le soleil, l'apéritif, manger, aller faire un tour, aller danser ou au cinéma – m'ennuyaient. Mon comportement était très étrange : ma seule source d'illusions était ce qui n'avait pas encore commencé.

Je n'ai pas pu t'oublier. Chaque nuit, je t'écrivais et je gardais soigneusement les lettres dans un tiroir fermé à double tour tout en m'imaginant qu'un jour, tu les lirais une par une. Je sais maintenant que ce n'était qu'une éraflure légère de bonheur que de penser qu'un jour, la lecture de mes lettres t'occuperait pendant des heures et que tu reviendrais, inexorablement, à moi. J'étais jalouse de tout ce qui t'entourait, de ce que je ne savais pas. De tes allées et venues dans la ville, des gens que tu pourrais connaître, de ton travail. Cet été-là, tu avais le projet de finir ta thèse, commencée il y avait longtemps et sur le point d'être terminée. Tu m'avais demandé de t'aider à faire les tables de matières et à arranger la bibliographie, ce qui me permettrait d'être avec toi à tout moment. Où étais-tu avec toute cette paperasse ? Ne pas le savoir me remplissait de tristesse.

Si seulement j'avais des nouvelles de toi ! Tu ne voulais pas noter mon adresse. Tu as déchiré le papier où je l'avais notée pour te le donner et tu as fait la sourde oreille quand, en venant de chez moi, je l'ai répétée.

- C'est mieux que le temps passe.
- Crois-tu que le temps effacera tout ?
- Il peut le faire, si nous collaborons.

Je ne collaborais pas. La seule chose qui me consolait était que l'été passerait vite. J'avais une envie immense de ce que l'automne arrive pour que je puisse retourner à Palma. Je ne savais pas si mon père avait décidé de me retirer de l'Institut pour éviter non seulement que je te voie, mais aussi que tu me donnes des cours. L'inscription était fermée au milieu de septembre, mais quand j'ai écrit à mes parents, je n'ai pas osé demander ce qu'ils pensaient faire de moi l'année suivante. J'ai eu de la chance, beaucoup plus que je m'y attendais : ils m'ont réinscrite à l'Institut. J'imagine qu'ils l'ont fait après avoir consulté mon oncle et ma tante au sujet de la normalité de ma conduite estivale et qu'ils étaient arrivés à la certitude que trois mois de séparation et passer le temps avec des garçons de mon âge m'avaient permis de changer.

Je suis arrivée à Palma seulement une semaine avant le commencement des cours. J'attendais anxieusement le moment où je pourrais te rencontrer. Mais je ne voulais pas me risquer à téléphoner chez toi, encore moins à y aller. Je me contentais de me promener dans les rues de ton quartier, maraudant sous ton balcon, près du seuil. Je refusais d'abandonner pourtant l'espoir de te revoir. J'allais aux endroits où toi et moi avions été et souvent je croyais entendre tes pas. Mais tu n'apparaissais pas. Et je continuais, en parcourant nos recoins un par un. Je cherchais quelque chose de plus que ton visage,

l'arôme de ton parfum ou le charisme de ton regard sur les murs, les façades, les pierres, l'asphalte, les olives, les amandiers, les champs, les fleurs, l'eau de la mer ou de la pluie... Je cherchais quelque chose de plus indéfinissable. Je croyais que rien ne serait de nouveau comme avant que tu l'aies regardé. Parce que tout, même le plus insignifiant, porterait pour toujours la marque de ton stigmaté.

Je n'ai posé le regard sur toi qu'au premier jour des cours. Tu étais sur l'estrade avec les autorités et les autres professeurs. Moi, depuis la dernière rangée de sièges dans la salle des fêtes, je te regardais. Je crois que tu n'as pas noté ma présence, malgré l'effort que j'ai fait pour communiquer avec toi. Quand le brouhaha a fini – la voix ennuyeuse du directeur qui a inauguré, au nom du Chef de l'État, la nouvelle année – j'ai pensé qu'enfin, je pourrais te voir de près. Les professeurs sont rapidement partis avec toi pour aller prendre l'apéritif qui, comme chaque année, est offert par la Direction. Nous ne nous verrions pas. À deux heures de l'après-midi, tu étais toujours là. Je n'avais pas d'autre choix que de rentrer chez moi.

Les bananiers jaunissaient déjà sur la promenade du dix-neuvième siècle. Un coup de vent avait laissé une branche ridiculement nue, ayant arraché les premières feuilles. Plus tard, quand il se fatiguait de jouer avec elles, le vent les a abandonnées à mes pieds. J'ai marché sur elles, elles ont craqué. J'ai aperçu alors les premiers signes de l'automne, j'ai remarqué les premiers symptômes et la Rambla, encaissée par les murs des couvents, me paraissait plus large et inhospitalière que jamais. J'ai traversé la rue sans regarder. Une voiture a freiné à un empan de mon corps. C'était la tienne. Ton visage, déboité, reflétait la terreur.

- J'aurais pu te tuer !

La force, la rage de mon étreinte t'a fait chanceler. Tu ne m'as pas demandé de monter dans la voiture. C'était moi qui, devant le regard étonné des gens, suis entrée avant de fermer la portière. Te revoir ! Ta figure me paraissait plus triste, plus fatiguée ; l'expression de ton visage vieillie prématurément.

- Où est-ce que tu veux que je t'amène ?

Je ne t'ai pas répondu. Tu prenais l'Avenida de Jaime III. Tu as insisté. Tu voulais te dépêcher. Quand tu as compris que je n'avais pas l'intention de descendre, tu as garé la voiture à côté du trottoir. C'était l'heure du déjeuner. La ville était déserte. J'avais besoin de ton contact, de tes lèvres, de tes mains. J'avais besoin que tu me regardes. J'avais besoin de te dire que je continuais à t'aimer, que j'avais l'ennui de toi, que je ne voulais pas me séparer de toi. Tu as accepté de m'écouter, bien que tu m'aies demandé, d'une voix douce mais ferme, de comprendre ta situation et que je me maîtrise.

- Le temps a passé et maintenant tout est beaucoup plus clair. Nos relations n'ont aucun sens. Ce n'est pas bien qu'elles continuent. Je ne veux pas te faire mal, ni que tu m'en fasses à moi. Nous ne pourrions rien faire avec cet amour qui ne conduit nulle part, qui n'a pas de but...

Je ne t'ai pas répondu, bien que je n'aie pas été d'accord avec tes arguments, parce que moi, je savais, je continue à le savoir maintenant, que le seul but de l'amour était, est simplement l'amour.

Depuis ce jour-là, nous passions souvent l'après-midi ensemble. Notre conduite était des plus correcte. En classe, quand tu te dirigeais vers moi, tu marquais la distance d'une froideur exquise et, pour accentuer encore plus ton détachement, tu exagérais ton intolérance à mon égard. Un jour tu as même exprimé de la colère envers moi puisque, au

lieu de te remettre un exercice, je t'ai donné une feuille avec des dessins de bateaux, de mouettes et de soleils... Tu as manifesté ton mécontentement parce que tu avais parfaitement compris ce que je voulais te dire et, au fond, cela t'a plu. Ta dureté était le masque sous lequel tu dissimulais une faiblesse sur le point de se briser. Je m'adressais à toi constamment et je te demandais de répéter l'explication une fois de plus parce que je ne l'avais pas comprise. Je te posais des questions, j'interrompais ta leçon pour te faire des observations insolentes... Et j'utilisais un ton agressif qui te déconcertait. Je voulais à tout prix que tu remarques ma présence. Je me vengeais de tout ce que tu m'avais fait souffrir.

Mai était déjà à moitié écoulé quand j'ai fait la connaissance de Javier et commencé à sortir avec lui. Son auréole de militant antifasciste avec des années de prison sur le dos, l'air mystérieux dont il se vêtait, étaient des ingrédients très positifs sûrs de renforcer mon intérêt. Cependant, je crois que j'aimais plus ses histoires que lui. Il savait les orner avec des fabulations héroïques – plus tard, j'ai découvert que c'était tout ce qu'elles étaient – ce qui les faisait ressembler à des confidences exclusivement réservées pour moi, interrompues de temps en temps par de galants propos chuchotés en français, des restes qui lui restaient, disait-il, de ses années d'exil.

Les après-midis, Javier m'attendait souvent à la sortie de classe et bien qu'il ait eu l'habitude de le faire dans un endroit discret – il s'obstinait à perpétuer les mœurs apprises en clandestinité, auxquelles il ne renoncerait jamais tout à fait – tu as remarqué sa présence. Ce que je ne comprends pas, c'est comment tu as pu deviner sa relation avec moi dès le début. Tu m'épiais ? Parfois, nous nous croisions sur le Paseo Marítimo. Tu ne nous as jamais salués. Tu ne nous voyais pas, mais tu nous regardais à travers le

rétroviseur jusqu'à ce que la distance nous ait fait disparaître. Malgré Javier et ses histoires, qui me fascinaient parce que je me sentais complice dans une résistance héroïque, je continuais à t'attendre. Parfois, te voyant passer, je réprimais mon besoin de courir vers ta voiture et de m'installer sur le siège avant, à côté de toi, bien que je croie qu'en ce temps-là, il était occupé : avec sa robe bleue, invisible, la jalousie voyageait avec toi.

Avant les examens de juin, sous prétexte de devoir récupérer un examen, tu m'as fait venir. Tu avais probablement pensé que le séminaire de mathématiques n'était pas l'endroit idéal pour une conversation qui, en deux minutes, n'aurait rien d'académique. Tu m'avais donné rendez-vous l'après-midi dans un café. J'ai feint de me sentir mal et je suis partie avant la fin du dernier cours. Je voulais prévenir Javier pour qu'il n'aille pas me chercher, mais je voulais surtout mettre la robe blanche que tu aimais tellement auparavant et me brosser soigneusement les cheveux.

Quand je suis arrivée, tu m'attendais. Tu as essayé d'être aimable, allant jusqu'à ébaucher une caresse quand je me suis rapprochée de toi pour te saluer, malgré la présence de gens connus. Tu m'as demandé comment j'allais et, d'un air plutôt soucieux, tu as montré de l'intérêt pour Javier, pour nos projets, tu as insisté sur le pluriel. Tu essayais d'éviter mon regard. Le tien était fixé sur le verre de bière que tu avais devant toi ou hypnotisait, j'ignore dans quel but, les vieilles taches décolorées sur la nappe. Tu ne savais pas quoi faire de tes mains. J'ai interrompu ta distraction et j'ai prononcé ton nom. Tu ne sais pas combien de fois je l'ai répété en faisant glisser les consonnes et les voyelles, de façon presque tangible, presque la chair d'une caresse, entre mes lèvres ! Ni combien de fois je l'ai pensé en essayant de découvrir où se produit le miracle qui a joint

les cinq lettres qui le forment pour leur donner un sens ! Et prononcé, ou simplement pensé, ton nom m'a toujours renvoyée à la première fois où je l'ai prononcé sans le précéder d'aucun titre et en te tutoyant, tout comme tu me l'as demandé.

- Qu'est-ce qui se passe ?

- Rien.

- Pourquoi as-tu dit mon nom ?

- Tu as l'air absent. Explique-moi ce qui t'arrive.

- La fin des cours est épuisante, j'ai des tas d'examens à corriger. C'est la fatigue. De plus, tu m'inquiètes. J'ai été trop faible de t'impliquer dans cette aventure dont tu dois te repentir, sans doute, maintenant que ta vie a pris un tournant clair... Et ça me fait plaisir ! Javier est un bon économiste. S'il obtenait un emploi et se consacrait moins à la politique...

- Tu parles comme si tu étais ma mère.

- Je t'assure que cela ne me dérangerait pas.

Je suis allée étudier à Barcelone. Nous nous écrivions. Tes lettres étaient très belles, pas complètement sincères, intentionnellement optimistes, parfois saturées de conseils et d'admonestations. Les miennes, qui te parlaient de tout ce que j'allais découvrant : la ville, les gens, étaient tristes. Pourtant, ma tristesse émaillée d'ocres et de gris, de murs et de nuages, s'estompait entre les lignes de la calligraphie – tellement incertaine, d'ailleurs – jusqu'à se volatiliser presque totalement. C'est pourquoi, peut-être, la mélancolie, l'angoisse et la nostalgie n'étaient pas facilement perceptibles après avoir fermé l'enveloppe et collé le timbre. Une fois, sous celui-ci, j'avais écrit une phrase amoureuse, d'une main de puce. C'était une surprise que je te réservais dans le cas où tu

décidais d'enlever le timbre, sous l'impulsion d'une voix, faible mais précise, qui t'indiquerait l'endroit exact du secret. Mais tu ne me l'as jamais confirmé.

Une nuit, je t'ai écrit une lettre énormément longue, un mélange de confidences et de confession, dans laquelle mon adolescence s'est écroulée pour toujours. Quand j'ai commencé à la rédiger, je ne voulais pas te l'adresser. J'essayais d'inventer un nouveau destinataire, avec lequel je n'aurais eu aucun lien. Mais un tel effort d'imagination s'est avéré impossible. Et comme j'insistais pour oublier ton nom et ton adresse, j'ai écrit à la mer, notre complice, avec l'intention secrète que les vagues, avec ses innombrables voix, amèneraient jusqu'au pas de ta porte, des nouvelles de moi. J'ai essayé d'utiliser une belle écriture, de reproduire la calligraphie anglaise exquise que j'avais apprise dans mon enfance, en soignant chacun des traits. – Le stylo profile les tés pointus, les elles ; il forme un coin, encore plus exagéré s'il y a de la place, les jis angulaires ; il incline l'écriture doucement vers la droite, et glisse sur le papier d'un façon si morose, si délicate, comme s'il te caressait. Le stylo ne contourne pas les os rondelets, ni s'arrête dans la sinuosité des esses ; il ne soigne pas beaucoup la dimension des lettres. Maintenant, il écrit séparant à peine les mots, les entassant, les jetant d'une ligne à l'autre. Le stylo dénonce la violence d'une caresse qui ne remarque pas les vêtements qu'elle fripe, jusqu'à se répandre sur la peau. Pendant que je t'expliquais, j'expliquais à la mer, avec la plus grande sincérité possible parce que cette nuit-là, je niais le sommeil, me forçant à demeurer éveillée.

Je n'ai pas gardé la lettre. Mais je l'ai lue tant de fois que je pourrais même t'en réciter ou mieux t'en copier, tout d'une traite, quelques paragraphes. Ne t'en fais pas, je ne succomberai pas à la tentation. Je l'ai déchirée au bord de l'aube, puis le vent l'a

balayée loin de l'encadrement de la fenêtre en l'éparpillant en mille morceaux quand le jour, au dernier râle des lampadaires, a commencé à épier à travers les stores.

Parmi les souvenirs de cette époque, celui de cette nuit-là m'accompagne fréquemment. C'est à la mémoire impénitente de mes heures amères que je dois le don de me reconforter avec le passé, me le rendant en toute sa splendeur – une splendeur que, maintes fois, il n'avait pas, comme si de cette façon, je pouvais me dédommager des tons gris qui l'enveloppaient. Souvent, je me plonge dans ce printemps, un printemps qui n'a pas encore son profil définitif, mais dont la sève s'enfonçait en moi, transperçant les frontières de la peau pour me vivifier. Dans un chalet voisin du Colegio Mayor, ils célébraient une fête. L'écho de la musique me parvenait en s'amortissant, mais était toujours audible. Le jardin paraissait en fleur, replet de lumières et de lanternes colorées cachées parmi les branches des arbres. Sur la piste, les paires de danseurs dessinaient des silhouettes. Mais je ne désirais pas être là.

L'air humide du port arrive jusqu'à la Vía Layetana. En faisant un effort, on peut aussi percevoir l'odeur de la mer. Dans une cellule, au sous-sol de la Préfecture, il y avait un camarade emprisonné, torturé peut-être. J'étais à côté de lui, mais moi, ils m'ont laissé partir, tranquillement, sans même me demander ma carte d'identité. Il était prisonnier et moi j'étais libre ! Je me sentais comme un pion sur l'échiquier, responsable pour les roses fanées et les oiseaux morts – coupable. Et entre l'angoisse et la peur, j'ai tracé sur un papier, maladroitement, une légère lueur d'espoir. Je m'obstinais à ne pas dormir, à échapper au sommeil qui insistait pour me fermer les yeux en dépit du désir qui construisait des échafaudages et les renforçait. Je suis restée éveillée toute la nuit. Je voulais partager de loin les heures vides de Jaime en prison, lui offrir, sans qu'il le sache,

mon sommeil et ma triste tendresse, ma rage aussi et mon impotence qui se mélangeait à l'écho éteint de la musique et à ton souvenir. Imprégnée de sensations inquiétantes et opprimantes, saisie par le trouble, l'incertitude, avide de toi, je me sentais pourtant utile, malgré l'inutilité de mon effort.

Les années passaient. Mai arrivait en général collé à octobre. Le commencement et la fin de l'année scolaire se succédaient presque sans intervalle. J'acceptais sans aucun problème ma discordance avec le calendrier dont je ne tenais compte qu'à l'heure de vérifier les dates des examens. Je récupérais alors le temps gagné et je l'inversais dans les derniers entraînements pour le marathon. Cela me coûtait un grand effort parce que durant l'année, j'avais à peine assisté aux cours. Et bien que je me sois rendue chaque jour au campus, je préférais me promener dans le jardin ou m'asseoir avec un camarade quelconque à la terrasse. Normalement, c'était avec un groupe de Majorquins qui avaient l'habitude de se réunir les dimanches après-midis en comilonas patriotiques et élégiaques, fortifiés par les sobrasadas et ensaimadas – les pâtisseries qu'envoyait la famille de Majorque. Ils s'amusaient à consumer les heures en divaguant sur les bontés de l'île et les comforts de la vie bourgeoise avec laquelle ils s'identifiaient. Leur conversation ne m'amusaient pas du tout, ce qui me consolait, pourtant, était que de temps en temps, quelqu'un mentionnait ton nom – tu avais enseigné la plupart d'entre eux - ou faisait référence à toi.

Cinq ans. Cinq années interminables, très longues ou peut-être trop brèves. Cours sans intérêt, même pas passifs, neutres. Conférences à l'Université, à l'Ateneo, aux collèges majeurs... colloques sur le sexe, les contraceptifs, les partis politiques, le référendum ; un professeur prestigieux, presque leader de l'opposition, fat, arrogant – il

achète ses costumes à Londres – analyse la situation universitaire avec son accent andalou fils à papa. Sa petite femme soumise prend des notes au premier rang. Son mari parle tellement bien ! Un chercheur espagnol, ni exporté ni exportable, remet en question la théorie de la relativité avec des arguments incontestables. Un couple marié montre sur une table ronde le témoignage vivant de leur amour chrétien. Leurs enfants, sots et mal élevés, s’agitent et se battent parmi le public. Les fêtes de Nova Cançó – Raimon, la chemise ouverte et contestataire, un matin glorieux à l’Institut Chimique de Sarriá. Jeux des Setze Jutges ; Guillerminas catholiques et sentimentales, Serrats infantiles et croyants. Lectures recommandées par les autres : Freud, Marx, Joyce, Faulkner, puis Vargas, García Márquez, Cortázar, Donoso, Lezama... Films dans des ciné-clubs, au sujet desquels je ne connaissais pas ton opinion. Coucher de soleil à Montjuïc. Sitges, Arenys, Blanes, excursions à Montesny, à la Costa Brava. Œuvres de théâtre expérimental. Récitals de poésie, ils m’ont détenue pour monter un spectacle en hommage à León Felipe. Réunions organisées par CC.OO. et par la PSUC... Baisers d’autres lèvres, caresses d’autres mains... La vie avançait avec une lenteur très pressée. Un frisson prolongé était une référence physique qui s’assimilait généralement à ton souvenir. Il y avait peu de jours où je me libérais de ce dernier, bien que j’aie essayé d’effacer ton image, de t’élaguer de mon mémoire. Je désirais des greffes neuves dans un nouveau printemps. Ma volonté, pourtant, refusait d’arracher les racines.

Pendant les vacances, nous ne nous rencontrions pas toujours. Tu voyageais beaucoup en été. Tu as assisté à une paire de congrès internationaux de mathématiques à Moscou, à Paris, à Tokyo, d’où tu m’envoyais des cartes postales : La Place rouge, la Tour Eiffel, le Palacio Real... Le texte était en général en accord avec le thème. Les

lettres dansaient dans l'espace blanc : « Souvenirs de Paris, Moscou, Tokyo... » Rien d'autre. C'était à Tokyo que tu as connu un mathématicien juif, proposé pour le Nobel, très riche apparemment et qui t'a fait des propositions indécentes... Un beau jour, il s'est présenté à Palma avec l'intention de t'emmener avec lui : il voulait ton aide pour des recherches à son université aux E.U. Il t'offrait l'argent que tu demandais en plus de sa protection désintéressée. À Palma, on ne parlait de rien d'autre parce qu'il avait lui-même confessé auprès des journalistes ses intentions à ton égard. Les gens disaient que tu faisais une sottise en laissant passer une occasion tellement bonne. Je me demande pourquoi tu as décidé de ne pas y aller. Je me le demande bien que je pense pouvoir deviner les motifs sans peur de me tromper.

Quelques mois après avoir terminé mon diplôme en sciences, je suis allée chez toi pour t'inviter à mon mariage. J'allais me marier avec un camarade de cours, un Catalan, avec qui je sortais depuis des mois. Toni et moi t'avons annoncé notre mariage avec une visite à l'ancienne mode, une visite de politesse, ce qui masquait la curiosité de Toni à te connaître, puisque je lui avais conté notre histoire de A jusqu'à Z, en la détaillant. Mon récit l'avait intéressé, mais il n'en a pas saisi l'importance. Il t'aimait bien. Il appréciait ton intelligence, ton amabilité, bien qu'il ait perçu quelque chose de bizarre, d'inquiétant, d'obscurément dangereux dans ton aspect.

Le jour des noces, tu m'as dit que tu me souhaitais tout le bonheur du monde, tout ce que tu avais voulu me donner. Tu me l'as dit avec un tremblement des lèvres, comme si soudain un frisson parcourait ton corps que j'ai pris, juste après, dans mes bras pour te remercier. Je t'ai dit – as-tu entendu ? – que je t'aimais toujours.

Quelqu'un a vu comment tu te couvrais le visage des mains, quelqu'un a remarqué que tu pleurais quand, le soir, tu revenais chez toi de l'hôtel où nous avons dîné.

Je ne sais pas si les circonstances permettront que tu lises cette lettre, ni si tu la comprendras au cas où Toni te l'envoie, tel que je le lui ai demandé. Il y a des mois, lors de ta visite de deux jours à Barcelone, que je t'ai annoncé la naissance d'un enfant. Le terme approche. Le médecin dit que, probablement dans deux semaines, le bébé naîtra déjà. J'ai peur, très peur. Je me sens trop faible et les forces me manquent. Je pense que, peut-être, je ne connaîtrai pas la fille, parce que ce sera une fille, et que je ne pourrai pas décider son nom si je ne le fais pas maintenant. Je veux qu'ils lui donnent le tien, Maria, et je veux aussi qu'ils jettent mon corps dans la mer, qu'ils ne l'enterrent pas. Je t'en prie, qu'ils ramènent mon corps à ce coin où l'eau a épié notre amour. Je souhaite être le sable au lieu de la terre. La mer me manque, la nôtre, et je te la laisse, comme une offrande.

Translation into English: “I Leave You, My Love, the Sea as an Offering”

From here, from this window, I cannot see the sea. My eyes fall from a cement precipice –dying flowers on the balconies, awnings corroded by the sun– toward the asphalt and the whirlwind of traffic. My eyes point toward the sky, peppered with antennas and where greyish clouds fray into discoloured bundles... Far away, across the concrete fence and the televisions’ wire netting, the needlepoint of Tibidabo temple is distinguishable... Even though I’m looking, even though my eyes run over the landscape, I cannot see even a shadow of the sea, nor a reflection, nor a murmur. At times I forget that my window faces north and that the sea lives in the south, on the other side of the city. There, in mourning, greasy, pestilent, the old wet nurse rocks cargo ships, yachts, and motorboats anchored in the bay. She no longer sings lullabies; all of the caresses trickled out from between her fingers some time ago; and her blind eyes do not perceive the light. There, she succumbs to the agony of being a mirror that reproduces nothing, an opaque, metallic sheet with no colour, nor transparency, in whose lap peels and pieces of plastic settle in, amidst the immodest clots of an oily menstruation.

This sea does not resemble ours at all and, even still, I love it. I love it and I need it. Maybe because, when I look at it, I realize that from sea to sea, from bank to bank, there is less distance than from city to city. And you are still on the other side.

I long for the sea. I long for the blue immensity, the small blue immensity that seemed to penetrate the cabin, through the porthole, that spring afternoon on the way to the island. Excuse me. I was going to ask you if you remembered, just for the pleasure of hearing you say that you do, that sometimes your eyes also anchor themselves in the worrisome blue of that sea of ours, while you lose yourself between inhalations of far-off

memories, already a little stale. How many years have passed since that trip? I refuse to count them, although I could perhaps still give you the exact number of hours, minutes and seconds as if it were an elementary math problem: I made myself a personal calendar where years, months and days began in the precise instant when the blue was perfect, your body silken, lukewarm, sweet and so soft the light that filtered in. We were younger, less conscious, overflowing with the perverse, almost evil innocence of a rebellious angel. It hurts me to use these words. I realize that they could prompt you to believe that I have regrets. Don't worry, I am perfectly reconciled with my conscience... I was fifteen years old. A popular song talked about tender young girls in bloom, and you would sing it to me to make me furious. I was fifteen years old and to that I owe, without doubt, our breakup. On the other hand, I like knowing that I arrived to you in the most critical moment of my adolescence, when I was beginning to be a woman and that your influence was decisive in my becoming as I am. During that school year, the last year, I swapped my socks for silk stockings; I tried on my first pair of heels and a party dress: it was red, velvet, lightly plunging. I wore it a few Fridays to go to concerts at the Teatro Principal. We had free tickets because the Council Board sent them, every week, to the school. You detested the performances by that provincial orchestra that fought fiercely with their violins, trumpets and cymbals. However you would go, and sit near our box suite. You would close your eyes while the lights were out and only the stage was illuminated. From time to time I would notice a blink, you would half-raise your eyelids and look at me sideways... One day –we were leaving a “disconcert” where we had listened to a bad version of Bach– you told me that I was piercing you with my gaze. You asked me what I wanted to ask from you with such a deep stare, as if I were searching for your soul. I

answered you –I cross my heart that I was sincere– that I always looked that way when someone caught my attention. It was then that you put your hands on my hair for the first time: you made me tremble from head to toe and it frightened me. I liked your hands so much! They are still so nice: long fingers, the palest skin, cautiously groomed nails. I felt happy when you took my hand and we would walk, like lovers, around the city. You showed me old corners that you had discovered in your adolescence, when the affinity for walking at dusk was born in you. My eyes, which were yours, because I saw the world just as you looked at it, captured the shades, the forms, the colours, the details that surprised you. I was so worried about keeping your attention that I would even make the effort to guess and translate your impressions, making them pass for my own in an almost unconscious way. Even today, ten years later, I can get excited about wandering, with my eyes closed, without moving from here, the fishing village of Puig –hills, steps, public fountains– that reminded you of some nook of a port in Naples. The children went around naked, playing with empty cans, bothering the cats, and the women in housecoats, tangled and dirty, screamed gossip from their doorsteps. Or I can also –I’d only need your touch– follow your slow steps through the old stone streets, of stately façades on the way back from the cathedral... I cross the Puerta del Mar, enter the central nave, breathe the strong odour of incense...

Some afternoons we would go out to the country. The water in the ditches overflowed and the almond trees mimicked slight wave crests, foamy and white between their branches. Winter, determined to deny the calendar, turned its back on us, going deep, cross-country, into the mountains. On the plains spring was already discernable, between wavering petals that fought to find their profile in the ancient memory of the

earth, that place where tubers or roots hide. With you I encountered two abandoned towns, Biniparraix –uninhabited due to the phantoms that frightened their neighbours with mysterious visits– and Biniarroy, flattened by a storm. There was no road to get there, hardly a few difficult goat paths that lost themselves in strange shortcuts, up the hill, penetrating into little forests of Holm oak and brushes that smelled like rosemary. We didn't tend to talk during the excursion. Your arm wrapped around my waist, at times I would lean my head on your shoulder and you would kiss me like nobody has done since.

At the same time that I was discovering the world, love began to discover me in order to take me over. Neither in books nor in films did I learn to live the story of our history. I was learning to live; I was learning to die, little by little, although I didn't know it when, clutching you, I refused to let the time pass: I wanted to stay by your side forever, never to stop, not for an instant, feeling your skin graze mine. The world viewed from your arms was beautiful and sad, an unnameable colour, lilac blue, at times blazing beneath a layer of neon makeup.

The fog dies down, dense, slow, in the streets; it vanishes in the gutters, fades between parked cars. The sadness of these hours, gripped by heartbeats, arrested in tears, brings me back to you: greedy, above all, for that happiness grafted in the kisses that we loved so much. We loved so, so many things! The damp ground after the rain, the ardent burst of poppies in the wheat fields, the café patios full of sun, the deserted beaches, the nights of our imaginary dates and the love, above all else the love that, at the time, we never spoke of.

Our relationship lasted exactly eight months and six days. It broke off because of the scandal and your fear of facing a double responsibility. You didn't have enough strength, or enough confidence in me. You were obsessed with the idea that one day, I could blame you for that love that we called friendship. They threatened you in the name of morality and of proper conduct; they spoke to you of corrupted behaviour, of the perversion of minors. You received anonymous notes with sick insults... I had to tolerate giggles and comments made in half-whisper. More than once my classmates changed their topic of conversation when they noticed that I was coming, but no one, except my father, dared speak to me face to face and deal with reality. I can still see his face and how it tenses up, still hear the bitter tone of his voice, but I have forgotten his words. I only remember two sentences that, like a catchy commercial jingle, have frequently accompanied me. "This is the path of depravation. I will send you to Barcelona if this lasts one more day." Now I can explain it to you. Then, I would have hurt you very much and I wanted to avoid your suffering at all costs. I lied to you: nobody had said anything to me. The whole world was behaving normally, like before, and my father sent me to spend the summer off of the island as a reward for the good marks I had gotten on my final exams.

For me, desolation will always have the face of those days: I was summoned by slugs and snails, I ate exquisite sandwiches full of poisonous mushrooms and fruits corroded by worms. I tried pastries that hid a knife with no handle in the meringue, and wines that concealed perfectly that they originated in spit. They filled me with tonics and advice. I have never felt so bad or so foreign to myself. Empty, powerless, I started to hate everything: the people, the city, the summer that was slowly starting, the landscapes

I had loved so much. I even reached the point of wishing for absurd stumps in place of branches in the trees, and flattened fields converted to fetid-smelling garbage dumps. And, nevertheless, I kept intact that enormous capacity for love that nourished itself exclusively from you and, without leaving the smallest trace on anything else, returned entirely to you. The last evening, we were on the Paseo Marítimo. We had parked the car by the yacht harbour, I started crying, looking for shelter in your arms that rejected me. The thousands of lights dancing in the bay tickled my eyes. Between the tears I could see slices of ships and pieces of sea. Your nerves were on edge. The exhausting tension of the past few days put a tragic grimace on your face. You didn't want to look at me. Finally you turned to me and with a desperate motion ran your hand through my hair like the first time. I closed my eyes and told you I loved you. You made me be quiet. The words came mechanically out of your mouth, as if somebody was dictating them to you: "This cannot continue. Our relationship doesn't make any sense."

Suddenly, the crashing of the sea invaded my ears –I wasn't listening to you anymore– and it dragged me behind it, abandoning me in the middle of the waves. Water was pounding on the porthole glass. The calm of the sky was reflected by a blue so intense that it hurt my eyes, but I couldn't tell if it was the colour of the sea or of your gaze. I didn't need to conceal, like other times, my need for you, nor mask a pleading caress beneath a furtive touch. I was beside you, alone, in your cabin. My classmates wouldn't have noticed my absence because they were entertained on deck, sunbathing. I had all the time in the world ahead of me... The trip lasted so many hours, and I felt rabidly happy. I lay down beside you in the bunk bed. Foam of the waves, seagull wings, dolphin wakes kept us company through the round, full moon window, a mid-day moon,

though, of our porthole. Slowly you began to undress. You took off your clothes without looking at me, with a gesture that wanted to be natural and that now I suspect was steeped in perverse honesty. You covered yourself with a sheet. Perhaps you were afraid of me, afraid that by looking at your naked body, perhaps for a moment you had imagined that I would pull back and run away, frightened by the spectacle that, for the first time, was offering itself to me. I assure you that I was not scared. My heart was beating very hard and inside me were being drawn back the veils of the most beautiful adolescent dream. I had always found your body to be lovely. I felt, in those moments, like satisfying my eyes, looking at it for all the time I wanted. So I uncovered it. And it appeared perfect, like a statue that I myself sculpted in that moment, because my eyes were the ones that, for the first time, chiselled and polished its outline. My eyes saw it as no one had seen it before. Later, in an old ritual, my fingers danced over your skin, glided affectionate and delicate to return to drawing, one by one, the contours of your body. And the cornered kisses, the kisses that died so many times on the tip of lips, before being born, could finally spill free, tremble insatiably, stagger on the bank of the enclosed space or trip over the borders that stopped them from going further inside... Then you asked me, not with your voice but with touch, permission to undress me. You wanted to do it yourself, you insisted, to savour the moments that separated us from the instant in which, finally, you would see me naked; prolonging, despite the urgency of your desire, those minutes to, in that way, extend them. Second by second –in the clock of our veins it was the height of midday– my body trembled, caressed by your hands, we got closer together as if we were answering very strong calls of an ineffable and mysterious place, a place outside of time, of space –an afternoon, a boat– made, however, to our measure and where we were going

to fall unsaved. Unsaved because that was the only way to save ourselves, because there, in the depths, in the kingdom of the absolute, of the ineffable, was waiting for us the beauty that was confused with our image, interlaced in the immense mirror that the sea fought to reproduce. And there, in the safe corner, in the body's most intimate fold, the adventure began. Not a sensual adventure, but a spiritual one that would bring me to meet the most remote beating of your being, heading, already and forever, for the mystery of love and death.

I went back and forth between the cabin and your car. From the present past to the momentary present. I found shelter in the old tenderness of your voice, so that your harsh words wouldn't hurt me so much. You had decided not to see me throughout the summer, you didn't want anybody to blame you for leaving a mark on my life forever. You started the car. I asked if we could stay. I needed to promise you, with all my strength, that I would never, ever forget you. The expression on your sad face was distant when you forbid me from writing to you and asked me for everything that was the opposite of what I was offering you: forgetting.

I spent the summer on a popular beach, at my aunt and uncle's house. Leisure activities –swimming, sunbathing, going for drinks, to eat, for a walk, going to the movies or dancing– bored me. My behaviour was very strange: the only thing I was excited about was that which had yet to begin.

I didn't forget you: every night I wrote to you and cautiously saved the letters in a box locked up tight, imagining that one day you would read them one by one. I know now that it was a light scratch of happiness to think that reading my letters would one day take up much of your time, during which you would return, inexorably, to me. I felt

jealous of everything that surrounded you, of everything I didn't know. Of your comings and goings in the city, of the people you could meet, of your work. That summer you had planned to finish your thesis, started some time ago and almost at the point of being completed. You had asked me to help you go through tables of contents and organize the bibliography, which would allow me to be with you at all times. Where were you with all of this paperwork? Not knowing filled me with sadness. If, at least, I had some news of you! You didn't want to write down my address. You tore up the paper that I wrote it on, and you covered your ears when, on the way from my house, I repeated it to you.

“It's better for time to pass.”

“Do you think that time will erase everything?”

“It can, if we cooperate.”

I didn't cooperate. The only thing that consoled me was that summer would pass quickly. I wanted so badly for autumn to arrive so I could go back to Palma. I didn't know if my father had decided to pull me out of school to avoid, not only me seeing you but also you teaching me. Registration closed in the middle of September but, when I would write to my parents, I didn't dare ask what they were planning to do with me for the school year. I was lucky, much more so than I expected: they registered me in the same school. I imagine that they did it after consulting my aunt and uncle about the normality of my summer behaviour and arriving at the conclusion that three months' separation and dealing with boys my own age had changed me.

I arrived in Palma just one week before classes started. I anxiously awaited the moment I would see you. But I didn't want to risk calling your house, even less going there. I limited myself to walking the streets of your neighbourhood, lurking beneath your

balcony, near the doorstep. I refused, however, to abandon hope of seeing you again. I went to the places where you and I had been and, often, I thought I could hear your footsteps. But you wouldn't appear. And I kept going around to all of our corners. I was searching for something more than your face, the smell of your perfume, or the charm of your gazing at the walls, the façades, the stones, the asphalt, the olives, the almonds, the fields, the flowers, the sea water or the rainwater... I was searching for something more indefinable. I thought that nothing would go back to being as it was before you looked at it. Because all of the things, even the most insignificant ones, would always bear your mark.

I didn't see you until the day classes began. You were on the platform with the authorities and the other professors. I, from the last row of seats in the assembly hall, was looking at you. I don't think that you noticed my presence, despite the efforts I made to communicate with you. When the commotion was over –the cloying voice of the director who inaugurated, in the name of the Chief of State, the new school year– I thought that, finally, I could see you up close. You left in a hurry with the other professors and went to have the drinks that, like every year, were offered by the administration. We didn't see each other. At two in the afternoon you were still there. I had no other option than to go home.

The banana trees were already yellowing on the nineteenth-century street. A gust of wind blew off the first leaves and left a branch ridiculously naked. Later, when it tired of playing with them, it abandoned them right at my feet. I stepped on them and they crunched. It was then that I perceived the first signs of autumn, I noticed the first symptoms, and La Rambla, boxed in between the convents' garden walls, seemed to me

longer and more inhospitable than ever. I crossed the street without looking. A car braked and stopped a hand's width from me. It was yours. You got out. Your face, contorted, reflected terror.

“I could have killed you!”

I hugged you with so much force, with so much fury, that you almost fell. You didn't ask me to get into the car. It was I who, in front of everyone's astonished eyes, got in and closed the door. I was seeing you again! Your gaze seemed sadder, more tired, to me, the expression on your face prematurely aged.

“Where do you want me to take you?”

I didn't answer you. You took the Avenida de Jaime III. You insisted. You were in a hurry. When you were sure that I wasn't planning to get out, you parked the car by the sidewalk. It was lunchtime. The city was deserted. I needed your touch, your lips, your hands. I needed you to look at me. I needed to tell you that I still loved you, that I had missed you, that I didn't want to be separated from you. You agreed to listen to me, though in a soft but firm voice you asked that I understand the situation and that I control myself:

“Time has passed and now everything is much clearer. Our relationship doesn't make any sense. It isn't good for it to continue. I don't want to hurt you, or for you to hurt me. We couldn't do anything with this love that doesn't go anywhere, that has no purpose...”

I didn't respond despite not agreeing with your arguments, because I *did* know, I still know now, that the only purpose of love was, is, simply, love.

We saw each other many afternoons after that day. We were meticulous in our proper behaviour. In class, when you addressed me, you marked the distance with an exquisite coldness and to accentuate your detachment even more, you exaggerated your intolerance with me. One day you even scolded me publicly because instead of handing in an exercise sheet I gave you a paper with drawings of boats, gulls and suns... You scolded me because you understood perfectly what I meant and, deep down, you liked it. Your harshness was the mask you used to cover a weakness about to break. I addressed you constantly, and I asked you to repeat explanations because I didn't understand. I asked you questions, interrupted your lesson to make insolent observations... And I used an aggressive tone that concerned you. I wanted, at any cost, for you to notice my presence. I was getting revenge for all the suffering you had inflicted on me.

It was the middle of May when I met Javier and started to go out with him. His aura of an antifascist activist, with some years in jail under his belt, the mysterious demeanour with which he dressed himself, were very positive ingredients when it came to securing my interest. However, I think I liked his stories more than him. He knew how to season them with heroic inventions –later, I learned that they were just that– that he made them pass for secrets dedicated exclusively to me, sometimes interrupted by sweet nothings whispered in French, remnants that had stuck with him, he said, since his years in exile.

Many afternoons, Javier would wait for me outside of class and, even though he tended to wait in a discreet place, –he was stubborn about habits he had developed in secrecy and that he would never fully give up– you noticed his presence. What I don't understand is how you were able to connect him to me from the beginning. Were you

spying on me? On occasion we would pass you on the Paseo Marítimo. You never greeted us. You didn't see us, but you would watch us in the rear-view mirror until the distance made us disappear. Despite Javier and his stories, which fascinated me, making me feel part of a heroic resistance, I was still waiting for you. Sometimes, seeing you drive by, I would resist the urge to run toward your car and jump in beside you, in the front seat, although I think at that time it was usually taken: with her blue dress, invisible, jealousy rode with you.

Before exams in June, using the rewriting of a midterm as an excuse, you sent for me. You must have considered that a math seminar was not the most appropriate place for a conversation that, two minutes in, had nothing academic about it. You scheduled to meet me one afternoon at a café. I pretended I wasn't feeling well and left school before the end of my last class. I wanted to let Javier know, so he wouldn't be waiting for me, but more than that I wanted to carefully brush my hair and put on the white outfit that you used to like so much.

When I arrived you were waiting for me. You tried to be friendly; you even squeezed me lightly when I leaned in to greet you, despite the presence of familiar faces. You asked how things were going for me, and with a certain tone of worry you asked about Javier, about our (you emphasized the plural) plans. You were trying to avoid my eyes. Yours were locked on the glass of beer in front of you or were hypnotizing, I don't know for what purpose, the old stains on the tablecloth. You didn't know what to do with your hands. I interrupted your thoughts and said your name. You don't know how many times I've repeated it, sliding consonants and vowels, almost tangible, almost the flesh of a caress, between my lips! Or how many times I've thought it, trying to discover where

the miracle happened to put together the five letters that make it up and give it meaning!
And, saying it or, simply, thinking your name has always brought me back to the first
time I said it without a polite title before it, just like you asked me to do.

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing.”

“Why did you say my name?”

“You seem like you’re somewhere else. Tell me what’s wrong.”

“The end of the semester is exhausting, I have tons of exams to correct. I’m tired.
Besides, you’re worrying me. I was too weak, getting you involved in the whole affair
that you, no doubt, must regret now that your life has taken such a turn... And I’m happy
for you! Javier is a good economist. If he were able to find work, and dedicate himself
less to politics...”

“You’re talking as if you were my mother.”

“I assure you, I wouldn’t mind being her.”

I came to study in Barcelona. We wrote to one another. Your letters were so
beautiful, not entirely sincere, intentionally optimistic, sometimes full of advice and
warnings. Mine, in which I told to you about everything I was discovering: the city, the
people, were sad. However, my sadness adorned with ochres and greys, with walls and
clouds, faded between the lines of cursive –so insecure, by the way– until it vanished
completely. Perhaps for that reason the melancholy, the anguish and the yearning were
not easily perceptible after I closed and stamped the envelope. One time, below the
stamp, in a flea’s writing, I had written you some loving phrase. It was a surprise that I

kept for you in case you decided to peel off the stamp, driven by a voice, dampened but precise, indicating to you the exact place of the secret. But you never confirmed it.

One night I wrote you the longest letter, a mix of confidence and confession, in which my youth collapsed forever. When I started writing I didn't want to address it to you. I tried to invent a new recipient, somebody I wasn't tied to in any way. But it ended up being impossible for me to strain my imagination that far. And because I insisted on forgetting your name and your address, I wrote to the sea, our accomplice, with the secret intention that the waves, with their countless voices, would bring, right to your doorstep, news of me. I tried to write nicely, to reproduce the exquisite English calligraphy that I learned in my childhood, taking great pains with each line. –The pen profiles the peaked Ts, the Ls; it squares off, even more if it will fit, the angular Js; it slants the writing lightly to the right, and slides across the paper with such delay, so delicately, as if it were caressing you. The pen does not contour the chubby Os, nor does it linger in the curve of the esses; nor does it take great pains over the dimensions of the letters. Now it writes, barely separating the words, stacking them up, throwing them over the edge of one line onto another. The pen reveals the violence of a caress that doesn't take notice of the clothes that it wrings until it lavishes the skin. While I was explaining things to you, I was explaining them to the sea, with all the sincerity possible because that night I refused to sleep, forcing myself to stay awake.

I don't have the letter anymore. But I read it so many times that I could still recite, or better, copy down, a few paragraphs all in one try. Don't worry; I won't fall into that temptation. I tore it up on the edge of dawn and the wind carried it away from the

windowpane, scattering it in a thousand pieces when daybreak, at the last breath of the streetlights, began to peek through the blinds.

Of the memories from that time, the one from that night tends to accompany me frequently. It is to the impenitent memory of my bitter hours that I owe the talent of securing myself in the past, returning it to myself in all its splendour, a splendour that many times it didn't have, as if I could make up for the grey tones that it was wrapped in. I often wallow in that spring, a spring that still hadn't found its definitive profile, but whose sap penetrated me, crossing boundaries of skin to bring me life. In a chalet near to the Colegio Mayor there was a party. The echo of the music reached me, dampened but audible. The garden was in bloom, the trees' branches full. On the floor the silhouettes were sketched of couples dancing. But I didn't want to be there.

The humid air of the port reached the Vía Layetana. If you tried, the smell of the sea was also noticeable. In a cell, in the basement of police headquarters, a classmate was taken prisoner, perhaps tortured. They had arrested him in the morning while we were participating in a rally. I was beside him, but they let me go, calmly, without even asking me for identification. He was a prisoner, and I was free! I felt like a game piece, responsible for the wilted roses and the dead birds, guilty. And between the anguish and fear I traced, awkwardly, on paper, a faint glimmer of hope. I insisted on staying up, on escaping the sleep that fought to close my eyes, despite the desire that put up scaffolding and braced it. I stayed awake all night. I wanted to share from far away Jaime's empty hours in jail, give him, without him knowing, the gift of my sleep and my sad tenderness, my fury as well and my helplessness that mixed with the muted echo of the music and of

memories of you. Soaked in worrisome, oppressive sensations, captured by unease, uncertainty, eager for you, I felt, however, useful, despite the uselessness of my efforts.

Years passed. May tended to arrive stuck to October. The beginning and the end of the school year occurred with hardly any time between them. I accepted with no problem my discordance with the calendar, which I only took into account when it came time to check exam dates. Then I took the time I had saved and invested it in the final training for the marathon. It was quite an effort for me, because during the school year I had barely attended class. And even though I was on campus every day, I preferred to walk in the garden or sit with some classmate on the patio benches. Normally, I would run into a group of Mallorcans that would get together on Sunday afternoons and have patriotic, funereal buffets, hanging off of the *sobrasadas* and *ensaimadas*—pastries that their family would send from Mallorca. It amused them to take up hours rambling about the goodness of the island and the comforts of the bourgeois life that they identified with. Their conversation did not entertain me at all, but the fact that someone would often mention your name —you taught the majority of them— or make reference to you made up for it.

Five years. Five years that were never-ending, so long, or perhaps too brief. Classes without interest, not even passive, neutral. Conferences at the University, in the Ateneo, in the student residences... Discussions about sex, contraceptives, political parties, the referendum; a prestigious professor, almost the leader of the opposition, analyzes, conceited, arrogant —he buys his suits in London— the university situation in his snobbiest Andalusian accent. His submissive little wife takes notes from the first row. Her husband speaks so well! A Spanish researcher, neither exported nor exportable,

counters the theory of relativity with clear and uncompromising arguments. A married couple demonstrates, on a round table, the living testimony of their Christian love. Their children, dopey and rude, move about and fight in the audience. Nova Cançó festivals—Raimón, his shirt open and rebellious, one glorious morning in the Instituto Químico de Sarriá. Performances by the Setze Jutges; Catholic, sentimental Guillerminas and childish, faithful Serrats. Readings recommended by others: Freud, Marx, Joyce, Faulkner, then Vargas, García Márquez, Cortázar, Donoso, Lezama... Films in cine-clubs, that I didn't know your opinion on. Sunset in Montjuïc, Sitges, Arenys, Blanes, trips to Montesny, to the Costa Brava. Works of experimental theatre. Poetry readings, they arrested me for putting on a show in homage to León Felipe. Meetings organized by CC.OO, by the PSUC... Other lips' kisses, other hands' caresses... Life went on with very hurried slowness. A prolonged shiver was a physical reference that tended to assimilate into memories of you. I wasn't often able to free myself from them, despite my attempts to erase your image, to chop you out of my memory. I wanted new cuttings in a new spring. My will, however, refused to pull up the roots.

On vacation, we didn't always coincide. You travelled a lot during those summers. You went to a couple of international mathematics conferences in Moscow, in Paris, in Tokyo, from where you would send me postcards: The Red Square, the Eiffel Tower, the Royal Palace... The words were usually in line with the topic. The letters danced in the blank space: Greetings from Paris, Moscow, Tokyo..." Nothing else. It was in Tokyo that you met a Jewish mathematician, recommended for the Nobel Prize, very rich, it seemed, and who made indecent proposals to you. One fine day he appeared in Palma with the intention of bringing you with him: he wanted you to help him do

research at his university in the U.S. He offered you whatever money you asked for on top of his unselfish protection. In Palma, nobody could talk about anything else, because he himself confessed to the reporters his intentions when it came to you. People said that it would be madness to let such a good opportunity pass you by. I wonder why you didn't go. I wonder, though I think I can guess your motives without fear of being wrong.

Just a few months after finishing my degree in Sciences I went to your house to invite you to my wedding. I was marrying a classmate, a Catalanian, whom I had been seeing for months. Toni and I announced our wedding to you with an old-fashioned visit, a courtesy call, that concealed Toni's curiosity to meet you, seeing as I had told him our history from beginning to end, sifting through it with him. He was very interested in my story but it wasn't important to him. He liked you a lot. He found you intelligent, friendly, though he noticed something strange, worrisome, obscurely dangerous in the way you looked.

The day of the wedding you told me that you wished me all the happiness in the world, all that you would have wanted to give me. You said it with a trembling of your lips, as if, suddenly, a chill ran through your body. I hugged you to thank you and I said –did you hear it?– that I still loved you.

Someone saw how you covered your face with your hands; someone noticed that you were crying when you went home at night from the hotel where we had dinner.

I don't know if circumstances will allow you to receive this letter, or if you'll understand it in case Toni sends it to you, like I've asked him to. Months ago, when you came to Barcelona for a couple of days, I announced the birth of a child to you. The due date is approaching. The doctor says that within two weeks, the baby will be born. I'm

afraid, really afraid. I feel too fragile, and my strength is failing me. I think it's possible that I'll never know the girl, because she will be a girl, and if I don't do it now I won't be able to decide her name. I want them to give her your name, Maria, and I also want them to throw my body into the sea, not to bury it. I ask you to have them bring my body back to that corner where the water spied on our love. I want to be sand instead of soil. I long for the sea, ours, and I pledge it to you, my love.

Section II: Translation Commentary

This project was undertaken with the primary objective of investigating the role of gender in three versions of the Catalan writer Carme Riera’s short story “Te entrego, amor, la mar como una ofrenda”¹ [I Leave You, My Love, the Sea as an Offering]²: the Spanish-language source text, and my own translations into English and French. As romance languages such as Spanish and French exhibit grammatical gender in ways that English does not, texts written in these languages are able to play on the interaction between the gender of the words themselves and the themes of social gender in a way that an English-language text ostensibly cannot. The goal is to explore the effect of the linguistic category of grammatical gender on the themes of social gender through the process of translation, with special attention paid to the ways in which this interaction can present obstacles in the transfer and adaptation of the text across languages. As will be discussed in more detail later, “Te entrego...” presents an opportunity for a productive case study on this topic. Such a close look is necessary in an effort to avoid the obfuscation and even distortion that can result from disproportionate abstraction in the treatment of issues involving gender and language (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 89); that is, while extrapolation is, to an extent, fundamental in order to draw meaningful conclusions from translation research, it is especially important when gender and language are involved to maintain a close connection between these abstractions and their realization by real groups and traditions.

Before entering into this case study, it is opportune to outline what is meant when referring to gender, and note the differences between the definitions of this word: It is

¹ Henceforth shortened to “Te entrego...”

² Unless otherwise specified, all translations into English are my own.

generally recognized that one of the ways in which languages can be classified is based on whether or not they display grammatical gender. As stated in Nissen:

The determining criterion of gender is agreement, and saying that a specific language has, for example, two genders implies that there are two classes of nouns which can be distinguished syntactically, according to the agreements they take.” (2002)

Grammatical gender of nouns can be arbitrary (such as when referring to inanimate objects –*le plat* in French and *el plato* in Spanish [the plate/dish] are masculine, as demonstrated by the masculine articles *le* and *el*, while *la table* in French and *la mesa* in Spanish are feminine, as demonstrated by the feminine article *la* in both cases– or also determined by the perceived sex of an individual: *le garçon* and *el niño* [the boy] as compared to *la fille* and *la niña* [the girl]. Nouns are not the only parts of speech that can show grammatical gender: for instance, adjectives in both Spanish and French must agree with the noun that they modify –*le plat blanc/la table blanche; el plato blanco/la mesa blanca* [the white plate/the white table]– and certain verb tenses in French require that the participle agree with the perceived gender of the direct object. Finally, it must be noted that in both Spanish and French, the masculine is the default, neutral, and unmarked gender while the feminine is inflected and thus much more difficult to dissimulate. For instance, *les étudiants* in French or *los alumnos* in Spanish can both refer to all-male or mixed groups of students whereas all-female groups must be signalled (*les étudiantes/las alumnas*). In a non-linguistic context, gender can also refer to the variety of physical, behavioural, and other characteristics perceived to qualify an individual as masculine or feminine. It is this definition of gender that is more widely considered to hold social implications.

With these explanations in mind, the intriguing position of Riera's "Te entrego..." can be more fully appreciated: the female narrator of this text recounts "the tender passion she felt and still feels for María, her first love. However, the narrator never names her lover and she never uses pronouns to address her (which is possible in Spanish). Thus the readers don't realize that her lover was a woman" (de Urioste 134). Though de Urioste's summary glosses over the fact that Riera is a Catalan writer, it does identify what, for the purpose of this project, is the crux of Riera's short story: while the grammatical manifestations of gender, namely pronouns and adjectives, used in reference to the narrator and protagonist, Marina³, clearly mark her as feminine, those that are used to refer to the recipient of this romantic letter (who is also Marina's former instructor) are strategically chosen in order to occlude her gender of until the final page. So, although Sherry Simon echoes Walter Benjamin's statement that "gender is not always a relevant factor in translation" (Simon 7), "Te entrego..." is certainly an instance where this normally insignificant category can be considered to carry meaning. The question then arises: what challenges surface in the translation of this story into structurally different languages? How does the process of translating this text into French differ from that into English?

Before entering into more details about the short story, we must acknowledge the somewhat convoluted network of versions of it that exist. In 1980, "Te entrego..." was published in Castilian Spanish as the first section in *Palabra de mujer* [Woman's Word], a collection of Riera's short stories translated by the author herself. This version that I

³ To facilitate reference to this narrator/protagonist throughout the discussion, I will refer to her as Marina although it must be acknowledged that, within the frame of the short story being examined, her name is entirely unknown.

employ as my source text is bookended by two more versions that bear mentioning. It is preceded by the 1975 “Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora”⁴, an earlier Catalan version appearing in an eponymous volume that was also Riera’s first book. It is also followed by Luisa Cotoner’s 1990 translation of the 1975 Catalan “Te deix...”, called “Te deixo, amor, la mar como una prenda”. Finally, many of Riera’s works have been translated rather extensively, with versions of some works in Italian, German, Dutch, English, or Chinese. As it relates to the current project, an English translation by Alberto Moreiras was published in 1988 in *On Our Own Behalf: Women’s Tales from Catalonia*; however, this translation uses the Catalan “Te deix...” (as opposed to Riera’s Spanish “Te entrego...”) as a source text.

Though a more in-depth analysis of the accompanying short story, “Jo pos per testimoni les gavines” [“I Call the Seagulls as Witness”] falls outside of the scope of the current translation project, it is valid to briefly comment on the existence of this text as well as how it relates to the present topic. *Jo pos per testimoni les gavines*, a separate collection of stories that shares a name with its title piece (just as “Te deix...” is the first story in the larger volume *Te deix...*) was published two years after the 1975 Catalan compilation. The importance of this other narrative lies in its relational meaning to the narrative of *Te deix...* While this short story chronicles the amorous relationship between a student and her instructor from the perspective of the former, “Jo pos...” is positioned as a response to this point of view. As demonstrated by Mirella Servodidio, the narrator of this second epistolary text writes to the author of “Te deix...” to give “her own version of [it], which, she claims, overlaps with her life in significant ways” (65), further

⁴ As with “Te deixo...”, “Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora” will henceforth be shortened to “Te deix...”

complicating the author/reader relationship. Servodidio posits that the severing of the lovers' recounting into two parts can be interpreted as a reflection of the societal barriers that drove these characters apart (65). The new, supposedly corrected version of the events in "Te deix..." that is provided by "Jo pos..." "creates an ambiguous register of sameness and difference from its precursor" (Servodidio, 66), providing paratextual reinforcement for the preservation of these themes –ambiguity, and sameness versus difference– in my translation project. This interpretation is made all the more relevant by the fact that in *Palabra de mujer*, Riera's Castilian versions of both these short stories appear immediately in sequence, a drastic distinction not only from the separate volumes that they occupy in Catalan, but also from Cotoner's 1990 edition. The placement of these two stories in the latter resembles the Catalan editions more closely, as they are separated into "Libro I", that is to say, "Te dejo el mar", Cotoner's translation of the Catalan compilation *Te deix...*, and "Libro II", "Y pongo por testigo a las gaviotas", her translation of *Jo pos per testimoni les gavines*. Brad Epps suggests that "Jo pos..." functions not only as an amendment to the events in "Te deix...", a notion that is echoed by Rodríguez who argues that the juxtaposition is, in fact, a vindication of difference within homosexuality (136), but as an attempt at "unwriting" (331) these events as well. This is seen as an authorial nod to the absence of lesbian signs in Spanish and Catalan literatures and cultures (Epps 330): while the first story, told from Marina's perspective, can be viewed as an attempt to give voice to an otherwise "unspeakable" lesbian relationship (Everly 170), the inconceivability of such a departure from the norm prevails and is thus negated by a second story. This consolidates the importance of ambiguity and uncertainty in the text to be translated.

Also interesting to consider are the ways in which these versions have been appraised and incorporated into the multitude of scholarly examinations that have been dedicated to Riera's work. On one end of the spectrum is the entry in the *Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature*, where *Palabra de mujer* is defined as "the Spanish version of several short stories included in *Te deix...* and *Jo pos...*" which, to an unsuspecting Anglophone reader, completely glosses over any process necessary in order to reach this "version". Catherine Bellver, for example, refers to this same compilation as a "Castilian translation" (232), an assessment that simultaneously emphasizes the difference between Riera's own Catalan and Castilian Spanish versions by specifically underlining the translation process, and diminishes the important element of difference that is added by the aspect of self-translation (this notion will be addressed in more detail in the following section). Others, however, elect to operate using this 1980 Castilian version as a point of departure, including Servodidio and Maria Bettaglio. Servodidio assesses that *Palabra de mujer* is a collection of stories drawn from previous Catalan anthologies, "rewritten in Castilian by the author" (65, emphasis mine), drawing comparatively more attention to the differences between Riera's two versions: here, the role of the translation process is replaced by one of complete re-writing and, at times, profound reworking (8) by the author, implying in this case that the relationship between the Catalan and Spanish versions is much looser.

María Pilar Rodríguez provides another occasion of the variety of ways in which this body of work has been examined. She cites *Palabra de mujer* as well as Cotoner's translation, and refers to both throughout her examination. Even further, she comments on the presence of an epigraph in the Catalan "Te deix..." that is absent from Riera's

Spanish version (but included in Cotoner's translation). Rodríguez assesses that this epigraph, containing "a fragment, never written, by Sappho" (111), that is recreated by Riera, offers a comment not only on the fragmentary nature of writing, but also on the cuts that it can suffer in the hands of successive editors and translators across time (112). It is fascinating to note that, even in examinations of Riera's short story that use *Palabra de mujer* as a principal point of reference (that is to say, a version from which this epigraph is totally absent), many scholars elect nevertheless to include an analysis of the Catalan epigraph. These choices can be seen as a testament to the conception of a greater body of work that comprises or contributes to this short story, which in turn reinforces the unique roles of authorship and authorization in this case. Though some do refer to the 1975 Catalan as the "original" (Rodríguez 112), adhering to more traditional notions of translation, Epps for instance asserts that there are "three 'authorized' versions of this text, one in Catalán (or, more precisely still, Mallorquín⁵) and two in Castilian, one translated and adapted by Riera and one (translated by Cotoner) approved by her" (333). I have attempted here to sketch the wide variety of ways in which this collection of texts has been published as well as analyzed. This in no way pretends to be an exhaustive catalogue of these elements, but rather is an attempt to construct a background for the translation of "Te entrego...".

Having sketched the variety of versions and examinations of "Te entrego..." we may now take one step back from our close look at this text, and turn to how it relates to the broader literary and cultural context. Maggie Humm, quoted in Davies, posits that "passing across the borders of national languages is a way of making the arbitrariness of

⁵ Mallorquín: a variant of Catalan native to the island of Majorca, Spain.

national cultures visible” (8). In an area in which one nation, Cataluña, is subsumed within the larger Spanish one, this is a bold statement. However, it does shed some light on the present project. The metaphorical borders between Spanish and Catalanian cultures are, of course, much more complicated than the geographical ones surrounding certain regions of Spain. The daily and constant contact between the two languages could also contribute to a loss of awareness regarding the boundaries between them (Cotner 2004, 65). It could be argued that the intricate web of versions of the short story in question provides a telling snapshot of this complex web of relationships.

In the already fraught context of minority language literature that is translated into majority languages, bilingual authors’ ability and choice to self-translate can further complicate the matter: Michael Cronin asserts that the decision to self-translate into a majority language has much to do with authors’ desire to increase their presence as writers or translators (158). Riera herself supports this, and suggests that writers elect to auto-translate “with the primordial intent of reaching the immense majority” (Glenn et al. 32). Katheryn Everly, in her volume on Catalan women writers and artists, for example, uses the Catalan versions of the texts that she includes “when possible”, her argument being that this will “maintain the tone that the writers intended” (10). This treatment of the relationship between Catalan and Castilian texts eliminates the possibility that authors such as Riera, who self-identifies as fully bilingual, may not only maintain the ‘tone that [they] intended’ during the process of transfer into Castilian, but also that the translation process may result in reevaluations of the original altogether, resulting in new but equally “intended” tones. To claim that the many Catalan writers who opt for self-translation always do so in the same circumstances, or are motivated by the same goal(s), would be

to simplify the matter; however, Luisa Cotoner –who, it bears repeating, herself produced a translation from Catalan to Castilian Spanish of many of Riera’s works and thus offers an unparalleled critical standpoint on the differences between these versions– suggests that this decision could be prompted by the desire to say “the same thing” in the other language (2006: 42). As we will see, this estimation often contrasts with the resulting text: Riera, conversely, acknowledges that the translation process inherently carries with it a certain amount of loss. For this reason, though, Cotoner assesses that Riera does not believe in translation and instead aims to rewrite her works in her other language, creating a new version altogether (2006: 43). Though this judgment reflects a fairly binary view of translation, paradoxically placing translation and sameness at one end of a spectrum and rewriting and difference at the other, it also offer some insight into “Te entrego...” by highlighting some of the author/translator’s theoretical framework. One other aspect of Cotoner’s examination that bears contemplation is that she maintains that the Catalan version is the original (43), despite going on to comment on Riera’s modifications to this version that were in part due to the newly analytical perspective taken during the process of self-translation.

In a more direct assessment of Riera’s (re)writing in Castilian, the consensus is that in “Te entrego...” and in the other stories that accompanied it in its various published versions, Riera’s translation is more blunt than Cotoner’s. Rodríguez posits that, in Riera’s Spanish compilation, the aforementioned second piece “Jo pos...” –called “Y pongo...” in *Palabra de mujer*– is much more clear in its treatment of social codes and morals, and their interaction with lesbianism. She asserts that, in comparison with Cotoner’s 1990 translation, allusions to these themes are more obvious, which

demonstrate the capacity for provocation and even danger that this uncommon type of relationship elicited (140). Cotoner's criticism of Riera's self-translation supports this, as she claims that the modifications made retroactively to what she deems the "original" can at times affect the reach that the stories had in Catalan (2006: 43).

Cotoner explains that Riera's self-translation is characterized by an "intensificación de la coloración afectiva y la exageración de las connotaciones burlescas que comporta cualquier desenfreno erótico visto desde fuera" ["intensification of the affective coloration and the exaggeration of the mocking connotations that are involved with any erotic abandon seen from outside"] (2010: 121), noting that suppressions, amplifications, and adaptations are not only habitual but in fact characteristic of Riera's self-translations (2010: 121). Cotoner judges that, between "Te deix..." and "Te entrego..." Riera "utilizó la supresión de manera tan feroz e indiscriminada que difícilmente puede considerarse aquella tentativa como traducciones *stricto sensu*" ["utilized suppression so ferociously and indiscriminately that it is difficult to consider these attempts as translation in the strict sense"] (2006: 43). She also states that, though Riera still displays some of these tendencies in her self-translations, they no longer endanger the meaning (43), insinuating that in the translation/rewriting process of "Te entrego...", they did just that. This gives a fascinating portrait of the author's complex role in self-translation: simply put, a self-translator is able to take liberties with the text that a typical translator cannot. This is due to the change in views of fidelity that must take place in this unique situation.

Looking to what has now become a classic in the intersecting realms of gender and translation studies will help illuminate this difficulty: in "Gender and the

Metaphorics of Translation” Lori Chamberlain outlines the process of sexualization of translation, using among others the notorious metaphor of *les belles infidèles*. Chamberlain argues that the reason this trope has such permanence in the prevailing Western conception of translation is due to the fact that it still captures “a cultural complicity between the issues of fidelity in translation and in marriage” (315). Chamberlain points out the double standard that becomes apparent when the relationship of a translated text and its “original” is paralleled with a typical marriage contract: that is to say, in marriage, historically, it was legally impossible for a husband to be punished for adultery –the crime of *infidelity*– while the wife was publicly tried. Likewise, a translated text is subject to scrutiny that the source text, considered the ‘original’, is obviously exempt from. She also asserts that “...the meaning of the word “fidelity” in the context of translation changes according to the purpose translation is seen to serve in a larger... context” (319), which is where self-translation comes into play. Obviously, what would be deemed a misinterpretation if committed by an independent translator cannot be considered in this way if the translator *is* the author and the supreme authority normally associated with authorship is maintained.

One can surmise that Riera, at least in this case, capitalizes on these notions of authority in order to make changes to her text(s) that a translator could not—changes that Cotoner designates as translation defects (2006: 43). Cotoner demonstrates that in Riera’s self-translations, one encounters fragments where she has translated literally, almost word for word, placed next to other passages where the author/translator distances herself from her own “source text”, rewriting portions in Castilian Spanish. Cotoner sees this as proof that Riera considers the translated text just as much her own as the original –her

translation, thus, is absolutely equivalent (Cotoner 2006: 45)– but also hints at the fact that this process of authorial adaptation negatively affected *Palabra de mujer* (46).

Although Cotoner's 1990 translation aimed to eliminate what she viewed as detrimental discrepancies between Riera's two versions, her position is also worth critiquing. She calls on Walter Benjamin to put forward that the target-language readership must be recognized, stating that they are the *only* reason to repeat oneself in another language (2006: 45, emphasis mine), and arguing that the translation strategies that Riera employed are not inherently harmful in themselves, but that they should only be used to make a text richer, not to manipulate it and render it unrecognizable (49). While these points can certainly be valid, they are also intensely subjective: firstly, Benjamin's claim that translating specifically for those who cannot read the original is the "only conceivable reason for saying 'the same thing' repeatedly" (15) is one of many potentially controversial statements made in "The Task of the Translator." Another, made just before that, which Cotoner also takes up, is that "in the appreciation of... any art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful" (15). A text such as "Te entrego..." where the reader, to borrow a term from Kristina Kosnick, is truly "acted on" by the text (3) shows the danger of such broad and polarizing statements: I argue that in the context of this particular translation project, the reader must be considered to some extent. What's more, it must be clarified that to make a text noticeably richer in one language than its version in another *is* to manipulate it. To uphold that readers are concerned with being able to "leer lo mismo que contiene el original y disfrutando de un efecto estético equivalente" ["read the same thing as is contained in the original, and that enjoys an equivalent stylistic effect"] (49) is to be both prescriptive and idealistic. Riera

concedes that she was never a professional translator but considers literature as creation through the manipulation of language, which is something that cannot be reproduced (2006: 35-6). Thus it is less a question of how ‘faithful’ either Castilian version is to the Catalan, and more apt to acknowledge the existence and unique legitimacy of all three. Chamberlain reminds us that the gendered metaphors that have come to characterize translation discourse are closely related to, and indicative of, real issues, in this case a “real anxiety” that exists concerning paternity and legitimacy. She comments that, like the Western model of kinship, paternity (that is to say, the masculine) is what legitimizes—not maternity, or the feminine. In a text where themes of gender and heteronormativity are so important, the layer of significance contributed by the process of self-translation is important to consider. It is obvious that Riera’s “Te entrego...” is different from the Catalan “Te deix...”; here, it has been shown that it is likewise different from Cotoner’s “Te dejo...”.

The interaction between Riera’s Catalan and Castilian versions, as well as Cotoner’s Castilian translation of what has been treated equally as the same text and as rewritings or adaptations is multiple, diverse, and confusing, and taking it up now mirrors the historical and the current political context of these two interrelated but different groups of cultures. So, although my translation uses “Te entrego...” as a source text, it is pertinent to address the Catalan context: the language in which this story was first published is also one that, during Francisco Franco’s rule, was legally prohibited from use in public. The period of “compensating liberalization” (Foster 16) following Franco’s death has also been referred to as “El destape” [The Uncovering] (from the verb ‘destapar’: to uncover, as a naked body) due to the profusion of images of naked bodies

that were present in the press, and in theatre (“Eroticism in Contemporary Spanish Women Writers’ Narrative”, 210-11). During this period there was an increase in production of erotic literature, which had hitherto been censored under Franco’s regime. Carme Riera’s work is widely considered to be representative of Catalan woman writers in the post-Franco era in Spain, and, despite the period of comparative freedom that began just after her first book was published, her work broaches topics that are sensitive, alluding to the political atmosphere with characters such as Javier and elements like Marina’s arrest, as well as other themes still less frequently addressed by her contemporaries such as lesbianism. In an interview with Luisa Cotoner, Riera affirms that in 1975, when *Te deix...* was published, the themes that it dealt with were generally considered taboo and thus were not discussed. Riera considers that this allowed her book to connect with young people who, like her, were still “coming out of the black night that was Francoism” (Cotoner 2011:10). It has been postulated that self-translation acquires particular significance in circumstances like that of Catalan within Spain (Simon 2012: 91). Thus, Epps appraises that Riera’s Castilian version of her Catalan short story compilation is “a considerably altered adaptation [of the Catalan] (for a considerably altered Spain)” (333). It is undeniable that “Te entrego...” is different from “Te deix...” in more ways than the linguistic disparity; however, it is important to be aware of this precursor, as well as of the factors surrounding all three “authorized versions”. For this reason I include the following sketch of Catalan and Spanish identities, alongside questions of femininity and language in this situation. As this project was selected for principally linguistic and literary reasons (that is to say, not for my own cultural

proximity to it), it is of paramount importance in the translation process to be able to acknowledge this distinction and situate myself in relation to these factors.

Though the experience of various permutations of exile has resulted in this being a stimulating motif throughout Spanish writing as a whole, Everly demonstrates that Cataluña during the second half of the twentieth century was a particularly fertile ground for women to express themselves in novel and intriguing ways, as the struggle with physical and national displacement caused by civil war combined with the metaphorical feminine exile from dominant culture to open up a space of liberation in which women could express themselves in creative ways (9, 14). She posits that the particular development of these feminine Catalan identities renders this literary context unique, suggesting that Cataluña's regional separation from the rest of Spain sets a stage that incites women writers to "go a step further" and experiment with their own sense of gender separation within their culture (15). The work done by Geraldine Nichols supports this: she refers to a double-marginalization or a double-rebellion (Nichols 1989: 13, 203) of Catalan women writers, which Riera echoes in interview: on one hand, women are separate from the majority Castilian-language worlds of lived experience and of literature in Spain, but they also occupy a role secondary to that of males in a patriarchal society. Nichols wonders: are post-war Spanish women writers not all inheritors of Catholic misogyny? Did they not all suffer the effects of a long political campaign geared to mystify one sole feminine role (motherhood); one sole attitude (abnegation)? (12). Her interrogative tone has been explicitly included here as it is crucial, in discussions of cultures, of literatures, as well as of translation in general and especially of the relationship to minority ones, not to speak in absolutes.

The potential for tension in the relationship between Castilian and Catalan was made even more acute by the migration of Spanish-speakers to Cataluña during and due to the Franco regime; not only was there a difference between various Castilian and Catalan speaking cultures, but now these differences were forced to coexist in much closer proximity. In these conditions, language became “cargad[o] de poder y peligro” [“loaded with power and danger”] (Nichols 1989: 16). Riera herself, in an interview with Nichols, does not identify as a separatist but does specify that *her* language is Majorcan Catalan (1989: 197, emphasis mine). She believes that the purpose of language(s) is communication, and therefore has no problem with the use of Castilian Spanish. However, she also asserts that one does not choose the language in which they write: because she lived experiences that she draws on in her fiction are in Catalan, she writes in Catalan instead of Castilian. The following excerpt from Davies, though referring specifically to a different Catalan author (Montserrat Roig), is applicable to the current analysis of Riera’s work:

When discussing the women’s issues raised in her narrative the reader should be ever mindful that these gender-related questions are being focused through the medium of the Catalan language which, as a minority and recently persecuted language, shed its own special vindicatory light on all other topics raised... Spanish is the language of power and domination, while the language of love and affection is Catalan.
(Davies 8)

Riera disagrees with the commonly held view, expressed here, that Castilian is the language of the conquerors (Nichols 1989: 198), a factor that must be taken into consideration. What is also fascinating here is the strong link that Davies draws between Catalan language and cultural identity: it would follow that the use of Castilian Spanish is seen as decidedly less in line with Catalan cultural preservation, yet this need not be the case. In fact, if one dismisses the idea that the author necessarily loses her (minority)

language by (re)writing in more widely-recognized Spanish, one can consider that she herself is effectively translated into her other language (Cronin 148).

Nichols suggests that the literary creativity among Catalan women writers, which can take the form of affinity for narrative form, characterization, and symbolism, among other elements, is due to their common origin and situation within Spanish society (Nichols 1989: 13). The double-marginalization mentioned above is thus not straight forward: added to it is the paradox of bourgeois women within Catalan society, who occupied a space at once inferior to men in general, but also superior to all members of other classes in a period where such social divisions had been sharpened by civil war (Nichols 1989: 16). It is interesting to note that the socio-economic standing of Carme Riera's family contributed in many ways to her bilingualism: growing up in the 1950s and 60s, she spoke Castilian with the housemaids, while her parents spoke to her in Mallorquí; she also received an education almost exclusively in Castilian Spanish. Cotoner associates Riera's contact with the rural Catalan population with an understanding of the resigned passivity of women with regard to the secondary role that they were to carry out in life (1990: 14). Despite the fact that Riera's upbringing taught her that proper little girls should not ask questions, perhaps it could also be considered to contribute to her ability to comment on her society/ies in the way that she did.

With this unique and potentially polemical position in mind, it becomes all the more impressive that Riera boasts many literary awards: the Premi Prudenci for *Una primavera per a Domenico Guarini* (1981), the Premi de Novella Ramón Llull for *Joc de miralls* (1989), the prestigious Premio Nacional de Narrativa in 1995, which could be seen as being representative of the change that was beginning to take place in Spain at

that time: a writer of “minority” language and gender was, in a way, embraced as a major artist through these signs of recognition (Servodidio 8). Cotoner affirms that *Te deix...* was published in 32 editions—a spectacular feat in a minority language (1990: 13). In the above-mentioned *Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature* this success is classified as a “Catalan bestseller” (“Short Fiction by Women Writers: 1975-1998, Post-Franco” 579). Epps also notes the renown of the series, Austral (Espasa-Calpe), in which Cotoner’s later translation was published, and suggests that this indicates “commercial visibility, if not growing academic acceptance” of Riera’s work (333). However in some areas of public opinion, success in these domains did not necessarily equate to quality; in others, it was seen as a sign that too many awards had been distributed (Servodidio 8). The commercial success of Riera’s work did not result in a comparable amount of criticism thereof: although the 1975 Catalan edition, released on the Día del libro [Book Day], sold out, upon being re-released there were still no critiques of it in the press, i.e. in periodicals. It was not until a year later that they began to appear: Riera, in an interview with Geraldine Nichols, attributes this to critics discovering her work through the readers, and suggests that the most important Catalan critics were not concerned with her work. In support of this point, Nichols states elsewhere that market success did not, in fact, change critics’ views of women writers in Spain (10). In another interview, this time with Cotoner, Riera points out that once critics finally began to pay some attention to *Te deix...* they commented primarily on her “sensibilidad” [sensitivity], a machista label used to qualify literature written by women (Cotoner 2011: 12). Riera’s entrance into the domain of letters in Spain came at a significant turning point in society, which should be kept in mind when considering the linguistic and social implications of her short story.

All of these factors combine to form the background of Riera's work. Nichols' summary of this context is apt: she acknowledges that it would be reductionist to say that the body of literature written by women in post-war Spain is owed exclusively to specific historic, geographical and social circumstances, but contends that during this period it is undeniable that a peculiar synergy was produced in Cataluña between nationality and sex (Nichols 1992: 17).

In his book of essays on twentieth-century feminine fiction in Spain and Latin America, Stephen M. Hart postulates that in Riera's work it is viable to compare the "idea of feminine language within language" to the situation of Catalan within Castilian (86). Literature by women in Spain, though united by important gender-based commonalities, is characterized even more by its diversity. David William Foster points out a variety of elements that characterized Spain until well into the 20th century, including the Catholic Church, the bourgeoisie, and Franco's fascist dictatorship (iv). All of these contributed to an atmosphere in which little overtly homosexual literature was published. What little writing from this time that does address themes which are in any way non-heterosexual can be described as "manifestations of social dissidence" and was received according to the paradox of contemporary homophobia (Foster ix): legal as well as traditional, societal obstacles made it difficult for gender issues to be dealt with directly, while critics generally refused to discuss alternative gender(s) and sexualities were these topics not explicit to begin with. Furthermore, female homosexuality was predominantly absent from Spanish literature; thus, even within the minority body of gay Spanish writing, comparatively less still is known about lesbian literature. It was not until the 1990s that an "out" lesbian author appeared: Wallace stresses that this illustrates a

lack of “lesbian leaders” in this context (18). Rodríguez provides a link to Riera’s short story, not only confirming the existence of a cultural absence of lesbian representation but also demonstrating that within “Te entrego...” the older María’s body and experience serve as the only models for younger Marina (120).

Ramon Acín, cited in Davies, stresses the fact that the popularity enjoyed by women novelists (among whom he lists Rosa Montero, Montserrat Roig, and Carme Riera) in Spain beginning in this era (that is to say, in the 1980s) was due to public demand for novels about women (3). In Roig’s words, “feminism arrived late and badly in Spain” (Davies 15): in Spain, there was no first wave feminism as such, mainly due to the strength of the right wing, Catholic ideology in the dominant classes, and among women themselves (Davies 14). The 1970s did see a “boom” of feminine literature in Spain, which resulted in an increase in sales success and visibility, and has since received increasing attention (see Nichols 1992, Davies, Cotoner 1977). Geraldine Nichols separates this era of feminine narrative in Spain into two generations: Carme Riera is among the authors generally considered to belong to this boom, and her situation after Franco’s death aligns her with the second generation along with, for instance, Montserrat Roig and Esther Tusquets, not only publishing some twenty years after the first generation but also entering into a clear dialogue with their objectives: in the second generation the focus shifts from assigning blame to those guilty for the disgraces that Catalan women suffered and moves toward the future, not unlike the protagonist of the short story around which this project is centered (Nichols 1992: 27-36). Another important factor to consider with regard to these two literary eras is the latter’s use of

Catalan, which further widens the gap between them and their predecessors, who wrote principally in Castilian Spanish (Nichols 1992: 36).

It is fascinating that, in her outline of themes present in her source text *Te deix...*—which include love, the passage of time, the senses as a source of knowledge, the mystification of female beauty, and the attraction to the abysmal— it is not until the very end that Cotoner lists “la denuncia de la explotación de que es objeto la mujer por parte de la sociedad en general y del varón en particular, sin caer por ello en manifiestos feministas” [“the denouncing of exploitation of women by society in general and by men in particular, without falling into feminist manifestos”] (33). This assessment appears to be indicative of a reluctance to marry feminism and literary writing: Davies asserts that there is no shortage of women writers in Spain, but that “the majority dislike intensely any suggestion that they are... writing feminist fiction” (5). Riera, for example, shows great interest in French feminist theory and claims she would never have written her award-winning novel, *Una primavera per a Domenico Guarini*, if it were not for the importance of these readings. Yet even she admits that her priority is to “write good literature, no matter what her ideas, and to continue to defend women’s rights as a person, not as a writer” (Davies 6). Ellen Mayock contends that contemporary women writers in Spain tire of the “eternal questions: Are you a feminist writer? Do you write differently?” (6). Davies suggests that this hesitance to openly profess feminist literary objectives is due to the fact that it could ironically foment patriarchal ideals within Spanish literary criticism and scholarship: critics could then legitimately separate women into a category of their own (7). It appears that Riera’s own situation does reflect this bias; she states that in her context there is no critique, only men who write for the newspaper (Nichols, 199).

The prevalence of this traditional way of thinking is something Riera looked to change with her writing, by demonstrating that critics should look for new and different ways of describing literature written by women.

On the topic of writing style, Maria Àngels Francés draws attention to a study done on the “generation archetype” in Catalan writers of the seventies (regardless of gender): this refers to a particular type of text recounted by a narrative character who shares a childhood with, and therefore can reflect the view of, the author (69). Nichols associates this generation archetype with the second generation of Catalan women writers, and also comments on the spatio-temporal similarities between characters and authors in the texts written in this situation, noting that the result is texts that are “pseudo-autobiographical” (1992: 36). Within this archetype, the women writers’ focus tends to be on the general condition of being a woman, and on love relationships from a female perspective (69). Marina, the protagonist and narrator of “Te deix”, like Riera, moves between Palma de Mallorca and Barcelona: the adolescence shared between author and narrative voice adds another layer of complication to the already complex question of authority in this situation. In Everly’s words, Riera’s writing “enters into the unstable, provocative area of language, meaning, and text, where multilayered realities bifurcate into writerly desire and readerly (mis)conception, directly confronting the notion of a writer” (163).

The most outstanding recurring theme in investigations into Carme Riera’s writing as a whole is the idea of writing to seduce the reader, and a principal theme in her body of work is female sexuality. Cotoner has asserted that one of the keys to the success of Riera’s fiction is the ‘ease with which the reader is submerged in a sensitive and

depraved world” (quoted in Parilla 45). In fact, Riera figures among the first to introduce an erotic element into her writing during the aforementioned “destape” period. It is pertinent to note that in doing so, Riera tackled a genre from which women writers, and markedly so in Spain, had been excluded: the erotic genre was considered improper for all well into the 20th century, prompting even male writers to make use of pseudonyms in order to publish. This judgment was especially strong for female writers and resulted in many occasions of self-censorship (Cotoner 2010: 116). In an interview, Riera clarifies that her idea of eroticism is to use language that is neither vulgar nor medical, but instead to make it so that no words referring to genitalia appeared at all (Nichols 1989: 194), a feature that differentiates Riera’s literary production from that of subsequent authors in a similar milieu, for whom sex became the central axis of the story (“Eroticism in Contemporary Spanish Women Writers’ Narrative”, 212). The result of Riera’s stylistic choice here was that critics did not associate her work with erotic writing at all, relegating it instead to “cosas de mujeres” [women’s things] written in a very pretty language (Nichols 1989: 194).

Also a salient feature of much of Riera’s literature is its epistolarity (“Catalan Women Writers: A Brief History” 120). While there certainly exists a canon where a female is placed at the centre of a male-authored text (Cornejo Parriego 118), the epistolary genre is traditionally linked to the romantic and the erotic, and this association carries with it a set of traditions: “la carta de amor femenina” [female love letter] is a classic in Spanish literature (Rodríguez 111). Dolores Fuentes Gutiérrez echoes Ortega y Gasset, underlining that the epistolary genre is the only *private* form of literature, and so has been commonly seen as predisposed for the woman (340): if writing in general was

outside of the strictly feminine sphere, patriarchal modes of thinking did nevertheless recognize women's aptitude for cultivating private, personal writing (diaries, letters, autobiographical texts) that matched the definition of feminine subjectivity (399).

Another characteristic typically linked to this generation of Catalan women writers, but also specifically to Riera, is the formal innovation and studied language employed. This, too, has been linked to Riera's success: Cotoner affirms that Riera's ability to transfigure language (Parilla 45) is integral to her writing. Speaking specifically of *Palabra de mujer*, the tone of the stories in this compilation has been deemed "melancholy despite [its] vibrant language" ("Short Fiction by Women Writers: 1975-1998, Post-Franco" 579). In many ways, "Te entrego..." is a conventional love letter; it is nostalgic, lyrical, etc. (Epps 318). During the first reading of the short story, then, the reader will likely notice only these stylistic aspects of lyricism and intimism, which are sufficient in themselves to make the text remarkable but that ultimately become weapons of stylistic subversion (Rodríguez 138). Then, prompted to start over by the revelation at the end of the text, the reader enters into an "interminable process of interpretation" which is starkly opposed to a definitive result (Rodríguez 141).

One key aspect of this historically significant text type exhibited in "Te entrego..." is the doubled "you": the addressee of the letter, and the reader (Rodríguez 111), which creates an important disjunction. In epistolary narrative, the notions of presence and absence are in play: typically, a letter is written as a result of physical separation or distance between narrator and addressee. As a literary genre, epistolary narratives insert the reader into the equation as a voyeuristic presence (Everly 171). It has also been theorized that this unique position can result in discomfort for the reader, as

with the implication that the reader takes the recipient's place, there is the obligation for a response. By symbolically distancing the author from the text, which, as was mentioned earlier, is a 'pseudo-autobiographical' story, the reader can potentially ease some of the tension brought on by the anxiety of being expected or prompted to respond. Interestingly, this bracketing off of the author in response to the particular role of the reader within epistolary texts relates directly to another significant aspect of this work: the complex relationship between author and reader.

The singular aesthetic in Riera's collection of stories comes from her view of the writing/reading process as one of seduction, a game of concealment and revealing that subverts established orders (Cotoner 1990: 21). This leads to ambiguity being significant on many levels: among other elements, it is unclear whether the narrator of "Te entrego..." is writing to her lover or to the sea, just as the identity of her lover is only fully confirmed at the end of the story. Nichols describes this latter situation, the omission of the protagonist's name or any specific reference to her gender, as forcing the reader to live in the pronouns without being able to concretize the subject of the narration (1992: 36) while Epps points to the "tense (con)fusions" that punctuate this short story, particularly within the realm of gender (320). Riera has been quoted as saying that there is nothing dumber than literature without ambiguity (Nichols, 25).

Servididio, as quoted in Everly, goes further and links this current of ambiguity with the aforementioned seduction (163). One striking feature of Riera's writing as a whole is that it:

...defines itself in opposition to fixed meaning or tidy compartmentalization. Rather, her aesthetic imagination is stimulated by ambiguity, mystery, connotation, and overtone, all of which facilitate provisionality and speculation...

[The techniques Riera employs] all provoke a variety of perspectives that defer the reader's arrival at meaning or a reliable truth. (Servodidio, 8)

Through a style that privileges connotation and suggestion over description and specification, Riera is able to surprise her audience not by shocking them with outrageous vocabulary or statements, but by having readers participate in their own mechanism of misleading. She makes use of the traditionally feminine epistolary genre and transforms it into a tool for renegotiating ideas of genre and of gender (Everly 163); she plays with and transgresses these notions in “Te deix...”, making readers aware that they are trapped in their own heteronormative paradigms of reading (Cornejo Parriego 118). Though ‘transgression’ implies passing over or beyond (Rodríguez 115), Epps signals that blurring the boundaries shows that they exist in the first place (329). Riera does this using an amalgamation of strategic maneuvers that manipulate not only language and the text, but, through them, also the reader (Servodidio 75). Factors such as the reader's culturally formulated expectation that Marina's teacher would be male (Everly 168) contribute to the effectiveness of the gender ambiguity: as mentioned earlier, there are a very limited number of fictions that reference female authority, so this can be considered to validate the (decoy) heterosexual plot (Cornejo Parriego 118). Thus, it is not simply a question of avoiding the grammatically marked feminine, but of doing so within a specific set of parameters, engineered so that this linguistic innovation passes imperceptibly within an otherwise very rich text. Fuentes Gutiérrez summarizes this neatly, explaining that Riera situates herself within a supposedly feminine discourse with the goal of resemanticizing it, of giving it a completely different, and even opposite meaning from that which it is assigned by popularized patriarchal thinking (343). Cotoner further concretizes this unique design, demonstrating that Riera investigates in between the lines of erotic

discourse in order to appropriate the word, assaulting the apparently impregnable patriarchal system in a way that no other female Catalan writer had thus far attempted (2010: 116).

Before specific translation issues can be addressed an investigation into my own approach is called for. Many well-known examinations of gender issues within translation studies (for instance, Sherry Simon's *Gender in Translation* and Luise von Flotow's *Gender and Translation: Translating in the Era of Feminism*) are concerned with specifically "feminist" goals, perhaps due in part to the proximity of these areas not only temporally but in subject matter as well. It has been theorized that the apparent symbiosis between feminism and translation studies is due to the importance of *secondariness* within both fields (Simon 8). Given this distribution, is *any* examination of gender issues in translation to some degree inherently feminist? It has been suggested that Riera's text serves to give voice to the unspeakable in her contemporary context (Everly 168), and a common theme within feminist translation scholarship is the goal of making female voices heard. Does it follow, then, that the fact that the author of "Te entrego..." is a female, and especially one producing alternative narratives in immediately post-Franco Spain, further contribute to the 'feminist' qualification of the project?

Lori Saint-Martin's concept of "*métaféminisme*", though it originally references a specific literary context, assists with this question. According to Saint-Martin, metafeminist writing differs from radical feminist writing, not by abandoning it but by absorbing and interrogating it, all the while recognizing the fact that the author's critical position is in large part possible due to previous feminist-identified scholarship (87). Similarly, although the present endeavour may not have the same

feminist motivations as its predecessors, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that this type of work forms part of the background of the project. Simon maintains that feminist translation aims to expand and develop the intention of the original text, not to deform it, thereby attesting to the indispensability of an “appropriate match between” text and translating project (36). Nevertheless, there are elements of “feminist” translation practice and theory that furnish useful insight into this project, whence the metafeminist qualification.

Taking cues from Skopos theory as well as Antoine Berman, we may begin to see some clarity on this topic. Edwin Gentzler calls on Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer to define the term Skopos, a school of thought that has existed since early in relation to translation studies. Reiss and Vermeer contend that “translation should be governed primarily by the one functional aspect which predominates in the original” (71). This provides the present project with a paradigm other than more traditional, prescriptive notions of ‘faithfulness’ and beauty. Gentzler continues that, without insisting upon one perfect translation as an objective, translators must strive towards “optimal solutions within the existing, actual conditions... ‘Right’ and ‘wrong’ choices are then judged according to their consistency with the concept of the unified whole” (71). Although words like ‘should’ and ‘must’ lean dangerously close to the prescriptive goals away from which Translation Studies generally have been moving, it does offer a viable option for conceiving of this project. Furthermore, Simon calls on Berman:

Dismissing the longstanding but sterile standoff between literalism and freedom, source-oriented and target-oriented translation, Berman argues that “every significant translation is grounded in a project, in an articulated goal. This project is determined by both the position of the translator and by the specific demand of the text to be translated.” (Simon 36)

In my translation of “Te entrego...” I argue that the manipulation of grammatical gender in order to communicate a subversive message concerning themes of social gender (which, it is difficult to argue, is already a prominent part of the text) falls under the category of what Berman would call the ‘specific demand of the text’ itself. Therefore, the principal textual intention that I work to reproduce in my translations is the preservation of gender ambiguity until it is made clear that the protagonist’s lover is female. This allows me to hierarchize the decisions made regarding translation obstacles encountered along the way.

Françoise Massardier-Kenny categorizes “feminist-identified” translations into either author-centered or translator-centered strategies (55). This formulation draws attention to a major discrepancy between past work combining gender and translation studies and the current project: here, it is not exclusively the translator who dictates the importance of gender within this particular text. Though my positioning after the cultural turn in Translation Studies allows for more sensitivity to culturally bound issues such as gender, it is no longer a question of a feminist interventionist, translator-centered process, where, to offer an extreme example, an antipathetic text is hijacked and used to re-sex language. Instead, I argue that the present translation project is only as feminist as the source text itself. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts that the work of the *feminist* translator is to consider language as it applies to the “workings of gendered agency” (313, emphasis mine)—by this definition, yes, this project is a feminist one. Kathleen Glenn judges that, when evaluating Riera’s claims that she is not a feminist writer, it is essential to be aware that North American contexts differ from the Riera’s; however, even with this in mind Glenn presents that “from this side of the Atlantic... [Riera] looks much like

one” (quoted in Mayock 23). Much like many female Spanish authors hesitate to label their writing as ‘feminist’, I argue that, though I acknowledge my personal beliefs, the occlusion and subsequent revelation of the gender of the recipient is a key element of “Te entrego...” and is already present in the text: despite challenges presented by linguistic differences, this aspect must be reproduced in translation.

Spivak also provides much of the theoretical framework for this translation project: one of her principal arguments regarding the politics of translation (though her attention is more specifically toward postcolonial women’s writing) is that it is not enough to simply “bone up” on the technical aspects of the language in which the ‘original’ text is written: one must also understand how the text to be translated figures within the literary culture that it originally appeared in, as well (405). By looking into factors such as the historical context, as well as elements closer to this short story in particular like the author’s overall style, I have attempted to do just this. Another of Spivak’s notions that applies here is her post-structuralist, three-tiered idea of language; that is, language as the interplay of logic, rhetoric, and silence (400). In a text where omission and ambiguity figure so prominently, the translation of silence in relation to logic and rhetoric is paramount. Epps, seeming to echo this conception of language, assesses that much of Riera’s text is “about what is left behind” (320). As I have demonstrated above, the ambiguity resulting in what is left unsaid is inseparable from the seduction of the reader, a notion which parallels Spivak’s views of translation as “the most intimate act of reading” (400), during which the translator must “surrender” to the text. At this point it is opportune to mention my own positioning with relation to the source and target cultures: as a non-native speaker of both Spanish and French, this

project was chosen not for the translator's proximity to either. Instead, the linguistic intricacies of this three-way comparison were motivations for the undertaking of this project.

To borrow a term from Cronin, the concept of a text (especially one that has been published in a more dominant language like Castilian Spanish after being written in Catalan) existing "for" translation (160) is intriguing. This is not to say that any one version of Riera's text is not complete in itself, but as much as the grammatical gender *within* all versions of Riera's story is significant, considering this text as a text for translation could imply that translation has the potential to make this category significant across linguistic boundaries, first, by attempting to reproduce the subversive use of grammatical gender that is present in the original, and second by allowing the subsequent comparison of translated versions. Riera's views discussed above, that her Castilian version is a rewriting of the Catalan in her other language, support my decision to employ "Te entrego..." as a source text—not as an independent body entirely, hence the investigation into contextual factors surrounding the various versions that make up the greater idea of this text, but certainly a legitimate one. Cotoner supplies that she undertook her translation into Castilian from Riera's Catalan so many years after Riera's Castilian version was published with the goal of maintaining to the greatest possible extent the acceptance of the ironic wink that consolidates the relationship between authorial voice and readers (Cotoner 2010, 117). This implies that, in Cotoner's assessment of Riera's Castilian version, this narrator-reader relationship was in some way worse than it was in the 1975 Catalan, a loss that she aimed to remedy. Nevertheless, for

the purpose of this project, it is clear that “Te entrego...” is a separate entity, just as valid as “Te deix...”, as the basis for a translation project.

In “Te entrego...” the enigma can only be solved in glimpses, then become fully meaningful through attentive re-reading (Rodríguez 125). The reader’s foreknown answer is a projection of a heterosexual schema (Rodríguez 139) onto a text throughout most of which, neither confirmation nor denial is provided, forcing the reader’s interpretive process to forge on. The play between acts of reading and re-reading present themselves as alternatives to one productive, definitive reading: this juxtaposition has been paralleled with lesbian sexuality as opposed to a cultural context that privileges reproductive heterosexuality (Rodríguez 141). Epps points to the significant engagement that exists in this short story between traditionally opposing pairs: presence and absence, subject and object; to his analysis, I would like to add ‘original’ and translation as well. Epps describes the way that these are linked as a “naturally constitutive manner” (320). Similarly, Everly underlines the reconsideration of the reader-writer relationship that is implied, asserting that in Riera’s text the two are united within the larger sense of programmed culture which serves to expose individual prejudices as well as the social mechanism that produces accepted discourses (163-5). If the translator is considered as a “re-writer who determines implied meanings” (Holman and Boase-Beier, 14) one can easily extend Epps’ statement to reflect the vital interrelation of each version of this short story, and thus the processes of writing, reading, and translation as well.

Let us look to the title in order to begin to address some translation obstacles and their solutions. Among the challenges this story presented, grammatical forms such as adjectives and pronouns, but also verbs, figure heavily in the decisions made throughout

the translation process. In an attempt to solve some of these difficulties, I took inspiration from Jean Delisle's techniques as well as from parallel translations of grammatically interesting texts. Riera's version of the short story is entitled "Te entrego, amor, *la mar*, como una ofrenda" while Cotoner's uses "el mar" (both meaning the sea). The dictionary of the *Real Academia Española* lists a small quantity of nouns that can correctly be used with either the masculine or feminine articles, independent of their meaning. It can be said that the grammatical gender of these words is ambiguous; that is, *el/la mar* is an example (the RAE lists only 7) of a noun with which the masculine or feminine articles are equally permissible and independent of the noun: this contrasts with the linguistic explanation of grammatical gender given earlier, according to which there are nouns such as "*el niño*", the boy/child, and "*la niña*", the girl/child, which can also take an article of either gender but only according to the perceived gender of the individual referenced. According to the RAE, the choice concerning grammatically ambiguous nouns is normally associated with either differences of register, or with personal or dialectal preferences. Though it is most common to use the masculine article "*el*" with "*mar*", Riera's Spanish version uses the feminine article "*la*" for the same part of the title. In a text like this short story, where imagery of the sea is intimately tied to Marina's lover María, the fact that the reader encounters a feminine article where a masculine one would normally be acquired a sort of foreshadowing connotation. Riera's view of literary seduction is pertinent once more: she affirms that one "must give the reader clues... giving sufficient data so that readers can make certain suppositions, but surprising them" (Glenn et al. 41). In practice, the use of "*la mar*" can generally have either poetic connotations or be associated with individuals who work with and/or live near the sea,

and “el mar” is more common in virtually all other contexts. As the story is set in the author’s native city of Palma de Mallorca, and the style of writing displays rather lyrical prose, a combination of both potential motivations can be considered to contribute to what would otherwise be perceived as an anomaly. Riera has assisted in the resolution of this translation query, affirming that in the title she references “[su] mar de Mallorca” [her sea in Majorca], that people call “el” but that the seamen call “la” (2006: 37). While it appears as though this slight alteration was not specifically made to emphasize the metaphorical importance of the feminine in the narrative, it contributes nonetheless to a network of significance unique to Riera’s Castilian version. Considered this way it is an effective trope, and is grammatically legitimate – the author did not, for instance, attempt to change the gender of a non-ambiguous noun, which would cause a much stronger reaction. Much has been theorized about the importance of the metaphor of the sea in “Te entrego...”. It is a site of paradox: of love and loss (Cornejo Parriego 146) as the lovers’ sexual union first occurs on a boat there, but, as mentioned earlier, the sea also comes to represent María’s absence. It is subtle while also somewhat foreshadowing that, just as many readers of the Spanish text likely expect the masculine article for “mar” but encounter the feminine in its place, the entire narrative is constructed so that, following hetero-normative societal expectations, the reader assumes that Marina’s love interest is male but ultimately learns that she is not, causing the reader to reassess.

This also speaks to the unique influence that the Catalan language and Mallorquín culture has on Riera’s Castilian text –the Catalan word for ‘sea’ is, grammatically, exclusively feminine– adding a specific stratum of signification that is not present in either the Catalan or Cotoner’s more ‘faithful’ Castilian translation. This notion also

echoes Riera's inspiration in the Catalan first-person plural pronoun "nosaltres", which differentiates itself from the Castilian "nosotros/as" due to the fact that it can be used equally for both sexes, while in Spanish if all members of a referenced group are female, such as a lesbian couple, "nosotras" must be used (Epps 333). Riera's version of this text is not just suitable as a source text because she is also the author of the Catalan "original". Her Spanish version, compared to Cotoner's, is a more appropriate match for the translation project as a whole precisely because of the anomalies such as this that are not present in the newer translation, in part due to the influence of Catalan that would perhaps be unacceptable if not supplied by the original author.

Unfortunately, there are limited options for translating the connotations of this element into French or English, short of rather dramatic interventions. Sherry Simon, considering Barbara Godard's translation of Nicole Brossard's *L'Amèr*, posits that supplementing has always been recognized as a legitimate process of translation. However, in a cultural context where the predominant translation priorities are transparency and fluency, the foregrounding of such techniques can begin to look like textual exhibitionism (Simon 13). Especially considering Riera's own style, where connotation is preferred to explicit explanation, such solutions are not fit for this situation.

This appraisal of the use of graphic interventions in order to unpack undertones as generally incongruent with prevailing standards of translation reinforces the fact that, in Riera's Spanish-language version, the utilization of a slightly atypical but fully grammatical article is rather inconspicuous, demonstrating both of Cotoner's above-mentioned elements of Riera's success. My translation privileges, in this instance, fluidity

in French and English over conveying the allusion to this particular metaphor. Here we can introduce a counterbalance to the goals of the translation project, framed by Skopos theory: in order to do so, I propose a combination of more traditional translation scholarship: Antoine Berman's "deforming tendencies" (287) to avoid, bolstered by some terminology compiled by Delisle. The most pertinent to this obstacle is clarification. While all translation, according to Berman, exhibits this tendency to some extent simply by the nature of the process (by virtue of executing a translation at all, one's own interpretation will be reflected therein, whence the importance of identifying an objective), there is a point at which this takes on a negative connotation.

Berman defines this as the "movement from polysemy to monosemy" (289), that is, the manifestation in full of aspects that were to some extent concealed or repressed in the original. This concept is very similar to Delisle's 'surtraduction', or over-translation, which consists of explicitly translating elements of a text that should remain implicit (60). I consider over-translation to be a simultaneous execution of two other translation errors described by Delisle: additions and losses, whose definitions will prove crucial to this commentary. Delisle defines an omission as the failure to render an element of meaning in the source text without valid reason (51) while an addition occurs when a translator introduces a superfluous element without justification (26). In this way, the title that I chose in French, "Je te remets, mon amour, la mer comme une offrande" is at once excessive and insufficient: *la mer*, in French, is incontestably grammatically feminine, and so compared to the Spanish, gestures more strongly towards the feminine, but because of this also loses the contrastive masculine element which makes the Spanish so interesting in the first place. In English, "I Leave You, My Love, the Sea as an Offering"

is also problematic: the play on grammatical gender is, of course, no longer an option, but Deborah Cameron's phenomenon of "natural gender" (quoted in Simon 1996: 17) in English can perhaps assist in compensating for this fact. "The sea" in English, similar to some of the connotations identified with the use of the feminine article in Spanish above, can have a feminine connotation that, although in an even less overt way than in Riera's Spanish version, could be considered comparable. Here it is pertinent to add that there are other options for this title that flow better or more naturally in English: "My Love, I Leave the Sea to You", or "I Leave the Sea to You, My Love" could both be viable options, but the slightly more jarring "I Leave You, My Love, the Sea..." is more suitable for alluding to the tension between María and the sea. As is revealed at the end of the story (and also implied in the accompanying "Y pongo...") Marina is near death at the end of her epistolary confession. "I leave you, my love..." hints at this departure, and by placing "my love" and "the sea" side by side assists in conflating these to thematic elements.

Links between the sea metaphor and notions of femininity extend from the title throughout the whole narrative, further concretizing the foreshadowing significance of the former and also the mirrored relationship between maritime imagery and María, the addressee of the letter. This network of meaning resulted in several translation difficulties, for instance:

- i) ...la mar habita al sur, al otro lado de la ciudad. Allí, enlutada, grasienta, pestilente, mece, nodriza vieja... (9)
- ii) Esta mar no se parece en nada a la nuestra y, sin embargo, la amo. La amo y me hace falta. (10)

The complication arises due to the continued grammatical ‘feminization’ of the sea. It has been established that, while the narrator is writing to her former lover María, there are also many examples in the text where it is unclear whether she is referring to the sea or to María. In fact, later in the narrative she explains that, after a period of correspondence with María, the narrator writes a long letter of crazed confession, addressed to the sea in order to allow herself more freedom of expression (26). Knowing that it could be either, or both, the underlined terms take on this added significance in that they contribute to the system of hints that Riera leaves for the reader. The first excerpt exhibits several feminine-marked adjectives, as well as a metaphor linking the antecedent with a “nodriza vieja”: literally, this term translates as “old wet-nurse”, but in a maritime context it can also refer to a “barco nodriza”—a supply vessel. The crucial relationship that exists between maternity and the juxtaposed pair of addressees in this short story will be taken up momentarily. Unfortunately, both French and English have a lacuna (Delisle 45) for the maritime connotation of the “nodriza”, thus the link is lost in this instance: as a consequence, another of Berman’s deforming tendencies—the destruction (albeit slight) of networks of signification—is inevitable (292). Similarly, while in Spanish “enlutado/a” and “grasiento/a” change to mark the gender of the subject, in English there is no gender marking for these terms and thus no difference in the descriptors “in mourning” and “greasy”. Here, it is fascinating to point out that both terms appear in the feminine in Riera’s Spanish version, due to the feminized ‘sea’, while they appear in the masculine in Cotoner’s translation. In French, the effect is the opposite: not only do “endeuillée” and “graisseuse” take explicitly feminine endings, but also “pestilentielle” whereas in Spanish, “pestilente” can apply to either masculine or feminine nouns.

The second excerpt also represents a challenge: once again, the unique feminization of “la mar” results in the intriguing phrase “la amo”, in which the direct object pronoun “la” could equally refer to a grammatically feminine object or a female person. Thus, when considered in tandem with the link between the (feminized) sea and a woman, this could translate into English as either “I love it” or “I love her”. However, with respect to the Skopos of this project, it is important not to over-translate: in Spanish, “la amo” is ambiguous in this way, while “I love her” is dramatically less so. Cameron’s concept of natural gender, though perhaps applicable in the title, cannot provide any assistance here: though the idea of the sea may have feminine connotations in English, the word “it” certainly does not. Once more, the French translation leans more towards the feminine: “je l’aime” is very similar to “la amo” in that it can refer to a feminine person or a grammatically feminine object. However, in the following phrase “me hace falta”, in Spanish it is acceptable to omit the subject pronoun while in French it is not, resulting in “*elle* me manque” (emphasis mine). The addition of this feminine subject pronoun, although a small detail, contributes to the presence and importance of femininity in the French version of this text.

It is with this allegory of the sea that we encounter another difficulty in the translation process. In the final lines of the story, narrator Marina pleads with her lover to ensure that “le pongan [tu nombre], María” (32), that her unborn daughter is named Maria, after the addressee, thus concluding the narrative by cementing the importance of the sea in relation to the feminine metaphor. The fact that María’s name is withheld until the last moment makes it so that the narrator is not simply naming her daughter *after* María, but actually *along with* her (Epps 324-5, emphasis mine). The nominal fusion

between *María*, the lover, and *María*, the narrator's unborn daughter results in a rich constellation of sliding boundaries: the narrator becomes a mother, while her lover is paralleled with her daughter. Here, the connection between '*la mar*' and '*María*' is obvious, and I argue that it is stronger in Spanish than in French ("la mer/Maria") or in English ("the sea/Maria"). Still, I elected to keep the character's name the same across versions, not only for continuity (to change such a prominent character's name would be extreme), but also with the expectation that the root could nevertheless resonate with readers. This, in turn, affected other translation decisions in the text, for instance whether or not to adapt '*Paseo Marítimo*' (15, 23) into something such as "Promenade Maritime" in French or "Seaside Promenade" in English. I elected to preserve the place name in Spanish in both cases, because clearly echoing "maritime" in French and English helps reinforce the theme of the sea as it manifests in *Maria's* name. Further, considering the text's strong ties to Mallorca, Riera's decision to translate this place name from the Catalan "*Passeig Marítim*" seemed already far enough: to adapt it into French or English could potentially sever the ties between Spain and the target culture(s). It bears repeating that, while in the companion narrative "*Y pongo...*", the narrator, *Marina*, is identified, she is never named in "*Te entrego...*", therefore the immense similarity between "*la mar*", the two *Marías*, and *Marina* can only be appreciated superficially here, outside of the context of the story itself.

There is one other element relating to maternity that is pertinent at this point in the investigation: some three quarters of the way through the story, *Marina* recounts a dialogue with *María*: the two meet outside of school to have a discussion.

- Hablas como si fueras mi madre.
- Te aseguro que no me importaría serlo.

It has been argued that this exchange marks a turning point in the narrative, as it is plausible that this could lead some readers to question the automatic construction of a “straight erotic tale” (Urioste 134). This reassessment on behalf of the reader requires that s/he find one or both of the following bizarre enough to be remarkable at all: that Marina would compare her love interest, presumed until this junction to be male, to her mother, and/or that a male ‘wouldn’t mind’ being a mother. Given the historical and cultural context at the time that this story was published, Nicolas Perrot d’Ablancourt’s seventeenth-century statement that “diverse times require not only different words, but different thoughts” (35) comes to mind: it is possible that in the latter half of the 1970s and the early 1980s, it would be much more shocking for a character presumed to be male to willingly accept allegations of maternal behaviour. However, my interpretation of this dialogue, rooted as it is some thirty years later, is not so definitive as Urioste’s. That is to say, this segment may not call as much attention in a contemporary reader, especially one who is not searching specifically for gendered themes within the text. What’s more, Urioste overlooks the role of adjectives in the Spanish version of this story; even after what she hypothesizes is a turning point in the text, there is only one instance in which an adjective is used that *could* reveal Maria’s identity:

Era una sorpresa que te reservaba por si decides arrancar el sello impulsada por una voz... (25)

This could be one of the clues that Riera gives to her readers, but even with this exception in mind I argue that it is not until the antepenultimate line of the entire narrative, in which Maria’s name appears, that there is incontestable clarity in this regard. For this reason, in the French translation, I circumvented this premature revelation by using “sous

l'impulsion d'une voix". Nevertheless, the translation into French revealed many instances where maintaining the desired ambiguity was challenging, even before this potential juncture. The vast majority of these situations presented no problem in English translation. For instance:

Por fin te volviste... (15)
Te cubriste con una sábana. (16)
No te olvidé (18)
No te vi... (20)
Saliste... te fuiste... No nos encontramos. (21); Te abracé... (21)
Te interesaste por... (24)
Cuando veniste a Barcelona (30); Tú le caíste muy bien (30); Te abracé... (30)
...por la noche volviste (31)

These examples demonstrate an important difference between the two romance languages: when the *pretérito indefinido* in Spanish is used, it could be considered to be more natural or direct to use the corresponding verb tense, the *passé composé*, in French, which can lead to gender-marking in the feminine (as is illustrated in the above excerpts when the direct object is feminine or when the verb is reflexive—here it must be noted that there are some verbs that, in Spanish, are not, but when translated to French are reflexive); however, the goal of preserving ambiguity in this way required a distancing from the most direct option for the sake of the overall project. These solutions will be discussed momentarily. There are also examples aside from the *pretérito indefinido* that present obstacles for the translation into French, namely:

¡Volvía a verte! (21); Tenías prisa (21)

In the first instance, French requires the *passé composé* (Je t'ai revue!) despite the imperfect in Spanish. In the second, the difference between the two romance languages is the articulation of the phrasal verb: 'tener prisa' becomes 'être pressé(e)' in French.

Finally, there are occasions where adjectives result in translation obstacles with regard to the Skopos of this project:

Éramos más jóvenes, menos conscientes, rebosantes... (10)

Te noto ausente. (25)

Te encontró inteligente... (30)

These terms in Spanish –conscientes, rebosantes, ausente and ingeligente– are identical when applied to individuals of any gender (as opposed to an adjective such as “simpatico/a” that must agree grammatically with the subject). Translating them into French under a different Skopos could have given solutions such as “absente” and “intelligente”.

Let us now look to the decisions made regarding these challenges. It is pertinent to mention that a small but important body of French-language literature exists that manipulates traditional use of grammatical gender in order to promote questioning in the realm of social gender roles. Gill Rye’s “Uncertain Readings and Meaningful Dialogues: Language and Sexual Identity in Anne Garréta’s *Sphinx* and Tahar Ben Jelloun’s *L’enfant de sable* and *La nuit sacrée*” traces this technique in a triad of texts published in the short window between 1985 and 1987, making them contemporary with Riera’s fiction as well. Garréta’s novel, *Sphinx*, was published in English translation just last year (2015). This implies renewed interest in adapting such themes across languages, and thus serves as additional support for the current project. One strategy that *Sphinx* affords my French translation is the employment of the *imparfait*, which is not inflected by gender (Kosnick 5). For instance, while “por la noche te volviste” could be translated into French as “tu es revenue chez toi” this would reveal María’s identity too early. For this reason, I chose “le soir, tu revenais”, just as “nous ne nous voyions pas” was chosen for “no nos

encontramos” and “il t’aimait bien” replaces “il t’a bien aimée” in translating “Le caíste muy bien”. This choice blends easily into the rest of the text: as mentioned earlier, a common theme in Riera’s work in general is the passage of time, and this text in particular reflects this in its use of a variety of past tenses. A consequence of this blend is that some actions are emphasized and prolonged, while others are truncated and short, creating an effect that parallels the narrator’s letter writing: at times, careful and precise while frantic at others. Changing the *pretérito indefinido* in Spanish to the *imparfait* in French draws out the action in a way that does not interfere with the text. Finally, there are instances where the *passé composé* was unavoidable in French, thus it was necessary to shift the subject away from María: for “saliste... con otros profesores” I used “les autres professeurs sont partis avec toi”.

As we can see, the *imparfait* is not the only potential solution, but its suggestion opened the door to other slight alterations in verb tense: in situations like “Por fin te volviste” (15) which would otherwise translate as “Tu t’es enfin retournée”, my solution was to employ “free” modulation (Vinay and Darbelnet 89) to alter the verb tense, using the progressive and combining it with the next sentence, giving: “Te retournant enfin...” In a comparable manner, “tu as montré de l’interêt pour...” bypasses “tu t’es intéressée...” in the translation of “te interesaste por Javier” by conveying the notion of “interest” in noun form instead of directly in a verb: this same tactic produced “lors de ta visite à Barcelone” for “cuando veniste a Barcelona”.

There are also instances where a combination of Vinay and Darbelnet’s notions of “fixed” and “free” modulations are, in my opinion, required, the difference between the two being that fixed modulations are necessitated by the structure of the target language

itself to a degree that free modulations are not (89). For example, “¡Volvía a verte!” requires a modulation which incorporates the notion of “volver a hacer algo” [to do something again] into the principal verb “ver” [to see]: to avoid “Je t’ai revue”, which again marks the feminine, I opted for “Te revoir!” The infinitive also came into play in translating “te fuiste a tomar...”, which I translated as “pour aller prendre”. This option, it must be admitted, detracts from the agency of the more directly translated phrase. With the next phrase, I attempted to compensate for this loss. “Tenías prisa” most directly becomes “tu étais pressée” and so a further change in French is required to maintain gender ambiguity, resulting in “tu voulais te dépêcher”. Instead of simply being in a rush, María ‘wants to hurry’ in this French translation, which returns some of the agency that was removed from the preceding example. This is similar to the solution “Je n’ai pas pu t’oublier”, which accentuates the narrator’s role and effort in the process of forgetting when compared with “Je ne t’ai pas oubliée”. Continuing with this series of modulations “¡Y me alegro...!” displays the present tense of a reflexive verb. In French, a colloquial translation could be “Et j’en suis contente!”, where a fixed modulation necessitates the change from a purely verbal expression to the usage of an adjective as well. However, modulating once more to use the phrasal verb “faire plaisir” eschews the offending adjective.

Another tactic employed by Garréta that assisted with my own translation process was the avoidance of applying gender-specific adjectives directly to Maria’s character herself, only to aspects or attributes of her person (Kosnick 5). This suggestion inspired the translation of “Te abracé” as “...ton corps que j’ai pris...”, and “Te encontré inteligente” as “Il appréciait ton intelligence”. This solution worked equally for “No te

vi...”, resulting in “Je n’ai posé le regard sur toi que...” and “Te abracé”, resulting in “mon étreinte...” Kosnick also notes that this strategy is especially successful in French, as something such as ‘sa présence’ “can be read as ‘her presence’, ‘his presence’ or even ‘hir presence’” (5). Related to this, instead of “tu t’es couverte avec un drap”, I translated “te cubriste con una sábana” as “tu as pris un drap pour te couvrir”, which shifts the focus away from the reflexive verb and onto the action of “prendre un drap” [“taking a sheet”].

As with the use of the substitution of the preterit past tense with the imperfect, this tactic harmonizes very well with Riera’s diction: in “Te entrego...” there are many instances of descriptions applied to, for example, the addressee’s body or body parts (hands, face, etc.). One particularly satisfying example of talking around María’s person is provided by “Te noto ausente”, which would transpose into “Tu as l’air absent/distract”. According to *Le bon usage*, it is acceptable to agree with either the subject (which would result in feminine marking in this case) or with the masculine word “l’air” (“Accord de l’adjectif attribut : cas particuliers”). It bears repeating that the modulations mentioned are not inherently required by the grammatical structure of French itself, but in keeping with my interpretation of the textual intention –the ambiguity of the narrator’s love interest until a given point– they are necessary.

I entered into this translation project with the assumption that, as Spanish and French are both romance languages that exhibit a masculine/feminine grammatical distinction while English does not, the French translation would, in a sense, have tools available to manipulate in the representation of gender themes that English would not. Therefore, I expected that translation into French would, in that manner, be easier than translation into English. This was virtually the opposite of the experience that I had in the

actual translation process: because English does not exhibit grammatical gender it was much easier to maintain the ambiguity that was so important to my interpretation of the textual intention, as opposed to the translation into French which required much more attention of that nature. From here, the question arises: is the ambiguity more significant in the translation process from Spanish to French due to the great lengths a translator must go to in order to preserve it? By contrast, does the difference in linguistic structures between Spanish and English result in a loss in the importance of the ambiguity, though it is easier to preserve? These questions recall Spivak's notion of translating to preserve the entire network of content and silence.

Lori Chamberlain, speaking to the over-coding of translation with gendered metaphors, touches on the fact that the translation process, typically regulated through terms of originality and production as opposed to derivative reproduction, "threatens to erase the difference" between the two, which is central to the establishment of power (322). Ultimately, Riera's text "shows that a woman can be both the subject and the object of love" (Pertusa 36) and her employment of language to subvert reader's expectations is a perfect complement for this subversive function of translation. The textual intention, or Skopos, outlined for this project enables me not only to hierarchize decisions throughout the translation project but more importantly to justify what would otherwise be deformities therein. As I have attempted to demonstrate, "Te entrego..." is a unique short story in itself due to the way in which grammatical gender and themes of social gender interact, as well as the way this relationship is incorporated into the greater network of meaning in text as a whole, ultimately involving the reader intimately in the process of determining and re-determining meaning. Seduced by this text, I undertook the

translation process in order to preserve the significance of ambiguity within the work, dictated by my interpretation of the textual intention, and explore the ways in which this process differed into French and into English.

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