Rise of the feminine voice and a renewed consciousness in Spanish contemporary literature "Cronica del Desamor" por Rosa Montero

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THE RISE OF THE FEMININE VOICE
AND A RENEWED CONSCIOUSNESS
IN SPANISH CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE:
CRÓNICA DEL DESAMOR POR ROSA MONTERO

by
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presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Women writers and women in general still face an uphill struggle in the relatively liberated societies of Spain with their freedom of movement within society, their access to education and to cultural opportunities, and their greater entrenchment in and acceptance into the job market. To truly appreciate the effort required to produce fiction and the degree of innovation that specific works by female authors represents, readers must open their minds and hearts to the unique manner in which their plight and their message is expressed. Some notion of the sociological context in which Spanish women writers have had to work is an indispensible prerequisite to understanding their concerns, their underlying messages, as well as for any hermeneutics of their fiction. The accelerated rate of change since 1975 necessitates some retrospective framework: visiting Spain today would give little notion of the conditions for women under Franco or those factors that contributed to their mental and emotional formation. An enormously significant event that marked the beginning of the transition into democracy from a restrictive, militaristic government in Spain was the death of Franco in November of 1975. This had a tremendous effect on not only men, but also most importantly on women and women writers. During the years of the Franco regime reactionary legislation was enacted, severely curtailing women's right to work and advancement in society. Under the guise of protecting the family, married women were not allowed to work outside the home, and progression for women into the academic, economic, and political avenues did not occur; under laws viewing the woman as a perpetual minor, the married woman became a ward of her husband and subject to his control. Negative stereotyping of and discriminatory attitudes toward women are so ingrained in Spanish society and are eloquently portrayed by female authors as the subject of their plight for sexual, political, and emotional liberation.
Although the incipient, euphoric transitional reforms regarding the treatment of women in Spanish society following the death of Franco were surfacing, there was still a widespread of indifference toward women and the potentiality of their advancement in society. With the growth of the Spanish Feminist Party and the issues raised by them with regard to equality and opportunity for women, a renewed consciousness about women's rights was raised. Abolition of the last vestiges of the Franco's regime censorship on December 31, 1978 did not produce the great literary outpouring expected by some. This censorship lifted obliged authors to exercise their ingenuity to circumvent it, and to do so by strictly literary means: figurative language, allegory, symbolism, allusion, and judicious placing of monologue and metafictive techniques. Spanish women writers within the cultural industry and society must still work within the constraints of unofficial but perfectly real "gender" censorship and heighten their levels of potentially new freedoms and consciousness of self. Rosa Montero, with her fiction novel of Crónica del Desamor, portrays a broad spectrum of society with a comprehensive, subjective, and realistic vision in hopes to assist in steering fiction by women into the mainstream of realism and rehabilitating the stereotypes and archetypal beliefs about women. Her advocacy of women's intellectual and productive capacities, and her presentation of women as victims of society's laws and patriarchal beliefs are apparent in her writing. She concentrates upon many conflicting feminist issues, many of them taboos during the patriarchal Franco regime.

The conflict between the traditionally inscribed feminine roles within Spanish society and the incipience of the newly proclaimed liberation of women during la Transición is what propels this novel into its success and what I intend to illustrate with this paper. I will address the work of Montero which constitutes the core of recent feminist fictional literature
that has sought to define and analyze the particular nature of Spanish feminist issues. Spanish machismo, and the equality promised to women. The importance of this piece of literature cannot be overstated, for it represents a concerted effort to provide an outlet of feminine voice from a suffocating environment and a renewed consciousness toward women. Montero, consistent with French feminist Hélène Cixous, insists that women express their different sexuality in order to liberate their repressed and ingrained patterns of thought and thus stop being the "wife of", or the silent part of the rigid dichotomy male/female. The rigid definition of "good" taste established by Franco's regime and censorship, and the continued hesitancy on the part of modern Spanish society toward women writers does not deter Montero from writing a polemic novel with a definitive message: the vindication of women and the plea for equal opportunity in modern Spanish society. Nevertheless, even within the restrictions that censorship has imposed (both externally and internally) on its writers and even within the context of the relative newness of the women's movement, I will point out in this allusive text by Montero her attempt to explore and define the problems facing women in contemporary Spain. In addition, I will illustrate Montero's attempt through Crónica del Desamor to make a plea for the redefinition of the traditional roles established for women during the Franco regime. I will do so by addressing the thematic issues apparent throughout the work. There is one factor that dominates and motivates all plots and characters of her narrative. It is as perennial as it is poignant and concerns all of us. It is the author's quest to understand the dialogue between males and females by writing her novel from her own point of view, that of a vibrant, intelligent woman in constant struggle with her circumstance: life in fast-paced, twentieth-century society Spain, reborn in 1975 after Franco's forty-year dictatorship.
Crónica del Desamor is a testimonial novel reflecting the realistic world and intense experiences of Spanish novelist, Rosa Montero. I believe it is responsible for reconstructing the traditional values in which literature had been derived. The traditional values in literature in Spanish society and societies around the world have been male-centered and dominated. In retrospect, I believe that Crónica constructed feminine literary myths and subverted the already established patriarchal beliefs and opinions. Crónica is a feminist manifesto, publicly declaring Montero's intention of providing a feminist point of view and encouraging readers in its awareness of raising female consciousness. Montero's desire to give merit to the feminine voice through literature in society is clearly evident for it encourages female consciousness, a vision that had not yet been recognized nor appreciated in modern society in the mid to late 1970's. With the author's motivation and quest to understand the dialogue between sexes, a novelistic and obviously personal account results in Crónica del Desamor. This novel is overtly concerned with and articulates its language as a tool for understanding the rapidly changing Spanish society and traditions dominated by the phallus. This Spanish female Bildungsroman eloquently portrayed by Montero's Crónica, illuminates questions of femaleness, self-definition, and maturity in a repressive society undergoing its own process of change. Montero, through Crónica, offers a refreshingly positive counteraction to women's oppression and suppression in society and deepens the awareness of women's experiences. I intend to illustrate the tension between the creative impulses of each character and the molding pressures of a controlling social group. Indeed, this is inherent to what creates a motivation for Montero to make a personal statement in reference to Spanish society of modern day. A voice that has been unconscious and subjective in both literature
and society, and a gender which has been submissive and of a following nature will be liberated through the literary success of Rosa Montero's novel.

**Crónica del Desamor** is exactly what the title suggests; a chronicle that encompasses and exposes negative sentiments and experiences that any human being, mostly women, could have encountered. They are disenchantment, disharmony, grief, dehumanization, noncommunication between the sexes, the struggle with societal emancipation, egoism, loneliness, the incomprehension and the anguish from living during a time called *La Transición* (The Transition) in Spanish society. *La Transición* (transition) refers to the decade following Franco's death (1975-1985) during which there would ideally be a true equality between the sexes-equality in the workplace, in the home, and in the bedroom. *Crónica* traces the disillusionment of women following their exhilaration over liberating promises and radical change assumed after the death of *El Caudillo*, Franco. It chronicles, with documentary narrative, the rapid but hollow social changes of *La Transición* (transition) when Spain struggled to topple the archaic beliefs of a strictly sexist and nonconformist culture. Montero explores, with her journalistic background and experience, certain collective feminist issues: relationships between the sexes, homosexuality, the generation gap, contraception, and abortion. All of these issues have been controlled by a phallocentric, male dominating society.

The mid-1970's were a time of immense transformation in Spanish society, with the dismantling of the oppressive Fascist state following the death of Franco. In the midst of this social change, I believe that Rosa Montero released *Crónica del Desamor* not only to acknowledge and endorse the attempt at sexual and social equality, but also to portray that beneath the surface of society, despite outward change, much remains the same. Most
definitively it appears that women were left to manage themselves in unknown territory and expected to survive. Montero establishes herself here with Crónica as a bellwether, a trendsetter of feminist issues through narrative written by women. This work marked Montero's emergence as a voice of the modern, post-Franco Spanish woman. It elucidates, with clarifying explanation and careful analysis, the period of La Transición as a time of disappointment and confusion for middle-class women who expected a tempering or balancing of the male-centered culture. Montero, a journalist-author, provides honest insight into the universal struggle of women to gain a rightful and well-deserved place in modern Spanish society. Women's desire and search for autonomy or self-liberation in a male-dominated community is depicted precisely in this chronicle-novel. We, as readers, will see that Montero also shares this quest for establishing feminine voice in society by way of literature with other Spanish female novelists past and present.

The struggle to establish voice is central by most female novelists and the development of the autonomous sense of "her"self is the primary goal in feminist literature. This is generally successful with the portrayal of a female protagonist written from a woman's point of view. Rosa Montero believes and endorses this notion of self-autonomy wholeheartedly by saying that women writers can bridge the boundaries imposed by society, and that writers have the power to break through social barriers. The novel written by women is an attempt to represent personal views of the world through female perspective; this is exactly the purpose or author intent for Crónica del Desamor. This sense of perspective, possessed by Montero, comes from her familiar world and its successes, its failures, and alienation from Spanish modern society and its patriarchal, valued beliefs. Montero, in reference to her writing, envisions it as a:
...spiral that descends toward the inner substance of life itself, and comes together with my relationship to the world and what it is all about. And that one thing is certain is that the underlying chord that beats throughout all my books is a web of obsessions—my fears and hopes.²

In Crónica, Montero reflects on the absurdity of life and the lack of balance between power and love in Spanish society. This ability of the female author to reflect and voice these absurdities through literature transcends historical circumstance. It is a (self) liberation of a censored female that here develops an outwardly known voice. The political and social activism among women stems from the continual and consistent willingness to create and establish themselves a worthy place in the community, and to go against all traditional norms and standards. In the past two decades Spanish women writers have searched for and established the consolidation of their own identity, both as a person and as a writer.

Rosa Montero has indeed embarked on a detailed, personalized, and combative narrative which foregrounds issues of specific interest to women: discrimination in the workplace, sexual stereotyping, and the difficulty of escaping societal roles. Female sexuality, methods of birth control, and abortion also play an important thematic role in the novel. Montero displays a desire to bear witness to the affective, sexual and political frustration felt by her female contemporaries, and to criticize certain situations and types of behavior that are manifestly unjust.³ She examines the male-female relationships, stereotypical roles, sexuality, motherhood, and career-related problems. Her central and integral concerns in Crónica possess an underlying feminist ideology or system of beliefs. There is also an attempt to create an alternative to the dominant male discourse in literature by concentrating on the exploration and careful, tactful analysis of female sexuality and
existence. Through this novel radiated a sense of personhood, liberation, and self-sufficiency as a woman and for women in spite of political, economical, and social discrimination prevalent in Spanish society. Montero with the development in literary structure of Crónica del Desamor, gives meaning and significance to female voice and sexual freedom. In accordance with the sentiments of Montero, writer Adrienne Rich is quoted as saying, "Truly to liberate women, then, means to liberate thinking itself: finally to integrate what has been named the unconscious, the subjective, the emotional with the structural, the rational, the intellectual."

Rosa Montero is clearly a part of a phenomenon of apparition of many Spanish women writers that emerged in the early 1970's. She is definitely not the first female novelist, there are a whole gamut of female writers that were not yet appreciated during those earlier years. Although Montero has had an indirect influence from the ever-changing society and the feminist movement, she still firmly believes that writing has no gender and that each must determine, establish, and utilize one's own appropriate language, style, and voice. She believes that feminism and being feminist is a way or posture of facing life. In my opinion, Crónica del Desamor illustrates and symbolizes Montero's posture of facing modern day life. Living in a sexist world, there are bound to be differences in attitudes, education, fears, and ideals. The differences between male and female visions of the world provoke the breaking-out and individual search to construct appropriate feminine literary successes that can continue to endure the continuously changing society. So in essence, the fact that female development differs from that of the male, and the idea of a woman being the author and the creator of her own history are both novel notions of a new self-cultivation novel not constrained by a masculinized or "masculinist" genre. Hence, the forthcoming and
rising female Bildungsroman (literary novelistic genre) blossoms and matures. Women writers, such as Montero, were beginning to articulate "self" and "voice" and model it in their style of writing, rather than through the masculinist spectacle or phallic self-identity. On one level, the novel allegorizes or symbolizes the entry of the knowledge of feminism into the patriarchal universe with its development and popularity. Notwithstanding the urgency of some issues raised in the novel, the fact that in February 1990 more than a hundred thousand copies had been sold speaks for the universality of its content. It will gradually bring about a post-modernist leveling of previously cherished and adhered to certainties relating to identity and gender struggles.

*Cronica* effectively begins the process of emasculation and gives a rightful place for women in society. This is the beginning for women of society and literature of the defiance of the phallocentric standard during changing times. With a subversive or undermining intent, the novel focuses on questions of textual and sexual authority by challenging the anachronistic or outdated assumption that men are born to dominate and the women to be dominated. For a long time now, the narration point of view has not been representative of women in Spain. However, the rise of literary voice of women in *Cronica* gives noted representation to women in Spain. A delicate point of view that had been previously suppressed by the masculine ideals, roles, and positions is now coming out of its silence through literature, providing an existence and a tendency toward subversion of the masculine myths. This process consists of presenting these original, traditional myths sustained by the male and later 'collapsing' them to show the fragility of the base which all along sustained them. This tendency to subvert the originally sustained chauvinistic, machista myths,
practices, and beliefs in the writing of men can be considered a characteristic of Montero's actual feminine literature.

A tactful subversive technique of Rosa Montero's in *Crónica* is metafiction. Metafiction is that which goes beyond or transcends the original fiction. At the same time it relates to the original and places emphasis on something changed in the story line. Metafiction calls to attention the fact that the novel or piece of work is an artifice or device that suggests to the reader that the exterior world around us is a construct. It provokes thoughts about the conventions and myths within a novel and alludes to the fragility and/or absurdity of these conventions in the real world. Concha Alborg, another prominent female writer has stated, "Metafiction is an instrument in the novels of Rosa Montero to give emphasis to feminist questions." Montero should be considered feminist by her reactions toward a narrative that privileges a male authority and one that makes private the woman's voice. Her position is developed within a repressive system of government, one that favored a traditional society. She uses this to her advantage by establishing a narrative and literary way to represent women effectively in *Crónica*. Montero, throughout the novel, searches for a voice that opposes the masculine text that had dominated Spanish culture for so many years. In this process, Montero, as well as her protagonist and other female characters, overtly intend to achieve a liberated consciousness and voice which to this point have been silenced and repressed. At the end of the novel Ana feels this sense of liberation with the manipulation of her boss, Soto Amón and his egotistical behavior. Montero and her protagonists attempt to weaken the phallocentric domain of language and culture in general. This domain, according to some French feminists and critics, has been gravitating around and functioning because of one singular entity of the male (and its only member). This is
to say that while males concentrate and focus on one aspect, women's thoughts, ideals, and successes are derived from a multitude or variety of mind-body experiences: female sexuality and eroticism. The overt intention and Montero's success of metafiction lie within the process of reexamining and undermining the old taboos, myths, and the time-worn patriarchal attitudes towards sex roles and sexuality. On occasion it eradicates and supplants the old myths of female submissiveness with men with new ones, only to toy with and destroy them as well. Metafiction, a fiction within the fiction of Crónica, becomes The Book of Anas. It allows the characters to respond to the influence of popular culture on their personal, daily lives in Spanish society. This also propels people in the world external (readers) to the novel to entrap themselves in and evaluate the myths or traditional beliefs that society has created for them.

The desire to overcome and the search for a narrative form that permits Montero to construct a world of fiction that is from her own liberal point of view is what propels Crónica to success. Her long journey of renovation and change, with the development of characters and action, is illustrated by reader and universal reactions. Here, Montero personifies and brings to life a permanent, sincere commitment in particular defense of the condition of the female. The story, or the many different stories conglomerated together, is comprised of various accounts putting into effect the conveying of different cases and situations juxtaposed to arrive at the conclusion that women are treated only one way under any circumstance—poorly. This orientation is indicated from the beginning: "Sería el libro de las Anas, de todas y ella misma, tan distinta y tan una." Although a great part of the narrations consists of an exposition in third person, frequently through the monoliths of its protagonist and female characters, underlying movements and shifts of dialogue are
transmitted. It represents, with its feminine discourse and female point of view, almost an inversion of the habitual, sexual model in literature: in a traditional presentation, it is usually men who boast of their conquests and recount their sexual experiences and triumphs. This is not the case with Ana and the rest of the female characters in the novel. At the vanguard of this new narrative of women, I believe that Montero's Crónica served as a model for consciousness-raising by introducing a variety of feminist issues: the personal and professional problems of women in a male-dominant society, the economic and emotional struggle of a single-parent, and the burdens placed on women in a country where abortion and contraceptives were illegal. In addition, the false equation of women's liberation with sexual freedom (issues of abortion, single-parenting, etc.), the impossibility of sustaining a long-term male-female relationship based on equality, the related plea of homosexuals in a patriarchal society, and lastly the need to cope with loneliness and boredom are also apparent. Written partially in documentary style, the novel chronicles individual and collective experiences. It not only voices issues pertinent to the rise of the female authority and voice in literature and in culture, but also it exposes and validates negative sentiments and experiences that any human being can have. It does address the issue of homosexuality in a reactive sort of way in the infamous repression of the Franco era and its related integration myth. Gay males were subject to harsh treatment under the law and to spontaneous discrimination by the dominant Spanish society. Homosexuality was not decriminalized until 1978, one year before the publishing of Montero's Crónica. The issue of homosexuality will not be addressed in this account of contemporary literature, however its importance has some relevance in the narrative to show that much remains the same in Spanish society. Most importantly the novel suggests, with its creative literary tactics and
techniques, taking a good look at women and their value in society. Although the statement has been made that, "...writing has been considered a male art: the pen is a phallic symbol and therefore women are not "equipped" for the (pro)creative act.," the new women's narrative of Spain appears to have embarked on a process of subversion and defamiliarization that is intended to make the reader aware of female perspective on life, literature, and society. In this new women's narrative, Montero seems to deploy, in her own way strategically, a tactic whereby stereotyped female attributes and culturally defined gender roles are turned against dominant male discourses and phallocentric supremacy. They are then turned into a means of resistance by exposing, undermining, and making an attempt to collapse this unstable authority. In essence, subversion through inversion is the ways and means to the intended female author's end. The subduing of the phallocentric domain becomes the desired outcome.

In search of this desired female voice, Montero also assigns new roles to silence, submissiveness, and passiveness. They now have become sites of resistance and disguised rebellion. Crónica del Desamor unveils this disguise and portrays verbally the rebellors' cause. It is itself a paradigm, an exemplary example, of feminine expression which attempts to override congenital machismo, and clearly defined gender roles in an overtly repressive society. It is not militant in its attack, but quite subtle, announcing publicly the repression. There is a vein of didacticism that runs subtly throughout this particular work of Montero. The creatively didactic elements that circulate throughout possess the intention to teach and inform as well as entertain. It is also polemic by nature whereby it is somewhat of an attack or refutation of others' opinions and principles, ultimately conveying moral and sometimes controversial, disputative observations. Montero creates, with Crónica and her protagonists,
a coherent fictive world that relates to the real world. Manipulation of linguistic prowess and character development is a very successful way of giving form to Montero's reality.

Although Montero most generally rejects the identification of the male experience as definitive and universal, she does not go to the opposite extreme and claim that only the feminine is of value, whether or not personal or professional. Throughout Crónica, Montero holds all manner of sexual stereotypes up to ridicule and criticizes discrimination. The absurdities and inequities of sexist systems are exposed in the novel with the reversal of the characteristics stereotypically assigned to either males or females. This is portrayed very well with the development of the character of Pulga and her experiences with younger lovers and the triumphs and failures she experiences with each of them. Theses transgressive tactics challenge assumptions about sexual roles, political systems, and social conventions. Montero, with the creation of Crónica, underscores the need for alternative realities, ones that are conducive for all human beings, most importantly women. Montero strives to achieve parity with male authors. In a sense, Montero endorses an affirmative action necessary to bring outstanding, underappreciated literature by female authors to the attention of a wider readership with Crónica del Desamor. The writing of Crónica can be considered feminist for it critiques existing disciplines, traditional myths, and beliefs about women and their social/sexual roles from the vantage point and the point of view of quite a remarkable woman.10

The experiences and the sentiments of the protagonist Ana in Crónica reflect the discourse of a novel rosa which is sentimental by nature. The sentimental discourse of romance remains alive in Ana's consciousness. Ana is a serious professional, single mother, and a feminist critic of machista society, at times portraying the image of the strong,
emancipated woman. However, by creating for herself an imaginary text revolving around her boss Eduardo Soto Amón, she has not erased the lingering voices of the romance novela rosa. In spite of her disillusionment with male-female relationships, Ana continues to identify with the dream and characteristics preferred by the novela rosa. This imaginary love is a motif of increasing intensity throughout the novel, even though Ana's feminist consciousness is at odds with the discourse of the sentimental romance:

...ahora Ana intuye con melancolía que ha consumido media vida inventado amores inexistentes: y este Soto Amón de la treintena no es más que un nuevo y sofisticado artificio."

Ultimately there will be a liberating effect of change that happens to the protagonist which allows Ana to write her proposed Book of Anas as a daily chronicle of "unlove" with its denunciation and attempt to undermine the mediocrity and tedium of the phallocentric domain, personified by Soto Amón and other male characters. Crónica continues the dialogic relationship with the novela rosa by taking into account the style and tone of the individual episodes or chapters with the chronicle and its subjective, untraditional discourse.

These individual parts and episodes of Crónica del Desamor are overtly written much like a movie script, containing scenes that can be visualized as clips from movies. The flash back and forth between characters and events gives the novel a cinematic overtone. The late 1970's was a time of disenchantment in democratic Spain. Coupled with the end of official censorship, the period gave rise in cinema to wildly comic and often erotic portrayals of contemporary Spanish life. While film makers have experienced a drastic change in the relationship between censorship and their creative work, many writers and authors within the mass-media have not. However, Montero acknowledges this and attempts to capitalize on
her desire to portray the same creativity with Crónica. It is an antecedent text that lends itself particularly well to this kind of imagery it returns toward realism, focusing on a well-developed narrative trend during the late 1970's. This obscure imagery and sarcastic tone is set and evident particularly well in the book in the scene where Ana and two friends go to the office of a male gynecologist, whose pompous ignorance is visualized satirically and humorously. A symbol of false progressiveness who owes his reputation to the fact that his office is located in a new, flashy tower in the suburb, the doctor conveys an attitude of a superior, patronizing chaunvanist. The middle-aged doctor views the women with "una sonrisa de conmiseración y desprecio" (a smile of commiseration and degradation) as he despairingly rejects the diaphragm as a contraceptive device. When Elena hands him her "una cajita redonda de plástico que parece una polvera de juguete" (a little round box made of plastic that seems like a toy), he wittingly opens it, spraying a cloud of talcum powder over his desk and clothes. In a comic reversal, his tone changes completely: "the dude reddens, his voice resembles feminine tones, what is this?", he repeated angrily while holding the disc-like item with his fingers. The ladies reach the conclusion that the so-called sexual liberation of the woman by the invention of the female contraceptives is really a disguised commodity for the man, who does not have to fuss with it anymore. So the woman is anything but liberated in this respect. On the contrary, contraception is now exclusively a woman's hassle and a man's convenience. The ability to create satirical imagery satiates Montero's desire to write a motivating, polemic piece of narrative.

Crónica del Desamor is a collective portrait of the professional middle class woman. It is a chronicle, which its title suggests, that is a collection of chapters with a loose plot and no primary central conflict. However, the constant presence of women and their encountered
problems give the novel its unity and complexity. The novel, which gave the ordinary thwarting of women's lives literary shape, portrays democracy and equality. Two things expected to appear in tandem appear as two different things. The new democratic Spain, though it appeared to advocate equality among the sexes, struggled with consistency and fairness. Ana Anton, the main protagonist, remains the consciousness that anchors the novel throughout and strives for this sexual equality and actual freedom. Ana is a thirty year old single mother who worries incessantly that her four-year old boy is suffering from the lack of a father's presence. Her job as an editor at a large Madrid newspaper, where her superiors intimidate her by calling her "hon" and "love", is insecure. She begins to realize as the novel materializes that the promises of promotion she's been given are meaningless. She has no other prospects. However, as her loneliness and frustrations mount, she develops a romantic obsession with the newspaper's powerful owner, Eduardo Soto Amón, a wealthy, preening playboy and a type Ana has always loathed. Even Ana realizes how irrational and insincere her passion is, but that does not stop her from pouring uncontrollably into this distraction. Elena, Ana's feminist friend, is a talented, self-doubting academic whose relationship with her live-in-lover is coming apart. Elena who during the course of the novel used to believe she had to think and act like a man in order to become liberated, changed her opinion when she reached the age of thirty. She started to consider her ability to give birth as a privilege, instead of a typically feminine burden. She learned to be proud of her ability to bear a child instead of considering it another form of female servitude. Maybe for a long time Elena confused woman's liberation with a rejection of womanhood: liberation seemed to mean imitation of the dominant sex, you had to adopt male values, copy men, and repudiate female identity. Elena carries out almost to the letter what her namesake Hélène Cixous suggests
as a way toward a satisfactory male-female relationship. According to Cixous, once feminine differences have been duly recognized and female sexuality confirmed as a positive asset, it will be possible to establish a dialogue between men and women as equals in a new, truly bisexual era when neither gender is privileged. Julita is a tarried, inconsolable woman whose just been left after fifteen years of a traditional marriage and is uncertain about how she will survive alone. There is child-like Pulga, who likes the fast life and knowingly takes up with a series of increasingly inappropriate men. Candela is a child psychologist who comes the closest to being a reasonably satisfied human being, and she is also the most overt, strong-willed feminist. There is really only one male point of view: that of gay Cecilio, who like women, searches unrelentingly for a body to ease his loneliness.

Loneliness in every conceivable form appears in Crónica. Since the death of Franco, the traditional sexual restrictions have broken down, but the main result for women has been that men have been free to have sex with them and then abandon them. Women are left with illegal abortions, single-parenting, and financial struggles. With as yet, no avenues toward political change have been opened, so the women in the novel keep half-heartedly at the game of love, telling themselves that something will surely come of it someday. With this occurring throughout the novel, the goal which Montero hopes to achieve is to provoke women to take a look and take action against the power games and struggles they have lost at home, at work, and as citizens in society. One element that is developed which is not so overt because of its subtlety, but one that would seem apparent in this novel eliciting and encouraging an awareness of female consciousness is that of female anger due to loneliness and unfairness. In Crónica, it is implied, though not blatantly evident and clear. Perhaps because Crónica was written in a country without a long or consistent history of rights and
the righteous battles that go with them. Female rage, with a few exceptions, is more muted and indirect in the novel. Because rage is not overt in the novel, it becomes literary, as matter of suggestion, symbol, metaphor, and motif. The subtlety of its suggestion is clearly shown in the beginning of the novel, and it surfaces periodically throughout the rest of the book. The passage reads:

...sangraron aun los dos supuestos etarras acrribillados esta manana en el Pais Basco, y el niño que se atravesó en el tiroteo callejero y resulto descerebrado, y el guardia civil y su novia que murieron a balazos en el coche, sudorosos aun tras bailar en la discoteca, desplomados sobre el volante, con la bocina tocando inutilmente a muerto.\(^{14}\)

Later, Ana is awakened by a midnight caller. The unknown man on the other end asks for her name, tells her she has a sexy voice, invites her repeatedly to come out for a drink. As he speaks, Montero interposes parenthetical flashbacks to Ana's reading:

...y agoniza el minusvalido al que unos policías aporrearon con sana, fue en Guipuzcoa y el muchacho intentaba protegerse desde el suelo, la peluca que cubría su craneo pelado, pálido y enfermo, resbaló dejando ver las cicatrices de la última operación, los policías golpearon una y otra vez sobre la sonrosada costura, tierna y reciente...\(^{15}\)

The rage and violation Ana feels are expressed only in disguise, through her memory of the sadism and suffering in the newspaper accounts. Although she knows it is absurd, she is unable to hang up on the caller. The interposed stories of violence become more and more closely tied to the current sexual threat:

...una chica de dieciséite años se ha arrojado de un camión en marcha, había hecho auto-
Montero, with these segments of events, makes the attempt to portray her view of society and the treatment of women by showing the double standards and hypocritical actions taken. Rage is then given its most horrifying form in the mysterious tenants who move into the apartment below Ana's. There is screaming, pleading, and moaning that comes from the apartment below which Ana hears daily. Ana convinces herself that it is nothing and escapes the raging and rising horror by leaving or distracting herself. We, as readers like Ana as well, never really find out what actually occurred in the apartment below, nor is there ever explanation of the violence. We are lead to believe the worst and formulate our own resolve. Literarily this is an honest approach and stands as an example on how Montero handles the subject of conflict and despair in modern society in general. There is no way out, the struggles and the pain continue. The battering is simply a scream of pain and anger continually inflicted on innocent and undeserving victims which threatens to rise up at any given time.

Through these particular passages of rage and pain, Montero's prose has a deceptively simple journalistic feel to it. There are long passages of part dialogue, and time and space is passed through swiftly and effortlessly. Montero has an uncanny tool for conveying the rage. She does so indirectly, yet she does not utilize euphemisms or substitutions of mild, indirect expressions. She calls things as she sees them by their true names. Not only does her reportorial, journalistic style of writing encourage the reader to empathize and identify, but her ability for telling detail and using choice phrases inspires the same. An explicit
example of this prowess is the depiction of the high-handed gynecologist that Ana and her friends in Crónica visit. They are referred to as "macho c_ _ _ inspectors" and the street interaction between sexual harassers and teenage girls, who learn tricks for fighting back, are compared to and portrayed as a type of "guerilla war". These are two metaphors used by Montero to illustrate literally this rage. The origin of this rage stems from the treatment from men and society as a whole. So as not to lose moral high ground, women need to pay close attention to the control of their emotions keeping in mind their targeted goals of acceptance, appreciation, and desire to fulfill the lack of love. The graphic expression of the word desamor (unlove) from the title denotes the absolute noncommunication with the man. However, women when they are alone, live tranquilly without the absorbent, dominant presence of the male. But nevertheless, the conflict that is presented to the protagonist is that, in spite of the disillusion, the violence, and the sadness that engulfs the relationship with the male sex, the women are at times incapable of living or going without men. In Crónica, what is evident is that without the man, the individual woman ultimately realizes and becomes professionally and affectively better than when accompanied. In this situation, women alone little by little become self-governing, self-directing, and morally independent. These bestowed qualities truly enrich them and free them from a paradoxical, compulsive form which has not been the norm. However, the necessity, both sexual and sensual, of their own female body causes the override of their autonomy, and they at times succumb to the imperfect, destructive company and wooing of a man. It is this irrational necessity that is noticed and exploited by a phallocentric culture, and that is also associated with the traditional role of women: serving and caring for the man. Women, although feeling a negative sense of personal freedom and autonomy, feel trapped in a situation of apparent
social rejection and loneliness, which in reality is the fictitious and phallocentric Spanish society.

The negative attitude of Montero in reference to the central theme: the noncommunication between the man and the woman, portrays the incapacity of the male to understand and accept the feminine discourse. Montero clearly establishes her attack and critique of the phallocentric aspect present in the erotic/sexual relationships with the development of the romantic love scene between Ana and her boss. She writes, "...durante un año, la protagonista de Crónica lo ha erigido, delusoriamente, como el horrible ideal por sus triunfos profesionales y sociales." This scene, anticipated during the entire novel by Ana, is manifest by the triviality and in the absurd that are stylistically expressed in the parallel exposition of the internal thought of Ana and her outward, visible actions. Concave reflections, of a possible real liberated communication that never materializes here, serve to express authoritatively the cultural and social oppression of men, and that women only find emptiness and loneliness. This critique of the phallocentric culture and the noncommunication is best developed at the end of the book when Ana is visualizing what will come of the night with her boss, Soto Amon. It concludes with:

...Ana intuye en un segundo el desarrollo de la noche, el me desnudará con mano hábil a ajena...nos amaremos sin decir nada en un coito impersonal, Eduardo tendrá un orgasmo ajeno a mí, sin abrazarme,...sin recordar quien soy yo. ...Nos vestiremos con premura y en silencio y el apartamento se irá haciendo más feo por momentos, recogeré quizá el vaso vacío y los ceniceros para ponerlos todos en el fregadero con desesperado, automático gesto femenino: déjalo, insistirá Eduardo, mañana vendrá la mujer de la limpieza...
The parallel action is an interior ridiculous reflection that Ana experiences in anticipation. It reads:

...se desarrolla, pues la pantomima con asombrosa semejanza a lo previsto (que hago aquí con este extraño?), se hacen un amor callado y hueco (qué absurda situación, absurda, absurda), el aire se llena de silencios (es como si contemplara a mí misma desde fuera, tan lejos de la realidad, de él, de todo), "lo siento, pero es tardísimo para mi, tenemos que marcharnos", dice él al fin (todo un año que se acaba con esto, si él supiera), "déjalo, Ana, déjalo, ya lo recogerá todo la asistente que viene cada día."

The resolve of an attraction and a year-long wait for Ana's boss, propels the plot of Crónica, which within the framework of the narrative is a collection of descriptions, brief scenes, and recorded speech. It is through this collection that the main characters share their lives as well as their thoughts and views. Crónica appears to be based on a slim metaliterary conceit which is interpreted by the chronicle that Ana thinks of writing at the beginning of the book and knows she will write at its conclusion. The women's characters and their individual but entangled plots are the subject of Ana's projected book. Montero, through these well-thought of plots, depicts details of female existence that were always previously left out of literature: menstruation, sexual harassment, and visits to a (male) gynecologist are described in detail, in frank language, and often hostile humor, "...si los hombres parieran el aborto sería ya legal en todo el mundo desde el principio de los siglos, piensa Ana temprano en la novela."
Women's roles in society and the evolution of the women's movement are primary topics in *Crónica del Desamor*. Feminist philosophizing is introduced and conveyed in characters' extended discourse. An example of this is the series of observations spoken by Candela, Ana's friend, late in the work. It appears that she feels that women's liberation from the onset initially represents a devaluation of women as they tried to emulate man. Only recently have women come to value their bodies and their gender. Rosa Montero verifies in her work that there has always been women capable of overcoming and taking control of the most arduous of circumstances. Creative, fighting spirits, and adventurous, political aspirations are essential here for women. They have had the ability and the courage to escape the chains that bound them so tightly and cross the boundaries that the world and society had placed around them. Here, Montero is abolishing this type of societal "sexist amnesia", giving new meaning to the growing feminine presence which is occupying the intellectual, academic, and societal levels. Montero, *Crónica del Desamor*, and her new investigations of change pave the way for women and new beginnings. Taking on a feminist perspective, I feel that Montero seeks and helps to rediscover the neglected feminine genre, which in literature has long been considered masculine in form. *Crónica* is simply for Montero a discovered outlet for her expression, which historically the public voice of women and women writers had been denied. In the novel, she addresses subjects which she personally deems important, she discusses through novel form the historical and sociopolitical issues, and foremost, it is my feeling that here Montero denounces female subordination by engaging in a direct dialogue with her readers. She incorporates into her work, both the ideological and the aesthetic into one concise form and uses skillfully various strategies to influence her readers. Purely for aesthetics, she differentiates psychologically
her work from reality, but at the same time conveys an underlying feminist message throughout which is obvious to her readers. Although Montero could be viewed as an aggressive controversialist dealing with feminist and societal issues, her shocking polemics do not obscure the art of Crónica del Desamor and the foundations upon which it is based. Montero herself, on the cover of her book, declares her work a chronicle without pretensions, a quick look at the world around us; an approach to the daily problems and desires we all have. Technically, Crónica is closely associated with the genre of non-fiction interviews that Montero cultivated so successfully as a reporter. It is a collage of interviews, and at the same time it is also a reflection of a Montero's novelistic approach to interviews. The "interviewees", the characters in Montero's novel, are an amalgam of ordinary people, most of them female, whose lives have traditionally and socially gone unnoticed. Theses characters, and the feminist views they hold as a matter of survival and search for change, are reflections of the involved author who claims them as part of herself and her beliefs.

Along these same lines of search for change are author/character reflection, involvement and views of other writers of the same beliefs and background. French feminist Héléne Cixous also believes that women will be able to destroy with their writing the actual phallocentric domain of language and culture previously dominated by males. This is not to say that Cixous and the theoretical aspects she declares have had anything to do with influencing directly Rosa Montero and her works. However, it is to say that this particular Spanish female novelist and her discourse of the novel, Crónica del Desamor could be analyzed to be having much to do with Cixous' theories. Crónica presents to us a mosaic of feminine lives presented under the point of view of the apparent protagonist, Ana. These women offer to the reader, from an impressionistic form, the confrontation of hard and
difficult lives where they express the problems and the anguishes of the actual Spanish urban woman. Also presented, and a constant recurring theme, is the absolute noncommunication with man, of which comes the graphic expression of the word desamor of the title. This again can be seen as paralleling the theory of the French feminists, Cixous specifically, that man is portrayed as the antagonist or simply non-existent.

In the novel, Crónica, this is evident in that the men portrayed are weak, egotistical, and incapable of comprehension of and identification with the physical and emotional circumstances of women. The fact that results in the novel is that women, even without man in her life, realizes both professionally and affectively better than while being accompanied by men. Again, as stated earlier and very important, little by little they become autonomous and discover an independence that enriches and potentiates their quests and ultimately their lives. Still the sexual necessity of their own femininity and bodies from a paradoxical and compulsive form, brings them from time to time to override their developing autonomy to give in to the imperfect and destructive company of men. This ambivalence and the necessity, both irrational and internalized, is fixated by a phallocentric culture that associates the same rising feminine realization with the traditional role of the woman serving and caring for man. They seem to be trapped in this machistic and fictitious society. The common goal for all is to escape and liberate their suppressed unconscious and voice. The male characters discussed above are not able to transcend their weakened masculinity where desire and sex become mechanical with emotion and compromise. Their erotic behavior is only a mere glimpse of what it will take to ratify the culturally dominant realm of phallocentrism, requiring a radical reassessment of cultural assumptions. Crónica del Desamor does so precisely because once feminine differences have been duly recognized and female sexuality
confirmed as a positive asset, it will then be possible to establish a dialogue between men and women as equals in a new, bisexual era when neither gender is unfairly privileged. Once feminine consciousness and female voice in literature have been made effective, and equilibrium has been reached between the sexes, this will allow for a universally human creative language. Montero, although she conveys feminist issues throughout in her novel, considers feminism an ongoing pursuit rather than an ideology: a continuum by which women seek to understand and know themselves, and also establish her role in this world and her position with regard to others, both men and women. First Montero stresses through the internal structures and common threads of the novel, that women themselves are the only people they need to affirm self-worth. Her characters ultimately achieve a level of emancipation and liberation. Emancipation from other "dictators" of society, Soto Amón, other men, and societal clucks. Evident also is the oppressive power of an increasingly materialistic society and its suffocating effect on the human spirit. Chasing vain images is not productive for these characters, nor is it positive. Therefore, this emancipation sets the foreground of the novel, conveying a common goal for each character especially the protagonist, Ana Anton. In the end, she realizes that she has been chasing a vain image in Soto Amón, just another dictator.

_Crónica del Desamor_ stresses the importance of achieved personal goals and self-reliance. Montero claims, "If we (women) don't know how to live with ourselves, we will only have anthropophagous or cannibal-like relationships, just because we are frightened of being alone." It is here that her narrative responds to the changing attitudes towards women in Spanish society over time. Her work is quite woman-centered, not separatist in that there is both treatment of males and females present. This documentary narrative should
be considered part of a general offensive by progressive women keen for change. The female protagonists find themselves in situations which not only force them to reconsider traditional values and ideas regarding women's role in society, but also to seriously question the apparently more progressive solutions resulting from feminist debate, the Women's Liberation Movement, and the sexual revolution. They need to reshape their lifestyles despite the social changes and find a new identity, a meaning, and a purpose in life. This, however, does not mean that women should not have to lose their identity to gain acceptance and recognition in today's society. Montero's quest for understanding is more than a struggle for equality and independence, though those two are indeed important and common threads throughout Crónica del Desamor. Documentary and fiction are mixed similarly here, and I believe at the same time she accomplishes this through female voice and feminine consciousness-raising. The novel, also known as a chronicle, gives Montero plenty of scope to introduce previously discussed topical and politically sensitive feminist issues. Other such hitherto taboo subjects not readily addressed, or even approached or raised by female authors are: oral sex, orgasms, male prostitution, homosexuality, menstruation, male and female masturbation, and more over constant sexual harassment endured by women of Spain. More general social issues are of secondary importance, but nevertheless form part of this social and societal critique: cancer, senility, geriatrics, bomb threats, and political parties are all scantily woven into the narrative. Women and the political struggle during the post-Franco period is best portrayed by Elena, Ana's friend, who formerly was a member of the Spanish Communist party for five years. There is scarce reference made throughout the novel about Elena's connection, but the most interesting one was how her joining the Communist party coincided with her desire to "stop being a virgin", and how difficult it
was to find an obliging partner once she confessed her intention. Somewhere along the line for her, she lost the most tender part of herself due to failures of hurt relationships. Elena lives desamor (unlove) only with exhaustion, the same exhaustion she felt when she left the communist party. Ana, too, has the same realization about the lack of love and communication in relationships.

In the end, Ana's realization that a new order of things will only come about through communication and understanding between the generations and the sexes, and that the basic values such as love, compassion, sincerity, self-respect, and above all and most importantly self-awareness, are crucial at this critical juncture enable her to conform to a new identity and become a self-fulfilling, productive member of society. Ultimately Ana thinks to have lost in this world-weary chess game of moves and counter-moves, than never to have taken part at all, better to be searching at all. She does, however, face up to one lust disappointment. Having never been to bed with a man who usually wears a tie. Ana relishes the moment when she will remove this item of clothing from Soto Amón’s neck; but he takes it off himself in a automatic, well-rehearsed, self-sufficient gesture. Montero writes:

...Un gesto cruel y poderoso que, quién sabe, recapacita ella con ácida sonrisa, puede ser un buen comienzo para ese libro que ahora está segura de escribir, que ya no será el renoroso libro de las Anas, sino un apunte, una crónica del desamor cotidiano rubricada por la mediocridad de ese nudo de seda deshecho por la rutina y el tedio.26

Here, Ana in a literary way has cleared the path for a satisfactory relationship with a man. Ana delights in her seemingly small but significant victory over her boss. After their depressing, predictable sexual encounter Ana is one step ahead of his “riddance repertoire”
and calls a taxi to go home, instead of having him call one for her. Her hysterical laughter
at the astonishment of "Mr. Perfect" releases all the anxieties and frustrations she has had to
deal with throughout the book. As she puts her little boy to bed, Ana feels a strange, strong
sense of pride growing inside her. She finally realizes here that she is the only person she
needs to affirm her self-worth, and that as long as you fail to recognize yourself as you best
friend, you cannot find yourself in others. She is ready for life on her own or with someone
who has reached the same level of emancipation.

With this in mind, we deem *Crónica del Desamor* a metafictional narrative. It
consciously and systematically centers on aspects of its own creation. It is as though
Montero does not directly address feminist issues in modern society, but through metafictive
narration, she indirectly makes her statement that society must change and remain constant
and consistent with its treatment of women. Ana writes a newspaper article on middle-aged
Spanish men castrated and weakened by the sexual depression of the Franco regime.
Fragments of the article are embedded in the narrative as journalism in fiction. At the
beginning of the novel, Ana muses on how she would like to write something called the
Book of Anas. The metanarrative *Crónica* is the final product: Ana, implied author and
protagonist, starts her work at the end of the novel. So to a large degree, the novel
recapitulates on the events leading to her decision to write. Montero here uses metafiction
to emphasize feminist issues, and more importantly to subvert conventional roles in life
experiences and reality. This is a type of confessional literature used for a specific purpose:
to inform and expose post-modern systems of thought, with moral and existential choices in
a hostile and alienating contemporary world. Postmodernism is the reaction against theories
and practices of modern society. I believe that Montero is writing from this movement,
along with the feminist movement as well. It is a post-modern reworking of feminism which
inscribes diversity and engages in a critique of a patriarchal system of thought. Also, it de-
legitimizes the master-male-dominated-narrative and cultural myths. Characters, both main
and others, experience in Crónica an almost mystical, transcendental moment of self-
revelation and environmental and societal awareness. This is a specific notion of
postmodernism and exemplifies to some degree radical feminism, one that not only
decomposes explicit ideologies, but also argues a definite need for change and real
transformation from traditional patriarchal and social practices. Montero's work reflects on
the past and imagines the future while it breaks down verbal and conceptual barriers set up
by modern Spanish society. Ultimately it shifts the site of differences and thinking,
somewhat displacing phallocentricity and enabling the materialization of a new order and
way of life within society, the workplace, and the home.

Crónica is a testimonial book of an epoch of new order where all of the characters,
mainly female, pertain to a middle class and all their disaster, crisis, disillusions of love and
trust, politics, and social inadequacies help to develop the drama and plot of this
disenchanted daily life. The vision that transmits to the readers is purely feminine and the
key narrative voice draws the readers' attention from the beginning of the novel to the end.
This novel is not autobiographical by definition, but that each of the female characters
developed within the drama is not identical nor individual, but rather each seems to form a
part of one collective character that reveals the paradoxical character of the feminine "I".
Ana, Pulga, Elena, Candela, and Julia pass throughout the narration feeling their stories of
frustrations, loneliness, and disasters, both amorous and professional. They live the desamor
with melancholy and without tears. Naturally in this context and this setting, male
personages are the worst treated, all of them perfect examples of the antihero. Unalterable, proud, despotic, authoritarian, and cowardly are the men tactfully portrayed in this novel. This ill-portrayal of men only scratched the surface of the intent of and the motivation behind Montero's writing. Her attempt to change men's consciousness and create a new one for women in a country that invented machismo would have to entail and require a radical reassessment of cultural assumptions and customs. This is just what Crónica presents: lived equality between men and women that goes well beyond legislation, affecting every aspect of daily life and new beliefs. It is my belief that it was precisely the matter of redefining roles and relations of men and women in society that Montero had in mind with her first novel because, both in the private and public spectrum, there was definitely a gap between spirit and word that she wished to bridge. Her goal was not an easy task, but one that could be achieved with tremendous amounts of desire and motivation: to elucidate the problems clearly and give women a voice in their possible solutions, and to articulate the non-existent and unheeded or hidden feminine point of view. To incorporate this voice and point of view, Montero, with her narrative, had to bring balance to the male-dominated public discourse. Montero achieves the consciousness-raising of feminine voice during the years of the Transition, the first decade following Franco's death, by voicing women's and, not least important, men's fears and sufferings as public matters of social import. Through Crónica, Montero explores the effects of social turmoil in the home and in the workplace, in relationships, and certain situations. Outwardly there is a web woven of conflicting interests and beliefs, unresolved tensions, and mostly ambivalence: where both men and women are pitted together to wait out the storm of radical change and find an appropriate place in society. What is appropriate? Crónica del Desamor emphasizes a desperate and great need
for alternatives through positive change and the breaking down of patriarchal myths. Montero's characters within the novel represent the sociological turmoil and situations in which women found themselves in post-Franco. These female characters all reject at some point the submissive and limiting traditional feminine roles, because although society appeared to be changing externally, what was happening internally fundamentally was unstable.

The emphasis of the book is on personal relations, mainly of the sexual nature because it is here in the intimate realm where the tension and confusion are manifest the most. Sexual relations continue to be dominated and controlled by men and their immediate need for physical gratification. Men were elusive and did not in any way fulfill the emotional needs of women, mainly the intimacy in the realm of vulnerability. In the novel, sex becomes a quantifiable and depersonalized endeavor because of man's fear of failure and woman's fear of loneliness and abandonment. It is this avoidance of fear and loneliness that links each of the characters, but still establishing an open-dialogue between men and women proves to be a difficult task. The longed-for freedom and female liberation becomes more and more of a burden for women that in fact they become confused with this liberation and imitate typical masculine attitudes, and appropriate phallocentric idiomatic expressions demeaning to their own sex. They all at some point in time reject everything labeled feminine. This split consciousness causes self-deception and the avoidance of facing the truth. Montero throughout the novel, repeatedly traces the painstaking process of learning and unlearning patterns of behavior and the norm with her characters. This provides a prime example of involvement and determination. Also through these Montero examines the
culture for the roots of conflict at both personal and social levels, and states her case about the breakdown of gender-based stereotypes and archetypical beliefs.

The novel promises a possible future, not only of equality, but of cooperation and reciprocity between the sexes. This gives it an implicit normative component making it a political statement, a form of feminism targeting a goal: a renewed consciousness freed from sexual, traditional stereotypes and beliefs. The ending of the novel best describes and relates this new renewed consciousness when Ana has a small personal victory, though not without its deep disappointment. It represents a decisive moment of self-affirmation, the moment when the inner and outer voices merge as she succeeds in slipping out of her subordinate, submissive, feminine role. Self-affirmation equals autonomy which is a true sense of self-governing, personal freedom and growth. This chronicle, the piece of work somewhere between the "male" genre novel and more spontaneous "female" literary form of the journal, conveys a self-reflective style which is purely thematic and goal-oriented. This novel, which portrays democracy and equality as two very different entities, gives literary shape to the struggles of the characters to maintain dignity in love and in the professional realm. Ana, the main character and protagonist, remains the consciousness that anchors the novel in the rapidly changing and struggling post-Franco society. Again, with the death of Franco, all sexual restrictions were broken down and women were left with struggles of the financial perspective, illegal abortions, and single parenthood; not something that denotes positive change at all. The definite anger instilled within the novel and the very presence of female rage gives hope to female assertiveness to beat out domestic drudgery and male callousness.

Due to this anger, I believe that Rosa Montero intends to find a feminine voice, unique and different from that of the male discourse. By analyzing the feminine
characteristics of sexuality, personality, and drive, we see the definite need for a renewed consciousness in daily life. Created and molded throughout the novel literarily, is the search and the encounter of the feminine "I", not the "I" of the masculine discourse. It is here where Montero tries to establish a bridge of the gap of communication, frustration, and weakness of both male and female parties in a phallocentric, traditional culture and society. With the liberation of their feminine libido and also their word, there is a demand that their voices be heard, something that until recently had been suppressed and repressed. Montero and her narrative work convey typical feminine problems and express new themes and solutions to them. We, as readers, are led to believe that what we have just read in Crónica del Desamor was written by the main protagonist, Ana. The Book of Anas was originally pondered from the beginning of the narrative to the end. This seems to be Montero's way of convincing herself she has triumphed over her depressing material and universal views of the world, landing itself to be somewhat autobiographical in form. Again, this metafictional technique convinces us as readers that throughout she is conscious of the necessity to create an individual feminine discourse and expose the alternatives that relieve and free women. She brings and reveals to her readers the value and the strength of femininity and its ability to destroy phallocentric stereotypes that oppress them in Spanish culture and society.

Concentrating on the analysis and the discovering of the feminine sexuality, and with alienation and communication with men, Montero frees the written literature by women of its myths and taboos. She proposes an alternative to the dominant phallocentric literature, a new feminine model and aspect, which powers the way to create a new literary canon and a new, true equality between male and female discourse. Crónica del Desamor is a groundbreaking story, a chronicle of disaffection and an option out of the game it was losing
because in 1979 it constituted a revolutionary and cultural exposé on Spanish society and its traditional beliefs. Through the novel, Montero brings to the surface, with subtle expressions and vivid imagery, shared assumptions and beliefs to confront, examine, and expose these beliefs. She demonstrates how if we choose to ignore our inner voices and strengths, and naively accept all examples established and set by society, that we as human beings will continue to suffer and not progress. The equation is simple, no progress, no change in society's ideology. Rosa Montero is an author who is careful to examine established cultural roots and conflicts and who chooses her subtle attacks wisely. She does not blatantly, nor directly cast blame and accusations onto society, but in fact provides a concrete foundation for a renewal of consciousness and an authoritative feminine voice. Her identification and techniques, of author-narrator-protagonist through Ana, are what anchors and advances the reading. Though it is not autobiographical in form, this technique of author-narrator gives personality and content to the ideologies of the text and captures the readers' attention aiding in the identification process with the characters and the events that take place throughout.

Definitively, the fiction of Montero is easily characterized by a consistent desire for overcoming obstacles and progressively improving. Her journalistic genre, in the case of *Crónica del Desamor*, ennobles her as an author and empowers her precise usage of literary language to capture the reader and provoke thought, actions, and ultimately change. With the exquisite portrayal of a gallery of characters, what can be visualized is the background of humankind disenchanted with the daily drudgery of life and the backbone of society. What results for all is an awakening of a renewed sense of consciousness, awareness, and willingness to change. From the power of criticism to the criticism of power, there seems
to be apparent throughout this novel a new beginning that this author desires and encourages in the beauty of her writing. Rosa Montero has impressed upon Spanish society, and now the world, her own personalized stamp in hopes to renovate assumed positions, thoughts, and patriarchal beliefs even in a much hoped for and long-awaited Franquista regime. Rosa Montero and her novel are distinguished by great technical innovation and experimentation and by the oblique presentation of themes that were forbidden and denounced under censorship of the Franco era. Her writing encompasses and embraces so many of the characteristics and aspects of her Spanish female author predecessors. This has had great effect on her recent popularity and success in the new democratic Spain post Franco. Her unflinchingly realistic documentation and testimonial of middle class of post-Franco society reflects uncannily the style of achieved author Dolores Medio.

Montero's contributions to the development of the contemporary novel, from social realism to metafiction, are personal and unique to her. However, reaffirming and emphasizing the need for the female voice to be heard, taken seriously, and appreciated are her main goals. Like another earlier author Elena Quiroga, although only recently noted and appreciated, and Montserrat Roig of the contemporary era, Rosa Montero is an author who offers issue-oriented testimony of contemporary Spanish life. She does so by uncovering the truths about Spanish society, hoping for the transformation and renovation of awareness and treatment of women in all facets of life. It is not the societal nor literary superiority that Montero strives for here, it is simply to create equality on a more broad spectrum throughout society and literature with the use of gender-based literary qualities: political, academic, and most important social with characters that illustrate feminist concerns. Montero's work is clearly defined and unified by these qualities, themes, and techniques that pervade all of her
novels. The motivation behind her writing is necessary to bring outstanding, underappreciated literature to the attention of a wider readership.

This particular wider readership reaches across the world, but most critically across all of Spain because my view is that Crónica depicts the urban social strata of post-Franco Spain. In her mind and the minds of others, she is brilliant as she assumes the role model for her young women protagonists. But because of her journalistic and reportorial background, Montero has been criticized as writing fiction as a newspaper reporter. Writer and critic Robert Manteiga says of Montero, "...her desire to create a work of art is less important to her than the need to express her ideas, sentiments, and concerns about a number of issues ranging from sex to politics." Monterey, in an interview, refutes this notion that her works as a journalist is projected onto her vocation as a novelist. She is acutely aware of the requirements of the two genres: journalism and novelistic fiction. She definitely considers them to be diametrically opposed to one another. However, Montero uses the clarity and the precision of journalism, which are detrimental to good novel writing. Crónica del Desamor is in a sense a journalistic narrative because it is a fact that Montero began this novel while under contract to prepare a nonfiction book of interviews with women. She instead wrote this stellar, controversial novel in its place. Montero's apparent eagerness to explore new ground, take risks as a writer, and expose true culture and society is definitively apparent in Crónica and each of her provocative subsequent works. Crónica is truly a work that takes us further out of the shallowness of daily routines and into the depths of our inner being. The success of this voyage is primarily due to the development of the characters Montero brings to life. The characters are initially losers in Montero's narrative world, but they become winners when they act positively in response to others; the winners at the initial
appearance become losers when they don't. Ana says, "...in este ajedrez de perdedores". dice Ana, "más pierden aquellos como Soto Amón que ni tan siguiera juegan."  

These characters, though they are static and have trouble in allowing change and escape their fate, they are still merely vehicles for Montero's ideas and concerns. We as readers identify with all of them and their being. They are all flat characters which form a flat sounding board for the author intent; the flatter the sounding board, the clearer the reflection we as readers receive of her own feelings, and the easier they are to sort out. Montero portrays through her characters the constant pressure of their surroundings and their compromises between their inner creative selves and the external ordering forces. They are leaves in the whirlwind of social, political, and economic changes that have taken place in Spain since its transition from a forty-year dictatorship to a democracy in rapid socio-economic expansion. When they would like to be still, they are forced forward; when they would like to go forward, they are thrown back. Meanwhile, they go around in circles, trying to find a center, something to hold on to and a basis on which to build their lives. Ana encounters this stifling and suffocating environment in her workplace. She realizes that she is a threat to the established economic order when she is told that a raise and promotion is uncertain although she does the work of five people and is a times recognized for it. Here is a prime example of how in the attempt to step out of the whirlwind and setting her own pace, she is rejected and controlled. Montero here denounces the oppressive power of an increasingly dominant and obstinate society that destroys and has a suffocating effect on the human spirit and relationships. She embarks on collapsing the male power syndrome that is manifest throughout this spirit and life. John Stuart Mill describes this spirit by saying, "...human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work
prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing." Montero's satisfaction comes in the end of the book when Ana releases all her anxieties and frustrations with a final euphoria of liberation over her incredibly egocentric boss. Montero empowers women here, through her narrative and readership, to realize the value and the power of their femininity and attributes, and also to overcome and destroy the phallocratic stereotypes that had been previously oppressing them.

In conclusion, Montero's narrative technique is at times riveting, sarcastic, tender, and melancholic. It always serves as a beacon that lures the readers into the depths of human nature and society. Her varied, frequently innovative use of dialogue, her keen sense in using the most appropriate lexicon for each circumstance and character, her sometimes humorous approach to not necessarily funny situations, and her skill of producing images simply lure and conquer the reader who can be somewhat reluctant to deal with the issues she raises. I believe that Montero and her message in Crónica del Desamor, from a women-centered perspective, makes a valiant attempt and effort to redress masculinist biases and condenscensions of women. Montero is a writer who supports and aggressively defends the general objectives of the Women's Movement. Namely she critiques patriarchy and sexism, and creates a new sense of femininity. She is engaged in the transformation and renovation of dominant gender-relations in society, and considers notably the practice of writing as a means of doing so. With Crónica del Desamor, Montero hopes to bring pressure to bear on politicians for the implementation of the reforms arising from the new Spanish constitution, passed through parliament 1978, one year previous to the release of the novel. She definitely and consistently puts the mastery of the language to the service of her intentions: to reveal
her deepest prejudices and to expose, through her subtle non-radical feminist fiction, Spanish culture and society. She emphasizes the need for the continuation of a raised consciousness, a greater awareness of the female voice and personal female autonomy in contemporary literature. Rosa Montero has been quoted as saying, "I have considered myself a feminist for a long time; but feminism for me is not so much an ideology, it is real. Which does not mean I agree with that right wing movement which avoids ideologies altogether and ends up nowhere. What I mean to say is that for me feminism is something more basic, more animal-like, its a way of being in life, something definitive, defining."

Rosa Montero best describes, in Crónica del Desamor, the emotions that inform her fiction and the events that set them in motion. She attracts her readers through unattractive contents by seductive forms of concise, powerful expression and humor, in its different gradations. She, by bearing both heart and soul, has provided in Spain an alternative to the once dominant, phallocratic literature by creating a unique model to pave the way and to serve as a new literary canon where true equality is established in the relations and the discourse of males and females.

I believe Montero ultimately gives answer to the question of what degree is it possible to discard the traditional sex-role stereotyping to which women have been subjected to since childhood through her main protagonist, Ana. She rejects the conventional romantic roles that women are expected to follow and fabricates a self-styled feminist philosophy based on freedom and independence. If there are at all any ambiguities, conflicts, or doubts portrayed in this novel by Rosa Montero, this reflects the difficult process of coming to terms with a new female reality still not fully accepted or sanctioned by Spanish society. The degree to which it will be accepted in the future will depend in great part on the continued activism of the Spanish women, women authors, and society's willingness to incorporate
into its structure her goals, demands, and vision of the future. By exposing the flaws of Spanish society and forging a new and different view of female reality. Montero truly exhibits the woman's voice in contemporary Spanish literature and challenges traditional and patriarchal beliefs. The reality is that the rise of the feminine voice and a renewed consciousness for all of Spain, (and for the rest of the world for that matter) now have a specific and special place in contemporary literature and society. The voice and the renewed consciousness will continue to redress biases and establish equality between the sexes in these times of constant change in Spain.

2 Ibid., 213.


Ibid., 28.

Ibid., 29.

Ibid., 12.

Ibid., 13.

Ibid., 13.

Ibid., 21-22.


Ibid., 66.


Ibid., 21.


Rosa Montero, *Crónica del Desamor*, 49.
26 Ibid., 273.


REFERENCES


