



Sangre en el Ojo

Lina Meruane

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"Sin ti me moriría" ¿es una frase retórica? Decir: «Te quiero más que a mi vida» ¿compromete a quien lo dice? Esta es la historia de una emergencia médica ocurrida a una escritora chilena fuera de su país. Es la historia de un derrame, primero en un ojo y después en el otro. Es, entonces, la historia de una ceguera vivida entre Santiago y Nueva York y por extensión una exploración subjetiva de lo que cada uno de esos lugares significa para la protagonista. Nueva York aparece como el lugar del inicio y acaso del final de una enfermedad, el sitio de las operaciones y de una recuperación incierta. Una historia en donde el presente se deja invadir por el pasado y por, lo más terrible, por un futuro incierto. Pero es también y sobre todo la historia de la extraña relación amorosa que surge en esa situación límite y la pregunta sobre la incondicionalidad de eso que llamamos amor. Una novela en la que el amor se hace pregunta y el lector o lectora debe arriesgarse a dar respuesta.

Sangre en el Ojo Details

Date : Published 2012 by Eterna Cadencia

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Author : Lina Meruane

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From Reader Review Sangre en el Ojo for online ebook

Cari says

This book was so good I sent Meruane a giddy fan letter. It began as a sedate, polite note about how much I enjoyed the novel and spun out from there because... Wow. It was fantastic. I devoured it. I read it in the original Spanish, but I understand that Meruane worked closely with her translator for the English edition, Seeing Red, so it's bound to be excellent as well. Definitely seek it out. Definitely read it.

Arelis Uribe says

Es la historia de una ciega que lo ve todo. En este libro, Meruane tiene una prosa súper visual, va narrando todo lo que percibe alrededor, usando el gusto, el oído y el olfato, y al contármelo, me lo imagino todo visualmente. Es un libro bellísimo, oscuro y melancólico, con una prosa llena de frases que una podría ponerse como estado de Facebook y sonar inteligente y sensible.

Shawn Mooney says

I expected this autobiographical novel about a Chilean American woman going blind to be riveting; sadly, whether it was the translation or what, by the 50% mark I found it to be quite putdownable so that's what I did.

Bookread2day says

Hardback version from Atlantic Books My review is on www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com
At a party it was happening. Right then. The doctors had been warning Lucina, for a long time. At Twelve o'clock sharp she gave her an injection, when her purse fell to floor Lucina bent down to pick it up. And then a firecracker went off in her head. But no, it was no fire that she was seeing, it was blood spilling out inside her eye. Until twelve o'clock that night Lucina had perfect vision. But by three o'clock Sunday morning, even the most powerful magnifying glass wouldn't have helped her. Seeing Red is a harrowing semi-autobiographical novel that I have read. I would recommend reading Seeing Red as Lina Meruane is one of the one or two greats in the new generation of Chilean writers who promise to have it all.

Grace PB says

This book was nothing like any other book I have ever read. The book is written with such a sense of urgency and passion which helps the reader sympathise with the protagonist in their situation of losing her sight.

It was an interesting read and I found it quite a 'heavy' read and it took a lot of concentration to get myself

back into the book each time I picked it up.

I also assume that because it was translated from Spanish this made it more difficult to become engrossed in as it had some grammatical issues, such as no speech marks, or no real paragraphs just headings. This also resulted in the book not flowing as well as I assume it would have done in Spanish.

Nonetheless this was a fascinating read, even more so when you consider it is semi-autobiographical.

I would like to thank ReadersFirst for providing a copy of the book in exchange with an honest review.

Alessandra JJ says

Acho que nunca na vida um livro me deu TANTA agonia quanto esse. Interrompi a leitura várias vezes porque não aguentava continuar. QUE GASTURA (mas foi ótimo, escrita da autora é impecável)

Julie lit pour les autres says

Lu en anglais : Seeing Red

Difficile pour moi de ne pas saupoudrer ce texte d'une pluie d'étoiles. Le viscéral parle.

Quel texte fascinant! Dans ce roman autobiographique, on suit Lina Meruane et les retombées terribles d'un simple mouvement vers l'avant. L'auteure souffre d'une maladie qui fragilise les veines intraoculaires, et lors d'une fête, alors qu'elle se penche pour saisir sa seringue d'insuline, les veines se rompent et le sang envahit ses yeux.

C'est le long parcours vers l'opération qui nous est raconté, alors que Lina est aveuglée par ce sang qui ne se résorbe pas. Loin du 'memoir', ce texte est un long murmure littéraire, souvent acide, toujours urgent, d'une intelligence qui fait mal. L'auteure explore les rapports avec son amoureux, sa famille, son médecin, avec lucidité et colère. Sa propre identité est mise à mal aussi - Lina écrit avec ses yeux. Et sans ses yeux, qui est-elle?

Entre le poétique, le pragmatique et la rage. Un.e lecteur.trice qui cherche un 'memoir' fait fausse route ici. La douleur, la colère, l'impuissance, toutes sublimées dans un texte d'une grande intensité.

julieta says

Primer libro que leo de Lina Meruane y estoy fascinada. Escribe con una fuerza que te atrapa desde la primera página. No se diga la historia, personal y durísima, pero hay algo en su uso del lenguaje que me conquistó. Tiene una urgencia que te empuja a seguir leyendo esta historia, que no sabes si pasó tal cual o no, pero como las grandes historias, tampoco es que importa, porque es una maravilla. Vivida entre Nueva York y Santiago, tiene amor, el vivido por ella, familia, hermanos, y en definitiva la enfermedad como la vive la

protagonista, escritora, autora.

Buenísimo descubrir a esta genial escritora chilena.

Una belleza.

Karen Mace says

Initially drawn to this book because of the very striking cover, and the insides are just as striking! It wasn't written in the normal way and I think that really worked well with the subject matter as the author describes her conflicting emotions as her world changes when her eyesight begins to disappear.

I found her story to be shocking, brutal, raw, honest and she pulls no punches in describing the despair she begins to feel, the way she takes things out on the wrong people and had to start depending on those around her to help her - not that she would take their help at times. All those things we take for granted are taken away from her and she is powerless to do anything about it.

The writing style was frenetic at times and gave a taster of the uncertainty she felt as her world is changing and as it is only a short book I was able to read it in one sitting and found it totally absorbing

thank you to Readers First for the advanced copy in return for a fair and honest review

Juan says

Literatura del cuerpo. Escrita como un torrente. Excelente novela.

Book Riot Community says

This book is harrowing and intense and wonderful. It tells the story of a young woman facing blindness: she has known for a while that she could lose her sight, and then one night at a party it happens. Her boyfriend doesn't get it and thinks she's drunk as she stumbles around. But her eyes have filled with blood and while she hopes an operation might help, she knows it may not. The novel is written in the first person and we spend the entire book experiencing all her thoughts and emotions with her. It's a powerful experience.

— Rebecca Hussey

from The Best Books We Read In December 2016: <http://bookriot.com/2017/01/03/riot-r...>

Marjorie says

This book is described as a new-to-me genre – autobiographical novel. Apparently the author, Lina Meruane, had a stroke and suffered temporary blindness, necessitating surgery. Her novel's main character, also named Lina Meruane, is based on the author, also being an author having serious problems with her vision. The

literary character literally sees red from the burst blood vessels behind her eye.

The book is written in short chapters with a stream of consciousness aspect to them. Having been through a period of blindness herself, the author writes a very realistic portrayal of a woman's deterioration of vision and the effects of her impending blindness on not only herself but her loved ones. While Ms. Meruane did a wonderful job describing all of the terrors of blindness and its devastating consequences, there was an element of black humor that I wasn't able to appreciate. It's an intelligent read and one I feel I should have been able to immerse myself into more than I was able to.

This book was given to me by the publisher through Edelweiss in return for an honest review.

Guillermo Jiménez says

Con diferencias mínimas de lo que se entendía en la Grecia antigua como tragedia, esta brutal novela de Lina Meruane podría ser leída como tal: sin coro, y con un reparto mínimo de actores, la narradora nos hunde en el sufrimiento de la vida de una escritora, una investigadora, que pierde la vista, al menos temporalmente.

Aunque antes de movernos a la compasión, siento que se acerca más más al espanto, al horror; y al mismo tiempo a una belleza ciega, una belleza del sonido, de los aromas, de las texturas; del recuerdo y la memoria privadas del sentido de la vista, y esto inserta la novela en un plano de ficción increíblemente rico y extenso, que se divide en más de un plano de comprensión.

El texto está narrado con una prosa que guarda un gran equilibrio entre lo cerebral, lo lúcido, lo sensato, sin perder un ápice de lo onírico de la situación, alguien que deja de ver porque solo ve sangre. Alguien que deja de ver a su amante, a su casa y amigos, a su familia, pero que sabe que están allí. Alguien que siente el abandono intelectual de sus colegas:

““Quizá pensaban que sin ojos ya no era posible pensar. ¿Pensarían que para pensar era necesario estar al tanto de la última teoría?”” (p. 149)

La narradora no escatima recrearnos ese nuevo mundo por medio de una voz que abarca demasiado, y que incluso es diestra en guardar silencio a algunas cosas, claves en la lectura y su desenlace.

Algunas preguntas entre líneas de la novela me parecen magistrales como, ¿qué estás dispuesto a dar por amor?

Segundo libro que leo de Meruane y la imagen que me hago de ella es la de una mujer con una fuerza descomunal, de una persona que “observa” el mundo con una mirada inquisitiva de detective que lo pone en duda todo.

Novela relativamente breve que se puede desgranar con parsimonia y sosiego para disfrutar su lectura como quien aprecia un buen cuadro, una buena pieza musical, una obra de arte; porque eso es Sangre en el ojo: una pieza magistral que no se empaña nada a los ojos del lector.

Mi fascinación por la escritura de Lina solo crece y va en aumento con cada cosa que leo de ella, la imagino como un ser sumamente despierto, con una mirada atenta a todo cuanto la rodea y con una lucidez extrema

que le permite traducir su comprensión del mundo en palabras y estructuras narrativas muy bien concretadas.

Amy Jane Smith says

4.5 rounded up. Will review soon.

Johanna says

Albeit a fascinating read I did struggle at times with the style, not sure if some of this is down to translation, but it did feel like a constant stream of consciousness which I found quite heavy at times.

Despite that, it's such an unusual story, semi autobiographical as I believe the author experienced blindness following a stroke, so it's a pretty horrific journey through the terrors of blindness, peppered with dark humour.

Lark Benobi says

As I was reading Seeing Red I had a sudden vivid wish to gather some women writers together who i realize have similar energy and similar honesty in their writing as Lina Meruane has in her writing, and whose writing is, like hers, brutally physical--by which I mean, not violent, but even so, deeply felt in the body. There is no distance at all in their writing. They write about blood and love and life and death.

Seeing Red begins, literally, with blood and love, in medias res, at a party, where the protagonist--who has been told by her doctor that any pressure at all--too hard a cough, or just bending over--might cause the diseased blood vessels in her eyes to burst and cause blindness--has just moved the wrong way, and then watches her eye as it fills with blood from the inside and her vision darken. From the outside there is no sign of her injury. Her lover doesn't understand why she stumbles, not at first--he thinks she is drunk.

The voice of this novel is detached in a way that adds to its nearly unbearable pathos rather than creating distance. In this way it reminds me of Lorrie Moore's voice in the story "People Like That Are the Only People Here," and indeed along with Meruane, Lorrie Moore is one of the writers I would invite to this imaginary gathering, as well as Guadalupe Nettel, author of The Body Where I Was Born, another short vivid novel about the particular physicalities of of living inside a female body, and Maggie Nelson would be there, too, because Meruane's writing also reminds me of The Argonauts, for its relentless focus on the difficulties of love between consenting, flawed adults. And Maylis de Kerangal, author of the novel I just read, The Heart, would be there, too, because her novel, like Meruane's, is a fearless examination of the terrors of living inside a broken body.

so that's a good party.

Melissa says

I received a review copy of this title from the publisher through Edelweiss.

Our senses are our most precious natural gifts because it is through them that we are able to experience the world. At one point we have all probably wondered what it would be like to lose our hearing or our sight or our sense of smell. In *Seeing Red*, we are given a vivid understanding, through the character of Lina, of what it is like to lose one's sight. Lina, a young woman attending graduate school in Manhattan and living with her boyfriend Ignacio, suddenly loses her vision. She has been a diabetic all of her life and from what we are told about her medical history in the book, the blood vessels in her eyes have burst and have caused her blindness. She knows that this is coming and the opening of the book is the moment at which her nightmare comes true.

The title is both literally and figuratively appropriate for the story. Lina actually sees red as her blood vessels burst and block her vision; her anger at the loss of her most precious sense makes her severely angry, thus causing her to figuratively "see red." The tone and setting of the first scene in the book during which Lina and Ignacio are at a party are unexpected. It is at this party when her sight begins to fade and when she realizes what is happening she calmly asks Ignacio to take her home. They stay at the party for a while longer and when they finally take a taxi home their ride is also rather serene. But this is the last moment of peace because it is from this point onwards that her anger and her anxiety build.

I was not surprised to find out that the author herself suffered from an episode of blindness because of a stroke. Her personal experience with the loss of her sight made the story all the more convincing. There are so many aspects of her life to which she must readjust; Lina has to learn how to navigate the streets of Manhattan, to walk around her apartment without injuring herself, and eat at a table without knocking over drinks. The author's own experience with blindness gives her writing a unique authenticity that provides us with a comprehensive understanding of what it means to lose this sense.

It is very uncomfortable and upsetting to walk through Lina's life with her as she is trying to adjust to her blindness. One of the hardest aspects of this situation for her to deal with is the ways in which other people act towards her. Ignacio, her boyfriend, is a faithful and loving companion. He washes her eyes and changes her bandages when she has surgery, he goes to her doctor's appointments with her and he even spends a month with Lina and her family in Chile. But there are times when even Ignacio loses his patience because of Lina's clumsiness.

The episode that was the most memorable in the book is one that takes place while they are visiting Chile. Lina carefully and meticulously packs her own suitcase by feeling each article of clothing and putting the heavier clothes on the bottom of her suitcase and the lighter items on top. Lina's mother, in an attempt to be helpful, unpacks and repacks Lina's entire suitcase. This causes Lina to be emotionally distraught because, as she explains between bouts of yelling and crying, she wants to do simple tasks her own way and not have to be constantly dependent on others. It is difficult for her loved ones to attempt to help Lina but without making her feel helpless.

Seeing Red is disturbing and uncomfortable but so worth the read. I hope that Meurane's books will continue to be translated into English so I can read additional works of hers in the future. Thanks to Deep Vellum one of my favorite small presses, for bringing us a wonderful selection of literature from around the world.

Vishy says

I discovered Lina Meruane's 'Seeing Red' when I stopped by at the bookshop a few days back. The cover grabbed my attention and refused to let me go. Then I read a quote by Roberto Bolaño on the back cover raving about Lina Meruane - well, who can resist that. I started reading it a couple of days back and finished reading it yesterday.

'Seeing Red' tells the story of a woman, who has a delicate health condition. Her eyes are in a delicate condition - her blood vessels in her eyes can burst any time and she can go blind. Her doctor warns her that she has to be very careful during her everyday life - she can't drink, smoke, make love to her boyfriend, can't even bend down. There are so many other things she can't do, simple everyday things, that we normally take for granted. She lives life in this careful way, avoiding anything which can result in the unfortunate event happening. But one day she is at a party and the dreadful thing happens - the blood vessels in her eyes explode and she becomes blind. She is able to see vague shapes and some light and shadow though. She tries meeting the doctor but she is able to get an appointment only a few days later. When she meets the doctor, he says it is hard to say anything. He says they need to wait for a month and then can think about an operation. He asks her to go on a holiday and spend time with her family in Chile. Well, I won't go into the rest of the story. How her reunion with her family goes, what kind of support her boyfriend gives, does the operation help her - for answers to these questions, you have to read the story.

The heroine of our story, has the same name as the writer, Lina Meruane. I later discovered that the novel is based on the writer's own experience. It shows in the story, because the way Meruane describes the way blindness explodes into our heroine's world and plunges her into despair - it feels so real. The relationship between the heroine and her boyfriend is so beautifully depicted. The reunion scenes with her family, her very different relationship with her mother and her father, her two different brothers - they are all beautifully portrayed. I loved the character of her doctor. I loved this particular description of him -

"I never noticed Lekz rushing a single syllable or discreetly checking the time; there wasn't a single clock on the walls of his office, no phone ever rang, he didn't have a cell phone. No one ever interrupted him. He was an absolutely dedicated specialist, true Russian fanaticism inculcated by his Soviet lineage."

That doctor was a no-nonsense character, dedicated to his work, never made any promises that he couldn't keep.

I love the way the book describes our heroine's descent into blindness, how navigating everyday things becomes a challenge for her, for example in this passage -

"I got tangled up in rugs, I knocked over posters leaning against walls, I toppled trashcans. I was buried in open boxes with table legs between my fingers. The house was alive, it wielded its doorknobs and sharpened its fixtures while I still clung to corners that were no longer where they belonged. It changed shape, the house, the rooms castled, the furniture swapped places to confuse me. With one eye blind with blood and the other clouded over at my every movement, I was lost, a blindfolded chicken, dizzy and witless."

- how simple things she took for granted are now challenging or impossible, how for someone who is a reader and a writer and a researcher, this is a kind of irreparable loss. Our heart goes out to the heroine and we sink when her heart sinks. But the book also describes how our heroine handles these challenges with style

and aplomb - it is inspiring. For example, in this sentence -

"As the car set off and began to gather speed, I looked into the rearview mirror with my mind's eye..."

- and this passage -

"Yes, but I'm only an apprentice blind woman and I have very little ambition in the trade, and yes, almost blind and dangerous. But I'm not going to just sit in a chair and wait for it to pass."

- and this passage -

"when he opened the door Ignacio exclaimed joder, the sun is coming up. But the word sunrise evoked nothing. Nothing even close to a sunrise. My eyes were emptying of all the things they'd seen. And it occurred to me that words and their rhythms would remain, but not landscapes, not colors or faces, not those black eyes of Ignacio's that I had seen spill out a love at times wary, sullen, cutting, but above all an open love, expectant, full of mirages that the crossword puzzle would define as hallucinations."

There is a scene in the book where our heroine kisses her boyfriend's eye - it is so beautiful, sensual, even erotic. It was amazing, because I never thought that a description of a person kissing someone's eye could be that way.

The description of Chile in the book is fascinating and beautiful and takes us a little bit into Chilean history of the past half century and makes us want to read more about that period. The ending of the book is unexpected and stunning - I didn't see that coming. Then I stepped back by a chapter and discovered that there were clues strewn around by the author. It was like watching 'The Sixth Sense'.

I loved the structure of the book. It is not very long at 157 pages. It is divided into short chapters, between two and four pages long. Each chapter has a title. Interestingly, each chapter is also made up of only one paragraph. Punctuation is used minimally. There is no distinction between a statement, a question, a dialogue. Sometimes the speaker of the first sentence is different from the speaker of the second sentence and there is no signpost to indicate that the speaker has changed. This kind of stuff might bother some readers. It didn't bother me. I loved it and the story flowed naturally for me. Lina Meruane's prose is soft, gentle and smooth and flows beautifully and quietly like a river. Reading the book is a meditative experience, which is very fascinating, because the main theme it addresses is a bit dark and bleak. Meruane's prose softens the blow and makes us turn the page.

There are places in the book where I couldn't help wonder how a particular passage would have read in Spanish, how it would have been even more beautiful and poetic in the original. For example, this description -

"That accent, so unmistakably Chilean, harbored the glacial poem of the mountain peaks and their snows in eternal mid-thaw, the dark whisper of the south dotted with giant rhubarbs, the mourning of roadside shrines, the herb-garden smell, the rough salts of the desert, the sulfurous copper shell of the mine open to the sky."

- and this phrase -

"to interrupt the peace of the worried"

- and this sentence -

"While outside the street revives - a gust or a whisper in the distance - and the sun peers indignantly through the gaps in the curtains to track us with its flame"

If you get to read this book in Spanish, I will envy you.

I also loved the fact that there was a lot of white space surrounding the words in a page - a beautiful place where the reader can write comments and notes. I love a book when it has that.

I loved 'Seeing Red'. It is one of my favourite reads of the year. I hope to read it again one of these days, more slowly, focussing on my favourite passages.

#Quotes

I will leave you with some of my favourite passages from the book.

"I'm the heroine who resists her tragedy, I thought, the heroine trying to drive destiny crazy with her own hands."

"Good was a word Lekz sometimes slid out like a crutch, and other times it seemed to weigh heavy on his tongue, like a rock that sinks in silence, leaving only ripples. The word had an expansive effect in the room."

"The lyrics of the song explain : what makes you live can kill you in excess. The refrain repeats : too much sun, too much sugar, too much water, too much oxygen. Too much maternal love. Too much truth."

"The finger is no longer there. My hand isn't there and neither is my arm. I'm not me anymore. Lucina vanished, her being is suspended somewhere in the hospital. What is left of her now is pure biology : a heart that beats and beats, a lung that inflates, an anesthetized brain incapable of dreaming, while the hair goes on growing, slowly, beneath the cap."

#EndOfQuotes

Have you read Lina Meruane's 'Seeing Red'? What do you think about it?

Blodeuedd Finland says

This book is autobiographical, but at the same time she does use fictional events. The author herself had a stroke and then she wrote this book. In first person, and with a character with the same name, except that person goes blind when her eyes start to bleed. But the author herself experienced blindness too and led that lead the way.

But this does seem to be the sort of book that is better read for example in a book club so that you can discuss it with others. Because it is just so personal. We are always in her head.

Or the sort of book that is discussed in a lit class, and then you write a paper about the writing and yada yada. Those things I have forgotten now when I am no longer in uni....yup, it is all forgotten.

Because she is a good writer and she gets under the skin. I can not say a lot about the translation, I mean it is

a good translation...I guess. But since I have not read the original I can not know ;)

But it is rather short, and not a lot happens. She goes blind, she has an operation at the end and, yes what was up with that end? Weird and good. And before that she complains about her mother, so yes, it is a personal one.

jeremy says

an unsettling and disquieting look at a woman's descent into blindness, lina meruane's *seeing red (sangre en el ojo)* melds autobiography with fiction. meruane, a new york-based chilean novelist and lit professor, was awarded the 2013 sor juana inés de la cruz prize (given to spanish-language women writers) for this work. with a first-person narrative chronicling her own ocular decline, *seeing red* bears witness to the inter- and intrapersonal struggles that force the narrator to make sense of the relationships around her, all while relying upon those very people for support, aid, and comfort. meruane's gifted prose lends the story both immediacy and persuasiveness.

and in the minutes that passed while i pulled up my skirt over my dirty underwear, put on my sweaty socks, my boots, pulled on my undershirt, scarf, sweater, and anxiety over the verdict, i watched an infinite number of treasured and uneven memories parade before my sick eyes, memories of the times when i'd pretended to erase my illness, moments that were falsely happy when i'd made myself think i could be someone else; they'd debilitated me and left me at the mercy of a foreign solitude that was only mine.

*translated from the spanish by megan mcdowell (zambra, et al.)
