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### Reconstructing Seville: Translating Eduardo del Campo's Capital Sur

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# Reconstructing Seville: Translating Eduardo del Campo's *Capital Sur*

By Hannah Varadi

An honors thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature

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## Overview

*Capital Sur* is a 2011 Spanish-language novel by the journalist Eduardo del Campo Cortés (1972- ), currently a staff writer at the Andalusian branch of the national newspaper *El Mundo*. Set in Seville in 1994 (although it was written between 1998 and 2011), the book follows the daily struggles of a group of university students while also painting a picture of the city in a specific era of disillusionment, isolation, and economic crisis. Several of the main characters are modeled on del Campo, his wife, and their friends as they were in the 1990's. Other characters and situations are loosely based on real people and events that the author had investigated in the 1990's, but which he had had to leave out of his articles at the time. (Varadi 27). However, del Campo admits that the author stand-in character of Diego is actually not the protagonist of the novel (Varadi 31). The true "protagonist," in my view, is the communal consciousness of the city itself.

Throughout this project, I will work on acknowledging how my own perspective and motivations influence my approach to translating this work. While studying in Seville in Spring 2014, I was planning both the final project for my Magazine Writing course, and the thesis for this Honors Project proposal. Following a professor's suggestion that I try reading *Capital Sur*, I eventually decided to interview Eduardo del Campo and his wife, Cristina, in order to prepare a feature story that compares the Seville of the novel with the real Seville of 1994, and contrasts both of these with the Seville of 2014. I was intrigued by the novel's huge narrative scope, its vivid depictions of the city, and its self-commentary on the nature of journalism. Here was a meaty work that would be more than enough for a translation-based, nonfiction honors project, and which forced me to reflect further on my time in Seville; furthermore, I learned how personal this novel, born of years of working with his fellow *sevillanos*, was and is for Eduardo.

### Plot summary and major themes

The novel is narrated almost entirely in chronological order, with several subplots that are juxtaposed and often narratively linked. Most of the passages are told in relatively straightforward narration, but a few are *escenas seguidas* (continuous scenes), which convey a more poetic tone, and a couple of passages are even less conventional. Note that the *seguidas* are almost exclusively narrated either by Diego or by an omniscient voice. The juxtaposition of the subplots supports the novel's major themes, thus forming an overarching "plot" in which the city of Seville is itself the protagonist. To help explain this overall "plot," I will summarize first the book's major themes and then its major subplots.

First, Campo expresses how one can alternately love one's hometown and feel constrained by it, especially in a time of economic recession and general public pessimism. This is why the college students in the novel are shown agonizing over their economic futures, and why the plot features impoverished, marginalized people such as a heroin addict and prostitute. Another major theme revolves around communal experience and communal memory. As I will discuss below in the background section, del Campo is working within his own cultural framework to reflect on this theme, such as when he portrays the shared emotional catharsis of a celebratory crowd during a film audition. He also examines the difficulty of trying to preserve the essence" or "memory" of a person, especially through journalistic or artistic means. Finally, he addresses the common trap that Americans (and other foreigners) tend to fall into when visiting Spain: that of exoticizing a place without truly engaging with it for what it is. Although these themes are obviously cemented within a particular culture and a particular historical

setting, they contain universal elements which any reader can grasp—and I suspect that the author realized that fact, as well.

Diego, the “false protagonist” mentioned above, is a university student who works at the floundering newspaper *Diario de Noticias*. As the novel progresses, he goes apartment hunting with his girlfriend Tina, reports on several key events around the city that play into the novel’s major themes, and generally observes his friends’ lives going on around him. For example, an American film director tours Seville to find locations for a new blockbuster and recruits scores of extras from among local residents, including several of Diego’s friends. These scenes are intercut with the misadventures of Diego’s friend Federico as he bounces from job to job, thus contrasting a foreign and local perspective on the city.

Later on, Diego and Tina both engage in projects involving creating profiles of others. Diego writes a feature story profiling Salvador, a former heroin addict and AIDS patient, and tries to reconcile doing the man’s story justice with his own guilt over their differences in economic status. Meanwhile, Tina and her Fine Arts classmates work at the Department of Medicine dissecting corpses, in order to build complete anatomical molds from them. This leads Tina to contemplate the difficulties of trying to portray a person’s “essence” through visual means, be it through sculpture or through this anatomy project.

At one point, the novel briefly jumps back to 1974, approximately twenty years before the rest of the plot’s events. A pregnant teenager named Antonia flees from her small village in a province of Seville to the city center, where she gives birth, abandons her baby, and becomes a prostitute to survive. Her subplot contains graphic depictions of prostitution in Spain in the 90’s, and it is important because it highlights the fact that she, like Salvador, falls into the category of marginalized people whose lives Diego (and his counterpart Eduardo) is trying to portray.

A later subplot about Juanca, another of Diego and Tina's friends who struggles through survivor's guilt over an accident that killed his father, is only loosely tied to the rest of the narrative. However, I address Juanca's story in my project because it is strongly tied to the novel's thematic elements, and because it is one of the clearest examples of how del Campo plays with poetic structure in order to evoke emotion. There are also several smaller, disconnected events that appear throughout the novel: several cases of workers' strikes and protests; Diego's brother Julián's gradual recovery from mental illness; a debate between an angry kiosk worker and an architect about the relative value of ancient ruins; and Diego's interview of one of the oldest men in Spain. All of these help enrich the setting by showing different aspects of life in the city, and usually tie into the major themes. However, I deemed them too redundant for the purposes of this project and did not include them among my translated excerpts.

Finally, the novel's equivalent of a climax and denouement occur when several subplots begin to converge and close at once: Juanca begins to resolve his grief, the readers learn all they need to about Antonia, Salvador passes away, Diego's newspaper collapses, and Diego and Tina decide to leave Seville to start a new life in Barcelona. Del Campo brings the reader back to the overall sentiments of the prologue—the way it felt to live in Seville in the 90's, and what that implies for the city's future. This set of actions may not sound like a true resolution at all, but because of how carefully the author arranges the order of the alternating subplots, it nevertheless manages to leave the reader with a sense of completion.

### Cultural and historical background

This author's background in journalism and literature is important to the original conception, presentation and reception of *Capital Sur*. A brief timeline is thus in order. Eduardo del Campo (1972- ) was born in Madrid and studied in the Journalism Department of the University of Seville. He interned at *Diario 16 Andalucía* in the fall of 1994, worked at *El País* in 1996-1997, and in 1997 married his partner Cristina Alcoba, who was studying in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Seville. The next month, the two traveled to New York so that del Campo could get his doctorate in literature; Alcoba, however, had to return to Seville a few months later to complete her studies. Then, in February 1998, while taking classes at CUNY and teaching Spanish at Lehman College in the Bronx, del Campo began to write a draft based on his memories of Seville in the early to mid-90's—both his personal experiences, and the extra raw material that he had gathered while reporting but had had to leave out of the finished articles. He finished the rough draft in June. In 1999, after completing his doctorate, he returned to Spain to help found *Diario de Sevilla*, and returned to journalism work. From then onward, he worked on revising his text here and there when time allowed, and had the book published in 2011. The latest and current publication for which he has worked is the Andalusia branch of *El Mundo*, which is one of the three national print newspapers in Spain along with the more liberal *El País* and the more conservative/monarchist *ABC*.

*El Mundo's* political views and history (up until 2013) may have influenced del Campo's portrayal of journalism in the novel to some extent. More to the point, the struggling newspaper *Diario de Noticias* portrayed in the texts is a blend of *Diario 16 Andalucía* and *El País*, the papers where del Campo primarily worked in the 1990's. The fictional paper's collapse even parallels that of *Diario 16 Andalucía*, where del Campo interned in the last months before its



closing. It is also important to note that del Campos is publically known in Spain primarily for his journalistic work, and not as a poet or a writer of fiction. He has published two nonfiction works, a recent anthology of the works of other influential Spanish reporters, and countless articles, as well as a book of poetry. *Capital Sur* is his only book that can be fully counted as a fictional novel. It was positively received, but not widely distributed compared to his other works. Nevertheless, this novel blends fiction with historical and biographical details, not to mention the metaliterary commentary on the nature of journalism itself; it even features some of del Campo's poetic sensibilities, most notably in the continuous passages. In this regard, it is rooted in a long tradition of biographical narrative from both Spain and Latin America.

In Spain, the field of news journalism began to incorporate literary styles in the nineteenth century, "a time preceding the golden age of news agencies, but key to the refinement of the field of journalism. During those years [1835-1875], writers who inserted literary texts into the newspaper made way for journalists who molded literary genres to fit the new informative function that their medium demanded" (Gómez Baceiredo 80; translation mine). This shift in the way that journalism wrote about aspects of daily life is particularly apparent in biographical feature profiles of subjects, not unlike the feature story about Salvador that Diego prepares in *Capital Sur*. Literary journalism in Spain also imported the Latin American *crónica* genre, and later *el Nuevo Periodismo* (New Journalism), a literary style originating in the Americas in the 1960s. The idea behind New Journalism was to challenge traditional journalistic styles by employing techniques of fiction writing to nonfiction narratives; unlike the relatively detached and impartial tone of traditional news feature stories, New Journalism works read more like works of fiction. For example, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* tells the true events of a murder trial as if narrating a novel from multiple characters' perspectives, including delving into

the thoughts (or what Capote conjectured to be the thoughts) of the murderers. Additionally, the writers Gay Talese and Ryszard Kapucinski brought in less traditional ways of gathering information from interviews, focusing more on memorizing and summarizing what the interviewees said than on extensive note-taking. (Admittedly, part of this comes from my own academic learning from Spring 2014.) The elements of New Journalism directly influence del Campo's nonfiction works of journalism, and indirectly inform the style of *Capital Sur* as well.

I have discussed how the setting and themes of *Capital Sur* resonate strongly with its original audience. However, this novel runs counter to mainstream traditions of del Campo's own literary time period. We should note in particular the influence of Juan Goytisolo's novel *Señas de identidad* (*Marks of Identity*) from 1966 (translated to English in 1969 by Gregory Rabassa). The novel begins with a brief passage of unpunctuated text that describes an accumulation of ideas, not unlike the continuous passages of *Capital Sur*. In fact, Goytisolo's novel is even more polyphonic than del Campo's, which mostly sticks to third-person narratives that alternate between normal narrative and mildly experimental. Gracia observes that "*Marks of Identity* is a novel wake-up call. Rather than limit itself to denouncing a single social situation, it encompassed all of Spain's reality, its historical roots, and its potential future; likewise, academic impartiality was reduced to a collage of real documents [...] and the occasional journalistic account." (563; translation mine) In this way, Goytisolo's book helped usher out traditional literary structures and values in a Spanish literary tradition that had avoided the earlier experiments of Joyce, Woolf, Gide, etc. We can also see how Rabassa's adherence to the original novel's strangeness mirrors my own attempt to adhere to CS's strangeness. What's more, we can see how del Campo borrowed from Goytisolo's experiments with syntax, although with less focus on multiple voices.

The novel has a slightly demanding structure for any modern reader, with occasionally dense prose, no chapter breaks, and a loose plot that unfolds only gradually. The continuous passages in particular risk alienating readers by their apparent difficulty. Yet because the *seguidas* and the other more experimental sections are so crucial to del Campo's narrative intent, they must be preserved in translation: that is, I knew I could not alter their original structure for the sake of accommodating the reader. I will discuss the methodological challenges with these experimental passages in the translation essay.

The bulk of this novel's plot is grounded in the 1990's, but extends forward and backward through history as well. It is important to keep in mind that Seville is the capital of Andalusia, the southernmost autonomous community of mainland Spain, which is itself the region where many of Americans' most prominent stereotypes of Spain—bullfighting, flamenco, hot weather, "carefree attitudes" or "laziness", Romanticism, and so on—originate. Giles Tremlett, an English journalist living in Spain, acknowledges that Spaniards are well aware of the remaining echoes of the "Black Legend," or the negative stereotypes that were projected onto Spain first by Britain and the Netherlands, and then later by the America's. In fact, one Spanish woman he talked to in the early 2000s displayed a degree of worry that he was insinuating that her country was "backward." (Tremlett xv) The point here is that, while Spain's industrial, economic, and cultural growth have improved since the time of the Black Legend, the cultural impact of Spain's "otherness" in the eyes of the rest of the Western world is still present to some degree; the world largely stopped viewing Spain as negative or backward, but still regarded it as "exotic."

More particularly, Andalusia has a rich cultural history of Arabic, Sephardic, and Christian culture, and historical associations with "the south" (i.e., Africa). The city is therefore

both an emblem of Andalusia for Spaniards from other regions of the country, and an emblem of Spain itself for international visitors, thus creating a problematized self-consciousness for its residents. In the former case, Spaniards from areas like Madrid tend to view Andalusians as more easygoing, festive, or lazy. These ideas of “fiesta culture” are influenced by the south’s tight adherence to siesta schedules (due to the geographic presence of summer heat), and the fact that Seville is one of the country’s major site of religious festivals such as Holy Week celebrations( and secular festivals (such as the April Fair); also, the idea of “laziness” is influenced by slower economic development in the south, and historically negative stereotypes against the greater North African and Muslim presence in the south. In fact, Spanish culture as a whole includes a degree of prejudice towards African immigrants that persists to this day.

Overall, it is important to note that del Campo himself is very aware of these inter- and intra-national stereotypes, and acknowledges their presence in the novel. He alludes to his city’s distant past in brief snatches, as with the Guadalquivir River’s Arabic origin in the prologue or the former Roman town of Itálica on page 355. A minor scene in the novel addresses this contrast head-on. An archeologist has been excavating a small set of twelfth-century ruins for months, and in doing so has been partially blocking a kiosk and disrupting its owner’s business. The archeologist tries to expound on the value of archaeology in discovering ancient cultures; the kiosk worker argues that the city has more than enough historical knowledge already, and therefore his loss of livelihood is a more pressing matter than trying to excavate yet another set of “three very old bricks.” The author alludes to the more recent past as well, including the Spanish Civil War (very briefly on page 399) and the subsequent dictatorship of Francisco Franco. These references serve to remind the readers of the immense number of people who existed before us and who lived equally valid lives, thus tying back into the theme idea of

preserving communal memory. Seville, with its flow of humanity that passes through history, comes to represent the universal sentiment that life continues on.

In a more practical sense, though, the historical references cement the book's setting. Notably, Antonia was born in the late 50's and goes to Seville in 1974, just a year before the end of the Francoist dictatorship. She would have grown up under the social and political repression of the dictatorship, including rigid reinforcement of Catholicism and supposedly proper gender roles; partly because of this, the shame associated with her extramarital affair forces her to leave home. She lives through the post-dictatorship transition of the 1980's, and is theoretically sexually liberated—but in reality, she experiences significant abuse at the hands of clients. Currently prostitution is semi-legal in Spain, tolerated but not quite condoned.

Diego and his friends—and their real-life counterparts—are thus part of the “wad of twentysomethings conceived in the joyful boom years of the 70's” (del Campo 13), during the transitional period following the death of Franco and the return to constitutional monarchy under King Juan Carlos I. After the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) gained power in 1982, the new prime minister Felipe González (incidentally an Andalusian) began focusing on increasing industrial reform and curbing inflation. By the end of the 1980's, Seville in particular was still in the midst of “territorial segregation,” with limited infrastructure that mostly prioritized the eastern side of the city (Mármol 1). Across the river Guadalquivir, the historically poorer neighborhoods of Triana, Isla de la Cartuja, and Los Remedios remained underdeveloped compared to the city's western side. (ibid 1)

The World Expo of 1992, a peak of optimism and excitement, made the economic realities of the years that followed all that more tangible. The World Expo '92 was hosted from April to October of that year in the Cartuja district to celebrate five hundred years since the

discovery of the New World. The city's preparation to put itself on international display for the Expo involved significant urban development and renovation, and overall included the same sense of local pride as during the previous IberoAmerican Expo of 1929; at least, del Campo says that he and his friends certainly experienced this optimism at the time. Not only that, because the novel largely takes place in the mid-90's, the memory of the Expo is still fairly fresh for the characters—making it all the more jarring in contrast to their economic situation.

What's more, one element that I stressed in my feature article about the novel was the fact that the economic situation it depicts mirrors the twenty-first century economic situation that I myself observed. The reverberations of the 2008 financial crisis in Spain were still being felt in Seville when I was there in 2014, as evidenced by a general anxiety over unemployment. Furthermore, Seville's youth culture today still largely resembles that of the city in the 90's. Indeed, del Campo believes that the reception to *Capital Sur* would probably have been about the same in 1998 as it was in 2011, because it talks about problems that are present in both eras (90s & 2010s); yet this is hard to measure because while the book was received and reviewed positively, it did not have large commercial success (del Campo interview).

Nonetheless, Seville remained and still remains a constant hub for national and international tourism. The presence of the United States international film market, in particular Hollywood's long history of filming in Seville, also plays a role. In other words, the city's self-conscious branding still remains to an extent, forming the impetus for del Campo's allusions to foreign gaze, the international film industry and Seville's older cultural past. At the same time, he constructed the book largely out of his observations and interviews of daily life in Seville, thus interweaving these more personal, authentic viewpoints with allusions to foreign, idealized notions.

I am reminded as well of a comment that Cristina Alcoba made during our interview about comparing cities. One of the novel's smaller themes is of metaphorical asphyxiation in a "labyrinthine" but enclosed city. While in New York with her husband, Alcoba noticed that New York seemed to "have a little a little bit of everything: like a self-sufficient city," which was both exhilarating and constraining. Unlike New York—and unlike Spanish cities like Barcelona or Madrid—her own city of Seville was less metropolitan and more enclosed; and therefore, she said, living there paradoxically made one feel the desire to leave once in a while. Thus, she frames Seville's "provincial"/"non-metropolitan" nature as a positive thing, which is nicely opposite from the characters' views in the novel.

While the novel's theme of communal experiences can be applied universally to a certain extent, we must remember to examine it through the lens of Spanish cultural values. "Spaniards," Tremlett writes, "like to move *en masse*, to belong to large gaggles. They celebrate, and demonstrate, in huge throngs—their enjoyment increased by the numbers with them. It is one of the great and enviable things about Spain to an outsider. [...] Individuality, I discovered when my own children reached school age, can be viewed with suspicion" (Tremlett xix). This is not to say that more intimate, one-on-one interactions are not valued as well—merely that "the throng" is more publicly prized in Spanish culture than in, for instance, American or British culture. And this colors the novel's thematic undercurrent.

Diego is overall comfortably immersed in this sense of community, as demonstrated on pages 330 and 59-66; nevertheless, he finds himself observing social situations from a distanced viewpoint on occasions such as the audition for the film shoot (pages 120-129), the shooting itself (pages 273-281), and a night of Feria (pages. 320-334). Del Campo doesn't seem to be criticizing the "rhythm of the tribe" (del Campo 330) *per se*; merely pointing out that it can

have both positive and negative implications: those in the throng can and do experience exhilaration and solidarity, but individuals within it can risk feeling overwhelmed or distanced. Admittedly, part of the reason I found scenes like the Feria excursion so compelling was due to my own outsider experiences with the Spanish communal mentality. Despite the social difficulties of inserting myself into my Spanish classmates' preexisting social circles (particularly as an Anglo introvert), I was able to get a taste of this feeling from time to time—especially during my own heady experiences at Feria, when I swung back and forth between feeling part of a community and a nagging sense of alienation. Yet I also got a small taste of the overwhelming parts: suffocating crowds, confusion, and nausea. In other words, I am probably more knowledgeable about this theme than the average American readers, but much less so than either Tremlett, my Spanish classmates, or del Campo himself.

In the Translation Analysis section of this project, I discuss in more detail the idea of foreign gaze and its implications in my translation choices. For now, I feel it is simply relevant to round out this introduction by mentioning a bias that I noticed even before beginning to translate. When first reading *Capital Sur* last spring, I slowly came to realize that I identified in part with some of the Hollywood director's views. Like most tourists, I too had passed by the many Gothic-Mudejar churches and cobblestone plazas of Seville, marveling at the exotic sight of seeing such historical monuments side-by-side with bus stops, apartment buildings, and convenience stores. I, too, had explored the former Expo Site and the nearby Cartuja, fascinated equally by the vine-choked pavilions and the University of Seville's shiny Communications Department building. The director's gleeful admiration of these juxtaposing aesthetics and semi-apocalyptic Expo site was like an exaggerated version of my own. Yet, upon reaching page 101, I realized that perhaps this identification with the character was not a good thing at all. Seville's



marks of the past were more unfamiliar and exotic to me than its marks of modernity, and I had consequently fallen prey to the temptation of over-romanticizing the former and paying little attention to the latter. I resolved to pay more attention to the way that the *sevillanos* that I lived and worked with that semester perceived their own city, so as to work through my own foreign biases. My realization is relevant to this translation project on two levels: it has forced me to stay cognizant of my own biases while going through the text, and it relates back to some of the themes that del Campo addresses within the narrative itself.

Pages 7-14 (Draft 2)

*The prologue, which del Campo wrote much later than most of the other passages, introduces the reader to the type of lyric, unpunctuated pasajes seguidas (“continuous passages”) that will occur at a few other points in the novel. Critically, this passage also synthesizes the themes and plot elements from the rest of the novel. Although none of the characters are mentioned directly in this prologue, the introduction of these themes does foreshadow several of the subplots that will reinforce the themes, including the film shoot, Federico’s search for work, Antonia’s misfortunes as a prostitute, and Diego’s biography of Salvador. Thus, the prologue is essentially the orchestral overture to the rest of the book.*

[title page:] South Capital: Chronicles of a Crisis<sup>1</sup>

[next page] Location: in southern Europe northern Africa slightly accidental hemisphere in the occidental region of Andalucía with no center or ex-center bordering a river in the middle of a valley right there on an unflagging pinpoint of the global globe in this moment we are living running working thinking in what world do we live is it flat or round does it spin or stay still is it a capital or is it the outskirts and some still cling to Galileo’s doctrine they believe that the center of the Earth is the easy chair of the room where they devour the Sunday afternoon soccer matches while beyond the other side of the circuit in which they consume their lives the comfortable closed circle which like an infallible unshakeable dogmatic theory encompasses the route from work to class to the neighborhood store and links it with the house the individual room the studio shared in happy marriage the bars the grocery store on the front corner there is nothing but the haze of myth the misty far-off territory with no foundation on top of the outside world more fragile than TV shows than the front pages of newspapers than virtual reality Nintendo games in bright garish graphics with stereo surround sound but this in any case no matter the size is always relative it happens to be our space yanked out by the ingenious builder beaver into a world where the sun is the blessing that heals and kills the gift allotted to us by the grace of having been born here here or here our accents are the nails that fix us to the earth like a camping tent’s peg planted in asphalt cement brick semiplastic coating artificial grass filthy albero quarry stone beat-up paving stones glazed azulejos baked clay tiles Almerian marble used-up aluminum iron copper sandbags noisy gravel here is where we live and here they say *we all have to die* don’t veer off this track you can’t discredit the destiny that gave you the sense of belonging to a place the subtle circumstance of yearning for a homeland for whatever reason one fine day we envision ourselves setting out to see the world and find it suffocating heavy frustrating leaden the spot which by chance we adopted or were adopted by they tell us let’s evaluate the strategic situation the pros and the cons numbered viciously by chauvinists disillusioned publicists transmitters of lies historical remakers of the urban panegyric: sunny location pleasant temperature irregular if consistent precipitation near the beach connected to the ocean by way of the Arabic-named river with the AVE lines running through the capital countless fiestas year-round university soccer league (brilliant average mediocre) monuments to the max stupendous gardens extraordinary nightlife world fame constant flood of tourists symposiums ladder-climbing infant students from American soil lively reputation serene state of existence joyful rioters just a little bit cliché and provincial rich local atmosphere wonderful landscapes inexhaustible fan of color sensation of living for the person who has never known how to feel it pulsations of packed streets sensual feminine thighs exposed to the air pollution at

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<sup>1</sup> Tentative title.

all levels the scent of orange trees and flowers a friendly charming populace exquisite beer a moderated cost of living that makes life bearable young adults supposedly that means us masters of languages and degrees transcripts and M.A.s substantial preparation for the demanding society advertised in the Sunday financial supplement of *El País* a rational culture that has granted space to Calderón Cernuda Shakespeare Othello the complete works of the Álvarez Quintero brothers the exhaustive repertoire of the Bulgarian Opera cultured city that inherited Herrera and Velázquez Murillo and Bécquer Rinconete and Cortadillo Ortega y Gasset Rossini and the barber of Carmen and a vast morbid classical tradition of lyricism harder to swallow than swallow's-nest soup and listen up we also have adobo ham tortillas de gambas breaded grouper we also have so they say quaint shady side streets Mozarabic Renaissance Baroque churches street carts selling pescaíto and chocolate con churros night watchmen grape must and wine spritzers plates of olives and revueltos de la casa little plazas with covert flirting and young bodies chaste from without willing and wet within yearning with all their inherited repression for a roll among the mushrooms in the park with a hot boyfriend an amorous foreigner with erect members brushing against light and shadow watery corners wrapped in mystery by the night's method of spinning in the southern sky of stealing the perfume from the jasmines in gypsies' hair of gilding with contradictions with bright shadows the memory of an unforgettable moment that will imbue any earthly life with meaning no matter how wretched and terrible it may later become yes we have plenty of love at least in the same dose as at any other latitude with the supposed advantage of growing up embedded in the geometry of corporal seduction that this mild climate accompanies the group of norms of chivalry-machismo that our immortal model of donjuans exports to the four corners of the earth we have papas aliñadas anchovies in vinegar chicken wings tuna al ajillo gazpacho with bread tomato vinegar garlic pepper and a pinch of salt we have they say the champions of nocturnal duels of courtly honor the second greatest cathedral in the world after the Vatican the terrific Expo with a fun water-filled theme park flamenco festivals *tablaos* for *guiris*<sup>2</sup> artful gypsies multinational city hall parliamentary government offices headquarters regional military barracks carrying medium and small weight frequently complaining about their low income the necessary system of economic taxes the value-added tax the square meters of livable space but also possessing just as their owners do a tough resistance to the crisis that has forced them to face the future of Spain with a smile on their lips a hint of orgasm in their bank accounts we also have family businesses whose sizes vary between ostentatious restaurant and modest sunflower seed stand we have tax agencies horse-drawn carriages public defender's offices for consumers for town soldiers for landladies for foreign immigrants for adopted children for senior citizens for impenitent gambling addicts for anonymous alcoholics for patients of AIDS or Down's Syndrome for the eternally unemployment for stressed students for women (battered beaten raped shot by a confident marital hunting rifle after a hard-fought intramarital dispute) we have aliño de huevas pisto puchero ensaladilla menudo con papas chipirón a la plancha bacalao con tomate we have the old people's homes emergency services 061 and 092 and 069 control units sanatoriums the Santa Isabel private clinic mental institution jail correction institution cells unit of unspoken isolation prison bars courtyard wishful reintegration watchtower high walls barbed wire proven surveillance group showers disgusting abuse unwavering repression people dying of AIDS exhausted veins mothers' tattooed love rough sandpapery faces brutal extremism impossibility of reduced sentences convictions for all manner of tastes treacherous homicides premeditated murders serial child rapes prison sodomy robberies with the dead's faces uncovered hands up chests on the floor banking scams at the highest administrative and governmental

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<sup>2</sup> *Guiri*=a pejorative term for non-Spanish tourists

echelons shots in the neck masquerading as Basque epics bombings that eviscerate beatings  
 inflicted on bruised women by night muggings with knives that slash knees faces chests  
 shootings extortions defiance of competent and torturous authority petty thefts trafficking  
 cocaine hashish heroin illegal possession of firearms etcetera etcetera etcetera the protagonists  
 are human beings not monsters human beings with wrinkled skin spent and wasted years clouded  
 eyes emotions life histories pasts presents and improbable caged futures suffering and distant  
 families unreachable kilometers away sordid dense fleeting intercourse with women or whores in  
 humanitarian conjugal visits with which the system allows numbered days a couple days off for  
 work or for long-distance university courses in law anxious and ever dwindling letters radio in  
 the morning jerking off under the sheets in the dark soccer matches with journalists over merry  
 christmases appeals revisions petitions for crimes that I didn't commit Your Honor thus between  
 paperwork and iron bars among crazies wretched souls ruffians murderers convicts with the  
 souls of men we also have espinacas con huevos fritos chanquetes montadito de lomo pringa  
 chorizo queso manchego panceta tortilla campera churrasco de cerdo cola de toro the many  
 melding voices of those who've been reincorporated into our apocalyptic awareness could it be  
 possible we wonder to free ourselves from reality to write it all down without rushing or pausing  
 in any case it seems that here the idea of middle group is an unreal concept if anything there are  
 only opposite extremes gradations of strange nuances mediocrity is a hypothetical quotient and  
 others stand out with the tremendous criteria on disbelief we have an economy buried under  
 three meters of dirt expiring enterprises the candy stand on the corner of the barrio the cart  
 selling roasted chestnuts outside the school doors the bucket of water where figs prickly pears  
 and bunches of licorice float so green we have market stalls of wild parakeets abandoned mutt  
 puppies parrots canaries iguanas tortoises Siamese cats goats and sheep little Caribbean-toned  
 fishes opening every Sunday in the Alfalfa the foldable table behind which a troop of card-sharps  
 scans the sea of faces for their next mark the wickedness within the crowd the drug dealer  
 lurking on the barrio's street corner barrio the prefab houses the old shantytowns the outskirts  
 beyond nylon handkerchiefs plastic bags leather belts African statues of false ebony offered by  
 the Senegalese Moroccans Nigerians Zaireans on the Plaza del Duque and their equals the rent  
 boys swarming between horny old men the bouncer addicted to heroin his military cap catching  
 mercedes seats audis volvos renaults on his patch of street the most upscale vovis the guard  
 watching pedalboats from the river's walls we also have troops of unemployed men with a string  
 of degrees hanging from their necks like academic rosaries we have a whole glut of aggravated  
 people batches of vocation plans tossed in the trash can seas of projects that ruling pessimism  
 aborted bloodlessly before they could even be conceived at the wrong time by alert minds taking  
 refuge in the kingdom of *no future* and *welcome to hell* we have private academies that prepare  
 the entrance exams for civil servants agendas for seasonal jobs departments of history law  
 economics natural sciences information sciences fine arts biology medicine physics  
 telecommunications education philosophy and literature jacks of all trades master of we have  
 cabrillas en salsa ancas de rana colorada manteca sangre encebollada lagrimitas de pollo  
 cañaillas erizos ostiones cartuchito de camarones cangrejos bígaros patas calamares en tinta we  
 have above all a generational and demographic blockage a wad of twentysomethings conceived  
 in the joyful boom years of the 70's a worrying shortage of children and of births sidewalks  
 devoid of birthday merriment and at the peak of the social pyramid the tableau of governing civil  
 servants managers and assistant managers ministry delegates obtuse executives bloated with cash  
 in short a grounded wall that doesn't want doesn't know doesn't understand doesn't care to let us  
 move forward our problems are surely not the worst ones in the world but since for us the world

is nothing more than what the eyes can see within the curved narrow horizon of this city that's what they feel like that's how we perceive them it's not worth numbering them like the tapas of the day on a menu because everyone knows: blue luminous sky saturated with exits that are closed-off to traffic irresponsible unsure growth where the word *opportunity* is grotesque exhaustion of a familiar location devalued carats blackened coins unable to invoke greed repressed impulse to flee acclimatization to the cycle of known lines paternal traditions social cracks in the tension between the joy of living under a fertile sun that makes us masters of the streets and time and the discouragement of not doing of no longer being of never being the person that you would have wanted to be coordinates from morning to night throb with the impulse of being part of this city of this rough turbulent hereandnow of this stopover of Europe radiant occlusive anointed with incense olive oil orange blossoms and the blessed divine aroma of the sweat of men burning up on the pavement.

*[next page:]* IN THE MID 90'S

Pages 17-20 (Draft 2)

*This passage occurs immediately after the prologue and introduces the character of an unnamed Hollywood film director. While both passages include highly specific description of detail, they otherwise form sharp contrasts. The prologue uses omniscient, lyrical, and sometimes sarcastic third-person narration with a stream-of-consciousness flow; meanwhile, the scenes with the director employ direct first-person with shorter sentences and a more logical narrative. (The director is, notably, the only one of the novel's viewpoint characters who uses first-person, present-tense narration. The character's background and even gender are ambiguous, although the director is eventually implied to be male.)*

*There is another benefit to this juxtaposition of passages as well: as we can see both from this initial passage and later scenes, the director's views of Seville reflect the simplistic and close-minded perceptions that the prologue mocks. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this character is not portrayed as an antagonist so much as a piece of the larger Hollywood infrastructure that will bring a temporary catharsis to the city.*

I don't know why I thought traveling to Seville would be like going to Morocco, as if it were separated from the center of Europe by a vast distance; but according to my guidebook's table of distances, there are only 540 kilometers of asphalt between Madrid and this southern Spanish city. I took an Iberia plane in Madrid after I arrived from New York. The landscape is mainly made up of yellow earth and various dry, brittle, ochre tones. There are no clouds during the flight, just an impressive sun that burns the horizon and blinds me. Following along with the book's map, I calculate that Andalusia begins beyond that chain of soft mountains that they call the Sierra Morena. The guidebook says that down in the valley of the Guadalquivir River is a town where it gets so hot that eggs can fry outside in the summer: page 134, *Écija*. But we're in spring, and the wheat fields still gleam green. As the plane descends, I can make out fruit tree fields, solitary mansions, and white, clustered towns. Paths of yellow dirt run between lines of palm trees up to the mansions. They are surrounded by rows of stunted trees, maybe olive trees, reduced to pure gray trunks. The pieces of countryside (I see trails; ugly, unpainted chalets; brownish hills; swimming pools filled with green water; walls; wire fences; sheds with metal roofs; a herd of cows, donkeys, and horses with their heads down, grazing) mix with houses where laundry waves on the roofs, and soon turn into landfills, into no man's land, and then dissolve into the brown, impersonal blocks of the city outskirts; these blocks cast shadows over dilapidated shantytowns, where women and children swarm between trash heaps and the remains of cars.

The plane makes a sharp turn that gives me a bird's-eye view of the earth below, and passes briefly over the city center, a labyrinth of streets marked by the dark outlines between the sunlit rooftops. Approach, descent, landing. Little stands of eucalyptus trees. A marvelously blue sky, crisscrossed with sporadic clouds and the white trails of other planes. People eager to get out of the cabin. I wait. A luminous, spacious airport. Examining my passport, the police officer tells me that many Americans are coming to Seville, and that within a few weeks there won't be a single free room in the entire city. I explain that I haven't come as a tourist. It's hot even though it's still March, and I start sweating under my jacket. The taxi driver, a short, serious, bald man of about 50 years, has all the features of the typical resilient Southern Mediterranean man. When he hears the address, he tells me that Hotel Alfonso XIII is the best, and goes through its glorious past: how it was built for the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929 during the dictatorship of a

general called Primo de Rivera, and how from then on its suites have hosted kings, princes, bullfighters, Saudi millionaires and Hollywood actors, those ingrates. A fragrant, intoxicating wind sifts in through the window. I'm starting to enjoy this. The driver's name is Luis. I talk to him while watching the landscape out of the corner of my eye. A freeway, heavy traffic, colossal advertisements (the face of a beautiful brunette advertising cognac hangs in papery shreds over her cleavage), palm trees, scrawny trees with yellow flowers, industrial ships, car dealerships, rusted factories, gray buildings, traffic circles, construction cranes, empty lots, billboards, the skeletons of apartments under construction.

We stop at a traffic light where a young man who looks like a gypsy is loudly selling packs of Marlboros. The driver calls him over; the transaction is quick. The traffic light turns green, and the vehicle behind us honks once, twice, then in a sustained, furious bellow. The taxi driver hands over three gold coins, worth 100 *pesetas*, and the seller gives him the change and then returns to his vantage point, hurling an imprecation at the other, impatient driver. There are motorcycles everywhere, like a plague of tropical mosquitoes. An entire family is balanced precariously atop a Vespino that is barely more than a bicycle with a motor. The father holds a three- or four- year old between the handlebars and his chest, while the mother behind them carries a baby wrapped in a checkered blanket in her arms. I ask Luis if he has a large family. "I can't complain." The taxi isn't his: he works for its owner ten to twelve hours a day, making a percentage of the earnings. It gets him to the end of the month, along with his wife's store that sells shampoo, perfumes, and toilet paper to the other workers in the barrio. They have five children, two boys and three girls, all under 25. Who could complain?, I sigh. They go to university, to high school; they work in whatever jobs can be found. Luis calls my attention to the university building, an eighteenth-century monument whose modern-day law school classrooms were once rooms in the famous Tobacco Factory, where Bizet's *Carmen* rolled cigars. A little farther down, he curves to the left and drops me off at the doors of a magnificent Neo-Mudejar style hotel emerging from the center of an oasis of palm trees, jasmine trees, and vases. Luis takes my suitcases out and shakes my hand goodbye. His fingers are short, rough, and thick. With the motor running and the bellhop gathering my luggage, he tells me from the window that David Lean turned this hotel into the military headquarters in Damascus in *Lawrence of Arabia*. I praise him for his wealth of knowledge and say goodbye.

"Me? No way, I don't know anything."

Pages 68-70 (Draft 2)

*This passage sets up the driving focus of Federico's subplot, which alternate with the director's subplot through page 111. I accordingly have selected some of the most relevant passages from both subplots in order to demonstrate the effect of this juxtaposition.*

*Federico is one of Diego's and Tina's friends, and he stands as an emblem of the economic and social struggles that the rest of his peers experience throughout the novel. In fact, del Campo based much of Federico's job-hunting on that of his brother-in-law, José Manuel.*

Federico's odyssey of job hunting began in June, on the first day of the final BUP exams. His professors—unmotivated, exasperated by the passivity and lack of discipline in classrooms full of teenagers, whose world they couldn't manage to comprehend—had instructed him for years that he, soon to be a seventeen-year-old *triple-peater*, was a failure in life; and from this judgment, which was pounded into him daily between the lines and via gestures of fatigue—in each reproach, in the never-spoken words of encouragement—his mind had created a Nobody Complex that led him to face his textbooks with the despondent certainty that those luminous pages, which spoke of the laws of physics, the mechanism of language, the history of the world, or the families of living beings that populate the Earth, had not truly been written for him. The street, money shortages, the absence of a future: *those* was the heartbreaking props and the dismal scenery that had been allotted him in the foretelling of his biography, the common twists and turns of his melodrama. The lessons of the street, not books, were to be his mandatory reading. On the day of surrender, he felt just like a boxer throwing in the towel before the bell had announced the start of the round. But his defeat was grand and absolute.

He arrived late to the exam room. As he stood in the doorway, through which he could see his classmates hunched mutely and nervously over sheets of paper, the prospect of entering became agonizing. He exchanged a glance with the professor. But before the teacher could come out into the hallway to ask why he wasn't coming in, Federico turned around and retraced his footsteps through the school's gray cement courtyard. The manicured soccer field was empty and silent, as if the fifteen hundred students had abandoned it; as if, evaporated by the sun, they had never existed, and the memory of past years were no more than a dream repeated every day with scholarly punctuality. Before reaching the street beyond the iron fence, he stopped for a moment. He wanted to survey the scene and fix the image of that day in his memory. As he contemplated the deserted courtyard, an avalanche of rage welled up in his stomach. Unable to control it this time, he went to a corner behind the groundskeeper's house so that no one would see him, and there he vomited his frustration against the old wooden chairs and tables, abandoned from past years, that had piled up next to the brick wall. He punched and kicked, splitting in half three tables carved with doodles and obscene codes. Still furious, he grabbed the back of a chair and smashed it against the wall. It was undamaged by the first strike, and he kept releasing his anger again and again until the wood was split and the iron legs had bent in half.

A scream, long suppressed, was about to explode out of his throat. It was a yell that should have been released in the middle of the courtyard where, strident, broken, and vicious, it would have risen to all the rooms to shatter the mortal silence of the final exams. But he couldn't manage it: instead he grasped the pens in his fists, squeezing them like stiletto knives, one red and one blue, and, standing before the broken tables and chairs, stared fixedly at the ground, huffing like an injured bull. A horrible shriek was pushing out from his heart, but his mouth only let out a restrained, muffled voice that said, trembling, "Jesus fucking Christ," like a cornered



animal. The school's ordered atmosphere was unfazed by this adolescent blasphemy, and yet, stepping back onto the pavement of the street, instinctively looking for the poor apartment complexes in his neighborhood, where young men lounge around under the awnings, he noticed his body lightening and his mind becoming more agile. An unexpected sigh of relief washed away the obstacles in front of him and presented him with a luminous future, a new phase of his life in which any goal that he put his mind to seemed reachable. He breathed deeply, and thought that this must be what it felt like for a soldier to desert the front lines of battle and imminent death. Deferrals, just different routes. From this day forward, other fronts awaited him throughout the city. And death was as certain as before.

Pages 70-73 (Draft 2)

*This passage presented particular challenges when translating a particular character's voice. English provides certain options for specific dialect choice that Spanish lacks (ex. contractions, specific synonym choice). This passage is nevertheless relevant because it presents a contrast between the perspective of a sevillano or Spaniard regarding this city, and the very type of foreigner's gaze that the prologue has discussed.*

*We will later see how the director's perception of "masses" differs from Diego's perception, due to the characters' distinct agendas and life histories. In particular, Diego will eventually witness the film shoot for the massacre scene that the director is imagining (del Campo 273-281), thus providing two contrasting perceptions of this communal actions' significance.*

I hit the streets at noon to inspect the most highly prized monuments of this springtime city. The route that my guidebook suggests begins at Puerta de Jerez and follows Calle San Gregorio towards the Cathedral, the Barrio Santa Cruz, and the Royal Alcázares. From there it continues down Avenida de la Constitución, the Plaza de San Francisco, the Town Hall and the Plaza Nueva, where the purple line on the map runs down Calle Sierpes and turns right onto the Plaza del Salvador. I commit the route to memory and start walking.

Puerta de Jerez: this traffic circle offers fascinating perspectives because five streets feed into it. We can mine from the dense layer of young people here. It will be easy to recruit the hundreds, maybe thousands, of students that we'll need for the scenes of the people's revolt in the marketplace, the departure of ships from the Americas from the harbor, the public execution, the palace ball, the tableau of plague victims, and the prison riot.

The fountain in the center of Puerta de Jerez will be the optimal focal point to film the modern-day scenes and the credit sequence. Then there's the factor of motion: the pavement is always crowded with pedestrians; cars turn around the fountain, change direction, cross paths at full speed. It could give the impression of a great cosmopolitan city. This will be the site for the modern-day public protest scene, no question: we'll set up the crane for an aerial shot of the crowd, amassed between the gates of the University and the houses across the street. Then, slowly, the camera descends toward the crowd and stops at the eye level of the leaders. As the protestors move forward, chanting in rapid rhythm, the camera pans backward until, without cutting, it starts to pull up and away from them again, passing above a lamppost in order to capture the two students who have scaled it in the shot; it keeps pulling back, expanding the shot while centered on the angle formed by the two intersecting, perpendicular avenues, focuses on the marchers from behind as they pass by, and finally stops on a fixed image of the protest's vanguard, with their placards visible from behind, face to face with a cordon of riot police and a line of miniature tanks that block their path to the completely deserted avenue.

I head down this very avenue. Taxi and carriage drivers chat while standing around horse dung. An old man is selling candy, gum, and tobacco, arranged in a basket; I buy a pack of Marlboros. The light brushes the heads of people standing and drinking beer outside a bar called "La Moneda." This makes for a wonderful contrast: a group of drinkers taking in the sun under a palace with bricked-up windows and cracking Neoclassical columns. Young people and ruins living elbow to elbow. The ruined palace continues under an archway towards an alley. There are trucks, cement mixers, helmetless construction workers. The foreman informs me that they plan to build luxurious mansions inside while maintaining the original structure and façade. The price: about 600,000 dollars per house. They've all been sold already. This enclosed street preserves a

strange humidity, as if History had been condensed within it. We could use it as the courtyard for the jail.

The Cathedral overwhelms me with its porticos, grand windows, rose windows, archivolts, flying buttresses, and joined columns. The stone saints blur together with one other and with the temple's wall, interred beneath a black crust of car exhaust and pigeon droppings. Various antique shops, travel agencies, souvenir stores, and lottery stores add color to the avenue. The disquieting presence of plastic legs in an orthopedics shop's window offsets the cheery photos of seafood *paella* on touristy restaurant menus.

Farther along, I run into the Ayuntamiento or Town Hall, whose flags lie across their poles due to a lack of wind. In front of this building, numerous vehicles and pedestrians circulate around the Plaza Nueva like chess pawns. The area could accommodate the final part of the protest scene, with the marchers covering every inch of space and scaling the trees; followed by the people assaulting the government house and the security forces subsequently, brutally repressing them. We could also get a lot of mileage out of the Plaza de San Francisco, the square opposite this one, for a parallel scene: a single shot of the human flood moving around the building and squeezing it like massive pincers from both sides. It would be a powerful image: the emblem of authority surrounded from the front and back. During the arrival of police reinforcements, who come in from the streets that empty into the plazas, these two connected spaces will allow for interesting circular filming. The people, penned in, would flee here and there trying to escape, only to meet the point-blank gunfire of soldiers who have slipped into the chaotic scene via the ends of the streets and fire their pistols and sawed-off shotguns at will. After the stampede and the gory repression, the camera would pan over the blood-drenched plazas and the broken bodies of the dead and wounded, with the boots of victorious soldiers kicking them in the ribs to turn them over and see their faces. An aerial view over the entire scene of the battle would show bodies scattered everywhere, like the dots and lines of a constellation of felled trees. I'm giddy just thinking about the epic possibilities for the script. Good God, the producers in L.A. had better not skimp on the budget.

Pages 74-76 (Draft 2)

*Federico's first job after dropping out is more mundane than his future ones, but I found it both narratively and culturally relevant. The flea markets known as mercadillos coexist in Seville with large department stores and conglomerates like El Corte Inglés. I also wanted to include this passage because it is one of the first instances in the novel where casual street speech is quoted directly. Finally, the irony of Federico's extracurricular math education and his acquired ability to "turn his brain off" will recur significantly in pages 108-111.*

Federico's three younger siblings were still asleep in bed, nestled under warm blankets, when he began setting up his market stall's frame and laying out T-shirts, undershirts, sweatshirts, pleated pants, bras, panties, men's underwear, stone-washed jeans, men's handkerchiefs, women's stockings, corduroy jackets, spandex belts, imitation-silk ties, gloves, visors, jerseys, sportswear from el Sevilla, el Betis, el Barça y el Madrid; plastic raincoats, imitation-leather jackets. Business was bad more often than not. Worse still if it rained. As the months passed, Federico internalized the formulas and geography of his travelling market stall. In these business calculations, water equaled disaster. In a light drizzle, you could risk waiting around; in stronger rain, it was better to stay home rather than ruin the merchandise. Beyond a certain number of kilometers from home, there were villages where the number of sales couldn't even pay back the price of gas. There was a 40% greater sales rate near the beginning of the month than near the end. A given village might do well in women's clothing and cotton sweatshirts; in another, a man could make a killing in underwear and checkered shirts; in this village farther down, they prefer out-of-fashion clothes; in that one, boys want imitation brands. After learning the independent influence of each variable—climate, gender, age, distance, the time of month, purchasing power—he investigated the complex relationship between all of them. On a cloudy day with a distant storm in the forecast, in a town 97 kilometers from home with 3,000 residents and a 20% unemployment rate, where the average clothing budget for a family of five with an income of 125,000 pesetas per month is 9,650.37 pesetas, on the eve of the local holiday and when seasonal fashion leans toward flower prints and shirts with American slogans, the gross profits will vary between 35,000 and 43,000 pesetas per full work day, of which 37% will reimburse the supplier, 15% will go toward social security taxes, 20% to installments on the vehicle, and 28% to household expenses.

One sunny day when things weren't going badly at all (he'd sold four pairs of black socks, five pairs of panties, two pairs of stockings, three sweatshirts, a pair of blue jeans, a couple of striped shirts, a woman's dress), while returning from a bar on the plaza with a cup of coffee for his mother, Federico thought ironically that the exams in school had never covered this kind of mundane knowledge, by which a family of six could make an honorable living among these humble villages of God. He had been moving from his own barrio's cement enclosure by Ronda del Tamarguillo to the construction sites, vacant lots, and dead-end streets at the outskirts of towns and cities—the frontier land where the tentacles of large urban development had not yet reached. He took it as a step forward: the plastic mercadillos, surrounded by a circle of trucks like the wagon camps of the West, had no fences or walls in sight. And besides, he knew that his parents needed him more than ever, and that was satisfying.

Hey, kid, how much for a pair of boxers?

Look at this, these pants that you sold me last week shrank!

Two thousand pesetas? But they're selling 'em at that stall over there for seventeen hundred!

Lemme think about it.  
 Mom, look how cute this skirt is.  
 Give me three, one of each color.  
 This one's too small for me, I'll try the size 33.  
 You should give me a discount on it—don't you see the broken stitching on the neckline?  
 No, no, it's pretty, but you already have another almost like it.  
 Turn around for me, María.  
 Don't you have any that say "New York" but with a blue background?  
 In the biggest size you have.  
 I'm looking for some size 501 black Levis.  
 I think I'll keep looking around  
 Not that tight a belt, *mi arma*.  
 We've already gone over budget for today.  
 Not blue ones, black ones.  
 This one, this one's good.  
 But none of the kids have clothes.

There seemed to be limitless combinations of people and clothing: an old man in a sweatshirt, a girl in a wide belt, a boy in a felt cap, a lady in a leather jacket, a bride in soccer socks, a man in a polka dotted skirt, a baby in a mourning outfit, a groom with silk panties, a boy with a checkered tie, a grandmother in size 501s, a long-unemployed man in a tropical shirt, a rapper in a casual bathrobe. The transactions boiled down to a predictable routine; the clothing stock changed bit by bit, but the lives of people never did. The only reason Federico didn't work with his eyes closed—which he could have done flawlessly—was to make sure no one stole the merchandise. In his salesman's head, prices, styles, tastes, and people gave way to a fixed equation. The business more or less ran itself. In the end, he was left with two ways out: save up enough money to set up a neighborhood store, or close the market stall. As people began to migrate to the Corte Inglés<sup>3</sup>, and as his car payments and debts to the supplier piled up, one day his only option became clear. The business had stopped yielding profits. And so, he folded up the stand and lived off his earnings until something else turned up.

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<sup>3</sup> One of the largest department stores in Spain, founded in Madrid, and heavily associated with pricy "modern" expansion

Pages 89-91 (Draft 2)

*Federico later passes out pamphlets door to door and then spends time in industrial painting for his uncle Manolo. However, those passages are less thematically important than his rooftop discoveries here. As demonstrated here, the passages describing the layout of the city only tend to identify specific landmarks and roads when told from the film director's perspective; when told from the perspective of locals, the focus is more on characterizing the physical city as a whole.*

The city had spent years of drought reading the charts in the *Diario de Noticias*, watching with apocalyptic anguish as the reservoirs' water levels displayed therein shrank day by day and drop by drop; and after the collection level dropped below the psychological limit of 20%, people began to count the days until the reserves dried up completely as if counting the hours to Judgment Day. But after everyone had forgotten what rain even was, there came torrential floods, followed by weeks of nonstop rain; and as this perpetual precipitation soaked through walls, it also dried up assignments for the troupe of painters led by uncle Manolo who, at the end of the last job, sent everyone home and declared that there would be no more work until the sun stayed out for three straight days. Federico was unemployed again, unaware that the Lord works in mysterious ways and one door opens when another closes—for the same downpour and gusts of wind that made it impossible to scale walls and paint the sides of buildings also tore out hundreds of antennas and satellite dishes by the roots, creating a demolition of media communications that would lead to his next job as an antenna repairman's assistant. Pepe, another neighborhood friend, couldn't keep up with the demand, and set up Federico as an assistant to pay back an earlier favor. Federico began moving from town to town as in the years of the traveling market stall, but now at the level of rooftops and terraces rather than the level of the street, mastering neighborhoods and urban centers from a superior height that made him feel like a hawk, a lookout, a master of ceremonies gazing down upon and controlling the course of the tiny beings who moved along the street, searching for some little destiny that they imagined to be grand. Or like a field marshal in his watchtower, examining the massive deployments of the fragile toy soldiers that he has ordered to throw themselves into the mouth of certain death. True, some terraces were wedged in the shadows of higher buildings, where a horizon of brick stifled one's natural urge to get a more expanded view. But as the days passed, he accumulated enough memories of terraces so as to compare them judiciously; he began to list the best vantage points, the ones with the most extraordinary views, and before long, having becoming a seasoned watcher, he learned to be thankful for the blessed opportunity to climb to the roof of a ten-story building, the bell tower of a church, or an overhanging ledge. After they had repaired the bent antenna, adjusted the downed lightning rod, and pointed the satellite dish in the right direction (and while Pepe collected their earnings from the owner), Federico would lean against the terrace's railing over the abyss that opened up in front of his feet and scrutinize the spilled-out city, intoxicated by the perspective that his hungry eyes craved. Before this job, he had never sampled the secret pleasure of discovering the whole city's form, shape, and expanse with just a sweep of his eyes; it almost felt like being a god or an angel, able to reach out and touch the threads of life spread out on the asphalt below or hidden behind thin curtains in countless rooms, and change their destiny, their direction, their course. So the day after the busy season died down and Pepe no longer needed his help, the only way to sate his metaphysical thirst for zenith spaces and circular, distant horizons was to pay two hundred pesetas and climb the tower of the Giralda every afternoon, like a tourist.

Pages 96-97 & 100-101 (Draft 2)

*I selected these two passages from the director's point of view to translate because of an element that I wanted to emphasize in this analysis: the foreign gaze that manifests itself visually. Note that the Technological Park on the west side of the city was designed for the World Exposition of 1992 specifically to evoke the atmosphere of futuristic progress that the society president describes here, and which Seville wanted to present as its international persona. The amusement park would have been in its infancy during the novel; it still exists today, now called la Isla Mágica ("Magic Island"). The Technological Park also still exists on the site of the Expo: the portions of the site used for offices and universities are maintained, while the unused pavilions are largely abandoned.*

*Soon after this, the director decides that this trip has been a success and that it is time to return to the States for now. That concludes the portion of the subplot that is told from the director's perspective; we follow the rest of it from Diego's perspective. In fact, the character will not reappear until the film shoot itself (pgs. 273-281), and even then, only momentarily.*

**96-97**

Black coffee to keep ourselves awake. Then we drive to the former Universal Exposition. It's like a Hollywood set after the film shoot. The sight offers us magnificent possibilities as an imitation of a futuristic city: with wide, rectangular avenues, abundant woodlands, elegant lampposts, recyclable buildings—cube-like and bizarre—floating gardens, canals, sculptures à la Brâncuși, a marble and aluminum auditorium, all reflecting the ideal model of a cosmopolitan metropolis of the new millennium. The place combines this minimalist expression of utopian elements with the melancholy atmosphere of an abandoned city whose population has been decimated by a windstorm, or a typhus epidemic. The traces of a ghost city that I detect in the deserted streets, crisscrossed by barriers in the middle of nowhere, in the piling-up flashes of traffic lights, the pavilions with smudged glass like the dirty lenses of a child's glasses, the traces of gravel and neglect, the plastic bags and papers dirtying the sidewalks: it's exactly the touch of disuse that I envision for the scene of a 21<sup>st</sup> century metropolis, sick with nostalgia for the past and filled with mortal ennui at the prospect of the future, displaying its wounds to those who believed it to be a communal paradise—a city that soon after its birth, without losing its modernity, has become a ruin of itself, expired, decadent, simultaneously hypermodern and ancient, a high-tech aesthetic fused with a di Chirico painting, like a Roman amphitheater abandoned by men after the last performance, when it was at its gleaming, architectural peak, but now strangled to death by ivy, frozen in temporal decay, equally majestic and fragile, barely sheltering a handful of hermits who survive within its crawlspaces, and feed themselves on the grass growing between the blocks of granite.

**100-101**

I meet with the president of the society that manages the Technological Park. He gives an optimistic presentation, explains that this site for businesses, enterprises, and research centers is the natural extension of the great economic leap forward achieved by their exhibition. Instead of mentioning the nostalgia for former buildings that have become gloomy shadows of the past, he speaks of science, investments, modernity, development, the future, future, future. He, too, is in favor of the movie, and promises that we'll be provided the best accommodations during the

shoot. He suggests that I also consider filming in the amusement park on the other site of the exhibition site: a theme park apparently steeped in the aesthetic of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Seville, with the largest roller coaster in Spain (or in the world, I don't remember which). I avert my gaze, knowing we don't need an amusement park full of crowds, machines, bright colors and breezy self-confidence. I would only be interested in filming there if it were enveloped in grass, like that roller coaster at Coney Island devoured by time and weeds. I don't dare tell this man that I'm not interested in this city's efficiently running buildings, but rather in the abandoned ones. What I'm really doing is a kind of industrial archeology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I can already see the people of a future metropolis walking down those same streets in the movie, going into the buildings, seated at the wheel of ecofriendly cars, all of them wearing a gaze of serious classicism and moving with apocalyptic lethargy.

The air is chilly now that the sun has set. The society members are walking behind me at a respectable distance; they've let me wander around alone for a few minutes among the ruins of that imaginary city from the days of the Expo, now only preserved in memory. They ask if I need to visit any additional sites. No. I'd rather go back to the hotel and rest.



Pages 108-111 (Draft 2)

*We must sadly skim over other parts of Federico's job-hunt for the moment. He eventually ends up as a contracted commission-based construction worker, and is then called to help build a Norwegian cargo ship alongside Spanish and Scottish youths. One day, the foreman picks Federico and sixteen other men to help carry a steel sheet across the shipyard to an area unreachable by construction crane. Significantly, this is the final passage from Federico's point of view and the denouement of the subplot, although the book later calls back to themes that we see here (rejecting reality, empathy for suffering, and the agony of uncertain future) in order to tie them more cohesively into the narrative.*

Very slowly, walking sideways, they began a trek of barely ten meters to the low shed in the corner where they were to deposit the steel sheet. Snorting like bulls, dragging their feet in unison, they inched closer to the goal. Federico was in front, at one corner of the sheet. The foreman directed the group's movements as if they were a brotherhood marching during Holy Week. "A little to the left, that's it, carefully now, *mi arma*, slowly." Federico felt the blood beating in his fingertips. In the very instant when he remembered that he was carrying gloves in the pocket of his overalls, the worker on his right suddenly caught his feet in a cable lying on the floor. The man stumbled, lost his balance and fell backward as if bending in slow motion, and the inertia of his collapse pulled the sheet toward him. The sheet slid out of the hands of the workers across from him. Nine hundred kilograms of steel fell out of balance and lurched towards the source of the pull, towards the man who had tripped. Following a sixth sense born of experience, they dropped the sheet and stepped back, having seen that it was no longer possible to keep a grip on it and pull it back in line. The edge of the sheet sliced through the air, nailing itself into the floor just a centimeter away from the leg of the fallen worker who, as he fell, had still reflexively managed to pull away as much as possible, recoiling like a doll wracked by an electric shock. But Federico instinctively clutched the piece he had been ordered to hold instead of pulling away. He saw the sheet irrevocably collapsing, and some survival instinct made him release his fingers from the metal in the last moment. He only had time to save his left hand, and his right little finger, ring finger, and thumb. The sheet's edge, sharp as a guillotine, cleanly sliced off his right index and middle fingers. Federico's hand burned as if it had been seared point-blank by a blowtorch, cutting through his bones like they were strips of tin. He stared in a horrified stupor at the two bumps of bloody flesh that sprouted from the palm of his hand in the place of his two fingers, like two monstrous appendages or two protruding vine shoots. Staring at the fist, he suddenly thought of a lizard with its tail snapped off and a starfish with one arm missing, like flashes of the useless hope that his fingers could grow back. He gazed at his hand with horror and indifference, like a bystander to someone else's accident, unable to react and help the injured parties. That hand wasn't his. Otherwise, he thought determinedly, he would not be able to look at it. This couldn't be happening to him; it was impossible for those mutilated fingers to be his; no way could that blood be his. The intensity of the pain shattered his division of consciousness and thrust him back into unthinkable reality, the inevitable, everyday reality. "My hand! My hand! My hand!" he screamed, not moving from where he stood. A fellow laborer, face unsettled, covered the two severed bones with a handkerchief to stop the bleeding, and above all, to protect Federico from the horror of witnessing his own mutilation. The cloth was immediately stained dark red. His crazed screams echoed across the warehouse, mixing with the nervous voices of the men who lifted him up and carried him to the infirmary. Amidst the chaos, someone shouted that they had to recover the severed fingers in case there were still time

to reattach them. Twenty men rushed to the scene of the accident, pried up the metal sheet using iron bars, and found two dark, soft, little sticks, with square fingernails glinting dully, squashed like worms against the gravel on the ground. The foreman put them in a bag of ice and clambered clumsily into the company ambulance as it sped off to the hospital.

The doctors couldn't perform the reattachment. The cut was clean and precise. But the fingers had been too damaged, they said, when they had been crushed under the sheet of metal. "Impossible to attach them." Hang in there, kid, he heard a masked face tell him in the operating room. On the way to the hospital, lying on the stretcher with his gaze fixed on the room of the ambulance, he had stopped thinking about what was happening and, simply put, wasn't able to think through the consequences that the accident would have for him. Work had taught him to stop thinking whenever he wanted to, and now he was putting that skill into practice. When they transferred him from the emergency room to a room in the ICU with four other patients, his parents were already there waiting for him and weeping. "It's not like I'm dead, mom," he muttered, as if nothing had happened. Towards evening, his friends started lurking in the room, heads low, still shaken, like him, by the shock of a sudden accident that had broken the normal flow of reality and forced them to redefine it. "Federico was just in an accident and two of his fingers got cut off!" the messenger, on edge, would say over the phone. Invariably, the question asked on the other end would try to correct the tragedy, soft-pedal the horror of the blow: "What d'you mean—he cut his fingers, he hurt his hand?" And the agitated correction: "No. He lost them; he was maimed." The next morning proved to Federico that he hadn't dreamed it all. While his parents went through the insurance paperwork with the union representatives and the temporary work agency, Federico scrutinized the white bandages enveloping his fist, which throbbed with unbearable pain, and asked himself, "*Now* who the hell is gonna hire me?" "Temporary partial disability" was Social Security's sterilized verdict.

Pages 120-129, draft 2

*As noted later on, this is one of the two seguidas in which Diego, the journalist, watches others' involvement with the Hollywood director's film: the scene of the audition, and the scene of the shoot itself (Federico, however, is still too despondent to come to either of these). They are a perspective flip from the director's passages, in which the masses of Seville are held at an exoticizing distance. Also, both scenes, in addition to the later events during Feria, tap into deep cultural notions of communal experience.*

The massive line reminded me of the ones formed by tourists and *sevillanos* in front of the most famous pavilions at the Expo everyone was there at different places in line I'd arrived with Alejandro the photographer it was an impressive sight hundreds of people crowding around the glass doors of the Maestranza Theater Alejandro was busily shooting that half-jovial half-desperate mass of young people that I too had helped gather and that I'd raised hopes for with the prospect of a simple working wage but the usual theories (*the mobs of Seville/the call of the crowd/the social-folkloric magma*) were overused and obvious I'd been thinking that the article shouldn't be full of the same old thing so I decided to focus the story in a different direction showing not only the visible actors in the world's comedy but the costumed extras whose disguises were themselves obscured whenever I start a story I'm nervous until I've scribbled down pages of illegible notes and so I was anxious now I started interviewing people in line almost all of whom were university students after talking to four or five of them I decided that I had to look for a contrast a note of color a desperate candidate in short something to support my strategy of protest because as low as the employment prospects were for students not everyone could be these healthy young men there had to be at least one resentful face to balance what otherwise looked like a real tangible urgent need for work for stability for future goals the resentment wasn't hard to find either there were older men a bit hard up wearing threadbare outfits their dark eyes focused gravely on the doors weathered men with gray hair battered shoes plain faces and a bit of a paunch where had they come from? an invisible sign on their foreheads read *unemployed for a long time all i'm asking for is a job* there were men like this of all ages so it was very easy to choose and in a way I thought this variety made the story more scientific more like an investigative report than a folksy portrait and screw broad brushstrokes anyway this was a sociological survey a high-definition snapshot not a joke or a pastime to play with while waiting half an hour at the post office for your girlfriend no it was a family portrait a moment in history please some respect I told myself I was stroking my own ego enjoying the professional vanity of introducing myself importantly as a journalist 'so who is this for?' I asked three older men in their forties and a twenty-something kid in order to gather a more representative sample for my survey they were from the projects a son a brother and a cousin they'd come because the growing crowd at the doors of the theater had caught their eye I recognized one of them he'd spend all morning in line for tickets during the opera season and then turn around and resell them he told me that other people did this the wrong way they took commissions for those rich enough to afford messengers people like that earned less they didn't have access to a fixed resale price either it's true there're risks to getting stuck holding unsold tickets another guy had been unemployed for two years he made a living making shoddy knickknacks I remember him saying he was from Los Pajaritos his name was Gonzalo he had three kids and another on the way the third man had been laid off from Gillette three years ago and now he was lending a hand at a relative's ceramics store to get by things were awful right now the government said everything was going fine sure but their situation proved how many problems were still going on despite the

official speeches the increasing economic activity the successful cap on inflation and unemployment's recent plateau the younger one had been told to come by a friend's cousin's neighbor who worked as a doorman at this very theater and who'd spread the word to his friends just like I'd told mine that morning the pull of the tribe still held sway on us the kid was cheerful and likeable fifty people had gathered around him at first chuckling at every clever joke or quip about the Hollywood producers as they fought the tedium of waiting then eventually throwing their heads back in long laughter applauding torero torero I could breathe easy now I had a little of everything happy students anxious jobless youths the dramatic image of thirty- forty- and fifty-year-olds standing alongside young people the slim chance of money and the familiar threat of poverty desperation utter failure this dark note was even counterbalanced by the grotesque camaraderie of the comedian in line dishing out anecdotes to his chorus of partiers in blue jeans turning the story into a tragicomedy I shut my notebook I had more than enough material now a foundation of human reactions enough meat to work with I went and found you about halfway down the ever-growing line next to Ana Elena and Andrés while a little farther down stood Ricardo Dani Gustavo Juanca Antonio and Julián Ramón and Israel you asked me where Fernando was and how could the only real actor out of any of us not show up I explained that the professionals had told him to come to the back door we kissed and said see you tonight 'these people asked me to send word if anything changes' 'why don't you find out when the hell they're going to open the doors?' I remember hearing so I met up with the photographer and the two of us went into the theater through the door reserved for the press I waved to my coworkers we walked down the spotless hallways and immediately gravitated towards the image that he and I had already built up in our minds Alejandro with his photos and I with my words here was the glass door and here were the uniformed guards stationed between people and jobs between the ordinary sunlit everyday desert and the fictional multimillionaire dream of the big screen the article's photo was clear as day it jumped out without question in those noses those dark eyes those distorted mouths pressed against the glass fighting to pass through the transparent yet solid barrier with some kind of desperation to grab those lucrative masks those disguises those fictional identities as extras until all the positions were gone to be at once themselves and someone else I committed that image to memory surveyed the area and saw each of your unmistakable faces among so many other heads seeing myself from this side of the door I felt a sudden jolt of unfairness as if that glass were separating me from the rest of you throwing a great distance between us turning me into a traitor a sudden painful thought my vision went blurry for a moment I felt panicked over what was going to happen and was happening again the thought that one day I too would have to die I was terrified at the prospect of the end I wanted to cry but now was not the time or the place I was alone behind the glass seeing you all waving gazing joyful radiant so much youth and energy the sun brushing your skin your hair your clothes with me alone and the rest of you so close behind a pane of glass that would soon be opened I felt dread sensing the return of that same overwhelming feeling from when I was little from that year in high school from a few months ago that peaceful solitude that serene panic at the thought of sudden death overtaking me before I was old and no it was not the time or place but I thought one day I'll have to witness the burials of my loved ones the people I grew up with the people standing in front of me right now shining in the spring sunlight I wanted to cry because I love life so much because life is made up of you and everyone we know and everyone there is with no exceptions all those kids who might as well be nameless to me were waiting pressed up against the ones that I knew you were all irritated indifferent scornful compassionate but shoulder to shoulder united in the same hope the same sliver of time the doors thank God were finally

opened and I buried that painful shining lucidity under thoughts of needing to do my job well the guards were flanking the door letting you pass through two at a time like a sieve the casting assistants led you to the deserted set walking together in line you all shared a pent-up mutual excitement but once you reached the producer's territory that feeling turned into a nervous deadened seriousness everyone humble trembling a guy with a Madrid accent walked down the line counting you off [...] six by six and six by six in an unwavering pattern the group slowly broke apart and in the end you all left a little of yourselves on those computer screens when they took your photo Tina you still looked very solemn and the guy at the screen tried to be friendly suggested that you'd be prettier in the picture prettier if you smiled you forced yourself to muster a fraction of a smile and he gave up on you as an impossible girl so you and everyone else passed by me the photographer was long gone I had more than enough material but wanted to stay and see what would happen after going through the group of two hundred they cleared the scene and sent in another group as big as yours maybe even bigger the cycle began again with its boring fantasy backdrop retracing my steps down the hallway to the exit I was bowled over again by the sensation of rushing towards death the fixed notion turning back on itself obsessively my heart trembling with fear I didn't want to think tried to shove it out of my mind for one instant it blurred but kept surrounding me the whole universe seemed like an intangible fantasy I looked to the past and saw nothing looked to the future and was terrified at the thought of snatching my own life pushing forward the course of what I was going to become I wanted tomorrow to never come wanted the hours to stop rushing by wanted not to die not ever like a child suspended in a menacing infinity I felt empty I thought I'll have to think of a good excuse to keep going and shatter the sharp crystalline truth of death believing in people creating a work of art dreaming of something eternal I stopped halfway down the corridor couldn't breathe felt so alone don't think about it don't think about it I chanted to myself what was wrong with me my temples were icy the idea finally exploded in my brain knees shaking ears ringing teeth chattering my heart paused and life stopped the way the hours would stop when I was little and discovering the heaviness of the world now I saw everything clearly for no more than a second it was unbearable the air vibrated and the blood started flowing through my veins again death death I'd have to learn to live with death's imminent arrival after having witnessed it useless to ignore it to pretend it didn't exist I told myself there's no way out except living shaking the bounds of reality in my path as I walk thinking about those who will come after me above all think of them believe that I am them and that my memories are shining in their gazes slight relief the dignity of living for the sake of having lived make a work of art or a work of love out of each moment invent a meaning for life get used to the idea of life being a mass of sounds and use them to build a language that unites the living and the dead within the same flow of time I had rediscovered the sharp pain of knowing myself to be mortal the vague hope that maybe the lives of all men (so stubborn and so fragile) who cling to the rope of time could brush the shadows of eternity that some part of ourselves could last forever bound up in the sum of everything like a grain of sand in the immensity of the desert and then I started walking running down the hallway in a panic past the tide of faces who were coming in the door pushed through out into the street exhaled gazed up at the sun watched the people strolling along the river in which the clouds were reflected the rest of you had met up on the terrace by the river as agreed I could see you on the other side of the street sitting around a table Juanca and Antonio were bringing more chairs I squinted through the sun's glare and glimpsed the silky yellowish gleam of a few glasses of beer I counted the bars of paint on the crosswalk while crossing the street the green man-shaped "walk" signal shone at me I reached in my jacket pocket without thinking pulled out the rolled sheets of paper from the

media info packet the little green pedestrian symbol blinked as if about to go out as if announcing its own imminent demise which would be followed shortly by the little red pedestrian heavy traffic the yellow traffic light and finally its own pre-programmed resurrection I unrolled the document somehow I'd never noticed this before I smiled at destiny's cruel little joke a reminder of the paradox of existence the film's title printed on the cover of the pamphlet burned into my retinas thundered in my ears what a coincidence the movie they'd hired you guys for as extras was the third installment in *The Immortals* when I reached the table a chair was waiting for me I met up with the rest of the group it was hot I remember Tina that you asked me what time it was and when I glanced at my watch I was amazed to realize that the day wasn't even over yet.

Pages 170-174 & 185-187 (Draft 5)

*This is from the subplot involving Diego's interview of Salvador, a terminal AIDS patient, for Diario de Noticias. In the omitted section ([...]), Salvador elaborates further on his life story, his addiction to heroin, his marriage to a woman whom he unintentionally infected, and his failing health. Because of the particular translation challenges in the following segments, I have decided to include both a trot and a full, translated draft for this particular section.*

“My name is Salvador Ortega Serrano and I’m 33 years old, the age of the Lord Jesus Christ, like they say. The boys in the barrio always called me *El Lele*. But I’d rather be called Salvador, or Salva if it’s someone close to me. I was born on May 1<sup>st</sup>, and according to my father, it was raining buckets that day. My father was white, and he was named Salvador too. The poor man died of cancer when I was about six or seven years old. He was a baker: he worked at night and slept by day, and spent evenings drinking wine at the bar. When we got up each morning, we always found loaves of bread, fresh out of the oven on the table, and his cap hanging from the back of a very old chair that we still use. My old woman’s name is Dolores. She’s a gypsy. She got along well with my father until he became an alcoholic. She asked him to stop drinking, but the poor guy couldn’t manage it; so after having my older brother Antonio, my sister Felisa, and I, she gave him the cold shoulder and never slept with him ever again. I have very few memories of him, but the ones I have I can still see as clearly as if they had happened this morning. For example, I have memories of when he would come to pick me up from school in the afternoon, give the excuse of going for a walk, and take me to the neighborhood club’s bar. While he’d drink wine and play cards with his friends, I’d read a comic book in the corner, with a packet of peanuts that he’d buy me to keep me quiet. Then he died, and my mother hid his death from us at first. I went to school at el Colegio de los Moros, the one on the corner of Cerezo and Cruz Roja. I was a beast in class, I had good grades and the teachers loved me. I played forward on the youth soccer team in the Polígono, and I wanted to play on the Betis team when I grew up...”

*[section break]*

“What’s your full name?”

“Salvador.”

“Your first and last names, I mean.”

“Salvador Ortega Serrano.”

“Don’t worry, this is just for me. I can just publish your initials in the article if you want.”

“We’re already here; jus’ put the whole thing down.”

“How old are you?”

“Thirty-three. That’s Christ’s age, you know? Tha’s what people say.”

“Do you have an alias?”

“Whaddaya mean, ‘do I have aliens’?”

“No, I mean, do you have a nickname?”

“Eh, well, the boys in the barrio called me *El Lele*. But I’d rather be called ‘Salvador’ than ‘Dummy.’ Or Salva, if it’s one of my own.”

“On what day of the year were you born?”

“What day was I born on? Well, tha’s hard to say ‘cause my old woman say I was born at night, but she don’t know if I poked my head out before or after midnight. When I was a lil kid I loved askin’ how she’d given birth to me. ‘Did it hurt a lot, momma, did it hurt a lot?’ The same thing all day long. It say May first on my ID card, but could jus’ as well be the second. That don’t matter to me.”

“That’s Workers’ Day.”

“Yeah, but back then didn’t nobody gave a crap about May first, y’know? That day was jus’ like any other; the only special thing about it according to my old man at least, was it was pourin’ buckets that day.”

“Like today, huh?”

“No way, today it’s rainin’ *twice* as much. Pff.”

“Talk to me about your parents.”

“Oof! Lemme try and break it down for ya. My old man and me had the same name. Poor guy died of cancer.”

“How old were you then?”

“ ‘Bout six or seven.”

“What did he do for a living?”

“Baked bread. He had a crazy weird sleep schedule, like a bat. He worked by night and slept by day, and then he’d spend all evening drinkin’ wine in a dive bar down past my house that they later closed down so they could put up a snack stand or ice cream stand or I don’t even know what.”

“He must have brought home nice, hot bread.”

“Man, that was the one advantage we had!: gettin’ up and always findin’ hot loaves of bread there on the kitchen table, just out of the oven, and that cap of his that he wore to work hangin’ off the back of a real old chair that we had in the house and that we still use.”

“And your mother? Tell me about your mother.”

“My old woman’s name is Dolores. My father was a whitey *payo*, and my mother a gypsy. She got along well with him until the poor guy turned alcoholic, and then she warned him, gettin’ all serious the way she gets: ‘listen, Salvador, if you don’t lay off the booze you’re gonna get it from me’; but he couldn’t help hisself, so no way could he have done what she said. So after she had us kids she gave him the cold shoulder, and fuckin’ hell, when all was said and done, never slept with him again for the rest of his life. And after that, my old man would stare through the bathroom window while she was takin’ a shower to see her tits. Poor bastard.”

“How many siblings are there in your family?”

“Well, firs’ came my big bro Antonio, the one who died, then me, then my sister Felisa: so, three.”

“Right, sorry. Tell me more about your parents. For example, what else do you remember about your father?”

“Truth is, I have very, very few memories of him, but the ones that I do have, it’s like I can see ‘em as clear...as clear as if they happened jus’ this morning. Hmm, like for instance, I still remember the times when he’d come pick me up in the afternoon when I got out of school, y’know? ‘Cause to keep my old woman from flyin’ off the handle, he’d give the excuse that we was jus’ goin’ for a walk, but we actually didn’t go nowhere: truth was, we was goin’ to the back of the bar at the club, and there he’d drink wine and play rounds of *tute* with his friends, and he’d gimme a comic book and a packet of nuts to keep me quiet. Hell, I remember that stuff like I was



seein' it right now. Then he passed on, y'know; but since my old woman hid that from us at first, well, it was easier for me to handle it."

"Where did you go to school?"

"The colegio de los Moros..."

"De los Moros?"

"Yeah, man, the one over by the corner of Cerezo and la Cruz Roja."

[...]

"Salvador, do you mind if I take your picture?"

"Naw, go ahead."

"Wait a second, let me get out the camera."

"Man, I'd rather my kids remember me from my wedding photo than from some picture in the paper. Right now I look pathetic, more like a dead man than anythin' else, and I don't wanna make people feel any sorrier or sadder for me."

"Of course not. Look at me for a moment. That's it...there. Wait a second, I'm going to take another one of you from the side. One, two, three...there."

"Can I move now?"

"Yes; besides, we're wrapping up now. Salvador, tell me, how do you plan to spend your final days?"

"Firs' thing is, I ain't got no clue how much time I got left. Could just as easily be two months or a week or a day. The truth is, I still haven't thought much about how I'm gonna spend that time. Anyway, now I'm a wreck, and I ain't gonna do nothin' I couldn't do as a healthy twenty-year-old boy."

"But you'll probably want to do something, now that you're free."

"What do I care. I'll let the days pass, and when the moment comes, it comes."

"Are you religious at all?"

"Deep down I think so, yeah. I haven't gone to mass since I got hitched, but I think if I've suffered so much in this life it means I deserve a better one in heaven. That'd be the fair thing, y'know?"

"Yes, of course."

"If not, it'd be some real shitty luck. You get one life, just one life, and you gotta live it like this, and don't even get no chance to fix it? Tha's a raw goddamn deal. But I think, I believe I'm goin' to heaven."

"Absolutely."

"That's why I'm jus' chill now, and don't nothing bother me none. Only thing I gotta do before I go is manage to see my kids. I ain't seen 'em in three years. That's what I'm gonna do right now. As soon as they finish givin' me my meds, I'm gonna go look for 'em in La Barqueta. Let 'em see me and come away with a good memory of me."

"Yes, that's a good idea."

"Dammit, let them see that I'm a person, not a miserable bastard. They old enough now to remember things. At least let 'em remember me when I'm not here anymore, like I still remember my dad even though he was a drunk and gave my old woman such a hard time. 'Cause that's what he was my father for, y'know? Uh-huh, *then* I can go ahead and fuckin' die."

[section break]

“I don’t know how much time I have left. It could just as easily be two months, a week, or a day. I still haven’t thought much about how I’m going to spend the rest of my time. Anyway, now I’m a wreck, and I’m not going to do anything I couldn’t do as a healthy twenty-year-old. Well, I’ll let the days pass, and when the moment comes, it comes. I’m a believer deep down. I haven’t gone to mass since I got married, but I think that if I’ve suffered so much in this life it means I deserve a better one in heaven. That would be fair. If not, it would be rotten luck. Having just one life, just one, and having to live it like this, and not even getting the chance to fix it, is the worst thing there is. But I think I’m going to go to heaven. That’s why now I’m calm and have no worries. The only thing I have to do before I go is to manage to see my kids. I haven’t seen them in three years. That’s what I’m going to do. So they can see me and come away with a good memory of me. So they’ll realize that I’m a person, not a miserable waste. At least let them remember me after I’m gone, the way I still remember my father even though he was a drunk and gave my old woman such a hard time. Because he was my father. After that I can go ahead and die already.”

Pages 169-170, 187-190, draft 4

*Tina, Diego's girlfriend and a college student at the Facultad de Bellas Artes (Department of Fine Arts), convinces her friend Ana to take a part-time job as a nude model for the department. (Ana appears briefly in an earlier scene on pages 56-66, where she is implied to be undergoing deep-seated stress, possibly depression.)*

*In addition to the lyrical style of these two passages, it is important to note their larger thematic relevance. They are part of the "cadaver subplot", in which Tina and several other students create anatomical molds of cadavers in the Department of Medicine. From pages 138 to 217, del Campo alternates the Salvador subplot with the cadaver subplot, adding in the Juanca subplot on page 217. Through this juxtaposition, del Campo naturally allows the reader to make the connection between Diego's attempt to preserve the memory of Salvador through words, and Tina's attempts to preserve people's memory's (those of Ana and those of an anonymous dead man) through sculpture.*

**169-170**

The sculpture was nearly finished now. Tina's fingers rounded the edge of its clay eyelid. Ana, posing nude on the dais, had her eyes open; but Tina had made her clay counterpart with closed eyes—as if it were sleeping, or staring into its own dark depths, trying to comprehend itself. Tina's delicate hand, the palm and knuckles outlined by dry clay, smoothed the fresh, moist surface until she'd brought out an even texture of skin, with deliberate marks and bumps that evoked not god-like perfection, but rather, the rough geography of mortal men. The sculpture had been born from nothing and had grown over four weeks into its current shape, the shape in which it would forever remain. Just like with a flesh-and-blood person, you could only truly know this clay being by observing it from afar, contemplating its proportions, seeing how the air surrounded and silently absorbed its whole body into the composition of the world. You also had to observe it up close, like a man spending long hours gazing at the features of his lover's face that distance would have blurred or hidden—living flesh, the marks of her creator's carnal battle with matter, and the unique topography of her skin—which revealed that she, just like any man, had been touched by time, history, and the hands of other beings. This statue would never open its eyes, but Tina was sure it would be able to feel the presence of a gaze, or a hand brushing down the length of its spine. Any deeply lonely soul who approached this woman, frozen in time, would realize with a shudder that her earthen heart was aware of a presence, and that her lips, hardened like stones by the oven's fire, smiled almost imperceptibly, as if discovering in this stranger a friend, a brother, a lover, asking to be awoken with a kiss.

Tina stepped back a few meters to evaluate. Then she approached and ran an eye along all its limbs, from the head with its sealed eyes and half-open mouth, to the rounded belly, skinny thighs, and small feet. She touched it up one or twice more, here and there, without really changing anything.

The sculpture was complete. This did not mean it was perfect, she knew that; rather, its imperfections were rounded and real, like those of all human beings.

**187-190**

"Ana, want to come down and take a look?" Tina stared up at her model. After two weeks on end of work, Ana's image had fused with that of the statue in her imagination: Ana's flesh had

become like humid clay, her white skin like a glazed surface, as if her body and form had exchanged the properties of substance. There were still a few minutes until the end of class, but most students were putting away their supplies or had already left. Still holding her pose, Ana turned her head and saw the room was half empty. Seeing that no one needed her any more, she shifted, stretched, put on her slippers and bathrobe, and stepped down from the dais. Tina took her gently by the elbow and guided her in front of the statue, as if it were a distorted mirror depicting not the present, but the immediate past, a past that kept moving farther and farther away with each passing second. Ana stared silently at the figure. It looked as if she were trying to penetrate the clay and fill it with her soul, to infuse those closed eyes with her own gaze and those hollow innards with her own heart. Ana closed her eyes and searched in the stark shadows of her brain for the emotion, the light, the abstract notion of eternity that this sculpture, which was no longer her, could imagine if it had senses or memories. When she opened her eyes, a smile bloomed on her lips. She turned to Tina and hugged her.

“It’s amazing. I love it, I really do. You’ve brought out my essence: not my body, but what I am and how I feel. Now I feel connected to this little piece of clay.” Her green eyes shone, searching for Tina’s. Tina smiled too and, by way of thanks, squeezed her friend’s arm.

Ana went to the changing room and covered her nakedness with street clothes, while Tina covered the sculpture with perforated plastic sheets. The holes would allow in enough air to ventilate the pores in the clay. Seeing the statue clad in transparent plastic reminded her of the crazy, barefoot girl whom she had once glimpsed in the garden of Miradores Psychiatric Hospital, wearing nothing but a large black garbage bag. She placed her tools—spatulas, rods, wooden spoons—in a shoebox, and took off the blue work overalls that her father had given her. She and Ana went to the department’s lunch room. None of the tables were free, but their classmate Auxi waved them over to her spot in the corner next to the vending machine. They left their bags on chairs and went up to the counter to order. After fifteen minutes, they returned with two trays loaded with plates, a loaf of bread, glasses of orange juice, and strawberry yogurt. They ate with relish.

“Isn’t Diego coming to pick you up?” asked Auxi between spoonfuls.

“Yeah, he is,” Tina said, blowing on her picadillo soup to cool it off. “He said he’d be here around this time, so he should be on his way.”

Auxi nodded and went back to her food. Suddenly, she stopped with the spoon halfway between plate and mouth, as if she had just remembered something important, and asked, “Tina, have *you* signed up to work with Rubiales in the Anatomical Institute?”

“I don’t think I could handle it. Have you?”

“Yeah, these kinds of things don’t scare me. I think it’s fascinating. And after the first day, I’m sure it’ll turn into just another job.”

“What’re you two talking about?” asked Ana.

“It’s Rubiales, the Anatomy professor. Haven’t you heard? He’s setting up this amazing project. They’re looking for students to build molds from corpses in the Department of Medicine and turn them into a 3D atlas of the human body,” Tina explained, breaking off a piece of bread from the roll.

“Oh. I was getting dressed when they came to class to explain it. It’s kind of morbid, you know? Instead of live models, you’re copying dead bodies,” Ana insisted, around a mouthful of callos caseros.

“Sure, but you wouldn’t want us slicing *you* open to make a mold of your liver or diagram your tendons,” said Auxi ironically, a stray breadcrumb bouncing up and down in the corner of her mouth.

“So you have to disembowel them too, huh? I hadn’t realized that. I thought it was just a model of the outside of the body. That’s even worse than I thought,” Ana said. She had speared a French fry with her fork and was dipping it into the sauce of her callos, a dramatic exception to her otherwise strict diet. “What a joke. I know it’s contributing to science and all, but I don’t want anything to do with it. Tina, I see where you’re coming from: I wouldn’t be able to work with a dead person either. In fact, I’ve only ever seen one corpse, when my grandma died last year. That was hard, but it was different; it wasn’t disgusting. But seeing blood and guts is a whole other story.”

“Don’t listen to her, Tina,” Auxi cut in. She paused to swallow a mouthful of pork filet and went on without pausing for breath: “It’s a unique opportunity. What’s cool about it is the fact that it forces you to work against the urge to throw up. When you get right down to it, it’s basically just a still-life of dead matter. It’s part of reality. Plus, you learn a bunch of anatomy. Studying a body from the inside has to be better than reading about muscles in a textbook or staring at a model from a distance—because it’s not like you’re ever gonna touch them, unless you hook up with them. You *have* to sign up, girl. At least come try it out with me.”

Pages 217-222, draft 3

*This is the first passage in the Juanca subplot. I am including it here mainly in order to help show the aforementioned juxtaposition with the cadaver subplot. Also, I was drawn to the high detail of realistic description in both this passage and the following one.*

It happened one evening in July the year before.

Juanca awoke face-up in a puddle of sweat, his body's large frame curled up in the center of the sheets. It was that time of day when the suffocating heat of the sun begins to relent, when people begin to show signs of life again after the little eternity of their siestas. He sat up laboriously, in nothing but a pair of soccer shorts, and regarded himself in the mirror on his closet door. A pair of sunken eyes with bluish bags stared back at him. He lamented the layers of fat accumulating on his thighs. Resolving to do more exercise and drink less beer, he hopped into the bathroom. The cold water cleared up his hangover, but he could still feel the encrusted sweat on his skin; he had to spend a good while scrubbing his armpits and testicles with lots of soap before he could really feel clean. Without waiting to dry off, he put on the same pair of jeans that he'd been wearing all week (blue, with a tear in the crotch that his mother had skillfully concealed with blue thread) and a clean, recently pressed, short-sleeved shirt. He asked his mother where his new loafers were, the ones she'd bought him two days ago. She replied she'd just washed them and they were still drying. Why bother washing them if they weren't dirty, Juanca asked tiredly, not wanting to fight over it. Without waiting for a reply, he went to the closet and fished out his old boots with worn-down soles, the ones the new shoes had been meant to replace. He put them on, relishing the sensation of broken-in material wrapping around his giant feet. The phone rang at a quarter to eight, and Juanca let it ring several times before picking up. It was his father. Jovial as always, his father asked if he'd just fallen out of bed. His son let out a genuine laugh, as he did even when his father was playing the role of authoritarian, admonishing parent. The two loved each from the bottoms of their hearts. Juan Carlos Senior asked Juan Carlos Junior to come pick him up at the warehouse. He was a member of a fertilizer cooperative in Alcalá del Río, and that day he had to oversee a special shipment that a truck was bringing in from Valencia. He had to bring four bags of fertilizer to a flower nursery near the ruins of Itálica, not far from the corner of Mérida and Santiponce. Juanca Junior had taken his mother grocery shopping at Continente late that morning, which was why he had ended up with the pickup truck. It was ten minutes to eight. His father told him to be careful, and sent him a kiss. Juanca took it for granted: his father always told him to be careful and sent him thousands of kisses. He asked his mother where the keys were. The ones with the Betis key chain? The ones with the Betis key chain. He found them lying under the discarded soccer shorts on his nightstand. Then he went to the kitchen to give his mother a kiss before heading off. He stopped in the doorway, turned back, and shouted over the rumble of the washing machine: don't stay up and wait for me tonight, Mom.

*[section break]*

They saw before them the body of a man, like a sunbather lounging idly in the sand, in stark contrast to the marble table's sterile, white surface. The wet formaldehyde on his skin helped create the illusion that this sunbather had just stepped out from the waves to enjoy the sun on his chest and the fresh water seeping through his open pores. A slight yellow-gray hue coated his skin, but despite this inevitable sign of death, it was still possible to imagine him as a living

summer vacationer submerged in the sea, to pretend his skin's shriveled color was because of sunscreen that had been carefully smeared across every inch of epidermis—or perhaps defective, expired tanning lotion, stinking of carrots, from the convenience store at the edge of the town where he was spending his August vacation. Tina squinted at him the way a near-sighted person without glasses peers at objects through a blurry veil, so as to contemplate his body without perceiving its statue-like stillness, the hollow paralysis of a desiccated animal gripping his limbs, the lack of breath on the lips that were pressed together like a single, sculpted stone. She would prefer to imagine that this body were just as alive as the models that posed for her in class, and that at the end of this morning's session, when they had finished extracting the first silicon molds, he would sit up on that freezing fishery table, rinse off the excess bits of plaster out of his chest hair with a hot shower, and then go have a beer with them at the bar on the plaza. But there was no mistaking it: up close, her eyes met with the jarring presence of an emptiness surrounding this inanimate body. Silence clung to his skin like damp paper, denying and dissolving any hint of breath. Soft flesh; inert, organic material that they were about to calmly explore and tear apart, without having to worry that it would shriek in pain or struggle to escape the unending torture. Feet spread in opposite directions, held in place by anklebones and by rigid tendons and muscles. Neatly trimmed fingernails, shining on the tips of his fingers like fish scales. A layer of wet hairs varnished the legs, arms, chest, groin, and genitals, flattened by the formaldehyde so that they looked straight even though they actually been curly. His legs were strong and fibrous, but seemed like a paper doll's fragile limbs compared to the belly that rose up like a small mountain, crowned by the crater of his navel; Tina wondered how they could have been capable of holding up the weight of that bulky torso. Arms, each surrounded by a thicker mass of flesh, pressed right up against the torso, palms up as if pleading innocent to a burglary. The fingers were robust, yet graceful. The slivers of white on the tip of each fingernail were like the rounded outlines of ten crescent moons. The two dark nipples atop his wide, boxy chest formed a triangle with the crater of his navel. The fairly solid layers of fat around his waist caught her attention: a sunbather's rolls of fat would have had a soft heaviness, not this firmness caught between flesh and stone, somewhere on the way to the transformation into fossil or ash. His penis, with its wrinkled folds of dark skin, had fallen to the left, lying in the corner between legs and torso. His testicles, two uneven lumps, brushed the surface of the table. Tina scanned his face again. Unlike the corpse from earlier, whose sealed eyelids she had envisioned as a blind man's, this one's were gently closed, like those of a broken doll. His eyelashes were curled in an arching smile. She mused that those eyes, now hidden behind a translucent veil of skin, had once gazed upon the world with an enormous hunger for light. The nose was small, straight, and squat. Salt-and-pepper hair circled his cranium, except for a bald spot in the center, dotted with emaciated hairs. There was a diagonal slash across his head from the right eyebrow to the left temple. Two dozen stitches covered the scar crosswise, like little studs or notches. The man had died at about age fifty, or hardly more than that. The same age as her father, Tina thought. She stared intently at his round, friendly face, his reddish cheeks, and his barely pronounced chin—which still, despite his final and permanent shave, preserved the shadow of a beard. Only then did it occur to her to wonder who this man had been.

Excerpts from pages 320-334, draft 3

*Chronologically, roughly a month has passed since the film director's arrival in Seville at the start of the novel. The following series of alternating scenes takes place during Feria de Abril, the city's annual April Fair. Diego, Tina, and friends decide to go visit the fair around midnight or so. Meanwhile, a local marquis convinces a police officer named Rogelio to solicit ten prostitutes for a private party, including Antonia. These two parallel subplots lead to what I believe to be a partial climax: the dissolution of two festive celebrations into disaster. The climax and resolution of several subplots, including Antonia's, follow directly afterward.*

*I am dropping most of Antonia's backstory, including some of the more graphic descriptions of her life as a prostitute, for the sake of including the latter parts of her subplot; for instance, I wanted to include the dining room scene in the sequence below because it addresses del Campo's sympathy towards the socially marginalized in a unique manner. Spain has an existing aristocracy, and the two nobles who appear in Capital Sur are both depicted as manipulative and exploitative of the working class. Because of this, American readers might find the dining room scene cartoonish compared to the much more down-to-earth tone of the rest of the novel, whereas Spanish or British readers might more easily see it as a relatable social depiction.*

The Marquis left the light on and the door open, continued down to the end of the hallway, and stepped into a room with two beds. The first bed had two shadows on top of it; the one on the bottom appeared to be snoring. The black Caribbean woman sat on top of him, legs spread, shaking her hips and crooning, "Tha's good, daddy, tha's goood," over and over. The Marquis sat on the edge of the free bed, letting Antonia lower his pants and her skirt while he fixed his eyes on the strange, groaning centaur, half black and half white. Antonia patiently went back to massaging his member. The utterly focused, obsessive movements going on in the other bed brought him to erection.

He suddenly pushed Antonia down onto the bed and plunged into her, not bothering with tenderness. She began shaking her hips, arms knotted behind her back. Her hands became damp with sweat, mixing with the scent of rancid perfume. Almost without making a sound or speeding up, he ejaculated weakly and pulled out of her body with shortened breath. Another shadow appeared in the doorway. The Marquis motioned it forward. The short, skinny figure approached the foot of the bed and revealed itself to be a man, stammering and complaining because there hadn't been a woman left over for him.

"Take this one; I'm done with her."

The Marquis pulled his pants up and left without another word. The two shadows were still swaying in the other bed, the overused springs squealing. The new arrival leaped at Antonia greedily, nailing hands that felt like claws into her chest.

"You're hurting me."

The stranger let go of her breasts, and instead issued an order:

"Touch me."

[section break]

"Stick together, or we'll all get lost in the crowd."



Joined at the waist we picked up the pace the trip along Calle Betis with you at my side was very short the stone benches by the river where we'd sit on summer nights to breathe the fresh air were almost deserted large clumps of people had formed on the pavement fed by more people streaming out from adjoining side streets growing into a brook flowing into the Plaza de Cuba heading in a single purposeful direction becoming loud and festive splashing into Calle Asunción bleeding into a human river running downstream denser than water and dirtier too heading for the drain for the innumerable lightbulbs on the fairground's doorway the sidewalks were crammed with people *we're talking fish*, I thought *in this current of laughter fatigue surprise horse shit intoxication unawareness bodily strain the physical contact of dancing bodies the urgent call to party and the heat of palms beating the same rhythm [...]* your face shone with your spirit's inner light revealing a childlike joy and the truth is I was letting myself be led by the rest of you suppressing my natural instinct to pull away by focusing on the goal of having an obligatorily thrilling night Torrebruno Elena and Israel started singing sevillanas with sexy lyrics although we could only remember the repetitive chorus you took out the sculpting rods from your bag and hammered out the beat with a hypnotic frenzy the fairgrounds came into view they were vast bigger more monstrous more densely populated than the very city that they copied it was an uncontrolled temporary replica with tubular canopies and wooden floorboards a drunken field filled with refugees seeking leisure familiar people and strangers crammed together there the river had become many waves lapping at the rain-fed mud on the sidewalks the damp stones on central avenues that reflected the lanterns in the sky rising and falling from one spot to another like a self-contradicting high tide that clashed with its own current a series of endless waves dissolving on the beach and then retreating back to the sea absorbing themselves before being devoured by a new line of kids teens adults oldsters all surrendering to the power of the crowd and its nameless energy to the carousel bonfire magnum opus that is **FERIA** I was thinking all this while clapping my hands like an action figure cutting off my circulation there at your side in that cyclone of anonymous anxieties embodied in an archipelago of exhausted faces like islands joined in the enormity of the ocean searching for their moment of firewielding glory in the celebration lucidity bewilderment saturation and sum of this fiesta this revelry with no beginning or end we passed groups of families from out of town who sang to the beat of a bottomless drum and a guitar with broken strings forming small knots of calm in the middle of the flow of countless human beings we saw rich kids dressed to the nines packs of workers taking up all the tables under the free tents owned by syndicates political parties and neighborhood districts in short everyone who was a part of our stony city was swarming through this parallel city foreigners students go-getters public servants unemployed folks delinquents small time dealers petty thieves police officers aristocrats Hollywood actors local celebrities freeloaders salesmen rich folks lawyers doctors lucky entrepreneurs luckless adventurers the broken the lost above all so many lost trying their luck in the solemn solitude of the mob.

*[section break]*

She complied. Then he lay on top of her, penetrated her clumsily, convulsingly, and quickly came. Almost in the same instant, the man in the other bed let out a long snore, and the Caribbean woman broke their centaur by pulling out of it. The black horsewoman abandoned the room. After emptying himself into Antonia, the stranger put on his pants and left. The other man had fallen asleep and was now snoring for real, completely naked on the bed, his penis fallen to the side. Antonia lay staring up at the ceiling and thinking. Suddenly, the Marquis' drunken

voice echoed down the hall, ordering everyone back to the dining room. Without waiting for a response, he came into each room one by one, yanking the sweaty sheets off sleeping or reveling bodies. A beat of silence. Then the sounds of laughter and voices, people moaning with nausea or fatigue, and the distant waterfall of someone vomiting into the toilet. Finally, the Marquis came into the room where Antonia was staring at the ceiling. First he tried to wake the sleeper, who muttered a string of incoherent words before rolling over on his stomach and displaying his ass to the intruder; then he grabbed Antonia by the ankle and made as if to throw her to the floor.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m goin’!”

Antonia put her skirt and shoes on, but before she had time to throw on her tank top, he shoved her out of the room. Back out in the hallway, she felt her nipples shrink and harden from the cold. Wide awake again, the men and women sat in the dining room drinking whiskey—naked, in underwear, or in nothing but a skirt or a backwards T-shirt.

“Why’d you bring us in here, sir?” asked Rogelio, naked from the waist up.

“To show you all the finale that I’m prepared for this party.”

All eyes focused on the giddy Marquis, the only one fully dressed.

“Am I not a rancher? Do the critics not say that my newest bulls look more like lambs? Well, to prove to you that those people have no fucking clue, that my bulls have more horns than they do and are manlier than they’ll ever be, I’ve arranged a private show for you. Well,” he corrected himself with a chuckle, “aside from the ‘show’ that these girls have just finished putting on for you.”

The people, tipsy though they were, still perceived in their host’s words a touch of insanity even greater than this night’s surreal events. The Marquis downed his cup of whiskey, then slowly walked over the door at the opposite end of the room. Upon reaching the door, he gazed at them arrogantly and turned the knob.

“*Voilà!*”

*[section break]*

“So where the heck are we going, anyway?”

We kept moving from one street to the next on that crowded chessboard searching for the bullfighter’s name that marked the location of the Triana tent (Pascual Márquez street, number 124) a clump of very young bodies were blocking our way I noticed my boots were covered in mud you were radiant I bought a carnation from a gypsy woman and pinned it to the side of your head you were smiling with fresh red lips and I kissed you carefully so as not to smudge the paint I felt like a tiny twig buffeted by the churning sea of eyes and grabbed your hand for fear of losing each other luckily Torrebruno made use of his size and muscled a path for Ana through the wall of bodies we didn’t need to go all the way in because at that point Andrés came out holding three bottles of Tío Pepe from his cousins’ tent holding tight like a line at the edge of a glacier about to burst we decided to explore Calle del Infierno discovered that “Hell Street” was yet another assault of brutal compact easily graspable matter electronic music booming rhythmically and solidly over the bumper cars’ tracks the high-pitched shrieks of passengers tumbling into the roller coaster’s vertical abyss the Viking boat ride the centrifuge the mini roller coaster the announcers’ sticky sordid hysteric voices streaming through megaphones attracting troupes of curious little kids and parents like flies to honey around the multicolored iron hydraulic fair attractions [...]

[section break]

Out of the dark room surged the muscled, bucking body of a young bull, perhaps the son of one of the bulls whose heads were mounted on the dining room walls; their fixed eyes and half-open mouths seemed to acknowledge this filial outburst, lowing mutely in astonishment. Running blindly, the animal hit the edge of a sofa, knocked over several chairs, speared the base of a flower vase with its horns, and launched itself desperately towards the rigid, hysterical bodies that it could see running, jumping, tripping, falling, or clambering up between the chairs or around the table. The women screamed at the top of their lungs as soon as they spotted the beast. They stumbled haphazardly up onto the chairs, and then onto the table, their breasts bouncing painfully against their chests. The young bull charged at Rogelio's naked friend, knocked her over, and started spearing her with its horns in the legs, back, and head.

"It's killing me, it's killing me!" The woman shrieked and clutched her head. She was soaked in the wine from a fallen bottle on the floor and believed the liquid was blood spurting from her bruises.

The room had been thrown into chaos. Some men had fled out into the hallway; others hid under the table or crouched behind chairs, hoisting them like shields. Rogelio approached the bull and grabbed its tail. The animal spun, and started running wildly again. The woman dragged herself across the floor and took shelter under the bookcase. Rogelio ran after the bull. Man and animal, bull and policeman were simultaneously chasing and fleeing each other in vicious circles; the Marquis stood near the door crying with laughter, his face distorted like that of a crazed clown; several people poked their heads out from the hallway without daring to interfere; and a pile of naked, shaken women huddled atop the table, trapped and motionless. After many circles, the young bull halted, leaped, and planted its hooves on the table. The women hurried to the other end, but their combined weight turned it into a catapult, sending them crashing to the floor; bottles, trays, and leftover food went flying in an arc through the air and landed on their heads. From within the mass of bruised and bloodstained chests, legs, arms, and buttocks, Antonia's yell emerged:

"Stop this, you motherfucker!"

The Marquis stopped laughing, but kept his clownish sneer. He gazed at them, relaxed and still.

"Bastard, end this right *now*!"

The Marquis didn't move a muscle. Rogelio had cornered the bull next to the chimney, and once it began to tire, he grabbed its neck and pulled, dumping it feet-up in a cloud of ash and dust. "Help me!"

Two men approached, testing the ground. Rogelio kept dodging the bull's attempts to head-butt him. He had pinned it down with his arms and legs, and kicked it in the flanks every time it bucked. The bull thrashed relentlessly. Two more men jumped in. The three of them grabbed the animal by the head and tail, dragged and shoved it back into the room it had come from, shut the door, and jammed a chair under the handle. Meanwhile, the women slowly and painfully pulled themselves up. The one who had been charged by the bull, crying softly, retrieved her blouse from under a lobster. Rogelio sat in a chair, panting. No one said a word for a few minutes. Finally, Antonia looked at the policeman and said, "We ladies are done here. We'd appreciate if you'd pay us and take us home."

Rogelio glanced at the clock on the wall and nodded. It was late, even for him.

The women got dressed silently, and the guests left without saying goodbye. The Marquis reclined in his chair, looked over at his trusted man, and said, "I've left the money in an envelope on a nightstand in the hallway. Pay them well. And don't look at me like that, sluts."

Then he closed his eyes, humming a Concha Piquer tune as they left. "*No debía de quererte, no debía de quererte, y sin embargo te quiero.*" I shouldn't have loved you, I shouldn't have loved you, and yet I still do.

[section break]

"Diego, what a scare that was."

We left Hell Street and went to Andrés' cousins' tent to see if they'd have us over for a bottle of wine and some plates of gambas but his cousins weren't there so we took ownership of the tables and dancefloor we danced together remember? one sevillana after another floating along not tired at all I was buying into the mood keeping time with theatrical flourishes pulling you close to my chest on every spin we all ordered round after round of wine always going Dutch on the tab Elena sang while the rest of us echoing her in slurred harmonies the hours flew by we were feeling good I'd stopped analyzing my surroundings and was just enjoying the moment the warmth of your presence my friends' good cheer the thrum of chests and hands beating out the rhythm of the tribe [...] I was starting to doze off when shouts echoed down the hallway a fight Torrebruno holding a drunk man by the neck Ramón trading blows with another one it turns out Ramón had made some harmless remark one of them had jumped him and Torrebruno had rushed to his friend's aid I moved toward the brawl as if it were a scene from a play complete with fake blood but then before I could react a clenched fist raised a beer bottle in the air and slammed it against Torrebruno's temple the bottle shattered into pieces and his hair was stained red I saw this like it was in slow motion the attacker took advantage of the confusion to drop the bottle Torrebruno released his hold on the other guy's neck and raised a hand to his temple as if nothing had happened stared at the blood on his fingers people were yelling without realizing what had happened Andrés punched the kid with the gelled hair just in case and the kid ran out to the street the one who'd been fighting Ramón looked shocked at the sight of blood and stepped back palms out fearing retribution nervously insisting that he didn't know the guy with the bottle we decided to forget him someone took out a handkerchief and pressed it to the wound then Julián Ricardo and Israel came in from the back of the crowd attracted by the commotion Torrebruno was squeezing his fists and yelling coward coward more blood spurting out of the hole with every word I grabbed his arm and pulled him to the door people moved aside when they saw the stained handkerchief a compact chorus had formed under the canopy at the entrance to see the wounded one up close to smell his bull's blood meanwhile Tina you stepped up and called the ambulance the sirens got the public worked up bloody faces like the agonized vampire women at the House of Horror [...]

Shifting shadows sliding on flat shoes took Torrebruno into the aseptic depths of the emergency room and told me to wait in one of the armchairs in the hallway the icy bluish glow of pre-dawn light filtered through the windows at the end of the hall my tongue was dry and swollen it filled up my mouth wouldn't let me breathe heavy eyelids dilated eyes nauseous stomach brewing diarrhea from behind the door came Torrebruno's kidlike whining and woman's raspy murmur only when I sat down did I notice another woman in front of me dressed up like a hooker in a tank top and leather miniskirt she was staring right at me I mumbled hello intimidated she replied good morning in a way that sounded scarcely believable I dropped my

gaze to my shoes to avoid more nausea tried to distract myself calculating how long it would take the rest of you to arrive but I couldn't avoid her eyes finally I raised my head and she took advantage of that to ask me what had happened I told her the whole story while fighting down the weight of fatigue she looked wide awake like she was used to pulling all-nighters like she worked the late-night shift I realized it was too late now to back out of the conversation so I moved to counterattack asked what she was doing in this place then in outraged tones she told me a crazy story about whores in pack trains and vicious ranchers and pimp policemen all of them rolled up in an orgy at some marquis' country house where a bull suddenly burst into the party and gored that comrade of hers whose voice I could hear through the wall after finishing her outlandish tale the woman got very quiet piercing me with her eyes and I felt ashamed to close mine thinking that looking away would be defeat a show of weakness she clicked her tongue and started talking very slowly measuring her words as if trying to seduce me without scaring me away I listened face frozen trying to understand how the night could have so many hidden corners so many dead-end alleys.

“You remind me of a son I had.”

Pages 354-359, draft 2

*After getting up from his nap, Juanca follows his nightly routine of drinking heavily with friends at his favorite bar; then, as the heat of the evening finally fades, he goes to pick up his father as promised.*

*Then another passage appears, which I did not include because it did not present any new translation challenges or narrative insights. Nevertheless, I must at least mention it: while driving Juanca Senior to the nursery where they are supposed to deliver the fertilizer, Juanca Junior accidentally crashes the car, killing his father. That scene, like pgs. 217-222, occurs a year before the rest of the novel's events. Thus the readers, and Juanca's friends know what happened—albeit a less detailed version of events than the tale that Juanca tells below.*

*Only after the end of this scene, does Juanca innocently mention that his father was one of the few people in Andalucía who donated their bodies to the Department of Medicine. He doesn't realize the possible connection, but his other friends do. They decide not to tell him.*

Juanca I tell him you're one of the smartest guys I know you're a genius in literature don't you realize that you're spending your life tied to this bench holding onto this fucking forty locked up in your house with your mom the years go by and you're still stuck to the past and the past can't be changed you drink away what little money you make every year you tell us this time you're going to apply as a professor and then you go back on it Juanca I know you're not doing well listen I want to tell you that you have to make the effort to keep going forward that we're all here for you and have you looked in the mirror lately? you've just turned what twenty nine or thirty? but you look like an old man who can't even move I'm your friend I want to help you tell me what you're feeling what's going on in your head I told him in a rush of words told him like I wanted to fix his trauma with a split-second electric shock he looked at me a little bloated asked me for twenty *duros* and went to order another two forty-ounce bottles we drank together I thought if I got drunk next to him he'd open his heart the forties ran out we ordered another it got very late I watched the customers on the night shift retreating to their houses the lights out front went one by one the two of us were left even more alone it was the right moment I was dizzy my tongue was like cloth but I felt eloquent precise airborne filled with powerful ability he'd been drinking twice as much as I had getting increasingly drunk and now his soul had separated from his body and could stare down at itself could let the memories emerge Juanca I said after we'd talked about bullfights soccer parties university movies stories Texan heroes the Betis team above all the Betis team don't you think now it's time to address the past to remember it digest it accept it and look forward why not tell me why you feel guilty about that accident if you analyze it calmly you'll see there's nothing to feel guilty about his broken eyes glinted like he was trying say something and the words were sticking in his throat like bits of meat in an anguished stammer then he whispered I loved my dad the voice barely emerged from his giant's body I loved my dad so much he sobs chokes his voice breaking and I killed him don't say that yes I did I killed him I loved him and I killed him what are you saying Juanca it was an accident my father was the most important person in my life he swallows his spittle lungs left without air it's my fault he whines softly that he's not alive today Juanca I tell him try to remember how it happened walk through it out loud then you'll see it was just a horrible accident no one blames you for it Juanca presses his fingers to his closed eyes as if to call up the right words which come bubbling up like echoes from a distant well.

[section break]

*The tavern was at the corner of the crossroads the three of us sometimes went there on Sunday to eat churrascos under the warm winter sun. It was Juanca Senior who recognized it my dad said Juanca this is the churrasco place Juanca smiled I told him yeah, I knew, and exchanged a look with him, I turned towards him and telling him I told him we'll go that they would go there in September to celebrate his parents' wedding anniversary 'cause they got married on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Did you look both ways? Yeah, I think so, He made sure I wasn't sure that he could keep going and shifted to first gear, I shifted gears with a screech of metal. The narrow I remember two-lane road was completely was gone to shit crammed with potholes but I should've noticed that there was practically no curb there was no curb, and the ground was lumpy and even, Juanca is crying he can't breathe I pound him on the back he saw that the speed limit sign read forty kilometers I saw the sign but we were in a hurry, He shifted I shifted into third gear and passed sixty per hour but I didn't realize what was happening to me His father my father looked to the right the dark olive trees were outlined in the moonlight and I saw his face outlined against the hills where the ruins of Itálica are, and he praised the good sense of he told me just look at the Ancient Romans who chose how well those guys chose the location the place to establish to found their cities, Kidlike hiccups shortened breath he grabs his voice back I saw The hill with the ruins of Itálica, fading into the shadows of the night, passed by slid past in the corner of my eye to his left my left as they continued along the road keep going, Juanca, went over sixty miles per hour and Juanca whimpers I was going really fast, The father my dad checked his watch and saw that it was 10:01 he said we were late, and I was in a rush too I was supposed to meet up with my friends to go to the Velá de Triana and I didn't want to be late he sobs I wasn't thinking The pickup truck shook going over the potholes, I felt the car shaking and from the back of the car I also remember the wind wafting through despite the breeze hitting me in the face the heavy odor of fertilizer came through the cracked-open windows and the manure smelled awful, the light from The lanterns at the inns cast their glow onto the painted line on the road, was shining on the road and keep going, keep going, Juanca envied I was really jealous of the people chatting he stops talking and drinking I'd drunk a whole forty an hour before I'm such an ass he says and takes another swig at the tables outside, Juanca Suddenly, from a ditch, there appeared moves his lips the snout of a dog, lowers his head, scratches his back the scalded black hump of its back, and resumes speaking in an agonized voice It placed its bloody paws on the edge of the road. It took a few steps forward stammers a few words and froze stops undecided, as if recalling an important detail Juanca didn't see it I saw until the beams of the headlights reflected in its the dark eyes of a scrawny little dog creating a doubled brightness in the middle of the road, suddenly it was right in front of me Juanca Senior my father felt his heart shrink, grabbed my arm and Juanca Junior I felt that the animal's eyes seemed to be begging to be spared from execution that dog's pitiful look cut into me and following the impulse to avoid hitting it, he I jerked the wheel to veer around the dog along the edge of the road if I hadn't seen it I'd have run over it I would've been shaken up and then I would've buried it but my dad would still be with me now The father Juanca screamed cries with terror as the front of the car split he's panting choking the dog's paws with a dull buzz we crippled it instead which is even worse The right wheel skidded I skidded on the sandy edge of the road, landing I landed in the ditch from which that ragged shadow had emerged, Juanca swallows his tears and was sliding I couldn't he couldn't maneuver it, I slid down into the ditch like we were on a rollercoaster track, it wasn't responding to the way Juanca was trying I was trying to wrench the vehicle back upright yanking the wheel but the car*

wouldn't respond, this story is gonna drive me crazy, keep going, Juanca, keep going, all you have to do is remember *In the last moment he wondered if they would survive this accident* I thought I was gonna die in the crash *whose consequences were manifesting in terrifying vertigo* I wanted to close *right before* my eyes, to not see how we were about to get killed but *The car* I couldn't *suddenly accelerated* we hit a road sign and yanked it out by the roots I felt *the wheels losing contact with the ground and the vehicle rolling over* we rolled over, *until it struck* we crashed *against a the large wall surrounding an inn's front porch, becoming* the car turned into a *mass of iron and manure* it was completely wrecked, *cruelly spilling onto the shoulders of father and son* Juanca wipes his eyes with a tissue he's congested the shit from the manure fell on us he says *A rain of broken glass* the glass *burst* exploded in our faces, *The seatbelt* yanked me back *sank into his chest like hot lead*, Juanca I felt a huge upheaval *thought he must be dreaming* and sometimes when I get up in the morning I wonder my God couldn't it have just been a nightmare *that carousel of chaos, The wheels of the pickup*, at night when I get into bed *lying on its side in a pile of bricks, were still whirling in the air* I toss and turn *when Juanca, as if in an unstoppable nightmare, touched his* I touch my face *in the dark, and felt* I feel my heart racing *warm liquid in his hand* so I realize *not yet having realized* that I'm alive *that he was crushing his father's body with his own weight, and that* since then my father's absence has opened up *a deep wound had opened up on his bald spot that wouldn't stop* that won't stop *bleeding hurting Dad, he cried out* I cry out *in the darkness* in the night, Dad, *he repeated sobbing*, dad like he could even hear me like I don't want to admit *He realized his father my father had died* is dead, *The men running out of the inn to help him heard him scream like a madman* then I scream like crazy *before passing out* and I start to cry.

[section break]

Juanca fell silent. Sitting next to him on the bench, Diego contemplated the lamplight's reflection on the beer bottle's surface. Juanca had stopped crying, and blew his nose. Diego broke the silence: "Juanca, I'm going home now. It's two a.m. Tina's waiting for me." He hesitated, then added, "Do you want to come over for a coffee?" He put a hand on Juanca's shoulder, waiting. A stray dog barked feebly somewhere. A couple was kissing on the other side of the plaza. The air was cooling down. Juanca took deep gulps of air, filling his lungs. "No, it's fine, I think I'll go home, too. My mom's bringing my grandma in from town tomorrow; and I don't want her coming home to find me sleeping in at two in the afternoon with the house a mess." Diego pressed: "C'mon, you've just had a rough time talking with me. It wouldn't be good for me to leave you alone right now."

They heard the muffled drone of a motorcycle starting from some distant place in the city, growing into a roar as the bike zipped along the road behind the apartment complexes, then fading away into a mosquito's buzz. Juanca took another breath, and let it out slowly through the mouth. His heart was beating steadily. "I haven't felt so much peace in a long time." His large head stared forward into the darkness. "And yeah, I'm drunk, but that has nothing to do with it. Talking to you helped a lot. You can't imagine how much." The glass had cooled in his hands. He blew out, and suddenly had goosebumps.

"No, it's okay, really, I barely did anything," Diego said, a bit uncomfortable. He tried to change the subject: "How about this? Let's walk to my house, have some coffee with Tina, and if you feel out of it, you can sleep in our spare room, and if not, you'll go back home. Okay? C'mon, let's go. I've lost track of how long we've been in here." Without waiting for an answer,



Diego stood up and went to toss the empty bottles in the trash. Juanca watched him, then got up from his seat. [...]

Excerpts from pages 392-402, draft 2

*The following segments form part of the earlier-described falling action of the novel. They also reflect further on the preservation of memory, particularly in relation to journalism's role in this preservation. Thus, I primarily chose them for their thematic significance.*

First Diego saw the square piece of cardboard that read *I have AIDS and two children please help*, and then he saw Salvador. He recognized him by his sparse, greasy, carefully combed hair—not by his face, which rested on his chest like that of a dying Christ. He was kneeling in the middle of Calle Sierpes, like a bothersome stone in a river. A few passersby glanced at the cardboard sign with comfortless pity and moved far around him. Occasionally someone would stop next to him, rifled through their wallet, and tossed a few coins in the shoebox at his feet. Teenagers walked past, laughing and elbowing each other.

Finally, Diego went up to Salvador, crouched, looked right at him, and called his name. Salvador opened his eyes, as if reawakening from the dead. He tried to smile, but his facial muscles wouldn't respond. He didn't get up, and the two stayed there, talking softly at ground level. Salvador was now too weak to stand at the roadside flagging cars, and now the only option he had left was displaying his statistics and his children's poverty, to beg each day for the next dose of heroin. Diego knew that there was no longer anything else that could ease the man's pain and give him the strength to face death. Salvador said he hadn't eaten anything since the night before. [...] Diego didn't want to cry; he'd rather take out a five-hundred *peseta* coin and place it in Salvador's hand instead. That way Salvador would have enough to disassemble his stand and go off to buy his next dose. But the real reason he did it was to stifle the ache in his conscience, to clear the debt that he felt he'd incurred with this dying man. He promised to come visit him more often. And then he went on his way, his heart on the ground.

[section break]

Everyone tried to cheer each other up by saying the same thing: it was impossible for a newspaper with such a long, prestigious history and so many loyal readers to close. The very idea was unthinkable. By repeating this headline so frequently, Diego wound up believing it to be an intrinsic, invulnerable, eternal element of reality. Every day before he sat down to write, he assured himself that this was a just temporary crisis, one that would ultimately strengthen the paper once it changed management. After weeks of negotiating with creditors and pleading with the national, regional, and local governments for special aid in publicity, Diego's hopes were rewarded. A group of entrepreneurs renegotiated the debt and saved *Diario de Noticias* from bankruptcy *in extremis*, buying the paper from its founders for the symbolic price of one *peseta*. The new owners and the staff worked out a deal to pay half the debt that the former proprietors had owed, and waive the rest of it. Better than nothing, the staff thought; optimism, albeit tinged with bitterness, reappeared in the newsroom and the print room. But the fantasy lasted for less time than a last-minute scoop. The paychecks soon stopped coming—and now, everyone was sure, there would be lay-offs next.

[section break]

[...] Salvador was smiling with his eyes. Diego didn't mention his article. The printed version had given Salvador a fake name (to "preserve his privacy," according to the text) and his face in

the photograph had been hidden behind a black bar (“to avoid any problems,” the editor in chief had urged. “These are delicate issues.”) Diego didn’t want to explain that he felt as though, by relenting to these fainthearted measures to conceal his subject’s identity, he’d somehow betrayed the man. Instead, he asked whether he could help with anything. “Nex’ time you remember, how ‘bout layin’ some flowers on my grave,” Salvador joked. Diego took him seriously, and promised to do it.

A heavyset nurse in green hospital scrubs and plastic gloves came in. He pulled an electric razor from his pocket and began shaving the fugitive’s face; the machine’s metal teeth rose and fell, following the outlines of bone that stood out like vines on his cheeks. “Salvador, want me to do yours too?” asked the nurse after he’d finished. The latter nodded. “Aw, I was kidding! This is gonna be tough work,” the nurse said cheerfully. But true to his word, he cranked the bed upright, put a little bucket under the patient’s beard, and began again. Diego watched Salvador’s swollen skin emerge from under the hair, the deft strokes of the blades, the way the nurse firmly gripped his chin with one hand while shaving with the other. He imagined the worker at the funeral home who, hours or days from now, would have to shave and pretty up the patient’s face over a marble countertop, and that image blended in his imagination with the gutted cadaver he’d seen in the Forensic Anatomy Institute. “I got another favor to ask,” Salvador said, staring at the ceiling as the razor continued up his throat. “Instead of buryin’ me, you think I could donate my body to the doctors, you know, so they can use it to study this disease and work on findin’ a cure?” “I’ll ask,” said Diego. But he knew the Department of Medicine would never accept a tainted cadaver, for fear that the students would be infected by spurts of blood when they sliced it open with their scalpels. The nurse finished his task, and held up a mirror to show Salvador the result. “Tha’s good, I look cleaned up now,” he whispered, as if to himself. Diego waited for him to fall asleep, then got up and touched a hand to Salvador’s forehead by way of farewell. He stopped in the doorway and turned back to look at him one last time, then vanished down the hallway.

*[section break]*

“Are we printing or not?”: the question ran from mouth to mouth. Those from the print room had come up to the newsroom to talk it over and for once, with sweat running down their faces, both sides were discussing the same matter: “Are we printing or not?” Printing the day’s paper, or going on strike. The acting editor in chief had resigned and fled back to Madrid. The workers had unanimously elected Cabañeros as their temporary acting editor and representative in the negotiations. The discussion grew heated, turning to shouts; desperation spread like wildfire. “We have to run the paper, even if it’s only a three-page issue,” an angry Cabañeros argued. “If the readers don’t see us at the kiosks anymore, we’re done for.” “No way, they can’t expect us to be such dumbasses that we keep working for free!” Manolo from Printing shouted wildly, his eyes bulging, as he strode around trying to pull support from the crowd. Tense voices formed a chorus: “We’re gonna go on strike!”

To the staff writers, breaking the newspaper’s timeline, the temporal link between them and reality, was unthinkable; that would only accelerate the approach of a disastrous end. To the printing staff (who often jabbed a thumb at the ceiling to scorn the writers’ lack of attention towards the labor union), working for free represented an unbearable humiliation. These antagonistic viewpoints split the workforce in two. “Are we printing or not?” Cabañeros and Manolo raised the volume of the debate. This escalated to an exchange of insults, and from there

to shaking their fists in the air. It didn't come to blows because Rosa from the Society section jumped between them, shrieking. Diego watched, astonished; he couldn't believe it. On the verge of tears, Rosa shouted for cooperation and solidarity among all the workers in the office. But she stopped abruptly when Rómulo, the most veteran photographer, appeared in the doorway; panting, face anguished, he announced, "Alonso just died in a car crash."

Silence fell like a stone. "I saw two cars that had crashed on the side of the road, and I stopped to take the photo. There were four bodies covered in sheets. When I went up to them I could make out his face."

No one breathes. First one woman, then another, bursts into ragged tears. "We have to run the damn paper," someone mutters. No one argues. The next day, the front page of the paper displays a photo with four corpses covered in sheets next to a mass of iron on the side of the road, with the headline: **FOUR KILLED IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, INCLUDING *DIARIO DE NOTICIAS*' STAFF ATTORNEY.**

*[section break]*

The sky was bluer than it had been in a long time. The sun warmed his cheeks. He wanted to look for the tomb unhurriedly, as if it were at the end of a labyrinth, for this place was exactly that: a labyrinth of whitewashed niches, mausoleums like palaces, rusty iron crosses planted in the ground among wildflowers and grass. He paused in the area with the tombs of local heroes: Paquirri, his statue flourishing a stone cape; Joselito el Gallo, Ignacio Sánchez Mejías; Antonio Machín. These tombs were adorned with fresh flowers, tributes from fervent hands that kept adoring them after death. [...] He found the name of a man who had extended his life for a hundred years, and that of a stillborn baby. In the middle was everyone else—including, he mused, the one thousand two hundred men executed by firing squad against the cemetery walls during the civil war, to save their murderers the time and effort of dragging their corpses all the way to the mass tombs. He tried to imagine what kind of sky, what kind of light those men had seen at the moment of death, when life had been snatched away from them. He suddenly found himself in the area that he was looking for. He found the niche in the penultimate column of the street, on the top row. The name was etched in the center of a modest stone slab: Salvador Ortega Serrano. Plastic flowers sat in a jar, petals dropping onto the rim. The water had evaporated. He went over to a fountain and refilled it. Then he put in both the artificial flowers and his own carnations, and set the jar back in its place. He traced a finger along the letters on the stone. If he were religious, he would have recited the Lord's Prayer. Instead, he decided the best and only homage to give to the dead man would be to fill his mind for just a moment with the memory of his face, before going back out to the street and having to forget it amidst the whirlwind of life. He spend one minute, then two, trying to mold the facial features in his mind, as if thoughts were moldable like clay. He wanted to imagine Salvador's face the way it must have been when he was a child, grasping life by the horns, thinking himself to be immortal. He saw that boy for just an instant, living and well, with no bruises, scars, or bloodshot eyes. Then the image dissolved like smoke. He returned to the cemetery's main avenue, head bowed, following the shadows of the cypress trees to the exit. There, among the flower stalls, he gazed out at the edge of town on the horizon. Beyond the walls of San Lázaro hospital were the apartment complexes of the Polígono Norte. He squinted. There was the half-lowered curtain in the window of the room where he and Tina had made love so often and so eagerly. He took a breath: he was alive.

[section break]

*Diario de Noticias* experienced the worst thing that could happen to any newspaper: it became its own source of news, and the competition mentioned it either to express solidarity or to gather wood from a fallen tree. “*Diario de Noticias* Disappeared From Streets Yesterday,” one paper’s column declared. “For Our Friends at the *Diario*,” another announced with dark humor in cartoon form. The newsroom staff were grateful for these allusions and dedications. They thought: as long as they name you, you’re still alive. They’d managed to get two months of delayed pay after the strike, and once again the light of hope was shining; but it was a pale ethereal light, like the red lightbulb in a darkroom. For months, they had been using optimism to fuel their will to fight, but now their despondency began to overtake it. It wasn’t a large change in tone, but just enough to upset the balance, and to make Diego realize that the end was near, that it was time to go. Those who could find work elsewhere went wherever they could. Real went to *El País*, Netti to the regional Junta of Andalusia. Cabañeros was determined to die with his boots on; he and those who had stayed were still holding out hope that a Basque publishing group could revive the paper. What was most important, he said, was to not disappear from the kiosks. “People remember you if they haven’t seen you for a couple days, or a week. After that, no matter how much they liked you, they get used to your absence and forget your name.” Diego privately agreed with him. He could still cling to hope when Cabañeros pointed to the presses on the lower floor and said, “We’ve got enough rolls down there to last a month. As long as we still have paper, the *Diario* goes out.” But Diego’s faith ran out sooner than the rolls did. After one more week, all he could think about was leaving. The newspaper, *his* newspaper, was going to close. And then, without noise or fuss, it closed. “Temporarily,” but it closed.

[section break]

They left the university building and continued down the street.

“We should go to Barcelona.”

“Barcelona?”

“Barcelona. Why not?”

“Why not just stay here? You could find a new job some other place here; people already know you.”

“I want to start something new, Tina. I already know what my options are here.”

“But they could still save the newspaper, right? Isn’t that what you’ve been saying?”

“*Diario* stopped running, Tina. I might as well accept it and stop feeling sorry for myself.”

“Well, all right, we’ll go to Barcelona. Sure. We can stay at my uncle’s house at first while you’re looking for a job.”

“Exactly. There’s plenty of opportunity there—we’re sure to find something, anything. It’s easy enough to pick up Catalan. And think of the arts scene that’ll be there for you! But I want to make sure that you actually want to. You sure you’re okay with it?”

“Yeah, of course. It’s not like we’re the first people to move there. And it’s a gorgeous city. We’ve always wanted to go on vacation together, right? Now’s the time. It’ll be like an adventure.”

“Yes, that’s it. Like an adventure.”

Pages 406-410, draft 2

*The following takes place shortly before Diego and Tina leave the city for Barcelona. Meanwhile, at an unspecified point in the past, a young couple walks away from an orphanage with their recently adopted child. (Also, because the entirety of pages 406-410 essentially constitute a single scene, I have represented the large amount of section breaks as they visually appear in the original.)*

[...] Medium shot of the host (wearing a look of sympathetic understanding, with dyed blonde hair and a Christian Dior suit, grasping the microphone with both hands like a staff):

“We know this must be hard for you, Antonia; it must be painful to expose wounds from the past. So we’re very grateful that you’ve agreed to come on set tonight to talk about your experiences—experiences, as we know, on the theme of this special edition on women in prostitution. Lowlife women?”

Close-up of the guest—one second.

Close-up of the host:

“Street women?”

Medium close-ups of the audience (sorrowful faces, looks of compassion, a teenaged girl with bright eyes)—two seconds.

Medium shot of the host:

“Should prostitution be a legal profession whose members pay Social Security dues, or it is a blight on society that should be banned? How would you react if *your* street suddenly turned into a sex market? Follow along with our program and cast your votes on tonight’s debate. Prostitution: profession or perversion?”

Wide shot of the audience (rapt faces, teenagers whispering among the seats).

Close-up of the guest (blowing nose, taking deep breaths, adjusting heartbeat. She brushes a bothersome lock of hair away from her face. She has recovered her voice now. She holds the microphone under her lips, awaiting the first question).

Wide shot of host and guest. The host speaking:

“Clients, anonymous caresses, danger on the street, exploitation, abuse, neglect. How long, Antonia? How long will you have the strength to keep going like this?”

Camera stays on the wide shot. The guest speaking:

“Mos’ days when I get up in the morning and look the mirror, tha’s what I ask myself: Antonia, child, how long before your dough dries up? Life’s given me so many blows. So many. And I’m tired, I’m just sick of it. Days go by, and you keep gettin’ older. If I could, I’d change things around, I’d start...”

Medium close-ups of the audience (women's scornful eyes, young adults nodding, empathizing). Guest speaking in voice-over—three seconds:

“...a new life right now. Maybe I'll come back in the next life as...”

Close-up of the guest:

“...a princess or something, who knows. But whaddaya want me to do? This is my only way of earning a living, no one's gonna come give me a job in something else. I ain't got nothin' to be ashamed of. I've sinned a lot, but the money I've earned is as clean as anyone else's. And lemme tell you something else: I don't regret nothin' either.”

“What're you watching, Diego?” Water vapor emerges from a small crack in the pot's lid. The lentil soup comes to a boil in the dark brown depths of the pot, the bubbles breaking in unison. Tina dips a spoon in, gathering a bit of soup, and raises the contents to the tip of her tongue.

“Nothing. Just some daytime drama about whether or not prostitution is a real profession,” Diego summarizes, standing in front of the screen. Tina sips. Her tongue touches the porous wooden surface of the spoon, and comes away slightly burned.

“Soup's ready. Should I make a salad?”

Diego knows that the image of that woman is nestled in some corner of his brain. He has seen her somewhere before. But where?

“Not for me, thanks.”

Close-up of the host:

“Look into your heart. Antonia. Are you sure you have no regrets? If you could start all over and change just one thing, what would it be?”

Wide shot of the set podium. The guest speaking:

“Look, what's past is past, and you can't change that. But I'm gonna tell you anyway. The worst thing I ever went through in my life was losing my child: tha's like a knife in my heart. I had to give him up as soon as he was born—but of course I was all alone in the world back then, I couldn't have provided for him, I had nothing to give. What hurts me is, that little creature from my own body grew up in this life without my ever getting to see him, and for all I know maybe I've passed him in the street without recognizing him.”

Diego's eyes are reflected in the TV screen. *Where have I seen her*, he asks himself. *Where have I seen her*.

The woman stroked the baby's little nose with the tip of her finger. The child drowned his anguish in tears; then, as he drifted off to sleep, the tears became occasional, hiccupping whines. The couple continued walking slowly towards the 600 bus that was parked next to a construction fence. The man slid his arm over the woman's shoulders, reaching down to pinch the child's chubby, swollen cheeks.

“Should we tell him someday?” he asked.

“What for? We've already talked it over. The orphanage doesn't know anything about their birth mothers. If we told him, he'd start looking for her frantically, he'd never find her, and

he'd end up suffering much more. Besides, things would change between us and him; he might even stop loving us."

Close-up of the host:

"Would you like to see your son, Antonia?"

Close-up of the guest:

"I'd give all the life I got left to see him."

Medium shot of the host:

"What would you tell him if you could see him? Imagine that he's watching you live from his house right now. Say something."

Close-up of the guest (voice shaking and hoarse, eyes bright, mouth contracted).

"Son." (pause)

Medium close-ups of the audience (emotional gestures, morbid curiosity)—two seconds.

Close-up of the guest:

"My son. Maybe you're watching me, but you don't know me. I am the woman who brought you into this world. Your mother."

Diego rapidly sifts through scenes in his mind, searching for the one in which this woman with the broken voice appears. Tina comes up to him, balancing two plates of lentils on a tray.

"I know that woman, and I can't remember where I've seen her."

Tina sets the plates on the table next to the silverware and the bread. She glances up at the TV and sees the talking head, the blonde host.

"That one?"

"No, the hoo—" he stops, corrects himself: "—the prostitute that she's interviewing. Let's see if they show her again."

Close-up of the guest:

"I had to abandon you, and now you have other parents, probably good, respectable parents, who must've loved you and given you what I couldn't provide. I just want to tell you that I'm glad from the bottom of my heart that you've turned into an honest man, that you're not living the same life I had."

"Food's ready."

"Coming, coming. Damn, where have I seen that woman?"

All I want is to find you someday and hold you in my arms for a moment,

"Shut off the TV, Diego, it's frying your brain."

Still standing, Diego turns his head and sees the steaming plates on the opposite side of the kitchen. His belly rumbles hungrily.

...so you can feel the warmth of my heart, and that way you'll know...



Impulsively, he turns back and presses the remote to shut off the TV. The image of the woman is condensed into a single bright dot in the center of the dark screen. It hovers there for a few seconds, a fixed point refusing to disappear, until, little by little, it fades and dissolves into blackness, returning to the far-off dream from whence it came.

...that I've never forgotten you.

"But it would be better for him to hear it from us than from someone else."

"Who's going to tell him?"

"True—no one."

The couple halted next to the bus. The child had fallen into an uneasy sleep, startling awake at the least noise or motion. Hammer blows rang out on steel girders, high up on the skeleton of the building behind the construction fence. The woman kept rocking the child in her arms.

"Wait, that's it, now I remember: it's the woman I met at the hospital that Saturday at Feria. The one who said she had a kid my age."

"Stop obsessing over it. He's our son, and that's the end of it. And *I'm* his mother."

"Go ahead and eat, the lentils are getting cold."

### Analysis of translation process and theories

It is my experience that one can develop a consistent method for translating a particular literary text, but not a consistent method for translating *all* literary texts. In translating these sections of *Capital Sur*, I wished to conserve as much of the novel's strange, lyrical quality and its innate cultural mentality as possible, and ended up reevaluating and shifting my translation methods to achieve this. I initially focused on translation processes that were most familiar to my own past work, such as close translation, mostly domesticating idioms, and very close adherence to the literal content of the text. Through further experimentation, however, I began to think more deeply about how to convey the author's careful organization of the text, both at the micro level (syntax and word order) and the macro level (the order of the alternating subplots). I also had to consider how best to bring my American readers toward the text rather than accommodating them by explaining every cultural nuance or paving over every bit of dialect. It eventually became apparent that I could draw from theorists like Venuti and Rabassa to help, but disregarding aspects of their frameworks that were not applicable or useful to my plan. My "method" for translating this book—using a middle-of-the road approach to dialect, avoiding unneeded footnotes, and foreignizing idioms whenever possible—is thus the one I used because it stands the best chance of bringing my intended readers closest to this particular text.

To be sure, my choice of passages to prioritize in translating for this project imposes my own interpretations of the text onto the reader to a certain extent. As I was forced to cut down my original selection of passages at the beginning of the fall semester, and then again in December, I realized that I had perhaps been relying more on choosing passages based on their narrative or thematic relevance, instead of also considering those that presented interesting translation challenges. I thus reevaluated my priorities and threw out certain scenes that were not as relevant

to the rest of the subplots and/or as interesting a challenge to translate. I also added a third criterion for choosing a scene: its relevance to other, interlinking scenes. This is because del Campo's careful arrangement of the scenes infuses further meaning and emotion into the story, such as in the passage on pages 406-410. In order to save time, I had to skip certain plot segments that I had initially intended to include, and even to occasionally abridge a passage in order to translate what I considered to be its most crucial lines. Were I to select different excerpts, such as ones focusing more on Diego and Tina's relationship or on Antonia's experiences, this project's readers would gain a similar but slightly distinct impression of the novel as a whole. Nevertheless, the miniature "story" that I have constructed out of translated segments and introductory text seems to stand on its own.

I initially intended to apply a very close version for the more poetic and/or continuous portions, and a slightly looser and less exoticizing version for narrative portions. I found it especially important to maintain a very close translation when dealing with the veritable flood of words in the continuous portions. In doing so, I kept in mind Venuti's claim that such a strict adherence can help preserve a text's "strangeness," thereby hopefully pulling the reader closer to the text. For instance, I did not italicize or otherwise highlight the lists of Spanish tapas in the prologue or other "non-translatable" terms because doing so would replace their subtle intrusion in the passage with overexoticization; later on, however, I began relenting and domesticating cases where employing the original term for a food seemed unnecessary. Also, I found it helpful to employ *trots* for most of the prologue in order to focus on the myriad implied meanings of each adjective and allusion. I found it unnecessary to use *trots* for most of the remaining passages, except for a couple of cases where I needed to clarify something for myself.

For example, the brilliance of the passage on pages 356-359 is that the two layers of text—one italicized, one non-italicized—can be either read separately or as one continuous text, in either case remaining intelligible. What’s more, the repetitions often use precisely the same verb or adjective in two different conjugations to emphasis the meaning. I tried to replicate these textual effects in English. Note the two sections where Juanca’s layer (the non-italicized layer) has a “delay” in the narration: first when the dog appears and Juanca pauses, and second when the car impacts the wall. Despite my reservations, that was no harder to translate than the rest of this passage; perhaps this was because I was already warmed up by the time I reached the “delayed” sections. With some sections, however, I decided to try a new strategy in order to keep up. First I created a trot for each of the two layers (italicized and non-italicized), trying to give each layer a natural sentence flow per se. Then, I began pasting the two layers together, tweaking here and there to make sure that they also had a relative good flow with each other. Making these broken-up TROTS was tedious and time-consuming. At first I found that it did not make shifting the syntax any easier than if I had simply omitted the trots altogether. A later attempt was equally time-consuming, but did make it slightly easier to keep track of each layer:

Original: Juanca *De una zanja asomó de repente* mueve los labios *el hocico de un perro*, inclina su cabeza, se rasca la espalda *su negro lomo escaldado*, y vuelve a hablar con voz agonizante *Sus pezuñas sangrantes pisaron el borde de la carretera. Dio unos pasos adelante* balbucea unas palabras y *se congeló*, se detiene *indeciso*, como si estuviera recordando un detalle importante *Juanca no lo vio vi hasta que los haces de luz se reflejaron en sus los ojos oscuros de* un perro canijo *con un brillo duplicado en el medio de la carretera*, de repente estaba allí en medio parado *A Juanca padre mi padre se le encogió el corazón*, se agarró a mi brazo y *Juanca hijo*, a mí *en una milésima de segundo*, reconoció *en esa mirada animal la súplica de alguien a punto de ser ejecutado* me cortó esa mirada del perro y *obedeciendo al instinto de no atropellarlo*, dio di un volantazo *para rodear al perro por el lado de la cuneta*

Layer 1: Juanca\_\_moves his lips\_\_lowers his head, scratches his back\_\_and resumes speaking in an agonized voice\_\_stammers a few words and \_\_stops\_\_as if recalling an important detail\_I saw\_**the eyes**\_a scrawny little dog\_suddenly there in the middle of the road\_my father\_grabbed my arm and\_[to] me\_that dog’s look cut into me and\_I jerked the wheel

Layer 2: *From a ditch, there suddenly appeared the snout of a dog\_its scalded black back\_It placed its bloody paws on the edge of the road. It took a few steps forward\_froze\_undecided\_Juanca didn't see it\_until the beams of the headlights reflected in its dark of\_with a doubled brightness in the middle of the road,\_Juanca Senior\_felt his heart drop\_Juanca Junior\_in a split second, recognized that the animal's eyes seemed to be begging to be spared from execution\_following the impulse to avoid hitting it, he [gave]\_to veer around the dog along the edge of the road*

Translation: Juanca **Suddenly, from a ditch**, there appeared moves his lips the snout of a dog, lowers his head, scratches his back **the scalded black hump** of its back, and resumes speaking in an agonized voice *It placed its bloody paws on the edge of the road. It took a few steps forward* stammers a few words and *froze stops undecided*, as if recalling an important detail *Juanca didn't see it I saw until the beams of the headlights reflected in its the dark eyes of* a scrawny little dog [...] (del Campo 357, translation mine)

Here, the two layers helped me plan for syntax changes more easily (for instance, it helped me change “*en sus los ojos oscuros de*” to “*in its the dark eyes of*”). Nevertheless, the attempt was worth the effort. I concluded that both the broken-up trots and going on chronological order were equally valid methods for this problem.

Over time, I became more adept at translating the *seguidas* in a manner that still meshed with the rest of my methodology. Each instance of these passages in the original is carefully arranged to convey a flood of ideas while remaining intelligible. Thus, I had to be just as careful in shifting the English syntax to keep my translation readable; in some cases, this required adding extra prepositions such as “then” or “but” to link clauses together. Another example of dealing with *seguidas* comes in Rabassa's translation of *Marks of Identity*, which I discuss more in-depth in the Introduction.

My approach to translating this structural format was fairly close overall, with the exception of only two large areas. One was infusing the dialogue with tones, dialects, and levels of formality that were not explicit in the original text. The other was that I eventually did begin taking liberties with the paragraph breaks in the non-*seguida* sections, such as in this passage:

“Are we printing or not?”: the question ran from mouth to mouth. [...] Tense voices formed a chorus: “We’re gonna go on strike!”

To the staff writers, breaking the newspaper's timeline, the temporal link between them and reality, was unthinkable; that would only accelerate the approach of a disastrous end. To the printing staff (who often jabbed a thumb at the ceiling to scorn the writers' lack of attention towards the labor union), working for free represented an unbearable humiliation. These antagonistic viewpoints split the workforce in two. "Are we printing or not?" [...] when Rómulo, the most veteran photographer, appeared in the doorway; panting, face anguished, he announced, "Alonso just died in a car crash."

Silence fell like a stone. "I saw two cars that had crashed on the side of the road, and I stopped to take the photo. There were four bodies covered in sheets. When I went up to them I could make out his face."

No one breathes. First one woman, then another, bursts into ragged tears. "We have to run the damn paper," someone mutters. No one argues. The next day, the front page of the paper displays a photo with four corpses covered in sheets next to a mass of iron on the side of the road, with the headline: **FOUR KILLED IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, INCLUDING *DIARIO DE NOTICIAS* STAFF'S ATTORNEY.** (del Campo 396)

I inserted the paragraph breaks here to accent certain lines, such as the pause after Rómulo's declaration, to help control the flow of the scene. It also helps clarify when the passage shifts from one main idea to the next. In translating the *seguidas*, meanwhile, I avoided changing the structure or syntax of the text whenever possible because these things added to the strange, cumulative effect of the passage.

The voice of the narrative portions was evolving as well. As I continued to translate passages from the director's and Diego's points of view, it became easier and more natural to give them their own distinct but similar voices. A similar thing occurred in sections like the prologue or the narrative scenes, whose objective narration began to sound less artificial. For example, I initially quoted two sections of the novel for my Spring 2014 article: the first few lines of the prologue, and a portion of the passage of page 101 (from "I don't dare tell this man" to the end of the paragraph). Because the article was to be published in a bilingual magazine, I had to transcribe these passages in the original Spanish and translate them into English while writing the article. Yet while translating pages 100 to 101, I was able to see that the small section that I had translated earlier sounded stilted and awkward by comparison to what I was now creating. By this point in the process, I had started to get a better grasp on this characters' voice,

and on how to manage del Campo's style; thus I was able to alter the section from Spring 2014 with the benefit of hindsight.

Venuti also discusses how the translator's very choice of source text is domestically motivated. As noted in the background analysis, I had several personal reasons for choosing to report on this Spanish-language text last semester, let alone to translate portions of the novel later on. Having lived in Seville for five months in addition to a long background of studying Spanish history and culture, I have a greater insight into this novel's setting than would the average American reader—although, of course, my perspective is still that of an outsider rather than that of the author's originally intended audience.

This is not to say that I will be able to give the translation's readership an identical experience to the experience of del Campo's original audience, however. As I learned during interviews in Spring 2014, part of the novel's draw for the original audience comes from their insider status as Spaniards and *sevillanos*. That is, the cultural landscape it reflects is their own. By drawing out the ideological remainder and bringing my translation's audience closer to the text, I can make it likely that my readership will gain enjoyment and insight from the translated text; yet because of their outsider status, it would be impossible to completely show them the novel—and by extension, its cultural context—from the inside. Venuti would consider this a typical problem, stating that while translation aims towards a utopian convergence of domestic with foreign, this convergence is nevertheless hierarchical or asymmetrical to some degree ("Utopia" 499). In my case, I can ameliorate the asymmetry by treating the text's local vocabulary and vernacular with respect and playing with the novel's own self-conscious portrayal of the city. For example, I was fascinated by the manner in which the novel played with the concept of outsider stereotyping, particularly as conducted by Americans, versus insider

knowledge. The trick was to present this metaliterary juggling of gaze, which was originally written for an insider audience, to an outsider foreign readership.

One of the largest issues in managing gaze was the matter of vernacular. I had not anticipated this as a large problem until I began translating the passage on page 170, the first of the Salvador scenes that I had selected. Del Campo occasionally renders aspects of the *andaluz* vernacular in the novel's dialogue, such as the tendency to omit /d/, pronouncing /l/ as /r/ or vice versa, and certain regional expressions like *mi arma*. This vernacular indexes both regional origin and socioeconomic background; as such, characters like Antonia and Salvador are shown to use it more heavily than Diego or Tina. Whereas I initially treated appearances of the phonetic vernacular on a case-by-case basis, reaching page 170 led me to focus more acutely on it.

I created a full trot of this passage, then turned to Venuti and to Gregory Rabassa to consider this problem. One potential solution was rendering Salvador's dialogue into an American dialect with approximately the same connotation; on the other hand, I was concerned about the possible risk of overdomesticating the text and/or missing the true essence of what I was trying to convey: Salvador's vernacular and how it contrasts with Diego's unmarked speech. According to Rabassa, translators have three options when translating a piece of regional dialect into English, listed in ascending order of difficulty: "to give up and use straight English," rendering the text into relatively unmarked speech and thus erasing the dialect from the target text; finding a regional equivalent in English which rings at least somewhat true; or, if the translator possesses "a master ear," rendering the text into "some sort of artificial but true-ringing English"<sup>4</sup> ("Ear" 84).

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<sup>4</sup> He claims that one example of the master ear used effectively—albeit employed for the purposed of literary flair rather than in a translation—is the language used in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. That English-language novel's unorthodox use of syntax and vocabulary gives the impression that the text was actually translated from Spanish.



Thus, I created an initial draft using hyper-elision that imitated the elisions of the original text, without full regard for consistently portraying a single “dialect,” to move even closer to Rabassa’s Third Way (text bolded below to emphasize significant words and phrases):

Original text: —¿Que en qué día nací? Bueno, eso es una duda porque mi madre dice que nací de noche, pero no sabe si asomé la cabeza antes o después de las doce. De chico me gustaba una jartá que me contara cómo me había parío. ¿Te dolió mucho, mamá, te dolió mucho? To el día lo mismo. En el carné pone el uno de mayo, pero lo mismo podía ser el dos. Total, qué más me da. (del Campo 187)

Translation, first draft: “What day was I born on? Well, that’s hard to say because **my mom** says I was born at night, but she doesn’t know if I poked my head out before or after midnight. When I was lil I loved **hearin’** her tell me how she’d **giv’n** birth to me. ‘Did it hurt a lot, **mama**, did it hurt a lot?’ The same **thin’** all day long. It says May first on my ID card, but it could just **’s** well be the second. **’S** all the same to me.

However, I later found that this had come out sounding rather silly and amateurish. In my second and third drafts, I tried formalizing Diego’s speech and the news article excerpts a little further; this helped provide a linguistic contrast, but did not fully solve the problem. In Draft 3, I toned down the artificial elisions and expressions, and turned Salvador’s dialogue into more casual, contracted speech, albeit a rather standardized form of “casual” Midwest American speech.

Draft 3: “What day was I born on? Well, that’s hard to say because **my old woman** says I was born at night, but she doesn’t know if I poked my head out before or after midnight. When I was a lil kid I loved askin’ how she’d given birth to me. ‘Did it hurt a lot, **momma**, did it hurt a lot?’ The same thing all day long. It says May first on my ID card, but it could just as well be the second. **Don’t matter to me.**”

Now Salvador no longer sounded ridiculous, but neither was his dialect coming through at all. I may have been subconsciously shying away from portraying a genuine English dialect at this point, for fear either of stereotyping or of not correctly remembering how nonstandard dialects in English tend to work.

After conferring with my advisors again, it also occurred to me that I had already been domesticating the text quite a bit; it made sense for consistency’s sake that I would do so even in this section, so my worries were perhaps unfounded. Besides, I had almost lost sight of the fact

that the contrast between Diego's intralingual, abridged translation and Salvador's original dialogue isn't just in a difference of Castilian speech patterns. Salvador is also expressing a harsher belief system (such as insistent patriarchal values), as well as greater breadth of specific detail. While Diego maintains the core points, and even some of the original wording, of the tale, he is also condensing and censoring the content. This condensing is at least as important to the passage's message as the juxtaposing speech patterns, since del Campo strongly believes in journalists' need to collect as much data as possible and then condense the info down into a packed form. I conclude that while I still did not feel it appropriate to take Rabassa's First Way, the Second Way might be useful.

The final drafts contain features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

AAVE and various "low-class" markers:

Draft 5: "What day was I born on? Well, **tha's** hard to say 'cause my old woman **say** I was born at night, but she **don't** know if I poked my head out before or after midnight. When I was a lil kid I loved askin' how she'd given birth to me. 'Did it hurt a lot, momma, did it hurt a lot?' The same thing all day long. It **say** May first on my ID card, but could **jus'** as well be the second. That don't matter to me."

This is potentially risky territory, as AAVE in the U.S. indexes both class and race, and is itself a very broad designation. Still, it seemed like a better solution than attempting some kind of British English (and thus not racially associated) dialect, with which I would be less familiar and which could also come off as more alienating to my imagined (largely American) readership. So I kept what I had for the moment, and inserted the same term of dialect markers, albeit less heavily, into the final Antonia section for good measure:

"Mos' days when I get up in the morning and look the mirror, **tha's** what I ask myself: Antonia, child, how long before your dough dries up? Life's given me so many blows. So many. And I'm tired, I'm just sick of it. Days go by, and you keep gettin' older. If I could, I'd change things around, [...] But whaddaya want me to do? This is my only way of earning a living, no one's gonna come give me a job in something else. I ain't got nothin' to be ashamed of." (406)

The dialect markers in the passage above at least internally consistent, as well as consistent with Salvador's dialect.

At any rate, trying to apply some of Venuti's and Rabassa's theories to an actual translation has helped me contemplate these theorists a little more. It seems apparent now that Rabassa's Second Way accommodates the reader more than the third, but has a higher risk of imprinting cultural connotations that are unfaithful to the original; meanwhile, the "artificial" way can display the text's underlying structure in a unique manner not attainable by the other two methods, but risks either ridiculing the original text or alienating the reader (not to mention being highly difficult to execute well). Furthermore, in relatively non-experimental translation such as mine, a particular passage that suddenly switches to "artificial" English presents a jarring inconsistency. And finally, depending on which factors of a passage the translator deems most important to focus on, the "master ear" may overemphasize a detail that need not even be emphasized. So artificial English may have its uses, but definitely not in all contexts—and perhaps it is less useful than Rabassa would imagine.

By contrast, the rest of the novel's dialogue was usually easier to translate than I had anticipated. In the original text, the dialogue between people in Diego's & Tina's social circles seemed a little stilted to me, more like novelistic speech than real speech. For example, the well-crafted speech on pages 189 to 190 feels more like a plot device rather than natural dialogue:

**Más macabro todavía** --dijo Ana. Había trinchado con el tenedor una patata frita, y ahora la mojaba en la salsa de los callos, una excepción brutal en la severidad de su dieta-. Es broma. Ya sé que es una contribución a la ciencia y todo eso. **Pero a mí que no me toquen.**

—Di que no, Tina --intervino Auxi. Se detuvo un momento para engullir el bocado de filete de cerdo. Sin esperar a recuperar aire, continuó--. Es una oportunidad única. El hecho de que haya que trabajar con cadáveres y superar el rechazo **es lo que lo hace interesante.** Al fin y al cabo se trata de materia, naturaleza muerta. Forma parte de la realidad. Y desde luego se aprende un taco de anatomía. [...] (del Campo 190)

**“That’s even worse than I thought,”** Ana said. She had speared a French fry with her fork, and was now dipping in the sauce of her callos, a brutal exception to her otherwise strict diet. “What a joke. I know it’s contributing to science and all, **but I don’t want anything to do with it.** [...]”

“Don’t listen to her, Tina,” Auxi cut in. She paused to swallow a mouthful of pork filet and, without stopping for air, went on: “It’s a unique opportunity. **What’s cool about it is** the fact that you have to work with corpses and push past the gag reflex. When you get right down to it, it’s basically just a still-life of dead matter. It’s part of reality. Plus, you learn a bunch of anatomy.”

A similar thing occurs in this exchange between Diego and Tina. Here, the dialogue leaves some emotion up to interpretation, meaning that I had to opportunity to try and mold the dialogue to make Tina’s apparent change of heart sound at least as fluid as it does in the original:

—¿Y aquí por qué no? Te podrías meter en otro sitio, ya te conocen.  
 —Quiero empezar algo nuevo, Tina. Aquí ya sé lo que me espera.  
 —Pero todavía pueden recuperar el periódico, ¿no? ¿No me has dicho tú eso?  
 —*Diario* ya no sale, Tina. Mejor lo acepto y dejo de deprimirme.  
 —Pues venga, nos vamos a Barcelona. Vale. Al principio nos podemos quedar en casa de mi tío, mientras buscamos trabajo.  
 —Claro, mujer. Hay mucho movimiento. Seguro que encontramos algo. Lo que sea, seguro. El catalán se aprende rápido. Y fíjate, para ti, la vida artística que hay. Pero quiero verte convencida de que quieres ir. ¿Tú estás animada?  
 —Sí, claro que sí. No somos los primeros que emigran. Y es una ciudad preciosa además. [...] (del Campo 401)

“Why not just stay here? You could find a new job some other place here; people already know you.”

“I want to start something new, Tina. I already know what my options are here.”

“But they could still save the newspaper, right? Isn’t that what you’ve been saying?”

“*Diario* stopped running, Tina. I might as well accept it and stop feeling sorry for myself.”

“Well, all right, we’ll go to Barcelona. Sure. We can stay at my uncle’s house at first while you’re looking for a job.”

“Exactly. There’s plenty of opportunity there—we’re sure to find something, anything. It’s easy enough to pick up Catalan. And think of the arts scene that’ll be there for you! But I want to make sure that you actually want to. You sure you’re okay with it?”

“Yeah, of course. It’s not like we’re the first people to move there. And it’s a gorgeous city. [...]”

Yet this type of well-crafted, non-realistic dialogue is mostly absent when one or more of the speakers in the text is beyond college age. This is possibly because del Campo was writing in

hindsight, but could also be because, unlike in the Salvador passages, the sound of the language itself is not the focus at all. On pages 187-189, he devotes more time to painting the atmosphere of the noisy cafeteria and the precise, everyday actions of the speakers as they eat; in the latter, he devotes more time to the arc of the conversation. I did smooth out a little of the dialogue (see bold portions above). However, I did not need to focus on “correcting” the dialogue to prevent it from sounding artificial, provided I paid attention to the most important elements of the scene.

Rabassa is against the notion of supposedly “untranslatable words,” insisting that rather than leave the word in the original or add an explanatory footnote, the translator should always try to find an equivalent or near-equivalent term in the target language that works. “Otherwise the very sound of the foreign word will give the book a tone that it should not have. [...] Foreign words often overstimulate the ear to the detriment of meaning, and then they too suffer so much [...]” (“Ear” 84) He adds that he will usually keep names in the original except when he needs to (and easily can) translate the meaning of a nickname. Nonetheless, he also points out that English tends to be inconsistent with the foreign names of historical or literary figures—sometimes rendering the name into an Anglicized equivalent, and other times not. (Treason 14). I come from an ingrained tradition of leaving foreign names in the original even when an Anglicized equivalent is available; and so, I worked under the assumptions that my audience could find Anglicizing proper names of characters as ridiculous as I would. Translating place names and local terms was less simple, because the guidelines were less clear. In many cases, I domesticated the name when there was a direct and generally accepted equivalent (Sevilla->Seville, Andalucía->Andalusia, catalán=Catalan; while Sierpes=Sierpes) but not always (ex. Polígono Norte, La Barqueta, el Betis, Feria). Meanwhile, I left many local terms with no direct equivalents in Spanish (callos caseros, pesetas; but conversely, litrona->forty). I found this

foreignizing effect thematically important when rendering the sarcastic lists of tapas in the prologue, but it also runs the risk of overexoticization, or making something sound more “alien” to the reader than it would to the original audience.

I have used relatively few footnotes to explain vocabulary and cultural concepts, about half of which are “translator’s notes” that will not be included in the final draft anyway; rather, the bulk of my authorial explanations within the translated passage themselves has come in the form of the italicized blurbs at the top of each passage. Such in-text explanations are rather more justifiable for the readers of my academic project than they would be for the readers of a full translation of the novel. Nonetheless, as the semester wore on, I did try to rein in the in-text explanations in favor of expanding the introductory essay. Although explanatory notes have the potential to coddle the reader by relieving them of the need to look up such information on their own, I reasoned that a certain level of accommodation is acceptable if it points the reader to highly relevant information that they would not have known to look up in the first place. Full understanding and appreciation of this book relies on at least a passing familiarity with the city and time period that it presents, and in this sense I have tried to provide some guidance in both the footnotes and the Introductory Essay.

Venuti explains that in order for a foreign reader to find the translated text comprehensible, they must recognize aspects of their own domestic values within the text, “usually values that have achieved authority in the domestic culture and dominate those of other cultural constituencies. Sometimes, however, the values may be currently marginal yet ascendant, mobilized in a challenge to the dominant. [...] Translations thus position readers in domestic intelligibilities that are also ideological positions.” (*Scandals* 77) In this way, translations can alter domestic perception of a foreign culture even while working within an

asymmetrical, domesticating framework. To me, this assessment also acknowledges the reader's partial agency in interpreting the text: the author/translator can work to guide the readership's interpretation, but ultimately does not have complete control over the audience's reactions. I can therefore infer that my translations' readership will probably encounter their "mirrored selves" in the text's more universal themes, such as death anxiety, the role of journalism in preserving communal memory, and perhaps the presentation of economic hardship and marginalization. Meanwhile, the way that del Campo addresses Spanish "herd mentality" could have multiple effects: on the one hand, as Tremlett discusses, this is a cultural value different from that of the U.S. and other Western countries, but on the other hand, my readership might pick up on one aspect of this theme (Diego's individualistic observations) more readily than its contrasting aspect (the fact that huge crowds are presented as positive in the text as well as negative). I have done my best to try and present how del Campo deals with that theme in a balanced manner, and the rest is up to the readers. Lastly, the foreign-gaze idea—that is, the text's argument against the implicit ways that Seville and Spain are exoticized by outsiders—is more likely to be "marginal" without being "ascendant," given that it runs against American hegemonic stereotypes; still, if my readers did in fact encounter a domestic resonance with this theme, as I hope they will, this would greatly increase my chances of challenging U.S. cultural stereotypes of Spain.

I do hope to complete and publish a translation of the entire novel, at which point this effect will no longer apply. It therefore seems relevant to include an examination of the sociopolitical implications of my future plans, such as the author-translator relationship. The author of my chosen text is a living person with whom I am still in contact. In fact, I interviewed del Campo about the conception of the novel long before beginning to translate it, meaning that I began this academic project already knowing certain aspects of his authorial intent. He was

pleased to hear that I was working on the project (particularly since none of his works have been translated into English before), and has expressed interest in reading my translation afterward. I also got back in touch with him again while finishing up my rough draft, and learned some additional details that changed my view of the assumptions that I had been making while translating. For example, I was already aware that he had shifted around the various passages in the text while revising it over years, but I decided to ask him whether he remembered which of the subplots he began to write first. Surprisingly, he told me that he had begun with the director subplot, then the Federico subplot up to pg. 111, in order to provide a contrast between a foreigner's view and a local's view of the city; then he moved on to writing each of the other subplots. In other words, the assumptions that I made about his thought process while translating those sections turned out to have hit the mark. It also appears that I had correctly guessed his authorial intent in the passage on pages 406-410. By contrast, although he sympathized with my difficulties over working with the *andaluz* vernacular, he pointed out that his use of the vernacular could have been much heavier or less respectful: "[...] you're right, it's hard to translate Andalusian slang and pronunciation. You'll notice that I don't abuse a reproduction of "andaluz" in the text, just a few small touches to give that phonetic sense." (del Campo interview; translation mine) That helped remind me that, for the author and his original audience, the sound of *andaluz* is something that scarcely needs to be thought about consciously, and one can afford to render it with a "light touch." It appears that my version of the dialect might be a little stronger than its original equivalent, bringing out some of the social connotations which the original merely implied.

This project is certainly nowhere near a balanced collaboration; it was simply created under a slightly different dynamic than if I were translating the text of a long-dead author. As a



result, I have mostly not had to deal with the struggle for ownership of the text between translator and author that Arrojo examines as a running literary and political theme—at least not consciously. On the other hand, Arrojo does say that this conflict is fueled by Western cultural notions of authorship as a sacred right to which translation represents “a threatening interference.” (Arrojo 77). As such, this issue only has the potential to arise later on, once I begin working in earnest to publish a full translation of the novel. Rabassa speaks of the anxiety of translators in the face of the “translation police,” meaning pedantic or inappropriate criticism after the book is published; another obstacle comes from large publishing policies, such as “the argument that people won’t buy a book if they know it’s a translation. This argument [...] is patently untrue. [...] There are a fair number of foreign books that have sold well even with the translator’s name boldly in view.” (“Treason” 40) And an English-to-Castilian translation will certainly have a large pool of critics on hand. Furthermore, Venuti uses a chapter of *The Scandals of Translation* to discuss the hegemony of the English language in the publishing world, and the tiny proportion of translations into English rather than vice-versa. So it’s true, all in all, that part of my instinct to take the easier ways out—domestication, footnotes, adhering to English name-translation conventions, veering away from Rabassa’s middle way, etc.—is partly due to an odd fear of rejection. The cultural climate and market for translations that I face are difficult enough as it is.

That is hardly an excuse to try and push towards the harder methods, however. To do otherwise would be a disservice to the author and to myself, not to mention to the city. According to Venuti, a translation actually creates a new domestic audience, “an audience to whom it is intelligible and who put it to various uses. This shared interest may arise spontaneously when the translation is published, attracting readers from different cultural

constituencies that already exist in the translating language” (“Utopia” 491). This new audience, or community of readers, is a non-homogenous group that would not have otherwise formed, joined by a set of shared cultural interests, linguistic background, and ideas of how to use the text (e.g. the academic setting to which I will submit my project). I have had to invent two distinct but overlapping readerships for my translation: those who read and appraise this project, and those who hopefully one day read my full translation of the entire novel. While the former case is restricted largely to academia, the latter imagined community will be broader because it will spill over into a larger audience. I can also see a few of those far-off readers: American friends from CIEE and family members who were interested, as well as possibly a few Spanish friends and professors who know English (although the latter would probably prefer the original text anyway). Yet aside from that, who else will be part of my imagined community, I wonder? Time will tell. For the moment, I can only hope to have brought them a translation crafted with the most effective methods possible for this particular work.

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## Appendix

### **Pgs. 7-14**

[title:] Capital Sur: Historias de una crisis

[next page:] Localización: el sur de Europa al norte de África hemisferio ligeramente accidental en la región occidental de Andalucía sin centro ni excentro al borde de un río en medio de un valle allí en un puntito inagotable del mundo mundial en este momento estamos viviendo corriendo currando pensando en qué mundo vivimos si es plano o redondo si gira o está fijo si es capital o periferia y todavía hay quienes viven anclados en el tribunal de Galileo se creen que el centro de la Tierra es la poltrona del salón donde devoran los partidos del domingo por la tarde que fuera más allá al otro lado del circuito en que consumen sus vidas el círculo cómodo cerrado que engloba como una teoría dogmática infalible segurísima el camino del trabajo del aula de la tienda del barrio y lo enlaza con la casa el cuarto individual el estudio compartido de feliz matrimonio los bares del barrio el colmado de la esquina de enfrente sólo existe la nada la nebulosa del mito el territorio lejano brumoso sin cimientos del mundo exterior más endeble e intangible que las series de la tele las portadas del periódico los programas de nintendo realidad virtual en luminosos colores articulados gráficos amañadas representaciones en tres dimensiones y sonido surrounding estéreo este en todo caso pues lo grande o lo pequeño es siempre relativo resulta ser nuestro espacio arrancado por entero al ingenio de castor constructivo un mundo donde el sol es la bendición que sana y asesina las cosas el regalo que nos toca por haber nacido aquí aquí o aquí el acento es la clavija que nos sujeta a la tierra como la piqueta de una tienda de campaña plantada en el asfalto el cemento el ladrillo los revestimientos semiplásticos el césped artificial el albero sucísimo la piedra cantera el empedrado abollado el azulejo esmaltado la loseta de barro cocido el mármol de la Macael almeriense el aluminio gastado el hierro el cobre los sacos terreros la gravilla ruidosa aquí vivimos y aquí dicen todos tendremos que morir de este circuito no salgas no se puede desacreditar al destino que te dio un sentimiento de pertenencia a algún sitio la suerte sutil de añorar una patria si por hache o por be un buen día nos da por salir a ver mundo asfixiante pesado frustrante plomizo este lugar es el que nos ha tocado en suerte adoptar o ser por él adoptados nos dicen evaluemos la situación estratégica los pros y los contras enumerados con saña por chauvinistas desencantados publicistas difusores de infundios reelaboradores históricos del panegírico urbano: ubicación soleada temperatura agradable precipitaciones irregulares si bien consistentes cercanía a la playa conexión con el mar a través del río de arábigo nombre con la capital por medio del Ave fiestas sin cuento a lo largo del año liga de fútbol universidad brillante mediana mediocre monumentos a tope estupendos jardines extraordinaria movida nocturna fama mundial regadío constante de turistas congresos infantes alumnos boyantes de tierra americana prestigio humorístico condición sosegada bullanguera alegre poquito tópica y típica rica expresividad popular pintoresquismo tremendo inagotable abanico de color sensación de vida para el que no la conozca trepidar de calles rellenas sensualidad de femeninos muslos al aire contaminación por debajo de los máximos niveles aroma de naranjos y flores simpatía cordial de la plebe cerveza exquisita moderado coste de la vida que hace a la vida más llevadera juventud es de suponer que nosotros dueña de idiomas y títulos carreras y máster preparación enjundiosa para la sociedad exigente que se anuncia en el suplemento de negocios de *El País* del domingo razonable cultura en la que se ha dado cabida a Calderón Cernuda Shakespeare Otelio las obras completas de los Álvarez Quintero el repertorio exhausto de la Ópera de Plovdiv ciudad cultivada dueña del legado de Herrera y Velázquez Murillo y Bécquer Rinconete y Cortadillo Ortega y Gasset Rossini y el barbero de Carmen y una

vasta tradición clasicista de lirismo morboso y alado como sopa de gol golondrina tenemos también oiga el adobo el jamón las tortillas de gambas el mero empanado tenemos también dicen las callejuelas fresquitas las iglesias mozárabes renacentistas barrocas los puestos populares de pescaíto y chocolate con churros los veladores el mosto el tinto de verano las aceitunas en plato pequeño el revuelto de la casa las plazoleas de coquetería recóndita el sexo de las jóvenes casto por fuera y dispuesto y mojado por dentro anhelante en toda su represión heredada de un revolcón callejero entre los setos del parque con un novio caliente un extranjero ardoroso de miembros erectos entre roces de luces y sombras rincones acuosos envueltos en misterio por la forma que la noche tiene de girar en el cielo en el sur robar el perfume de los jazmines en los moños gitanos dorar con contradictorias sombras brillantes el recuerdo de un inolvidable momento que dará sentido por siempre a cualquier vida terrestre por arrastrada y terrible que en adelante lo sea amor tenemos bastante en la misma dosis al menos que cualquier otra latitud planetaria con la ventaja ostensible de crecer encarnados en la geometría de la seducción corporal al que este clima templado acompaña el conjunto de reglas del caballerismo machista exportado a los cuatro rincones del mundo por nuestro inmortal modelo de donjuanestenarios tenemos las papas aliñadas el boquerón en vinagre las alitas de polio el atún al ajillo el gazpacho con pan tomate vinagre ajo pimienta y una pizca de sal tenemos dicen los campeones en el duelo nocturno de las virtudes de la villa sin corte catedral poderosa la segunda del mundo tras el Vaticano Expo imponente parque temático divertido y acuoso festival de flamenco tablaos para guiris gitanos con arte ayuntamiento diputación parlamento delegación del gobierno capitania cuarteles región militar multinacionales de peso medianas y pequeñas empresas con frecuencia quejosas de sus bajos ingresos el aparato necesario de impuestos sobre la actividad económica el valor añadido los metros cuadrados de espacio habitable pero siempre dueñas como sus dueños de un correoso carácter de resistencia a la crisis que les ha hecho afrontar el futuro de España con una sonrisa en los labios un apunte de orgasmo en las cuentas bancarias tenemos también los familiares comercios cuyos tamaños oscilan entre el restaurante ostentoso y el modesto puesto de pipas tenemos la agencia tributaria los coches de Caballos la oficina del defensor del consumidor del soldado del pueblo de las amas de casa del inmigrante extranjero del niño adoptado de la tercera vejez pellejuda del impenitente ludópata del anónimo alcohólico del enfermo de sida del síndrome de Down del eterno parado del estudiante estresado de las mujeres violadas golpeadas machacadas fusiladas de un marital y certero disparo de escopeta de caza tras intraconyugal reñida disputa tenemos el aliño de huevas el pisto el puchero la ensaladilla el menudo con papas el chipirón a la plancha el bacalao con tomate tenemos el hogar de ancianos el servicio de urgencias el 061 el 092 el 069 la unidad de control intensivo el pabellón de reposo la clínica privada de Santa Isabel psiquiátrico cárcel reformatorio celdas unidad de aislamiento incomunicada prisión rejas patio reinserción ilusoria garita muro muralla alambrada de espinos vigilancia probada duchas colectivas mamoneo asqueroso represión sin fisuras moribundos de sida venas exhaustas tatuados amores de madre ásperos rostros de lija brutalidad de maniquea redención imposible condenas para todos los gustos homicidios alevosos asesinatos premeditados violaciones en serie infantil sodomía carcelaria atracos con muertos a cara cubierta manos alzadas pechos al suelo estafas bancarias fraudes contables en las altas esferas de la administración y el gobierno tiros en la nuca revestidos de épica vasca destripamientos con bomba palizas nocturnas a la amoratada mujer robos con navajazo en la pierna la cara el pecho tirones chantajes desobediencias a la competente autoridad torturante hurtos menores tráfico de coca hachís heroína posesión ilícita de armas de fuego etcétera etcétera etcétera los protagonistas son seres humanos no monstruos seres humanos de piel arrugada años consumidos cumplidos

gastados nublados ojos sentimientos historia pasado presente enjaulado futuro improbable familia sufrida y distante a infranqueables kilómetros sórdidos coitos fugaces y densos con mujeres o putas en humanitarias sesiones vis a vis con que el sistema se asegura un descargar de energías de en otro caso peligrosa proclividad a amotinarse pelo caído barbas canosas horas contadas redenciones de dos días de pena por jornada de trabajo estudios de derecho por la universidad de educación a distancia cartas ansiosas y cada vez mas escasas madrugadas de radio pajas en la oscuridad sabanera campeonatos de futbito con los periodistas al llegar la feliz navidad apelaciones revisiones peticiones de indulto por un delito que no cometí señor juez así entre papeles y rejas entre tarados malditos rufianes asesinos convictos con alma' de hombre tenemos también las espinacas con huevos los fritos chanquetes el montadito de lomo la pringa el chorizo el queso manchego la panceta la tortilla campera el churrasco de cerdo la cola de toro se mezclan las voces de los reinsertados en nuestra apocalíptica conciencia de integrados será posible nos preguntamos redimarnos de la realidad apuntarlo todo sin prisa y sin pausa en todo caso parece que aquí el término medio es un concepto irreal existen si acaso los extremos opuestos la gradación de matices extraños la medianía es un cociente hipotético y saltan los otros con el tremendo criterio de los descreídos tenemos la economía sumergida bajo tres metros de tierra caduca el puesto de chuches en la esquina del barrio el carrito de castañas asadas a la puerta del cole el cubo de agua donde flotan tan verdes los higos chumbos el palodú en manojitos tenemos el tenderete de periquitos salvajes cachorros abandonados de raza bastarda loros canarios iguanas tortugas gatos siameses cabras y ovejas pececitos de caribeños colores que se abre cada domingo en el mercado de la Alfalfa la mesita plegable del escuadrón de trileros buscando a su incauto entre la marea de rostros aviesos de la muchedumbre el camello en su desierto de la esquina del barrio la casa prefabricada las antiguas chabolas las afueras afuera de los pañuelos de nylon los bolsos de plástico los cinturones de cuero las africanas estatuillas de ébano falso de los senegaleses marroquíes nigerianos zaireños de la plaza del Duque y sus correspondientes chaperos pululando entre ancianos ardientes el gorrilla enganchado al caballo captando mercedes seats audis volvos renaults en su pedazo de calle el vovis mas pulcro con su gorra de plato el vigilante de las barcas de pedales en los muelles del rio tenemos también la tropa de chavales en paro con una ristra de licenciaturas colgándoles del cuello a modo de rosario académico tenemos la pechá de gente frustrada el lote de vocaciones arrojadas al camión de la basura la mar de proyectos que el pesimismo reinante aborto sin sangre antes incluso de ser concebidos por mentes alertas en mala hora refugiadas en el reino del no future y welcome to hell tenemos las academias privadas que oposiciones preparan para funcionarios las agendas de temporales empleos las facultades de historia derecho económicas ciencias de la información bellas artes biología medicina físicas telecomunicaciones educación filosofías y letras aprendices de todo maestros de tenemos las cabrillas en salsa las ancas de rana colorada manteca la sangre encebollada las lagrimitas de pollo las cañaillas los erizos los ostiones el cartuchito de camarones cangrejos bígaros patas calamares en tinta tenemos sobre todo un generacional y demográfico atasco un taco de juventud veinteañera procreada en los años felices del boom setenta una escasez preocupante de niños y partos aceras vacías de expresividad natalicia y en la cima de la pirámide social un cuadro de funcionarios gobernantes directivos subjeses delegados de consejerías obtusas ejecutivos hinchados de pasta en suma un muro asentado que no quiere no sabe no entiende no le interesa dejarnos pasar tenemos problemas seguro que no son los más graves del mundo pero como el mundo para nosotros no es más que lo que los ojos alcanzan a ver dentro del horizonte curvado y estrecho de esta ciudad así se los siente así se perciben enumerarlos como tapas del día no merece la pena pues todos lo saben: un cielo azul luminoso

saturado de salidas cerradas al tráfico un crecimiento irresponsable e inseguro donde oportunidad es palabra grotesca un hastío de lugar conocido devaluados quilates renegridas monedas de oro incapaces de incitar la codicia un ansia reprimida de fuga un acomodamiento ambiental al ciclo de trazos seguros tradiciones paternas resquicios sociales en la tensión entre la alegría de vivir bajo un sol fecundo que nos hace dueños de las calles y el tiempo y la desilusión de no estar haciendo de no ser más de no ser nunca el que uno hubiera querido palpitan de la mañana a la noche las coordenadas de ser de esta ciudad de este aquí accidentado de este apeadero de Europa radiante oclusivo untado de incienso aceite azahar y el santo aroma divino del sudor de los hombres ardiendo en la acera.

[next page:] MEDIADOS DE LOS AÑOS 90

### **Pgs. 17-20**

No sé por qué me pareció que viajar a Sevilla es como hacerlo a Marruecos, como si estuviera separada del centro de Europa por una distancia abismal, pero he comprobado en la tabla de distancias de la guía de viajes que entre Madrid y esta ciudad del sur de España se extienden solo 540 kilómetros de asfalto. En Madrid he tomado un avión de Iberia al rato de llegar de Nueva York. Tierra amarilla y varios tonos de ocre, quebradizos y secos, son lo más significativo del paisaje. No hay nubes en el trayecto, solo un sol impresionante que quema el horizonte y me ciega. Siguiendo el mapa del libro, calculo que Andalucía empieza detrás de esa cadena de suaves montañas que llaman la Sierra Morena. La guía dice que por ahí abajo en el valle del río Guadalquivir hay un pueblo tan caluroso que en verano pueden freírse los huevos bajo el sol. Pagina 134, Écija. Pero estamos en primavera y aun brilla el verde de los trigales. A medida que el avión desciende de altitud observo plantaciones de frutales, mansiones solitarias, pueblos blancos y apretados. Hasta las mansiones llegan caminos de tierra amarilla entre filas de palmeras. Están rodeadas de hileras de árboles raquíticos, reducidos a puro tronco gris: quizás sean olivos. Los trozos de campo (veo pistas, chalés muy feos de ladrillo sin pintar, lomas de color pardo, piscinas llenas de agua verde, muros, alambradas, cobertizos de chapa metálica, una manada de vacas, burros y caballos sueltos con la cabeza agachada, pastando) se mezclan con barrios de casas en cuyos tejados ondea la ropa tendida, y pronto se convierten en vertederos, en tierra de nadie, y enseguida se disuelven en los bloques marrones e impersonales del extrarradio, que dan sombra a destartallados núcleos de chabolas, y a mujeres y niños que pululan entre vertederos y chatarra de coches.

Marcando una pronunciada curva que me inclina cenital sobre la tierra, el avión sobrevuela durante unos segundos el centro de la ciudad, un laberinto de calles cuyo trazado distingo por las líneas oscuras que separan los tejados, relucientes con el sol. Aproximación, descenso, aterrizaje. Bosquecillos de eucaliptos. Cielo prodigiosamente azul, cruzado por nubes esporádicas y el surco blanco de otros aviones. Prisas de la gente por salir. Espero. Aeropuerto luminoso y de grandes espacios. Al examinar mi pasaporte, el policía me dice que están viniendo muchos americanos a Sevilla, y que dentro de unas semanas no habrá una sola cama libre en toda la ciudad. Le aclaro que no vengo de turismo. Pese a que aun estamos en marzo, hace calor y empiezo a sudar bajo el abrigo. El taxista, de unos cincuenta años, serio, calvo y bajito, responde a los rasgos del típico hombre correoso del Sur mediterráneo. Al oír las señas, me dice que el hotel Alfonso XIII es el mejor, y me glosa su pasado esplendoroso: que lo construyeron para la Exposición Iberoamericana de 1929, en tiempos de la dictadura de un general llamado Primo de Rivera, y que desde entonces sus suites han alojado a reyes, príncipes, infantes, toreros, millonarios saudíes y actores de Hollywood, esos desgraciados<sup>5</sup>. Un viento aromático se cuele por la ventanilla, embriagador. Esto me empieza a gustar. El taxista se llama Luis. Mientras

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<sup>5</sup> *Desgraciados* can mean either “wretched/miserable/unfortunate/etc.” or “ingrate/offensive/etc.” The choice of which to use can depend only on my own interpretation of this character’s personality.



hablo con él voy reparando de reojo en el paisaje. Una autopista, tráfico intenso, anuncios colosales (la cara de una bella morena anunciando coñac cuelga a jirones, desgarrada del telón, sobre el escote de su pecho), palmeras, árboles escuálidos de flor amarilla, naves industriales, concesionarios de coches, fabricas oxidadas, edificios grises, rotondas, grúas, solares, carteles inmobiliarios, esqueletos de apartamentos en construcción.

Paramos en un semáforo donde un joven que parece gitano vende a voces cartones de Marlboro. El taxista lo llama y él se acerca. La transacción es rápida. El semáforo se pone en verde, el vehículo de atrás aprieta el claxon, una, dos veces, luego en un mugido sostenido con furia. El taxista entrega tres monedas doradas, que valen 100 pesetas, y el vendedor le da la vuelta y retorna a su atalaya, dedicando una imprecación al impaciente conductor. Las motos abundan como una plaga de mosquitos tropicales. A lomos de una que es apenas una bicicleta con motor, marca Vespino, una familia completa logra un precario y circense equilibrio. El padre sujeta entre el manillar y su pecho a un crío de tres o cuatro años, mientras la madre, detrás, sostiene en brazos a un bebé envuelto en una manta de cuadros. Pregunto a Luis si su familia es numerosa. «No me puedo quejar». El taxi no es suyo: trabaja para el dueño diez o doce horas al día, cobrando un porcentaje. Llegan a fin de mes con la droguería de su mujer, vendiendo champús, perfumes y papel del váter a los otros obreros del barrio. Tienen cinco hijos, dos chicos y tres chicas, todos por debajo de los 25 años. Quien los tuviera, suspiro. Van a la universidad, al instituto, trabajan en lo que va saliendo. Luis me llama la atención para que admire el edificio de la universidad, un monumento del siglo XVIII donde la Carmen de Bizet liaba puros cuando las aulas de Derecho eran todavía las estancias de la famosa fabrica de Tabacos. Un poco mas allá, tuerce a la izquierda y me deja a las puertas del esplendoroso hotel de estilo neo mudéjar que emerge en el centre de un oasis de palmeras, jazmines y floreros. Luis saca las maletas y se despide con un apretón de manos. Sus dedos son cortos, ásperos y gruesos. Con el motor en marcha, mientras el botones recoge mi equipaje, me cuenta desde la ventanilla que David Lean convirtió este hotel en el cuartel general en Damasco de Lawrence de Arabia. Alabo lo mucho que sabe y me despido.

—Qué va hombre, si yo no sé nada.

### **Pgs. 68-70**

La odisea laboral de Federico en busca de trabajo comenzó el mismo día de junio en que empezaban los exámenes finales de segundo de BUP. Sin motivación, exasperados por la indisciplina y la pasividad en el aula de los adolescentes, cuyo mundo no acababan de entender, sus profesores le habían transmitido durante años la consigna de que él, inminente *tripetidor* con diecisiete años, era un fracasado en la vida, y ese juicio machacado diariamente entre líneas y con gestos de fatiga —en cada reproche, en las palabras de ánimo no dichas nunca— se había convertido en su conciencia en un complejo de don nadie que le hacía enfrentarse a los libros con la tristeza de que aquellas páginas de luz que hablaban de las leyes de la física, el mecanismo de la lengua, la historia del mundo o las familias de los seres vivos que pueblan la Tierra no habían sido, en el fondo, escritas para él. La calle, las penurias económicas, la ausencia de futuro; si, ese sí era el atribulado atrezo que le había sido adjudicado en su prevista biografía, los vulgares giros de su melodrama. No los libros, las marcas de la calle deberían ser su lectura obligatoria. El día de la renuncia se sintió igual que un boxeador que arrojase la toalla antes de que la campana anunciara el inicio del asalto. Pero su derrota fue solemne.

Llegó tarde a la hora del examen. De pie frente a la puerta abierta del aula, por la que veía a sus compañeros agachados sobre las hojas de papel, en un silencio mudo y nervioso, la

idea de entrar se le hizo aplastante. Intercambió una mirada con el profesor. Pero antes de que este saliese al pasillo a preguntar por qué no entraba, Federico se dio media vuelta y se volvió sobre sus pasos a través del patio de cemento gris del instituto. La pulida cancha de fútbol estaba vacía y silenciosa, como si los mil quinientos estudiantes hubieran desertado; como si, evaporados por el sol, nunca hubieran existido y el recuerdo de los años anteriores no fuera más que un sueño repetido cada día con escolar puntualidad. Antes de cruzar la verja de la calle todavía se detuvo un momento. Quería recorrer con la mirada el escenario y fijar en la memoria la imagen de aquel día. Contemplando el patio desierto, le invadió el estomago una avalancha de ira. Incapaz, al contrario que otras veces, de controlarla, se fue a un rincón tras la casa del portero, donde nadie lo viese, y allí vomitó su frustración contra las viejas sillas y mesas de madera que se amontonaban de otros años, inservibles, junto al muro de ladrillo. A puñetazos y patadas rompió por la mitad tres mesas tatuadas de garabatos y claves obscenas. Aún lleno de furia, agarró el respaldo de una silla y la estampó contra la pared. Ilesa al primer golpe, repitió las descargas una y otra vez hasta que la madera se partió y las patas de hierro acabaron dobladas por la mitad.

Un grito de ahogo estaba a punto de explotar en su garganta. Era un grito para haber sido lanzado en medio del patio, de donde, estridente, roto y feroz, se hubiera elevado a todas las aulas para despedazar el mortal silencio de los exámenes finales. Pero no fue capaz: en lugar de eso cerró los puños alrededor de los bolígrafos, apretándolos como si fueran estiletes, uno rojo, otro azul, y, delante de las mesas y las sillas rotas, clavó los ojos en el suelo, resoplando como un toro herido. En su corazón se había gestado un grito espantoso, pero de su boca apenas salió una voz refrenada, en sordina, que decía entre temblores «Me cago en Dios», como una presa que está llena hasta los topes y no termina de saltar en pedazos. El orden del instituto no se inmutó con esa blasfemia adolescente, y sin embargo, al pisar otra vez la acera de la calle, mientras buscaba de forma instintiva esos bloques pobres de su barrio donde los muchachos vegetan en los soportales, notó como el cuerpo se le volvía ligero y su mente actuaba con más agilidad. Un repentino soplo de alivio borró de su vista los obstáculos pasados y le presentó ante sí un futuro luminoso, una nueva etapa de su vida en la que todo parecía realizable, al alcance de la mano, con tal de proponérselo. Respiró hondo, y pensó que así de bien debería de sentirse un desertor al abandonar el frente de batalla y una muerte segura. Aplazamientos, solo rutas distintas. A partir de ese día, otros frentes lo aguardaban repartidos por toda la ciudad. En cuanto a la muerte, la misma.

### **Pgs. 70-73**

Salgo a la calle al mediodía para inspeccionar los monumentos más valiosos de esta ciudad primaveral. El itinerario que sugiere mi guía ordena empezar por la Puerta de Jerez, para, tomando la calle San Gregorio, dirigirme a la Catedral, el barrio de Santa Cruz y los Reales Alcázares. De allí hay que continuar por la avenida de la Constitución, la plaza de San Francisco, el Ayuntamiento y la plaza Nueva, de donde el trazo morado pasa a la calle de las Sierpes y, girando a la derecha, a la plaza del Salvador. Memorizo el recorrido y me echo a caminar.

Puerta de Jerez: esta glorieta ofrece interesantes perspectivas porque en ella confluyen cinco avenidas. Hay una densa veta de gente joven. Será fácil reclutar los cientos, quizás miles de estudiantes que nos harán falta para las escenas de la revuelta popular en el mercado, la salida en el puerto de los barcos de América, la ejecución pública, la fiesta del palacio, los apestados de la epidemia y el motín de la cárcel.

La fuente de esta Puerta de Jerez sería un baluarte óptimo para filmar las escenas contemporáneas y la panorámica circular de los títulos de crédito. Está, además, el factor del movimiento: las aceras están siempre llenas de peatones, los vehículos giran alrededor de la fuente, cambian de sentido, se cruzan veloces. Puede dar el aspecto de una gran ciudad cosmopolita. Para la escena de la manifestación moderna el lugar es este, sin duda: la grúa, en gran picado, da un plano aéreo de la muchedumbre, amasada entre las verjas de la Universidad y las casas de la acera de enfrente. Luego, lentamente, desciende a la altura de la cabecera de la manifestación hasta quedar al nivel de los ojos de los líderes que la encabezan. A medida que los manifestantes avanzan gritando consignas, a ritmo veloz, la cámara va retrocediendo cara a cara con ellos, hasta que, sin cortar, empieza a alejarse, se eleva nuevamente, pasa por encima de una farola para que los dos estudiantes que están subidos a ella entren en cuadro; sigue retrocediendo, amplía el ángulo tomando como centro la intersección entre las dos avenidas perpendiculares, deja pasar por debajo a la marcha, se sitúa por detrás de las cabezas de la multitud, y al fin se detiene en una imagen fija de la vanguardia de la protesta, las pancartas vistas desde atrás, enfrentadas a un cordón de policías antidisturbios y tanquetas cruzadas que les cortan el paso hacia la avenida, completamente desierta, que se extiende a sus espaldas.

Por esta avenida encamino mis pasos. Taxistas y cocheros conversan entre excrementos de caballo. Un viejito vende caramelos, chicles y tabaco, ordenados en una canasta; le compro un paquete de Marlboro. La luz riza el pelo de los que beben cerveza de pie a la puerta de un bar llamado La Moneda. El contraste es estupendo: una multitud de bebedores que toma el sol bajo un palacio con las ventanas tapiadas y las volutas neoclásicas atravesadas de grietas. Gente joven y ruinas conviviendo codo con codo. Este palacio ruinoso continúa bajo un arco hacia un callejón. Hay camiones, hormigoneras, obreros sin casco. Un capataz me informa de que respetarán la estructura y revestimiento originales, y dentro construirán mansiones de lujo. Precio: unos seiscientos mil dólares por casa. Ya están todas vendidas. Esta calle cerrada conserva un extraño aire de humedad, como si en ella se hubiera condensado la Historia. Podría servirnos como patio de la cárcel.

La Catedral me abruma con sus pórticos, ventanales, rosetones, pináculos, arquivoltas, arbotantes, columnas adosadas. Los santos de piedra se confunden entre sí y con el muro del templo, sepultados bajo una costra negra de contaminación de coches y mierdas de paloma. Le dan color a la avenida varios anticuarios, agendas de viaje, tiendas de recuerdos y despachos de lotería. Las piernas de plástico de una ortopedia contrapesan con su presencia inquietante el feliz colorido de las paellas de mariscos que anuncian las fotos de los restaurantes para turistas.

Más adelante me topo con el Ayuntamiento, cuyas banderas caen sobre los mástiles por falta de aire. Enfrente, numerosos vehículos y viandantes circulan por la Plaza Nueva como peones de ajedrez. El espacio podría albergar la parte final de la escena de la manifestación, con la muchedumbre ocupando cada palmo de tierra, encaramada a los árboles, con el posterior asalto del pueblo a la casa de gobierno y la subsiguiente represión sangrienta de las fuerzas de seguridad. Daría mucho partido además el uso espacial de la plaza de San Francisco, a espaldas de esta, como contrapunto, como escenario paralelo: la grúa podría dar al mismo tiempo, en un mismo plano, el flujo humano que se mueve alrededor del edificio, apretándolo como una tenaza desde dos frentes opuestos y masivos. La imagen sería poderosa: el edificio mas representativo de la autoridad cercado por delante y por detrás. En la escena de la irrupción de los refuerzos policiales, que llegan a través de las calles que desembocan en las plazas, estas dos ágoras comunicadas ofrecerán la posibilidad de realizar interesantes movimientos circulares de cámara. La gente, acorralada, huiría de un espacio al otro buscando una salida, solo para

encontrarse de frente con los disparos a bocajarro de los soldados que en ese momento han asomado al escenario caótico desde la boca de los callejones y descargan a discreción sus pistolas y escopetas de cañones recortados. Al concluir la estampida y la salvaje represión, la cámara nos ofrecería un barrido panorámico, aéreo, sobre el suelo encharcado en sangre de las plazas y las posturas rotas de los cuerpos de heridos y cadáveres, entre cuyos brazos y piernas veríamos las botas de los soldados victoriosos dándoles patadas en los costados para echarlos a un lado y verles la cara. Una toma cenital sobre el escenario completo de la lucha mostraría los cuerpos desparramados por todas partes como puntos y rayas en una constelación de árboles caídos. Me emociono solo con pensar en las posibilidades épicas del guion. Por Dios, que en Los Ángeles no escatimen el presupuesto.

### **Pgs. 74-76**

Protegidos entre mantas de la helada humedad de las paredes, sus tres hermanos pequeños dormían aún en la cama cuando Federico empezaba ya a montar el armazón del puestecillo y colocar sobre las mesas camisas, camisetas, sudaderas, pantalones de pinza; sostenes, calzoncillos, bragas, vaqueros lavados a la piedra; pañuelos de hombre, medias de mujer, chaquetas de pana, fajas de lycra, imitaciones de corbatas de seda; guantes, viseras, jerseys; equipaciones del Sevilla, el Betis, el Barça y el Madrid; chubasqueros de plástico, falsas chupas de cuero. La fortuna era regular, tirando a mala. Peor aún si llovía. Con los meses, Federico interiorizó las fórmulas y la geografía de la venta ambulante. En aquella ecuación de los negocios, agua equivalía a ruina. Con la llovizna se podía arriesgar a ver qué pasaba; con lluvia insistente era mejor quedarse en casa y no estropear la mercancía. A partir de un cierto número de kilómetros, había pueblos cuyo índice de consumo no compensaba siquiera el gasto de gasoil. A principios de mes se vende un 40% más que a finales. En tal pueblo gustan las prendas de mujer y las sudaderas de algodón; en aquel otro los hombres arrasan con los calzoncillos y las camisas de cuadros; en el de más allá prefieren la ropa pasada de moda; en el de acá, los chavales quieren imitaciones de marca. Después de aprender el impacto de cada variable por sí sola -el clima, el sexo, la edad, la época del mes, la distancia y el poder adquisitivo-, investigó la compleja relación de todas ellas entre sí. En un día de nubes con lejana amenaza de tormenta, en un pueblo a 97 kilómetros de casa y de tres mil habitantes de los que el 20% está parado, cuyo presupuesto para ropa en una familia de cinco miembros con ciento veinticinco mil pesetas de ingresos mensuales es de nueve mil seiscientos cincuenta con treinta y siete pesetas de media, siendo víspera de las fiestas locales y dominando el gusto temporada los estampados de flores y las camisetas mensaje americano, las ventas brutas oscilarán entre las treinta y cinco mil y las cuarenta y tres mil pesetas por día completo de faena, de las cuales el 37% irá destinado a pagar al proveedor, un 15% a costear los seguros sociales, un 20% a cubrir la letra del vehículo, y el 28% restante a satisfacer los gastos corrientes del hogar.

Un día soleado en que las cosas no estaban yendo mal del todo (habían vendido cuatro pares de calcetines negros, cinco bragas, dos medias, tres sudaderas, un pantalón vaquero, un par de camisas de rayas, un vestido de señora), Federico, mientras volvía de un bar de la plaza con un café para su madre, pensó, irónico, que en el instituto nunca le habían examinado de aquel conocimiento prosaico, gracias al cual una familia de seis miembros se ganaba honradamente la vida por esos pueblos de Dios. Había cambiado el recinto de cemento del instituto de su barrio, junto a la Ronda del Tamarguillo, por los solares, los descampados y las calles sin salida en las afueras de pueblos y ciudades, esa tierra fronteriza adonde aún no habían llegado los tentáculos de las grandes superficies. Se lo tomó como un avance: en los mercadillos de plástico, rodeados

por un círculo de furgonetas como en los campamentos de carromatos de los colonos del Oeste, no se veían paredes ni muros. Y, además, sabía que a sus padres les era cada vez más necesario, y eso le hacía sentirse muy bien.

Oye, muchacho, ¿a cómo están los calzoncillos?

Mira, los pantalones que me vendiste la semana pasada se han encogió<sup>6</sup>.

¿Dos mil pesetas? ¡Pero si yo lo he visto en el puesto de allí al lado por mil setecientas!

Me lo voy a pensar un momento.

Mamá, mira qué falda más guapa.

Ponme tres, uno de cada color.

Esta me queda pequeña, me voy a probar la 33.

Me podrías hacer una rebaja, ¿no ves el descosido este en el cuello?

No, si bonita es, pero tú ya tienes otra muy parecida.

Dame a mi la vuelta, María.

¿Y no lo tienen que diga Nueva York pero con el fondo en azul?

La más grande que tengan.

Estaba buscando unos Levis quinientosuno, de color negro.

Voy a ver si sigo mirando.

Una faja que no apriete mucho, mi arma.

Hoy ya nos hemos pasado del presupuesto.

No, azules no, negros.

Esa, esa es buena.

Pero es que los niños están todos sin ropa.

Las combinaciones de la gente con las prendas parecían ilimitadas: un viejo con una sudadera, una niña con una faja, un muchacho con una boina, una señora con una chupa de cuero, una novia con unos calcetines de fútbol, un hombre con una falda de lunares, un bebé con un vestido de luto, un novio con unas bragas de seda, un niño con una corbata de cuadros, una abuela con unos quinientosuno, un parado de larga duración con una guayabera, un rapero con una bata de bajar a por tabaco. El negocio se redujo en realidad a una rutina sin sorpresas: se renovaba poco a poco el vestuario, pero la vida de la gente no cambiaba. Si Federico no trabajaba con los ojos cerrados era por evitar que le robasen la ropa, pero habría podido hacerlo sin equivocarse.

Precios, modelos, gustos y personas se sometían en su cabeza de comerciante a una ecuación que no fallaba. El negocio funcionaba solo. Al final, les quedaron dos salidas: o ganar bastante dinero y montar una tienda en el barrio, o cerrar el chiringuito. Pero a medida que la gente se mudaba al Corte Inglés, las letras del coche y las deudas con el almacén se acumularon, y un día la opción se impuso, implacable. El negocio no rentaba. Así que hubo que plegar el tenderete y comerse los ahorros hasta que saliese otra cosa.

## Pgs. 89-91

Durante años de sequía la ciudad había visto con angustia apocalíptica cómo el nivel de los pantanos menguaba día a día y gota a gota en el diagrama de *Diario de Noticias* y una vez rebajado el límite psicológico del 20% de ocupación empezaban a contarse hacia atrás las fechas que faltaban para que las reservas se agotasen, como se cuenta las horas que quedan para el Juicio Final, pero cuando ya todos se habían olvidado de lo que era la lluvia llegaron de repente

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<sup>6</sup> Translator's note (will delete this later): From *encogido*, "shrunk." Informal Castilian vernacular in Andalucía tends to involve dropping /d/, as shown here, and pronouncing /l/ as /r/ or vice versa, as in the regional term of endearment *mi arma* (from *mi alma*, literally "my soul").

las inundaciones torrenciales y, después, semanas seguidas de precipitaciones sin descanso, y esa acumulación de agua a todas horas, al tiempo que empapaba las paredes de humedad, acabó también secando los encargos para la partida de pintores del tío Manolo, que al final del último trabajo mandó a casa a todo el mundo anunciando que no habría más faena hasta que no volvería a salir el sol tres días seguidos. Federico se quedó de nuevo en paro, sin saber que los caminos del Señor son inescrutables y que no hay mal que por bien no venga, porque aquellas trombas de agua y aquellos vendavales, igual que hacían imposible encalar muros y pintar edificios, arrancaron de cuajo cientos de antenas de televisión y parabólicas, creando un tipo de destrucción mediática cuyo remedio sería el objetivo de su siguiente trabajo: ayudante de antenista. Pepe, otro amigo del barrio, no daba abasto atendiendo los encargos y, en pago a un favor anterior, colocó de ayudante a Federico. Como en los años de la venta ambulante, volvía a recorrer los pueblos, pero no a pie de calle, como entonces, sino a ras de los tejados y azoteas, dominando las barriadas y los núcleos urbanos desde una perspectiva superior, elevada, que le hacía sentirse como un halcón, un vigía, un maestro de ceremonias que controla en las alturas los programados movimientos de los seres diminutos que recorren la calle en busca de un pequeño destino que ellos imaginan grandioso, o como un mariscal que desde su atalaya de mando analiza los desplazamientos masivos de sus frágiles soldados de juguete, a quienes ha ordenado arrojar en la boca de una muerte segura. Es cierto que había azoteas encajadas entre las sombras de edificios más altos, y allí la vista se ahogaba ante un horizonte de ladrillo y el natural ansia de expansión de la mirada quedaba recluida. Pero, conforme fueron pasando los días y acumuló suficientes azoteas como para poder compararlas con criterio, empezó a elaborar una lista de los mejores miradores, los de perspectivas más insólitas, y al cabo de poco tiempo, convertido en un experimentado oteador, aprendió a agradecer como un premio divino la ocasión en que les tocaba subir al tejado de un décimo piso, al campanario de una iglesia, una cornisa asomada a un precipicio. Cuando terminaban de arreglar la antena retorcida, el pararrayos abatido, y la parabólica apuntaba otra vez al satélite correcto, mientras Pepe cobraba el arreglo con el dueño él se dedicaba a observar atentamente la ciudad desparramada, poseído por una exhaustiva embriaguez de los ojos hambrientos de visión, apoyado sobre el pretil de las azoteas, inclinado sobre el abismo que se abría a sus pies. Comprender con un solo barrido de los ojos la forma, el cuerpo, la extensión de toda la ciudad, con la sensación proteica de ser un dios o un ángel capaz de tocar con los dedos los hilos de la vida tendidas allí abajo en el asfalto de la calle, escondidas detrás de los visillos en habitaciones incontables, y cambiarles su destino, su rumbo, su deriva, era un placer secreto que hasta entonces no había probado. Así que a partir del día en que amainó el temporal y Pepe dejó de contar con sus servicios, a Federico no le quedó más remedio para saciar su metafísica sed de espacios cenitales, de horizontes circulares y lejanos, que pagar doscientas pesetas y subir de tarde en tarde a la Giralda como un turista más.

### **Pgs. 96-97**

Café solo para no quedarnos dormidos. Después vamos en coche a la antigua Exposición Universal. Es como un decorado de Hollywood después de una película. El recinto tiene magníficas posibilidades para nosotros en la medida en que imita la estructura ideal de una ciudad del futuro, con anchas avenidas cuadriculadas, arbolado en abundancia, farolas de diseño, edificios reciclables -cubiculares y estrambóticos-, jardineras aéreas, canales, esculturas brancusianas, un auditorio de mármol y aluminio, reflejo todo de lo que se considera el modelo de la metrópolis cosmopolita del próximo milenio. El lugar concita esa experimentación minimalista de trazos utópicos con un aire melancólico de ciudad abandonada donde un vendaval

o una epidemia de tifus hubieran diezmado a la población. Ese rastro de ciudad fantasma que aprecio en sus calles desiertas, con las vallas cortando el paso en mitad de ningún sitio, las señales amontonadas de tráfico, el cristal churretoso de los pabellones como las gafas sucias de un niño, un rastro de gravilla y descuido, de plásticos y papeles volantes ensuciando las aceras, es el toque de descuido que imagino para el escenario de la urbe del siglo XXI, enferma de nostalgia por la historia del pasado y aburrida mortalmente ante la perspectiva del futuro, que muestra sus llagas a los que creyeron en ella como el paraíso de la vida en comunidad, y que, sin dejar de ser moderna, se ha convertido al poco de nacer en una ruina de sí misma, caduca, decadente, hipermoderna y antiquísima a la vez, fusión de *high-tech* y cuadro de Giorgio Di Chirico, como un teatro romano que al final de la función del día del estreno fuera abandonado por los hombres, y en su plenitud arquitectónica, reluciente, muriese de pronto invadido por la hiedra, congelado en el deterioro del tiempo, tan imponente como frágil, dando apenas refugio a un puñado de ermitaños que sobreviven en sus huecos y se alimentan de la hierba que crece en las juntas de los bloques de granito.

### **Pgs.100-101**

Entrevista con el presidente de la sociedad que administra el Parque Tecnológico. Su discurso es optimista: me explica que este recinto para empresas, organismos y centros de investigación es la natural prolongación del gran salto adelante que en la dimensión económica significó la consecución de la muestra. No habla de nostalgia de edificios convertidos en triste sombra del pasado, sino de ciencia, de inversiones, de modernidad, de desarrollo, de futuro, futuro, futuro. Él también se pronuncia a favor de la película, y asegura las mayores comodidades durante el rodaje. Me sugiere que tome en consideración para las tomas el parque de atracciones del otro lado del recinto, un parque temático, dice, ambientado en la Sevilla del siglo xvi que cuenta con la montaña rusa más grande de España, o del mundo entero, no recuerdo. Evito la visita, sabiendo que no nos hace falta un parque de atracciones lleno de máquinas y gente, colorista y desenfadado. Nuestra ciudad en cambio es triste y melancólica como el brillo y el tacto del titanio. Solo me interesaría filmar en ese parque si estuviese comido por la yerba, como la montaña rusa que el tiempo y la maleza han devorado en Coney Island. No me atrevo a decirle a este hombre que lo que me atrae de este lugar no son los edificios que funcionan a pleno rendimiento, sino los que siguen aún abandonados. Lo que estoy haciendo es arqueología industrial del siglo XX. Ya me imagino a los habitantes de la metrópolis futura paseando en la película por estas mismas calles, entrando en estos edificios, a bordo de vehículos ecológicos, todos ellos con un velo de grave clasicismo en la mirada, de una parsimonia apocalíptica.

El aire de la puesta de sol se ha vuelto frío. Caminando detrás de mí a prudente distancia, los miembros de la comitiva, que me han dejado pasear a solas unos minutos entre los restos de aquella ciudad imaginaria de los días de la exposición, ya solo real en el recuerdo, me preguntan si necesito realizar alguna otra visita. No. Prefiero regresar al hotel y descansar.

### **Pgs. 108-111**

Muy lentamente, moviéndose de lado, iniciaron el recorrido de apenas diez metros que los separaba del rincón donde, bajo el techo bajo de una caseta, debían descargar la lámina de acero. Resoplando como toros, arrastrando los pies al unísono, se fueron acercando al objetivo. Federico ocupaba el primer puesto, en una esquina de la plancha. El capataz guiaba el movimiento del grupo, como si se tratara de una cofradía. «Un poquito a la derecha, ahí va, con cuidado, mi arma, tranquilito, despacio». Federico sintió que le hervía la sangre en la yema de

los dedos. Justo en el momento de acordarse de que llevaba los guantes en el bolsillo del mono, estando a un metro de la meta, el obrero que iba a su derecha se enredó los pies con un cable que había suelto en el suelo. El hombre trastabilló, perdió el equilibrio y cayó hacia atrás, como si se estuviera agachando a cámara lenta, y mientras iba desplomándose, con la inercia, arrastró la plancha tras él. A los obreros en el otro lateral se les escurrió el acero de las manos. Novecientos kilos perdieron su equilibrio y cayeron hacia el origen del tirón, del lado del hombre que había tropezado. El sexto sentido de la experiencia les hizo retirar las manos de la plancha, dar un paso atrás y dejarla caer, ya que no era posible aguantarla y devolverle el equilibrio. El filo de la plancha segó el aire y fue a clavarse sobre el suelo, a un centímetro apenas de la pierna del obrero caído, que aún tuvo el reflejo, mientras se derrumbaba, de apartarse todo lo que pudo, reculando como un muñeco sacudido por un calambrazo. Pero Federico, en lugar de retirarse, sucumbió a la reacción instintiva de aferrarse a la pieza que le habían ordenado sujetar. Vio que la plancha se desplomaba sin remedio y un impulso de vida le hizo despegar los dedos del metal en el último segundo. Solo tuvo tiempo para salvar la mano izquierda, y los dedos pulgar, meñique y anular de la derecha. El canto de la plancha, afilado como una guillotina, le seccionó limpiamente de un tajo los dedos índice y corazón. Federico sintió que la mano le ardía como si le aplicaran un soplete a bocajarro, cortándole los huesos como varillas de hojalata. Sumido en un escalofrío alucinante se miró los dos nudos de pellejo ensangrentado que en el lugar de los dedos perdidos, a la mitad de la primera falange, brotaban de la palma de la mano como dos apéndices monstruosos, como dos protuberancias de sarmiento. Absorto en el puño, se le cruzó por la cabeza la imagen de una lagartija con la cola arrancada y de una estrella de mar con un brazo menos, como iluminaciones de la inútil esperanza de que pudieran crecerle otra vez. Se miraba la mano con horror e indiferencia, como el que es testigo de un accidente ajeno y no es capaz de reaccionar y socorrer a los heridos. Esa mano no era suya. Si no, pensaba detenidamente, no la podría mirar. Eso no le estaba pasando a él, se decía, era imposible que esos dedos mutilados fueran los suyos, se aseguraba, esa sangre la suya, se intentaba convencer. El dolor intensísimo deshizo el desdoblamiento de conciencia y lo devolvió de bruces a la impensable realidad, la de siempre, la de costumbre, la de todos los días. «¡Mi mano!, ¡mi mano!, ¡mi mano!», gritaba, sin moverse del sitio. Un compañero, con el rostro descompuesto, le cubrió con un pañuelo los dos huesos seccionados, para taponarle la hemorragia y, sobre todo, evitarle el horror de ser testigo de su propia mutilación. Inmediatamente, el pañuelo se tiñó de rojo oscuro. Sus gritos alucinados se confundieron en el eco de la nave con las voces nerviosas de los hombres que lo alzaron y se lo llevaron en volandas a la enfermería. En medio del revuelo, alguien gritó que había que recuperar los dedos cortados por si había tiempo todavía de practicar un reimplante. Veinte hombres acudieron al lugar del accidente y, haciendo palanca con barras de hierro, levantaron la plancha y sacaron de entre la gravilla del suelo, aplastados como gusanos, dos palitos oscuros y reblandecidos, en los que brillaba pálidamente el cuadrado de las uñas. El capataz los metió en una bolsa con hielo y se montó atropelladamente en la ambulancia de la empresa, camino del hospital.

Los médicos no pudieron reimplantarlos. La herida era limpia; el tajo, exacto. Pero al quedar aplastados debajo de la plancha, los dedos, adujeron, se habían estropeado demasiado. «Imposible pegar». Ánimo, chaval, oyó que un rostro enmascarado le decía en el quirófano. En el trayecto al hospital, tumbado en la camilla con la vista clavada en el techo de la ambulancia, había dejado de pensar en lo que estaba ocurriendo y, simplemente, no era capaz de extraer las consecuencias que tendría para él el accidente. El trabajo le había enseñado a dejar de pensar cuando quería, y ahora estaba poniendo en práctica aquella habilidad. Cuando lo sacaron de la



sala de urgencias y lo llevaron a una habitación de la UCI con cuatro enfermos más, sus padres ya estaban esperándolo allí, llorando. «Que no me he muerto, mamá», musitó, como si nada hubiera ocurrido. Al final de la tarde sus amigos empezaron a merodear por la habitación, cabizbajos y sacudidos aún, como él, por el shock de un accidente inesperado que había roto el discurrir de la realidad y de repente ahora les obligaba a redefinirla. «Oye, que el Federico ha tenido un accidente y se ha cortado dos dedos», decía el mensajero, preso de nervios, al dar la noticia por teléfono. Invariablemente, la pregunta del otro lado quería corregir la tragedia, rebajar el dramatismo del horror. «¿Qué quieres decir?, ¿que se ha cortado, que se ha hecho una herida?». Y la turbada corrección: «No. Que los ha perdido, que se ha mutilado». Cuando amaneció el día siguiente, Federico comprobó que no había soñado. Mientras sus padres arreglaban los papeles del seguro con los representantes sindicales y la agencia de trabajo temporal, Federico, escrutando el puño enfundado por completo en vendas blancas, bajo las cuales el dolor se hacía insoportable, se preguntaba en silencio: «¿Y ahora dónde coño me van a dar trabajo?». «Invalidez parcial transitoria», fue el aséptico veredicto de la Seguridad Social.

### **Pgs. 120-129**

La cola masiva me recordó a esas otras que turistas y sevillanos de paseo formaban en la Expo a la puerta de los pabellones más famosos estaban allí todos aunque cada uno a una altura distinta de la fila yo había acudido con Alejandro el fotógrafo la estampa era impresionante cientos de personas apelotonándose ante las puertas de cristal del Teatro Maestranza Alejandro hizo las fotos evidentes de rigor apuntando a ese pelotón de juventud entre desesperada y jocosa que yo también había contribuido a reunir y excitarse con la perspectiva de un sencillo trabajo alimenticio la bulla sevillana el síndrome de coro el magma folklórico-social eran teorías gastadas de pura obviedad había pensado que el reportaje no podría abundar en lo mismo decidí por tanto enfocarlo de otra manera no solo el papel de figurantes en la comedia del mundo sino el de disfrazados en una ficción que volvía a opacar su propio disfraz en esta realidad como siempre que empezaba una historia me sentía nervioso hasta que no tuviese en la libreta páginas de notas ilegibles no podría quedarme tranquilo empecé a preguntar a la gente de la cola casi todos estudiantes de la universidad cuando ya hube hablado con cuatro o cinco de ellos pensé que había que buscar el contraste el personaje colorista el desesperado de turno era la estrategia de la denuncia no todos podían ser muchachos saludables por mucho que su situación laboral fuera terrible hacía falta un rostro amargado que hiciese verosímil lo que era a todas luces una real tangible precisa necesidad de trabajo dinero proyectos un lugar en el mundo no fue tampoco difícil allí esperaban de pie hombres maduros un tanto apurados de su situación su indumentaria estaba impregnada de sobria pobreza los ojos oscuros miraban muy serios en dirección a la puerta hombres curtidos de pelo canoso zapatos gastados perfil anodino y un tanto panzudo de dónde habrían salido? un rótulo invisible les marcaba la frente parado de larga duración yo solo pido un trabajo los había de todas las edades así que tenía muy fácil dónde elegir y en cierta manera pensaba yo que aquella variedad atribuía a la crónica un carácter científico esto no era un cuadro de costumbres me cago en las pinceladas de color era un sondeo sociológico una instantánea de alta definición el reportaje no era una gracia un chiste un pasatiempo para cuando no llega la novia y hay que esperar media hora de pie a las puertas de correos era una foto de familia un momento de historia por favor un respeto me decía a mí mismo me daba importancia gozaba la vanidad profesional de presentarme como periodista y esto para quién es? pregunté a tres hombres mayores de cuarenta y a un chaval de veintipocos a fin de que la encuesta se adecuara a las elementales normas de representación venían de los barrios un hijo un hermano un

primero simplemente la bulla creciente a las puertas del teatro los había atraído a uno lo conocía de vista en la temporada de ópera se pasaba las madrugadas enteras haciendo la cola en las taquillas compraba los tickets y los revendía después otros mas tontos me dijo hacían cola de encargo para gente más rica que pudiera pagarse un correveidile sus ganancias eran menores no tenían la autoridad de un reventa que fija los precios tampoco es verdad los riesgos de quedarse tirados con las entradas en la mano otro estaba en paro desde hace dos años se ganaba la vida haciendo chapuzas recuerdo que era de Los Pajaritos se llamaba Gonzalo tenía tres hijos y uno en camino al otro lo habían despedido hacía tres años con lo de Gillette ahora sobrevivía echando una mano en el polvero de un familiar la cosa estaba muy mala el gobierno decía que todo iba bien pero ellos eran la prueba de cuán imperfecta seguía siendo la sociedad a pesar de los discursos el reconocible dinamismo de la economía la contención plausible de la inflación el recién iniciado parón del desempleo el muchacho tenía una amigo que era primo de un vecino que trabajaba de portero en el mismísimo teatro y él le había pasado la voz igual que yo hiciera con los míos aquella mañana el tirón de la tribu aún nos guiaba de tal modo era gracioso y alegre este chaval que cincuenta personas habían formado un corro en torno a su estampa cada chiste ocurrencia salida ingeniosa con el recurrente motivo de los productores de Hollywood era acogido con risas sinceras que para aliviar la expectativa tediosa se convertían poco a poco en gran carcajada mandíbula batiente salva de aplausos torero torero respiré tranquilo tenía de todo estudiantes felices angustiados jóvenes sin curro la imagen dramática de los hombres con treinta cuarenta cincuenta tacos mezclados con la chavalería acariciando la remota probabilidad del dinero con la íntima sensación de ruina desesperación impotencia de un fracasado la anécdota simpática del humorista en la cola y su coro de festejadores en pantalones vaqueros aportaba incluso el contrapeso de camaradería grotesca que necesitaba el relato para convertirse en tragicomedia cerré la libreta ahora sí tenía materia de sobra una base de reacciones humanas chicha por donde empezar te fui a buscar a la cola cada vez más nutrida te encontré más o menos a la mitad compartiendo cemento al lado de Ana Elena y Andrés un poco detrás estaban Ricardo Dani Gustavo Juanca Antonio y Julián Ramón e Israel me preguntaste que dónde estaba Fernando que cómo que el único actor de verdad de todos nosotros aún no había llegado te dije que a los profesionales los habían citado por la puerta de atrás nos dimos un beso y nos despedimos esta noche nos vemos te dije esta gente me pidió que les trajera noticias si algo cambiaba por qué no averiguas cuándo carajo abren las puertas? recuerdo haber escuchado entonces busqué al fotógrafo y entramos los dos al teatro por la puerta de prensa saludé a los compañeros atravesamos los pulidos pasillos directamente nos fuimos a por la imagen que él con la foto y yo con palabras nos habíamos ya construido en la mente esto es el cristal de la puerta y los uniformes de los guardias jurados a modo de valla entre la gente y el curro entre el prosaico y soleado desierto de todos los días y el multimillonario sueño ficticio de la pantalla gigante la foto del reportaje estaba muy clara saltaba a la vista rotunda eran claro esas narices esos ojos oscuros esas bocas torcidas pegadas al vidrio luchando por atravesar las transparentes y sin embargo impermeables barreras con no sé qué ansia de atrapar uno de aquellos lucrativos disfraces caretas identidades ficticias de extra antes de que no quedase ni un puesto libre ser él mismo y ser alguien distinto grabé aquel momento en la memoria os busqué con la mirada vi vuestras caras inconfundibles emergiendo entre tantas cabezas al verme a mí mismo de este lado de la puerta sentí un repentino arrebató de injusticia como si el cristal interpuesto entre vosotros y yo nos alejara a un fondo distante nos separase unos de otros me hiciera traidor de repente me dolió el pensamiento se nubló la mirada un segundo tenía pánico de que fuera a ocurrir y estaba ocurriendo otra vez la idea de que un día yo también tendría que morir me aterró reconocer que

existe un final quise llorar de tristeza pero no era el lugar ni el momento yo a solas detrás del cristal os veía hacerme gestos festivos sacando las manos vuestra limpia mirada de entre la gente tan joven con tanta energía el sol os acariciaba la piel el pelo la ropa yo solo y con vosotros tan cerca separados por una vidriera que en unos minutos alguien daría la orden de abrir sentí con terror que a dominarme volvía como cuando era pequeño como en aquel año del instituto como desde hacía unos meses era el pacífico roce de la soledad el pánico sereno a la muerte que me llegaba mucho antes de ser viejo no era el lugar ni la hora repito pero pensé que algún día tendría que asistir al entierro de mis seres queridos con los que había crecido a los que ahora veía radiantes frente a mí bajo el sol de primavera quise llorar porque quiero tanto la vida pues la vida eres tú sois vosotros son todos uno a uno sin excepción los muchachos sin nombre sin pasado para mí que esperaban apretados con vosotros unidos hombro con hombro con molestias con indiferencia con desprecio con simpatía en la misma esperanza el mismo trocito de tiempo gracias a dios abrieron las puertas y cubrí aquella dolorosa lucidez fulgurante con el pensamiento de hacer bien mi trabajo los guardias jurados bloqueaban la puerta os dejaron pasar como por un colador de dos en dos los ayudantes del *casting* os indicaban el camino hacia el escenario desierto la excitación corralera que manifestabais mientras todos juntos hacíais solidarios la cola se transformó al entrar en el territorio de la productora en seriedad asustadiza y momificada temblando todos de humilde un tipo con acento madrileño os iba contando al pasar [...] de seis en seis de seis en seis sin que nada cambiase el grupo se fue desmembrando y todos al final dejasteis algo de vosotros en aquellos teclados tú te quedaste muy seria al hacerte la foto y el tipo que te tocó al otro lado se hizo el simpático y te dijo que sonriendo saldrías más guapa amagaste un esbozo de tu peor simpatía y él te dejó por muchacha imposible así como tú todos pasasteis delante de mí el fotógrafo hacía tiempo que se había marchado yo tenía materia de sobra pero quise esperar a ver qué pasaba cuando acabaron con las doscientas personas despejaron la escena y otro grupo más numeroso si cabe ocupó vuestro sitio un nuevo ciclo empezó a repetir el trasfondo aburrido de la fantasía desandando mis pasos hacia la salida por el pasadizo me atizó de nuevo la noción de estar yendo a la muerte la idea retornaba fija obsesiva el corazón me temblaba de miedo no quería pensar intenté desterrarla de mi pensamiento por un instante se hizo borrosa seguía rondándome el universo entero me pareció una quimera intangible miré hacia el pasado y no veía nada imaginé el futuro y me aterraba arrebatarme a mí mismo la vida adelantando la historia de lo que yo iba a ser quise que no llegase mañana que no pasasen las horas que no pudiese morir nunca como el niño suspenso en su intimidante infinito me sentía vacío pensé que tendría que inventarme una justificación plausible para seguir adelante y destruir la cristalina punzante verdad de la muerte creer en la gente crear una obra soñar que existe algo en la tierra que no caduca jamás me paré a mitad del pasillo me faltaba el aire me sentía tan solo no pienses en eso no pienses en eso me repetía a mí mismo qué me pasaba con un soplo oscuro se me helaron las sienes de una sola vez la idea del fin estalló en mi conciencia temblor de rodillas zumbido en el tímpano castaño de dientes se me paró el corazón se detuvo la vida como se detenían las horas cuando era pequeño y descubría el peso del mundo lo vi todo claro no más que un segundo fue insoportable la atmósfera vibró y las venas reanudaron su bombeo de sangre la muerte la muerte tendría que aprender a convivir con su inminencia después de haberla presentado era inútil querer olvidarse de ella fingir que no existe me dije no hay solución mi único alivio es vivir sacudir la realidad a mi paso pensar en los que vendrán detrás de mí sobre todo pensar en ellos creer que ellos soy yo y que en sus miradas brillarán mis recuerdos un alivio la dignidad de vivir por el gesto de hacerlo hacer de cada instante una obra de arte una huella de amor si la vida no tiene sentido inventárselo yo hacerme a la idea de que la vida es un montón de

sonidos y que con ellos hay que construir un lenguaje que una a vivos y muertos en la corriente común había descubierto de nuevo el dolor de saberse mortal la esperanza difusa de que solo quizás la vida tenaz y tan frágil de todos los hombres agarrados a la cuerda del tiempo como el náufrago a un salvavidas roce las sombras de la eternidad que en la suma del todo algo de nosotros perdure para siempre como en la inmensidad del desierto un grano de arena entonces eché a andar adelante corrí la otra mitad del pasillo desesperado me abrí paso contra la corriente de rostros que cruzaban la puerta hacia adentro busqué un resquicio salí a la calle respiré miré el sol contemplé a la gente pasear junto al río y su lámina de agua que reflejaba las nubes según lo acordado os habíais ido a esperar a los otros a la terraza del río desde este lado del paso de cebras os vi sentados en un velador Juanca y Antonio traían más sillas formaban con ellas un foro en la mesa me pareció ver que al trasluz de los rayos de sol brillaba el amarillo sedoso de varias cervezas mientras atravesaba la calle contaba las franjas y un peatón verde me invitaba a avanzar por puro reflejo me llevé la mano al bolsillo de la chaqueta y cogí los folios enrollados del dossier repartido a la prensa el peatón verde parpadeó como si fuera a extinguirse como si anunciase su muerte al hombrecillo rojo al tráfico intenso al semáforo en ámbar a su resurrección programada dos minutos después estiré el documento cómo no me había dado cuenta allí sonreía la broma cruel del destino el recordatorio de la paradoja de ser el título del film en la portada del comunicado se me clavó en la retina retumbó en mis oídos hombre qué casualidad la película en que os habían contratado de extras era la tercera parte de *Los Inmortales* al llegar a vuestra mesa en la terraza del río una silla vacía me estaba esperando me sumé a vosotros hacía calor recuerdo que me preguntaste la hora y al mirar la muñeca pensé con asombro que el día aún no había acabado.

### **170-174 & 185-187 (original & trot)**

« Me llamo Salvador Ortega Serrano y tengo treinta y tres años, la edad del Señor Jesucristo, como suele decirse. En el barrio los chavales me pusieron de mote *El Lele*. Pero yo prefiero que se me diga Salvador, o Salva, si es alguien de confianza. El día que nací era uno de mayo y, según contaba mi padre, llovía a reventar. Mi padre, que era payo, se llamaba también Salvador. Cuando yo tenía seis o siete añillos se murió el pobre de un cáncer. Mi padre era panadero: trabajaba de noche y dormía de día, y la tarde se la pasaba bebiendo vino en el bar. Al levantarnos nosotros cada mañana nos encontrábamos siempre en la mesa de la cocina las barras de pan recién sacadas del horno, y su gorra colgada del respaldo de una silla muy vieja, que todavía se usa. Mi vieja se llama Dolores. Ella es gitana. Con mi padre se llevó bien hasta que se hizo alcohólico. Le pidió que dejara de beber, y como el pobre no pudo hacerle caso, después de tener a mi hermano mayor, Antonio, a mí y a mi hermana Felisa, le hizo la cruz y no se volvió a acostar con él nunca más. Tengo muy pocos recuerdos de él, pero los que tengo los veo todavía tan claros como si hubieran ocurrido esta mañana. Tengo por ejemplo grabada la imagen de cuando me venía a recoger al colegio por la tarde y, con la excusa de ir a dar un paseo, me llevaba al bar de la peña del barrio. Mientras él bebía vino y jugaba a las cartas con sus amigos, yo me leía un tebeo en un rincón con un paquete de cacahuets que me compraba para tenerme callado. Luego se murió, y mi madre tapó su falta enseguida. Yo fui al colegio de los Moros, el que está en la esquina del Cerezo y la Cruz Roja. Los primeros cursos era un monstruo, sacaba buenas notas y los profesores me querían un montón. Jugaba de delantero en el equipo de la peña del Polígono, y de mayor quería ser futbolista del Betis...»

[section break]

—¿Cuál es tu nombre completo?  
 —Salvador.  
 —Con los apellidos, me refiero.  
 —Salvador Ortega Serrano.  
 —No te preocupes, es solo para mí. En el periódico, si quieres, publico solo las iniciales.  
 —Ya que estamos, ponlo entero.  
 —¿Cuántos años tienes?  
 —Treinta y tres. La edá de Cristo, ¿abe? Eso es lo que dice la gente.  
 —¿Tienes algún alias?  
 —¿Que si tengo alas?  
 —No, digo que si tienes un mote.  
 —En el barrio los chavales me pusieron de mote *El Lele*. Pero yo prefiero que me digan Salvador. O si es alguien de mi gente, Salva.  
 —¿En qué día naciste?  
 —¿Que en qué día nací? Bueno, eso es una duda porque mi madre dice que nací de noche, pero no sabe si asomé la cabeza antes o después de las doce. De chico me gustaba una jartá que me contara cómo me había parío. ¿Te dolió mucho, mamá, te dolió mucho? To el día lo mismo. En el carné pone el uno de mayo, pero lo mismo podía ser el dos. Total, qué más me da.  
 —El Día de los Trabajadores.  
 —Sí, pero en esa época no había uno de mayo que valga ¿abe? Ese día era como otro cualquiera, lo único especial, según contaba mi padre, es que ese día llovía a reventar.  
 —Como hoy, ¿no?  
 —Que va, hombre, hoy está lloviendo el doble. Fijo.  
 —Háblame de tus padres.  
 —¡Ofuf! Vamos a ver cómo te resumo. Mi padre se llamaba como yo. El pobrecito se murió de un cáncer.  
 —¿Cuántos años tenías tú entonces?  
 —Seis o siete añillos.  
 —¿En qué trabajaba él?  
 —Haciendo pan. Tenía un horario tela de raro, como los murciélagos. Trabajaba de noche y dormía de día y luego por la tarde el hombre se la pasaba la tarde entera venga que venga bebiendo vino en un bar chiquitillo que había abajo de mi casa y que luego cerraron para poner un puesto no sé si de chucherías o de helados o de no sé qué qué.  
 —Os traería el pan calentito, ¿no?  
 —Hombre, esa era la ventaja que teníamos, que nos levantábamos y nos encontrábamos allí siempre en la mesa de la cocina las barras de pan calientes, pero es que vamos, recién sacaítas del horno, y al lao la gorra esa suya que se ponía pa trabajar, que la ponía colgada de la esquinita de aquí del respaldo de una silla mu vieja que tenemos en casa, que todavía se usa.  
 —¿Y tu madre? Cuéntame de tu madre.  
 —Mi vieja se llama Dolores. Mi padre era payo, y mi madre es gitana. Con mi padre se llevó mi madre mu bien hasta que el pobre se volvió alcohólico perdio, y entonces ella le advirtió mu seria, como se pone ella, oye Salvador, como no dejes la bebida vas a enterarte de lo que vale mi moño, pero el pobre no controlaba, cómo iba a hacerle caso, así que ella después de tenernos a nosotros le hizo la cruz, y coño, dicho y hecho, que no se volvió a acostar nunca más con él en

la vía. Y desde entonces mi viejo se asomaba por la ventana del lavadero cuando ella se estaba duchando, pa verle los pechos. Pobrecillo.

—¿Cuántos hermanos sois?

—Pues mira, mi hermano mayor Antonio, que se murió, luego vengo yo y luego viene mi hermana Felisa: tres.

—Vale, perdona; sígueme hablando de tus padres. Por ejemplo, ¿qué más recuerdas de él?

—La verdá es que tengo mu pocos recuerdos, de él muy pocos, pero los recuerdos que tengo es como si los viera todavía tan claros, tan claros como si fueran de esta misma mañana. Por poner un ejemplo, vamos, tengo grabada en la cabeza la imagen esa suya de cuando me venía a recoger por la tarde al salir del colegio, ¿no?, porque para que mi vieja no se cabrease él daba de excusa que era para ira a dar un paseo, pero en realidad no íbamos a ningún lao, que en verdad lo que íbamos era a la parte de atrás del bar de la peña, y él se ponía allí a beber vino y a jugar al tute con sus amigos, y a mí me daba un tebeo y me ponía allí a leerlo en un rinconcito, y me compraba un paquete de altramuces para tenerme callao. De eso me acuerdo como si lo estuviera viendo ahora mismo, me cago en la mar. Después se murió y eso, ¿no?, pero como mi madre estaba allí ensegúa pa tapar su falta pues fue más fácil pa mí superarlo.

—¿A qué colegio fuiste?

—Al de los Moros...

—¿Al de los Moros?

—Sí, hombre, ese que está por allí por la esquina del Cerezo y la Cruz Roja.

[...]

—Salvador, con tu permiso, ¿te importa que te haga una foto?

—No, hombre.

—Espera un segundo que saque la cámara.

—Hombre, preferiría que mis hijos me recordasen por la foto que tengo de la boda, más que por esta del periódico. Ahora parezco un muerto y doy más pena que otra cosa, y yo no quiero dar pena.

—Claro que no. Mírame un momento. Así..., ya está. Espera un segundo, que te voy a hacer otra de perfil. Uno, dos, tres..., ya.

—¿Ya me puedo mover?

—Sí, sí, estamos acabando además. Salvador, cuéntame, ¿qué te gustaría hacer en estos días?

—Lo primero es que no sé cuánto tiempo me queda. Lo mismo dos meses que una semana que un día. No he pensado mucho todavía en qué voy a emplear el tiempo, si te digo la verdá. De todas maneras, no voy a hacer ahora, hecho polvo, lo que no pude hacer siendo un chaval sano de veinte años.

—Pero supongo que querrás hacer algo, ahora que estás libre.

—Y a mí qué. Dejaré que pasen los días, y cuando llegue el momento, llegó.

—¿Eres creyente?

—En el fondo yo creo que sí, oye. No he ido a misa desde que me casé, pero creo que si yo he penado tanto en esta vida es para merecerme otra mejor en el cielo. Eso sería lo justo, ¿no?

—Sí, desde luego.

—Si no, sería una putada. Una vida que tiene uno, una vida solamente, y tener que vivirla así, y no tener otra oportunidad para arreglarlo es una putada. Pero yo creo que voy a ir al cielo.

—Seguro.

—Por eso estoy tranquilo y me da ya todo tan igual. Lo único que tengo que hacer antes de irme es conseguir ver a mis hijos. No los veo por lo menos desde hace tres años. Eso es lo que voy a hacer ahora mismo. En cuanto terminen de meterme la medicina, me voy pa La Barqueta a buscarlos. Que me vean y se queden con un buen recuerdo de mi.

—Buena idea, sí.

—Coño, que se den cuenta de que soy una persona, no un desgraciado. Que ya son mayorcitos y se acuerdan de las cosas. Por lo menos que se acuerden de mí cuando yo ya no esté, como yo me sigo acordando de mi padre aunque fuera un borracho y se lo hiciera pasar tan mal a mi vieja. Porque para eso era mi padre, ¿no? Ea, pues después de eso ya sí que me puedo morir de una puta vez.

[section break]

«No sé cuánto tiempo me queda. Lo mismo dos meses, que una semana que un día. No he pensado mucho todavía en qué voy a emplear el tiempo. De todas maneras, no voy a hacer ahora, hecho polvo, lo que no pude hacer siendo un chaval sano de veinte años. Pues dejaré que pasen los días, y cuando llegue el momento, llegó. Yo soy creyente en el fondo. No he ido a misa desde que me casé, pero creo que si yo he penado tanto en esta vida es para merecerme otra mejor en el cielo. Eso sería lo justo. Si no, sería una putada. Una vida que tiene uno, una vida solamente, y tener que vivirla así, y no tener otra oportunidad para arreglarlo es una putada. Pero yo creo que voy a ir al cielo. Por eso estoy tranquilo y me da ya todo da igual. Lo único que tengo que hacer antes de irme es conseguir a ver a mis hijos. No los veo desde hace tres años. Eso es lo que voy a hacer. Que me vean y se queden con un buen recuerdo de mí. Para que se den cuenta de que soy una persona, no un desgraciado. Por lo menos que se acuerden de mí cuando yo ya no esté, como yo me sigo acordando de mi padre aunque fuera un borracho y se lo hiciera pasar tan mal a mi vieja. Por que era mi padre. Después de eso ya me puedo morir.»

«My name is Salvador Ortega Serrano and I'm 33 years old, the age of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they usually say. In the neighborhood/barrio the boys [*colloq.*] gave me the nickname *El Lele*. But I prefer to be called Salvador, or Salva if it's someone close to me/that I trust. The day I was born was May 1<sup>st</sup> and, according to how my father<sup>7</sup> told it, it was raining buckets. My father who was white/payo, was named Salvador too. When I was six or seven the poor [man] died of cancer. My father was a breadmaker: he worked at night and slept during the day, and spent the afternoons/evenings drinking wine at the bar. When we got up each morning we always found loaves of bread fresh out of the oven on the table, and his cap hanging from the back of a very old chair that we still use. My old woman's name is Dolores. She's a gypsy. She got along well with my father until he became an alcoholic. She asked him to stop drinking, and since/because the poor [one] couldn't pay attention to her, after having my older brother Antonio, my sister Felisa, and I, she refused to speak to him/refused to have anything to do with him/etc. and never slept with him ever again. I have very few memories of him, but the ones I have I can still see as clearly as if they had happened this morning. I have for example engraved [in memory] the image of the times when he would come to pick me up from school in the afternoon and, with the excuse of going for a walk, took me to the bar of the neighborhood club. While he'd drink wine and play cards with his friends, I would read a comic book in a little corner with a packet of peanuts that he'd buy me to keep me quiet. Then he died, and my

<sup>7</sup> Note that in Spain Spanish (at least in modern-day), the use of *padre* and *madre* is slightly less formal than their literal equivalents of "father" and mother in English would be. *Papá* and *mamá* (Dad/Daddy and Mom/mommy/mamma/etc.) have more restricted usage.

mother covered his debts [??] I went to school at *el colegio de los Moros*, the one on the corner of Cerezo and Cruz Roja. I was amazing in class, I had good grades and the teachers loved me. I played forward on the youth soccer team in the Polígono, and I wanted to play on the Betis team when I grew up... »

[section break]

“What’s your full name?”

“Salvador.”

“With the last names/surnames/family names, I mean.”

“Salvador Ortega Serrano.”

“Don’t worry, this is just for me. In the newspaper, if you want, I can just publish your initials.

“Now that we’re already here, put my full name/the whole name.”

“How old are you?”

“Thirty-three. Christ’s age, you know? That’s what people say.”

“Do you have any alias/pseudonym/nickname [more formal term]

“[You mean,] do I have wings?”[*pun: alias->alas. Possibly also refers to the religious connection?*]

“No, I mean do you have a nickname.”

“In the neighborhood/barrio the boys/guys gave me the nickname *El Lele*. [*colloq.*: fool/dummy/idiot/etc.] But I prefer they call me/I’d rather be called Salvador. Or, if it’s some of my people [*colloq.*], Salva.

“On what day were you born?”

“[You mean] on what day was I born? Well, that’s in doubt/in question because my mother says that I was born at night, but she doesn’t know if I poked my head out before or after twelve [o’ clock]. When I was little/as a kid, I loved [*colloq.*] hearing her tell me how she’d given birth to me. Did it hurt [you] a lot, mommy/momma/mama, did it hurt [you] a lot? The same thing all day. It says May first on my ID card, but it could just as well be the second. It’s all the same to me/I don’t care either way.

“[That’s] Workers’ Day<sup>8</sup>.”

“Yes, but in that era/back then there wasn’t a May 1st that was worth anything, you know? That day was just like any other; the only special thing, according to how my father told it, was that that day it was raining buckets/cats and dogs/etc.

“Like today, no?”

“No way, man, today it’s raining twice as hard/much. I fixed it/pay attention to it [???].

“Tell me/talk to me about your parents.”

“Ofuf! Let’s see how I can sum it up for you. My father had the same name as mine. The poor thing died of cancer.”

“How old were you then?”

“Six or seven years old [*colloq.*]

“What was his job?”

“Baking bread. He had a *tela de raro* [???] schedule, like [the] bats. He worked by night and slept by day and then in the afternoons/evenings [,] the man spent the whole afternoon/evening come what may [??] drinking wine in a little bar that was down past my house and which they later closed to put up a stand [that sold] snacks or ice cream or I don’t even know what.”

“He must have brought you [*plural*] the bread nice and hot, no?”

“Man, that was the advantage that we had, that we would get up and always find [the] hot loaves of bread there on the kitchen table, just out [*colloq.*] of the oven, and on the side that cap of his that he put on for work, which he hung from just the corner of the back of a really old chair that we had in the house, which we still use.”

“And your mother? Tell me about your mother.”

“My old woman’s name is Dolores. My father was white/non-gypsy/payo, and my mother is a gypsy. My mother got along very well with my father until the poor thing became a total/lost alcoholic, and then she warned him, getting very serious like she does: listen, Salvador, if you don’t stop drinking you’re going to find out what my rage/anger is worth, but the poor thing couldn’t/wouldn’t control himself, how

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<sup>8</sup> Refers to International Workers’ Day, as opposed to the United States’ Labor Day. The day was outlawed in Spain under the Franco regime due to its socialist overtones, and officially reinstituted in 1978.



could he have paid attention to her/done what she said, so after having us kids she refused to speak to him/refused to have anything to do with him/etc. (le hizo la cruz) and damn/etc. said and done, she never slept with him again for the rest of his life. And from then on, my old man would peek through the bathroom window while she was taking a shower to see her breasts. Poor little thing.”

“How many of you siblings are there?”

“Well, look, my older brother Antonio, who died, then came me and then came my sister Felisa: three.

“All right, excuse me/sorry; keep telling me/talking to me about your parents. For example, what else do you remember about him?”

“The truth is that I have very few memories, very few of him, but the memories that I do have [,] it’s like I can see them as clearly, as clearly as if they happened just this morning. To give an example, well, I have engraved in my head that image of when he’d come pick me up in the afternoon when I got out of school, no? because to keep my old woman from getting mad/suspicious [*colloq.*] he’d give the excuse that it was to go for a walk, but actually we didn’t go anywhere, the truth was that where we went was to the back of the club bar, and there he would drink wine and play *tute* with his friends, and he gave me a comic book and a packet of lupin seeds to keep me quiet. That, I remember as if I were seeing it right now, *me cago en la mar*. Then he died and all, no? but since my mother was there right way to cover his loss [??], well, it was easier for me to bear it.”

“What school did you go to?”

“The *colegio de los Moros*...

“*De los Moros?*”

“Yeah, man, that [one] that’s over by the corner of Cerezo and la Cruz Roja.”

[...]

“Salvador, with your permission, do you mind if I take your picture?

“No, man.”

“Wait a second and let me get out the camera.”

“Man, I’d rather my kids remember me from my wedding photo than from that one for the paper. Right now I look like a dead man and pathetic/pitiful/shameful more than anything else, and I don’t want that.”

“Of course not. Look at me for a moment. That’s it...there. Wait a second, I’m going to take another one of you from the side. One, two, three...there.

“Can I move now/yet?”

“Yes, yes; besides, we’re nearly done/wrapping up now. Salvador, tell me, what would you like to do during these [final] days?”

“The first thing is that I don’t know how much time I have left. It could just as easily be two months or a week or a day. I still haven’t thought much about how I’m going to spend that time, to tell the truth. Anyway, I’m not going to do now, as a wreck, what I couldn’t do as a healthy twenty-year-old boy.”

“But I assume you’ll want to do something, now that you’re free.”

“What do I care. I’ll let the days pass, and when the moment comes, it comes.”

“Are you religious/devout/a believer?”

“Deep down I think so, you know. I haven’t gone to mass since I got married, but I think that if I’ve suffered so much in this life it means that I deserve a better one in heaven. That would be the fair thing, no?”

“Yes, of course.”

“If not, it would be rotten luck/shitty luck etc. A life that one has, just one life, and having to live it like this, and not having the chance to fix it is rotten luck/shitty luck/ etc. But I think/believe I’m going to go to heaven.”

“Absolutely/for sure/no doubt.”

“Because of that I’m calm and now it’s all the same to me. The only thing I have to do before I go is manage to see my kids. I haven’t seen them in three years. That’s what I’m going to do right now. As soon as they finish giving me the medication, I’m going to go look for them in La Barqueta. Let them see me and come away with a good memory of me.”

“A good idea, yes.”

“Dammit, let them realize that I’m a person, not a wretch/miserable person/etc.. They’re old enough now to remember things. At least let them remember me when I’m not here/there anymore, the way I still remember my father even though he was a drunk and gave my old woman such a hard time. Because that’s what he was my father for, no? Ea, after that then I *can* go ahead and fucking die.

[section break]

« I don’t know how much time I have left. It could just as easily be two months, a week, or a day. I still haven’t though much about how I’m going to spend the time [that I have left]. Anyway, I’m not going to do now, as a wreck, what I couldn’t do as a healthy twenty-year-old boy. Well, I’ll let the days pass, and when the moment comes, it comes. I’m religious/a believer deep down. I haven’t gone to mass since I got married, but I think that if I’ve suffered so much in this life it means I deserve a better one in heaven. That would be fair. If not, it would be rotten luck/shitty luck/to fix it etc. A life that one has, just one life, and having to live it like this, and not having the chance to fix it is rotten luck/shitty luck/etc. But I thin/believe I’m going to go to heaven. That’s why I’m calm and everything is all the same to me. The only thing I have to do before I go is to manage to see my kids/children. I haven’t seen them for three years. That’s what I’m going to do. Let them see me and come away with a good memory of me. So they will realize that I’m a person, not a miserable/wretched person. At least let them remember me when I’m not here/there anymore, the way I still remember my father even though he was a drunk and gave my old woman such a hard time. Because he was my father. After that I can go ahead and die [already]. »

## 169-170

La escultura ya casi estaba acabada. Tina redondeaba con los dedos la curva de un párpado cerrado sobre la cuenca del ojo. Ana, desnuda en el entarimado, tenía los ojos abiertos pero Tina había decidido que su doble de barro los tuviera cerrados, como si estuviese durmiendo, o buscando una oscuridad subterránea para conocerse mejor. Su mano fina, oscurecida por el barro reseco que se había incrustado en sus pliegues, señalando las líneas de la palma y los nudos de los dedos, acariciaba la materia húmeda y fresca, rebanaba protuberancias excesivas, allanaba la arcilla hasta extraer de ella una lisura de piel a la que, por contraste, las marcas y abolladuras de la manipulación dotaban de buscadas imperfecciones que hiciesen recordar al futuro espectador no la perfección de los dioses sino la áspera geografía del hombre mortal. La escultura había surgido de la nada, pero había tardado cuatro semanas en nacer y adquirir su actual figura, que ya sería para siempre. Como ocurría con las personas de carne y hueso, para conocer a este ser de barro era necesario observarlo de lejos, contemplando sus proporciones, el aire que rodeaba todo su cuerpo y que lo integraba silencioso a la composición del mundo, y también muy de cerca, usando la intimidad del hombre que mira de frente a su amante y se pasa las horas suspendido en la admiración de su rostro, de manera que saltase a la vista lo que la distancia oculta o difumina, y que es el palpitar de la textura, las señales del cuerpo del creador y su lucha carnal con la materia, el relieve único de una piel cuyas huellas indican que por ella, como por un hombre cualquiera, ha pasado el tiempo, la historia, las manos de otros seres. Esa estatua nunca abriría los ojos, pero sin duda, pensaba Tina, sería sensible a la presencia de una mirada, al roce de una mano que repasa la curva de su espina dorsal, desde la base del cuello hasta el final de la espalda. Aquel que en su profunda soledad se acercase a mirar a esa mujer inmovilizada en el tiempo, se daría cuenta con un estremecimiento de que su corazón de tierra advertía su presencia, y que los labios, endurecidos como piedras tras pasar por el horno, esbozaban una sonrisa casi imperceptible a modo de saludo y reconocimiento, como si la estatua descubriera en el extraño a un amigo, un hermano, un amante, y le pidiera sus besos para despertar.

Tina se alejó unos metros para sopesar la obra. Se aproximó luego a ella, y recorrió con la vista la superficie de todos sus miembros, desde la cabeza, los ojos sellados y la boca

entreabierta, hasta el vientre torneado como un suave cojín, los muslos sin músculo, los pies pequeños. Un par de veces retocó acá y allá, como una superstición, sin que nada cambiase realmente.

La escultura estaba hecha. No significaba, lo sabía, que fuera perfecta, sino que su imperfección ya era redonda y real, como la de los seres humanos.

### 187-190

—Ana, quieres bajar a ver cómo ha quedado? —Tina alzaba la vista en dirección a su modelo. Después de dos semanas de trabajo continuo la imagen de Ana se fundía con la de la estatua en su imaginación, de modo que su carne cobraba la humedad endurecida del barro, y su piel blanca se volvía arcillosa, como si el cuerpo y su figura hubiesen intercambiado las propiedades de su ser. Quedaban aún unos minutos para que acabara la clase, pero la mayoría de los alumnos se había marchado o estaba guardando sus cosas. Sin perder la pose del cuerpo, Ana giró la cabeza y vio el aula medio vacía. Al ver que ya no servía a nadie rompió filas, se estiró, se puso las zapatillas y la bata y bajó del estrado. Tina la cogió suavemente de un codo y la puso de frente a la estatua, como si la estatua fuera un espejo deforme que retratase no el presente sino el inmediato pasado, más y más alejado conforme pasaban los segundos. Ana se quedó mirando la figura en silencio. Parecía que intentase penetrar en el interior de la materia y llenarla con su alma, querer darle su mirada a esos ojos cerrados, su propio corazón a sus entrañas huecas. Cerró también ella los ojos y buscó en la oscuridad repentina de su cerebro el sentimiento, la luz, la idea abstracta de eternidad que aquella escultura que ya no era ella podría imaginar si tuviera sentidos y memoria. En sus labios floreció una sonrisa cuando volvió a abrir los ojos. Se acercó a Tina y la abrazó.

—Es una maravilla. De verdad, estoy emocionada. Has extraído la esencia de mí. No mi cuerpo, sino lo que soy, cómo me siento. Me siento unida a esa cosita de barro. —Sus ojos brillaban, verdes, buscando la mirada de Tina. Ella sonrió también y apretó el brazo de su amiga para darle las gracias.

Ana se metió en el vestuario y empezó a tapar su desnudez con la ropa de calle, mientras Tina cubría la escultura con plásticos transparentes, a los que había abierto agujeros para favorecer la ventilación de los poros del barro. Vestida de plásticos, la estatua le hizo recordar a aquella muchacha demente, descalza y cubierta solo con una gran bolsa negra de basura que había visto una vez en el jardín del hospital psiquiátrico de Miradores. Guardó las herramientas—espátulas, palillos, cucharas de madera—en su caja de zapatos, y se quitó el mono azul de trabajo que le había regalado su padre. Se fueron juntas a comer al bar de la facultad. No había ninguna mesa libre, pero en el rincón, junto a la máquina de latas, vieron a una compañera de clase, Auxi, y al verlas de pie las llamó con los brazos para que se sentasen con ella. Dejaron los bolsos en las sillas y se fueron a pedir el menú. Al cabo de un cuarto de hora volvieron con dos bandejas cargadas con un par de platos, el pan, el vaso de casera de naranja y el yogur de fresa. Comieron con ganas.

—¿No viene Diego a buscarte? —preguntó Auxi entre dos cucharadas.

—Sí --Tina enfriaba la sopa de picadillo soplando--, me ha dicho que va a venir a esta hora. Estará al llegar.

Auxi musitó un signo de entendimiento y se concentró en la comida. De repente suspendió el viaje de la cuchara a medio camino y, sin devolverla al plato ni llevársela a la boca, detenida en el aire, volvió a preguntar, como si se hubiera acordado súbitamente de algo importante.

—Tina, ¿tú te has apuntado para trabajar con Rubiales en el Instituto Anatómico?

—No creo que lo pudiera soportar. ¿Y tú?

—Yo sí, esas cosas no me dan miedo. Lo veo muy interesante. Y después del primer día, estoy segura de que convierte en un trabajo normal.

—¿De qué estáis hablando? --preguntó Ana.

—De Rubiales, el profesor de Anatomía. ¿No te has enterado, tía? Tiene un proyecto alucinante. Está buscando alumnos para sacar moldes a los cadáveres de la Facultad de Medicina y hacer con ellos un atlas del cuerpo humano en tres dimensiones --explicó Tina, arrancando un pedazo de bollo.

—Es que yo estaba vistiéndome cuando vinieron a explicarlo. Un poco morboso, ¿no? En vez de usar a modelos vivos, sacar copias de cadáveres --repuso Ana, sin dejar de masticar un par de callos caseros.

—Mujer, no querrás que te abramos por la mitad para sacarte un molde del hígado o una maqueta de los tendones --ironizó Auxi. En la comisura de la boca le bailaba una miguita de pan al hablar.

—O sea, que los tenéis que destripar. No había caído. Pensaba que era solo un molde del cuerpo, por fuera. Entiendo. Más macabro todavía --dijo Ana. Había trinchado con el tenedor una patata frita, y ahora la mojaba en la salsa de los callos, una excepción brutal en la severidad de su dieta--. Es broma. Ya sé que es una contribución a la ciencia y todo eso. Pero a mí que no me toquen. Tina, te comprendo: yo tampoco sería capaz de trabajar con un muerto. De hecho yo solo he visto un cadáver, el de mi abuela cuando murió el año pasado. Me dio mucha impresión, pero era distinto. No me dio asco. Pero es que ver la sangre y las vísceras es otra cosa.

—Di que no, Tina --intervino Auxi. Se detuvo un momento para engullir el bocado de filete de cerdo. Sin esperar a recuperar aire, continuó--. Es una oportunidad única. El hecho de que haya que trabajar con cadáveres y superar el rechazo es lo que lo hace interesante. Al fin y al cabo se trata de materia, naturaleza muerta. Forma parte de la realidad. Y desde luego se aprende un taco de anatomía. Cómo va a ser igual estudiar los músculos en un libro, o mirando desde lejos a un modelo (porque no se los vas a tocar, claro, a menos que te enrolles con él), que analizar un cuerpo por dentro, en todos sus niveles. Te tendrías que apuntar, tía. Por lo menos haz la prueba conmigo.

## 217-222

Ocurrió así, una tarde de julio de un año atrás.

Juanca despertó boca arriba en un charco de sudor, con el dilatado contorno de su cuerpo recortado en el centro de las sábanas. Era la hora en que el sofocante sol del día empezaba a ceder su tregua cotidiana, la hora en que la gente empezaba a dar señales de vida tras la pequeña eternidad de la siesta. Vestido solo con unas calzonas de fútbol, se incorporó con pesadez sobre el filo de la cama y, sentado, se miró en el espejo de la puerta de su armario. Vio reflejadas en su imagen unas ojeras azuladas, unos ojos hundidos. Se lamentó de las ristras de grasa que le estaban brotando en las caderas. Se propuso hacer más ejercicio y beber menos cerveza y, simulando una acrobacia, entró de un salto al cuarto de baño. El agua fría le aclaró la resaca, pero notaba como si el sudor se le hubiera incrustado en la piel, y no se sintió limpio hasta que no hubo pasado un buen rato frotándose axilas y testículos con abundante jabón. Sin esperar a secarse, se puso los mismos vaqueros usados de toda la semana, azules, con un zurcido en la entrepierna que su madre había disimulado hábilmente con hilo del mismo color, y una camisa limpia de mangas cortas, limpia y recién planchada. Preguntó a su madre por las zapatillas

nuevas, las que le había comprado antes de ayer. Ella le contestó que las había lavado y aún no estaban secas. Juanca le dijo cansino, sin ganas de pelea, que por qué las había lavado si no estaban sucias. Sin esperar una respuesta buscó en un rincón del armario los botines de suelas desgastadas a los que aquellos habían reemplazado, y se los puso, sintiendo la comodidad de un tejido adaptado como un guante a la forma gigantesca de sus pies. A las ocho menos cuarto llamaron por teléfono, y Juanca dejó que sonase varias veces antes de descolgar el aparato. Era su padre. Alegre y humorista como siempre, le preguntó que si se había caído de la cama. El hijo soltó una risa sincera, porque con las cosas de su padre se reía incluso cuando interpretaba el papel de padre autoritario para amonestarlo. Se querían con locura, desde el fondo del alma. Juan Carlos padre le pidió a Juan Carlos hijo que fuera a recogerlo a la puerta del almacén. Era socio de una cooperativa de abonos agrícolas de Alcalá del Río, y aquel día le había tocado controlar la descarga de un camión que traía de Valencia compuestos especiales. Antes de que se pusiera el sol debía llevar cuatro sacos de abono a un vivero de flores junto a las ruinas de Itálica, a pocos metros del cruce de la carretera de Mérida con la de Santiponce. Juanca hijo había llevado a su madre a hacer la compra en Continente al final de la mañana, y por eso se había quedado con el coche-furgoneta. Eran las ocho menos diez. El padre le dijo que tuviera cuidado y le mandó un beso. Él se lo tomó como una frase hecha: su padre siempre le decía que tuviera cuidado y le mandaba millones de besos. Le preguntó a su madre dónde estaban las llaves. ¿Las del llavero del Betis? Las del llavero del Betis. Las halló encima de su mesa, debajo de las calzonas de fútbol que se había quitado. Luego fue a buscar a su madre a la cocina para darle un beso antes de irse. Cuando ya iba a salir por la puerta de casa, se giró y le gritó desde el umbral, elevando la voz sobre el runrún de la lavadora: mamá, esta noche no me esperes despierta.

*[section break]*

En agudo contraste material con la blanquísima mesa de mármol, se estiraba ante ellos, como un bañista tumbado con despreocupación en la arena, el blando cuerpo incorrupto de un hombre. El brillo lúbrico del formol sobre su piel alimentaba la impresión de que el bañista acababa de salir de entre las olas y gozaba del placer de sentir cómo los rayos de sol caían a plomo en su pecho mientras la frescura del agua se infiltraba en sus poros, abiertos como flores diminutas. Un tono entre amarillento y grisáceo embadurnaba su piel por completo, pero a pesar de ese rasgo inequívoco de muerte todavía era posible continuar la fantasía de verlo como un veraneante vivo en el mar, aduciendo que el marchito color de su piel era el resultado de una crema solar extendida con minucia por cada pulgada de epidermis, un bronceador defectuoso y caduco con olor a zanahoria que le habrían vendido en la tienda de veinte duros a la salida del pueblo donde estaba pasando las vacaciones de agosto. Tina lo miraba entornando los ojos, como el miope sin gafas que reconoce los objetos tras un velo que desdibuja sus contornos, de manera que contemplaba el cuerpo sin reconocer su quietud estatuaría, la inmovilidad hueca de animal disecado que atenazaba sus miembros, la falta de aliento entre sus labios, que parecían, de tan pegados, una sola piedra tallada. Prefería pensar que ese cuerpo estaba tan vivo como el de los modelos que posaban para ella en la facultad, y que al acabar aquella mañana la sesión de trabajo, practicados los primeros moldes de silicona sobre el rostro y la superficie frontal, procedería a incorporarse en aquella helada mesa de pescadería, se limpiaría con una ducha caliente los restos de escayola incrustados entre los pelos del pecho, y se iría con ellos a tomarse una cerveza al bar de la plaza. No había sin embargo engaño posible: si miraba de cerca, su vista chocaba con la cortante presencia de un vacío en torno a aquel cuerpo inanimado. El silencio le

ceñía la piel como una funda empapada de humedad, anulando y disolviendo cualquier soplo de palpito. Carne blanda, inerte materia orgánica que ahora ellos iban a explorar con la tranquilidad de poder perpetrar sobre ella los desgarros más profundos sin temer un grito de dolor, una sacudida frenética para liberarse de la tortura inacabable. Los pies se abrían en direcciones opuestas, frenados por los huesos del tobillo y la rigidez de los tendones y la masa muscular. Las uñas, recortadas pulcramente, cubrían como brillantes escamas de pescado la punta de los dedos. Una capa de pelos mojados en formol le barnizaba las piernas, los brazos, el pecho, la ingle y los alrededores del sexo, peinados por acción del líquido hacia abajo en toda su longitud, haciendo que parecieran lisos cuando en realidad en otro tiempo se erguían rizados sobre la piel. Las piernas eran de constitución fuerte y fibrosa, pero la comparación con la barriga que se elevaba como una pequeña montaña en su centro, coronada por el cráter del ombligo, les hacía adquirir un aire de fragilidad hueca, de monigote de caña, y Tina se preguntaba cómo habrían sido capaces de soportar el peso de ese tronco abultado. Una masa más gruesa de carne rodeaba la longitud de los brazos, pegados junto al torso con las palmas de las manos expuestas hacia arriba como las de alguien que quisiera probar su inocencia en un robo. Los dedos eran robustos y gráciles a un tiempo. Un filo blanco asomaba en la punta de las uñas como el perfil redondeado de diez lunas crecientes. Sobre la caja del pecho, amplio y bombeado, los dos pezones oscuros creaban un triángulo con el boyo del ombligo. Los rollos de carne sujetos alrededor de la cintura, apenas descolgados, llamaron la atención de Tina, porque los michelines de un bañista tirado en la arena habrían mostrado una pesadez reblandecida, una tirante gravidez, y no la firmeza de ese cuerpo atrapado en un estado intermedio entre la carne y la piedra, en algún punto de la metamorfosis que lo convertiría en fósil o ceniza tarde o temprano. El pene colgaba en el vértice de las piernas y el tronco, caído hacia la izquierda y arrugado en varios pliegues oscuros de pellejo. La bolsa de los testículos rozaba la superficie de la mesa con sus protuberancias desiguales. Tina repasó su cara. Al contrario que los párpados sellados del cadáver anterior, que su imaginación había convertido en los de un ciego sin ojos, los de este estaban cerrados sin tensión, como los de una muñeca a la que se le hubieran roto los muelles escondidos detrás de las órbitas. Las pestañas se rizaban en una sonrisa de arco. Pensó que aquellos ojos, ahora ocultos bajo un velo translúcido de piel, habían mirado al mundo algún día con un ansia enorme de luz. La nariz era recta, pequeña, más ancha que larga. Pelo entre negro y canoso cercaba su cráneo, reservándole en el centro una calva salpicada de raquíuticos mechones. Un tajo le cortaba la cabeza en diagonal desde la ceja derecha hasta la sien del lado izquierdo. Una veintena de puntos había restañado la oscura cicatriz en tiras transversales, como tachones o muescas. El hombre habría muerto con cincuenta años, si acaso alguno más. Tina pensó que esa era también la edad de su padre. Se quedó mirando fijamente las facciones redondas y amables de su rostro, las mejillas rollizas, el mentón apenas pronunciado que aún mantenía, a pesar del último y definitivo afeitado, la sombra de la barba. Solo entonces se preguntó quién había sido aquel hombre.

### **Pgs. 320-334 (excerpts)**

El Marqués dejó la luz encendida y la puerta abierta, avanzó hasta el final del pasillo y entró en una habitación de dos camas. En una yacían dos sombras. Una de ellas, la de abajo, parecía roncar. Sobre él, abierta de piernas, la negra caribeña sacudía la cintura repitiendo: «Qué rico, papito, qué rico». Mientras, sentado en el borde de la cama libre, dejaba que Antonia le bajara los pantalones y se quitara la falda, el Marqués clavaba los ojos en el extraño centauro gimiente, mitad negro, mitad blanco. Antonia volvió a amasarle el miembro con paciencia. La

visión del movimiento reconcentrado y obsesivo en la otra cama le hizo alcanzar la erección. Con inesperada brusquedad, empujó a Antonia de espaldas y se hundió en ella sin caricias ni ternura. Ella sacudía las caderas, con los brazos anudados detrás de su espalda. Sus manos se empaparon de sudor, mezclado con el olor de un perfume rancio. El otro, casi sin emitir un sonido, sin acelerar el ritmo, acabó eyaculando sin fuerzas y se retiró de su cuerpo con la respiración entrecortada. En el umbral de la puerta apareció otra sombra, baja y delgada. El Marqués le hizo una señal y la sombra se acercó junto a ellos, convertida al llegar al pie de la cama en un hombre balbuciente que se quejaba porque no le había tocado ninguna mujer.

—Ponte con ella, yo ya he acabado.

El Marqués se subió los pantalones y salió sin decir nada. En la cama contigua las dos sombras seguían columpiándose, con el chirrido de los muelles gastados de fondo. El recién llegado se arrojó sobre Antonia con avidez feroz, clavando en su pecho manos que ella sintió como garras.

—Me estás haciendo daño.

El desconocido le soltó los senos, dándole a cambio una orden:

—Tócame.

*[section break]*

—Pareja, como os quedéis descolgados os vais a perder en la bulla.

Trabados por la cintura apretamos el paso la calle Betis se me hizo a tu lado muy corta los bancos de piedra que asoman al río donde en verano nos sentábamos a respirar el frescor de la noche casi estaban desiertos en las aceras se había formado un archipiélago de cuerpos y los cuerpos sumados a otros que desembocaban a través de callejones perpendiculares dieron lugar a un arroyo y el arroyo al verse en la plaza de Cuba y enfilarse salpicante ruidoso y festivo la calle Asunción se integró en un río humano que corría hacia abajo más denso que el agua más sucia buscando como un desagüe las incontables bombillas de la portada del recinto ferial las aceras se encontraban atestadas de gente pensé que éramos pescados parlantes en aquella corriente de risas cansancio sorpresa mojón de caballo urgencia de juerga borrachera inconsciencia distensión corporal contacto de cuerpos que bailan ardor de palmas que baten un único ritmo [...] a ti se te iluminó la cara con la luz propia de la que tu espíritu es fuente adiviné en su brillo una alegría de niña pequeña y la verdad es que yo me dejaba llevar por vosotros y aplacaba mi natural instinto rechazo con el voluntario propósito de pasar una noche excitante como es preceptivo Torrebruno Elena e Israel empezaron a cantar sevillanas de letras eróticas de las que solo recordábamos el machacón estribillo tú sacaste los palillos del bolso y repicaste el ritmo con fuerza frenética hipnótica la Feria allí se extendía inabarcable a la vista más grande monstruosa poblada que la mismísima ciudad de la que era desenfundada réplica efímera de tubulares toldos tablones de madera ebrio campo de refugiados del ocio en el que muy apretados cabían propios y extraños allí el río se había convertido en muchas mareas que lamiendo el barro de las aceras alimentado por días de lluvia o los adoquines de las húmedas calzadas centrales en cuyo brillo se reflejaban los farolillos del cielo subían y bajaban de una punta a la otra como una contradictoria pleamar que choca contra su propia corriente una resaca de olas que tras disolverse en la playa retroceden hacia el mar succionándose a sí mismas antes de ser devoradas por una nueva batida de niños muchachos jóvenes maduros y viejos entregados al poder de la masa y su energía sin nombre la Feria carrusel hoguera ópera magna mientras batía las palmas como un muñeco de pilas hasta aplastarme la sangre yo pensaba a tu lado en aquel ciclón de ansias anónimas encarnado en una

micronesia de rostros exentos como islas ligadas en la inmensidad de un océano que buscaban su momento de flamígera gloria en la celebración lucidez aturdimiento saturación total de los sentidos de la fiesta sin principio ni fin nos cruzábamos con racimos de familias de pueblo que cantaban al son de un tambor desfondado y una guitarra con las cuerdas rotas formando un corro quieto en mitad del flujo de seres innumerables pijos y pijas vestidos de gala espuertas de obreros copando las mesas de las casetas gratuitas de los sindicatos partidos políticos distritos de barrio todos los que en suma componían la pétrea ciudad pululaban por esta ciudad paralela extranjeros estudiantes buscavidas funcionarios parados quinquis chorizas policías aristócratas actores de Hollywood celebridades locales vividores vendedores burgueses abogados médicos empresarios con suerte aventureros quebrados perdidos sobre todo muchos perdidos tentando a la suerte en la triste soledad de la multitud.

*[section break]*

Ella obedeció. Luego el tipo se tendió sobre ella y la penetró torpemente, poseído por un ataque convulso que, al minuto siguiente, atajó en seco una eyaculación precoz. Casi al mismo tiempo, el hombre de la cama contigua emitió un largo ronquido, y la caribeña destruyó el centauro de sombras saliéndose de él. La negra amazona abandonó la habitación. Después de vaciarse en Antonia, el desconocido se puso los pantalones y también se marchó. El otro hombre se había quedado dormido, y ahora roncaba de verdad, completamente desnudo sobre la cama, el pene cayéndole a un lado. Ella siguió tumbada boca arriba, mirando el techo, pensando. De repente la voz embriagada del Marqués resonó en el pasillo ordenando que todos volvieran al salón. Sin esperar la respuesta, entró una por una en todas las habitaciones y arrancó de las sábanas a los cuerpos sudados que dormían o gozaban en ellas. Tras un paréntesis de silencio se volvió a oír el ruido de risas y voces, los lamentos y quejidos de sueño, mareo o cansancio, o la lejana catarata de alguien vomitando en el retrete. El Marqués entró por último en la habitación donde estaba Antonia mirando hacia el techo. Primero intentó despertar al hombre dormido, que respondió entre sueños con un hilo inconexo de palabras antes de ponerse bocabajo y enseñarle el culo al intruso; luego agarró a Antonia por el tobillo e hizo el ademán de tirarla al suelo.

—Ya voy, hombre.

Antonia se puso la falda y los zapatos, pero antes de que le diera tiempo a cubrirse los pechos con la blusa de tirantes el otro la sacó a empujones de la habitación. Al salir al pasillo sintió frío en los pezones y se le pusieron pequeños y duros. En el salón, despiertos de nuevo, en calzoncillos y bragas, o desnudos, o cubiertos solo con una falda o una camisa del revés, los hombres y las mujeres ocupaban los asientos y se servían una copa de whisky.

—¿Para qué nos has traído aquí? -preguntó Rogelio, desnudo de cintura para arriba.

—Para que veáis el fin de fiesta que os he preparado.

Todos los ojos se posaron en la figura alucinada del Marqués, el único vestido por completo.

—¿No soy un ganadero? ¿Los críticos no dicen que mis toros parecen corderos últimamente? Pues para que veáis que no tienen ni puta idea, que mis toros tienen más cuernos que ellos y son más bravos que su puta madre, os he montado una corrida. Bueno -corrigió-, aparte de las que acabáis de echarles a estas muchachas.

La gente, en su borrachera, aún fue capaz de apreciar en las palabras del Marqués un grado de locura superior a la irrealidad de esa noche. El Marqués apuró su whisky y caminó



despacio hacia la puerta al fondo del salón. Cuando llegó a ella, los miró soberbio y giró el pomo.

—¡Voilà!

*[section break]*

—¿Pero se puede saber a dónde vamos?

Pasamos de una calle a otra de aquel populoso tablero de ajedrez buscando el nombre de torero que rotulaba aquella en que tenía su sede la caseta de Triana en la puerta de Pascual Márquez ciento veinticuatro hervía una piña de cuerpos muy jóvenes que taponaban el paso me fijé que tenía las botas cubiertas de salpicaduras de barro tú estabas radiante le compré un clavel a una gitana y te lo puse con una horquilla en un lado del pelo sonreías con labios saturados de rojo y yo te besé con cuidado de no quitar la pintura en medio del impetuoso torrente de ojos me sentí como una zarandeada ramita y te cogí de la mano por miedo a perderme de ti por suerte Torrebruno hizo valer su despliegue de músculos y le abrió a Ana un pasadizo a través del bloque de carne que atestaba el precario local no fue necesario entrar hasta el fondo porque en ese momento Andrés salía hacia afuera con tres botellas de Tío Pepe que se había agenciado en la caseta de sus primos agarrados de la mano como una cordada en el filo de un glaciar a punto de resquebrajarse y partirse en pedazos decidimos explorar la Calle del Infierno y de nuevo fue un asalto de la materia en el estado más bruto y compacto el estrépito rítmico del comodón bakalao retumbando con corporeidad maleable en las pistas de los cochecitos de choque el grito torturado de los pasajeros cayendo a los abismos centrífugos de la montaña rusa el martillo la barca vikinga la olla el gusano la voz pegajosa sórdida y rayada de los locutores que a través de los tronantes megáfonos atraían como la miel a las moscas a las pandillas de chiquillos y padres curiosos en torno al hierro multicolor de sus hidráulicas atracciones de Feria [...]

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De la oscuridad de la habitación recién abierta surgió entonces el cuerpo musculoso y encabritado de un novillo, el hijo quizás de alguno de los toros disecados expuestos en la sala, cuyos ojos fijos y boca entreabierta parecieron aceptar la filial irrupción con un mudo mugido de asombro. En su ciega carrera el novillo chocó contra el borde de un sofá, derrumbó varias sillas, acometió con los apuntes de sus cuernos el pie de un florero, y se lanzó desesperado hacia los cuerpos rígidos e histéricos que veía correr, saltar, tropezar, caer o levantarse entre las sillas o alrededor de la mesa. Las mujeres, nada más ver aparecer al monstruo, empezaron a chillar y desgarrarse la garganta. Las tetas les botaban dolorosamente contra el pecho mientras intentaban, con movimientos descoordinados y rotos, subirse a las sillas, y de ahí a la mesa. El novillo embistió a la amiga de Rogelio, y derrumbada en el suelo, desnuda, la siguió corneando en las piernas, la espalda, la cabeza.

—¡Que me mata! ¡Que me mata!

La mujer chillaba con las manos enroscadas alrededor de la cabeza, creyendo que el vino de una botella derramada sobre el suelo en que se estaba rebozando era la sangre que brotaba a borbotones de sus cardenales. El salón se había vuelto al revés. Algunos hombres habían huido al pasillo; otros se escondían debajo de la mesa o se parapetaban detrás de una silla blandiendo las patas hacia afuera a modo de escudo. Rogelio se acercó al novillo y le tiró de la cola. El animal se revolvió, y comenzó a correr enloquecido. La mujer se arrastró por el suelo y se guareció bajo

el mueble. Rogelio persiguió al novillo. Hombre y animal, novillo y policía se perseguían y huían recíprocamente en círculos viciosos, mientras, junto a la puerta, el Marqués lloraba de risa, con la cara desencajada de un *clown*, varias cabezas se asomaban al pasillo sin atreverse a intervenir, y una piña de mujeres desnudas y descompuestas permanecía atrapada e inmóvil encima de la mesa. Después de muchas vueltas el novillo se paró y, de un salto, puso las pezuñas en el borde. Ellas, con las caras desencajadas, se desplazaron hacia la otra punta de la mesa, pero el peso amontonado de sus cuerpos convirtió el mueble en una catapulta y las mujeres cayeron al suelo de forma estrepitosa, con un ruido abombado, mientras las botellas, las bandejas y los restos de comida salían disparados y caían sobre sus cabezas después de trazar una parábola en el aire. Entre la masa de pechos, piernas, brazos y nalgas, cubiertos de sangre y moratones, surgió el grito de Antonia:

—¡Hijoputa, detén esto!

El Marqués dejó de reírse, pero sin borrar de su rostro la mueca de payaso. Se la quedó mirando, quieto, relajado.

—¡Que lo pares ya, so cabrón!

El Marqués no movió un músculo. Rogelio mantenía arrinconado al novillo junto a la chimenea, y cuando lo vio cansado se enganchó de su cuello y tiró de él hasta hacerle caer patas arriba bajo una nube de cenizas y polvo.

—¡Ayudadme!

Dos hombres se acercaron tanteando el terreno. Rogelio aún resistía en el suelo los cabezazos del novillo. Lo tenía agarrado con brazos y piernas, y a cada embestida del animal le respondía con un taconazo en los ijares. El novillo se revolvía como si fuese una serpiente de músculos. Otros dos hombres se le arrojaron encima. Entre los tres sujetaron al animal por la cabeza y el rabo y lo arrastraron a empujones hasta la habitación de donde había salido, y, tras cerrar la puerta, la aseguraron con una silla apoyada bajo el pomo. Las mujeres, entretanto, se iban incorporando penosamente. La que había sido embestida por el novillo lloraba en voz baja mientras rescataba su camisa de debajo de una langosta. Rogelio se sentó en una silla, jadeante. Durante unos minutos nadie pronunció una palabra. Hasta que Antonia miró al policía y le dijo:

—Nosotras ya hemos acabado. Haz el favor de pagarnos y llevarnos a casa.

Rogelio miró la hora en el reloj de la pared y asintió con la cabeza. Incluso para él era tarde.

Las mujeres se vestían en silencio, los invitados se marchaban sin decir adiós. El Marqués, reclinado en la silla, miró a su hombre de confianza y le dijo:

—En la mesa del pasillo he dejado el dinero metido en un sobre. Págales bien. Y vosotras, putas, no me miréis con esa cara.

Luego cerró los ojos y, mientras ellas salían, se puso a tararear una copla de Concha Piquer. *No debía de quererte, no debía de quererte, y sin embargo te quiero.*

[section break]

—Diego, qué susto he pasado.

Salimos del Infierno y nos fuimos a la caseta de los primos de Andrés a ver si invitaban a alguna botellita de fino y unas raciones de gambas pero sus primos no estaban allí de revancha nos adueñamos del tablado y las mesas bailamos juntos lo recuerdas? una sevillana tras otra yo estaba flotando no tenía sueño marcaba los pasos con mañas teatreras convencido te ceñía a mi pecho cada vez que tocaba dar vuelta entre todos pagamos a escote otras botellas de vino Elena

cantaba los demás le hacíamos coro con un murmullo incomprensible pasaron las horas estábamos a gusto había dejado de analizar mi alrededor y simplemente gozaba del momento la calidez de tu presencia la jovialidad de mis amigos el estruendo de los pechos y las manos entonando el ritmo de la tribu [...] me estaba quedando dormido cuando retumbó en el pasillo el griterío de una riña Torrebruno agarraba del cuello a un borracho Ramón se enzarzaba con otro la historia es que uno de ellos se había abalanzado sobre Ramón al decirle este cualquier cosa anodina y Torrebruno había acudido a defender a su amigo me acerqué a la trifulca como si fuera una representación de teatro en la que la sangre corriera de mentirijillas pero de repente vi alzarse en el aire una botella de cerveza y una mano crispada que la descargaba brutalmente contra la sien de Torrebruno antes de poder reaccionar vi a cámara lenta cómo la botella se partía en pedazos y a la vez el pelo se le teñía de rojo el agresor escurrió el bulto aprovechando el barullo Torrebruno soltó al tipo que tenía agarrado del cuello se llevó la mano a la sien y como si nada hubiera pasado se miró la sangre que le teñía los dedos la gente gritaba sin saber qué había pasado Andrés le pegó un puñetazo por si acaso al chaval engominado y este optó por salir a la calle el que se encaraba a Ramón se quedó impresionado a la vista de la sangre y temiendo venganza dio un paso atrás poniendo por delante las manos dijo nervioso que no conocía al chaval de la botella y nos olvidamos de él alguien sacó un pañuelo y tapó la hemorragia alertados por el ruido vinieron Julián Ricardo e Israel de la parte de atrás Torrebruno apretaba los puños y gritaba cobarde cobarde cada vez que escupía una palabra de la brecha le brotaba con más fuerza la sangre lo cogí del brazo y lo saqué hacía la puerta la gente al ver el pañuelo empapado se echaba hacia un lado bajo el toldo de la entrada se había formado un coro compacto para ver al herido de cerca oler su sangre de toro tú te adelantaste y avisaste a una ambulancia las sirenas excitaron al público con el rostro ensangrentado como las torturadas vampiresas de la casa del terror [...]

Unas sombras embatadas que se deslizaban montadas sobre zuecos se llevaron a Torrebruno a las profundidades asépticas de la sala de curas y a mí me dijeron que esperase sentado en las butacas del pasillo en las ventanas del fondo se veía clarear la madrugada con su frialdad de hielo azulado sentía que la lengua seca e inflamada me llenaba la boca y no me dejaba respirar los párpados pesados los ojos estriados el estómago revuelto gestando una diarrea detrás de la puerta se escuchaba la voz quejumbrosa y aniñada de Torrebruno mezclada con otra ronca de mujer hasta que no me senté en el asiento no pude darme cuenta de que enfrente de mí otra mujer que parecía disfrazada de puta con una blusa de tirantes y una minifalda de cuero me estaba mirando a bocajarro yo murmuré un hola intimidado ella me contestó con unos buenos días que me sonaron increíbles y bajé la vista a mis zapatos para escapar a su mareaje traté de distraerme calculando el tiempo que os haría falta para llegar hasta allí pero no pude evadirme de sus ojos por fin alcé la cabeza y ella aprovechó para preguntarme qué había pasado le conté todo por encima teniendo que superar un enorme cansancio ella parecía muy despierta como si estuviese acostumbrada a trasnochar como si la madrugada fuese su turno de trabajo previendo que la conversación había comenzado y ya no podía escabullirme pasé al contraataque y le pregunté qué hacía ella en ese lugar entonces me contó indignada una historia alucinante de reatas de putas ganaderos viciosos policías proxenetas revueltos todos ellos en una orgía en el cortijo de un marqués con un toro que salía de repente en medio del festín y empitonaba a esa compañera cuya voz era la que oía yo quejarse a través de la pared cuando hubo terminado su estrambótico relato la mujer se quedó muy callada me penetró con los ojos y a mí me dio vergüenza cerrarle los míos pensando que desviar la mirada sería una derrota mostrar un punto flaco entonces ella chasqueó la lengua y empezó a hablar muy lentamente como queriendo

seducirme pero midiendo al mismo tiempo las palabras por temor a espantarme de su lado yo la escuché sin mover un músculo de la cara intentando comprender cómo era posible que la noche tuviera tanto recoveco tantos callejeros sin salida.

—Me recuerdas a un hijo que tuve.

**Pgs. 354-359 (original & partial trots)**

Juanca tío tú eres uno de los tipos más inteligentes que he conocido tú sabes un taco de literatura no te das cuenta le digo que estás pasando tu vida atado a este banco aferrado a esa puta litrona encerrado con tu madre en tu casa han pasado los años y sigues clavado al pasado y el pasado no se puede cambiar el poco dinero que ganas te lo bebas de un trago todos los años nos dices que esta vez sí que te vas a preparar la oposición y luego es mentira Juanca yo sé que estás mal óyeme quiero decirte que tienes que hacer el esfuerzo de salir adelante que todos estamos contigo te has mirado al espejo acabas de cumplir cuántos veintinueve treinta tacos? Y pareces un viejo que no se puede mover yo soy tu amigo quiero ayudarte cuéntame cómo te sientes qué te pasa por la cabeza le dije avasalladoramente le dije como si quisiera arreglar su trauma en medio segundo con un electrochoque me miró abotargado me pidió veinte duros y se fue a comprar otro par de litronas bebimos juntos pensé que emborrachándome a su lado me abriría el corazón las litronas murieron pedimos otra se hizo muy tarde al fondo vi cómo los clientes de los veladores se replegaban a casa en las fachadas se extinguieron una a una las luces nos quedamos si cabe más solos era el momento propicio yo estaba muy mareado con la lengua de trapo me sentía sin embargo elocuente preciso volátil tocado por una iluminación poderosa él también cada vez más borracho bebiendo el doble que yo se separó de su cuerpo y su alma pudo mirarse por fuera dejar que los recuerdos saliesen Juanca le dije después de haber hablado de toros de fútbol de fiestas de la facultad de cine de mitos de héroes tejanos del Betis sobre todo del Betis no crees que ya es hora de referirse al pasado recordarlo digerirlo asumirlo ya de una vez para mirar al futuro por qué no me cuentas por qué te sientes culpable por aquel accidente si lo analizas sereno verás que no hay nada de qué arrepentirse sus ojos brillaban disueltos quería decir algo y las palabras se le atascaban como pedazos de carne en un tartamudeo angustioso yo quería mucho a mi padre susurra apenas le sale un hilo de voz de su cuerpo gigante yo quería mucho a mi padre llora se asfixia se le rompe la voz y yo lo maté no digas eso sí yo lo maté yo lo quería y yo lo maté qué estás diciendo Juanca fue un accidente mi padre era la persona más importante en mi vida sorbe la baba los pulmones se quedan sin aire yo tengo la culpa gime callado de que hoy él no esté vivo Juanca le digo piensa de nuevo cómo ocurrió dilo en voz alta verás cómo descubres que fue solo un desgraciado accidente nadie te acusa dije Juanca se aprieta con los dedos los ojos cerrados como recordando las palabras que brotan como el eco de un pozo lejano.

*[section break]*

*En la esquina del cruce estaba la venta, algunos domingos habíamos ido los tres a comer un churrasco, bajo el sol templado de invierno, Fue Juanca padre el que lo recordó, mi padre me dijo Juanca ese es el sitio de los churrascos, Juanca sonrió, yo le dije que sí, y cruzó con él una mirada, me giré hacia él y diciéndole le dije ya iremos que irían allí en septiembre a celebrar su aniversario de boda, porque ellos se casaron el 12, ¿Miraste a los lados? Me parece que sí, Se aseguró no estoy seguro de que podía seguir adelante y arrancó en primera, yo arranqué con un acelerón chirriante, La carretera recuerdo que de dos carriles era estaba hecha una mierda*

*bombardeada de baches, pero yo tenía que haberme fijado en que no tenía apenas cuneta, no tenía cuneta, y vista a ras del suelo se apreciaba en ella un firme ondulado, Juanca llora no puede respirar le golpeo la espalda vio la señal de límite de velocidad en cuarenta kilómetros yo vi la señal pero teníamos prisa, Él metió metí la tercera y sobrepasó enseguida los sesenta, pero no me di cuenta de que me estaba pasando Su padre mi padre miró a la derecha, recortado en el resplandor de la noche, se veía el perfil de los olivos y yo vi su perfil recortado sobre la loma de las ruinas de Itálica, y alabó el gusto me dijo de los hay que ver estos romanos para elegir cómo elegían los tíos el lugar el sitio de fundación de donde fundaban sus ciudades, Hipos de niño aliento cortado la voz que renace en un puro desgarró yo veía La colina de las ruinas de Itálica, desvanecidas ya en las penumbras de la noche, pasar se desplazaba de reojo a su lado mi lado a medida que avanzaban, sigue, Juanca, subió de sesenta y Juanca gime iba muy rápido, El padre papá comprobó que su reloj de muñeca marcaba las diez y un minuto me dijo que íbamos tarde, y yo también tenía prisa había quedado con mis amigos para ir a la Velá de Triana y no quería llegar con retraso llora no pensé en nada La furgoneta se bamboleaba atravesando los baches, yo sentía que el coche se estaba resintiendo y desde la parte trasera del coche me acuerdo además de que el viento les llegaba a pesar de la brisa que me daba en la cara se colaba por el resquicio de las ventanillas bajadas el penetrante olor de los abonos compuestos y los abonos compuestos olían fatal, la luz de Las ventas volcaban la luz de sus farolillos sobre la cinta de asfalto, se proyectaba en la carretera y sigue, sigue, Juanca envidió a me dio mucha envidia la gente que conversaba deja de hablar y bebía yo me había bebido una litrona entera una hora antes qué hijodeputa dice se bebe un nuevo buche al aire libre alrededor de las mesas, Juanca De una zanja asomó de repente mueve los labios el hocico de un perro, inclina su cabeza, se rasca la espalda su negro lomo escaldado, y vuelve a hablar con voz agonizante Sus pezuñas sangrantes pisaron el borde de la carretera. Dio unos pasos adelante balbucea unas palabras y se congeló, se detiene indeciso, como si estuviera recordando un detalle importante Juanca no lo vio vi hasta que los haces de luz se reflejaron en sus los ojos oscuros de un perro canijo con un brillo duplicado en el medio de la carretera, de repente estaba allí en medio parado A Juanca padre mi padre se le encogió el corazón, se agarró a mi brazo y Juanca hijo, a mí en una milésima de segundo, reconoció en esa mirada animal la súplica de alguien a punto de ser ejecutado me cortó esa mirada del perro y obedeciendo al instinto de no atropellarlo, dio di un volantazo para rodear al perro por el lado de la cuneta, si no lo hubiera visto lo habría machacado con el coche me habría dado un susto y luego lo habría enterrado pero mi padre estaría conmigo en este momento El padre Juanca aulló llora con terror a la vez que el morro del coche partía de todos modos jadea asfixiado las patas del perro con un zumbido sordo lo dejamos inválido que es mucho peor La rueda derecha derrapó derrapé sobre la arenilla de la cuneta, se encajó me encajé en la zanja de la que había salido aquella sombra sarnosa, Juanca se traga las lágrimas y deslizándose no pude no pudo controlar la furgoneta, me deslicé por el hueco como por un raíl, no respondió al volantazo con que Juanca quiso, quise devolverlo a su sitio con un volantazo pero el coche no respondió, esta historia me va a volver loco, sigue Juanca, sigue, solo te queda recordar El último instante solo fue para pensar si sobrevivirían al accidente, pensé que iba a morir en el accidente cuya anatomía se estaba gestando en vértigo terrible quise cerrar delante de los ojos, para no ver cómo nos matábamos pero El coche no pude arrancó vi cómo arrancábamos de cuajo una señal de tráfico, sentí que las ruedas perdieron el contacto con el suelo y el cubículo volcó volcábamos de lado, yéndose a empotrar nos empotramos contra un el muro defensivo que rodeaba el porche de una venta, y a convertir el coche se convirtió en un amasijo de hierro y abono siniestro total, derramado cruelmente sobre los hombros del padre y*

*el hijo Juanca se pasa un pañuelo por los ojos está congestionado la mierda del abono se nos cayó encima dice Una lluvia de cristales rotos los cristales les estalló nos estallaron en la cara, El cinturón de seguridad se me clavó se les hundió a fuego en el pecho, Juanca sentí una conmoción tremenda creyó que estaba soñando a veces me pregunto al levantarme por la mañana Dios mío por qué no habrá sido solo una pesadilla ese carrusel de caos, Las ruedas de la furgoneta, por la noche al acostarme tumbada de lado en un vertedero de ladrillos, giraban todavía en el aire doy vueltas en la cama cuando Juanca, como en una pesadilla imposible de detener, se tocó me toco la cara en plena oscuridad, y sintió me siento el corazón palpitando en su mano un líquido caliente para darme cuenta sin darse cuenta aún de que estoy vivo estaba aplastando con su peso el cuerpo de su padre, y de que la ausencia de mi padre en su calva se había abierto me ha abierto desde entonces una profunda herida que no dejaba que no deja de sangrar causarme dolor Papá, lo llamó lo llamo en las tinieblas por la noche Papá, repitió sollozando, papá como si me pudiera escuchar como si no quisiera admitir que Intuyó que su padre mi padre había muerto murió, Los primeros hombres que acudieron de la venta en su ayuda lo oyeron gritar como un loco entonces grito como un loco antes de perder la consciencia y me pongo a llorar.*

[section break]

Juanca se quedó mudo. A su lado en el banco, Diego contemplaba el reflejo de la farola en la superficie de la botella de cerveza. Juanca había dejado de llorar y se sorbía la nariz. Diego rompió el silencio. «Juanca, me voy para casa. Son ya las dos. Tina me está esperando -dudó un momento y añadió-; ¿Te apetece venir conmigo y tomarte un café?». Le apoyó la mano en el hombro, esperando. Un perro vagabundo ladró sin fuerzas en alguna parte. Una pareja de novios se besaba al otro lado de la plazoleta. Estaba refrescando. Juanca tragó aire profundamente, llenándose los pulmones. «No, déjalo, creo que yo también me voy para casa. Mi madre viene mañana del pueblo con mi abuela y no quiero que encuentre la casa hecha una pocilga, y a mí dormido a las dos de la tarde». Diego insistió: «Vente, hombre, has pasado un mal rato hablando conmigo. No es bueno que ahora te deje solo».

De la carretera que pasaba detrás de los bloques les llegaba el ruido ahogado de una moto, que nacía en algún punto lejano de la ciudad, pasaba estruendoso a su altura y se volvía a perder, como el zumbido de un mosquito remoto, al final de la noche. Juanca volvió a aspirar aire, y lo soltó, lentamente, por la boca. El corazón le latía pausado. «Hacía tiempo que no sentía tanta paz -su gran cabeza miraba de frente, atravesando la oscuridad-. Estoy borracho, vale, pero no tiene nada que ver. Me ha servido de mucho hablar contigo. No te imaginas cuánto». El cristal había cobrado un tacto frío en sus manos. Sopló un poco de viento y la carne se le puso de gallina. «No, hombre, es muy poco lo que he hecho por ti -Diego se sintió incómodo, intentó cambiar de conversación-. Hacemos una cosa. Vamos andando para mi casa, nos tomamos un café con Tina, y si te sientes mal te quedas a dormir en el cuarto libre, y si no, te vuelves para atrás. ¿Vale? Venga, vamos a andar. Ya he perdido la noción del tiempo que llevamos aquí». Diego, sin esperar la respuesta, se levantó y se fue a tirar a la papelera las botellas vacías. Juanca lo siguió con la mirada y al final también se incorporó. [...]

trot sample 1:

First few attempts: *he praised the good sense he told me just look of the how well those Ancient Romans who chose those guys chose the location the place to establish to found their cities -> Newest attempt: he praised the good sense of he told me just look at the Ancient Romans who chose how well those guys chose the location the place to establish to found their cities,*

trot sample 2:

Juanca\_\_moves his lips\_lowers his head, scratches his back\_\_and resumes speaking in an agonized voice\_\_stammers a few words and \_stops\_as if recalling an important detail\_I saw\_the eyes\_a scrawny little dog\_suddenly there in the middle of the road\_my father\_grabbed my arm and\_[to] me\_that dog's look cut into me and\_I jerked the wheel\_if I hadn't seen it I'd have run it over I would've been shaken up and then I'd have buried it but my dad would still be with me now

*From a ditch, there suddenly appeared\_the snout of a dog\_its scalded black back\_It placed its bloody paws on the edge of the road. It took a few steps forward\_froze\_undecided\_Juanca didn't see it\_until the beams of the headlights reflected in its\_dark of\_with a doubled brightness in the middle of the road,\_Juanca Senior\_felt his heart drop\_Juanca Junior\_in a split second, recognized that the animal's eyes seemed to be begging to be spared from execution\_following the impulse to avoid hitting it, he [gave]\_to veer around the dog along the edge of the road*

Juanca Suddenly, from a ditch, there appeared moves his lips the snout of a dog, lowers his head, scratches his back the scalded black hump of its back, and resumes speaking in an agonized voice It placed its bloody paws on the edge of the road. It took a few steps forward stammers a few words and froze stops undecided, as if recalling an important detail Juanca didn't see it I saw until the beams of the headlights reflected in its the dark eyes of a scrawny little dog creating a doubled brightness in the middle of the road, suddenly it was right in front of me Juanca Senior my father felt his heart shrink, grabbed my arm and Juanca Junior I felt that the animal's eyes seemed to be begging to be spared from execution that dog's pitiful look cut into me and following the impulse to avoid hitting it, he I jerked the wheel to veer around the dog along the edge of the road if I hadn't seen it I'd have run it over I would've been shaken up and then I'd have buried it but my dad would still be with me now

**Pgs. 392-402 (excerpts)**

Primero leyó el trozo cuadrado de cartón -«Soy enfermo de sida tengo dos niños favor de ayudarme»- y luego lo vio a él. Lo reconoció por su melena raída y grasienta, peinada con cuidado, no por la cara, que tenía doblada contra el pecho como la de un Cristo a punto de expirar. Estaba hincado en medio de la calle Sierpes, como una piedra molesta que sobresale en la corriente de un río. Algunos peatones le dedicaban una ojeada al reclamo de cartón, y con un gesto de piedad desconsolada pasaban de largo. Hubo quien se paró a su lado, se rascó el monedero y arrojó algunos duros a la caja de zapatos. Y adolescentes que se pegaban un codazo y al pasar a su lado se reían. Al fin se acercó, se puso en cuclillas y lo llamó por su nombre, frente a frente. Salvador abrió los ojos como un resucitado. Hizo el esfuerzo de sonreír, pero los músculos del rostro no le respondieron. Salvador no se levantó del sitio, y los dos siguieron hablando así, a media voz, a ras del suelo. Sin fuerzas para estar de pie en la carretera aparcando coches, no le había quedado más salida que exhibir sus postillas y esgrimir la miseria de sus hijos para ganarse su dosis diaria de heroína, limosna a limosna. Diego sabía que ya no había otra cosa que pudiera aliviarle el dolor y darle fuerzas para enfrentarse a la muerte. Le dijo que no había comido desde la noche pasada. [...] No le apetecía llorar. Era mejor sacarse una moneda de quinientas pesetas y ponérsela en la mano. Salvador tendría así lo suficiente para desmontar el puesto y largarse de una vez a comprar su dosis. Pero lo hizo en realidad para calmar una punzada que le ardía en la conciencia, saldar los intereses de la deuda que sentía que había contraído con aquel moribundo. Le prometió venir a verlo con más frecuencia. Y siguió su camino, con el coraje por los suelos.

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Todos se decían lo mismo para darse ánimos: un periódico con tanta historia, con tan fieles lectores y con tanto prestigio, no puede cerrar. Eso era algo inconcebible. A fuerza de repetírselo,

Diego acabó por creer que aquella cabecera era un elemento consustancial a la realidad, invulnerable y eterno. La suya era una crisis pasajera que acabaría por robustecer al periódico cuando cambiara de manos en el mercado editorial, se decía a sí mismo cada día antes de empezar a escribir. Después de semanas de negociación con los acreedores y de ruegos al Gobierno, a la Junta y al Ayuntamiento para conseguir una ayuda especial en forma de publicidad institucional extra, la esperanza de Diego se vio recompensada. Un grupo de empresarios, tras renegociar la deuda, había salvado *in extremis* de la quiebra a *Diario de Noticias* adquiriéndoselo a sus fundadores por el precio simbólico de una peseta. Los nuevos dueños acordaron con los trabajadores pagar la mitad de los salarios adeudados por los anteriores propietarios, a cambio de renunciar al resto y empezar de cero. Peor era nada, pensaron, y el optimismo, aunque teñido de amargura, volvió a la redacción y a los talleres. La ilusión duró poco. Menos que una noticia de última hora. Al poco tiempo dejaron de pagar, y ya nadie dudó; el paso siguiente serían los despidos.

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[...] Salvador, con los párpados, sonreía. Diego no le dijo nada sobre su reportaje, que había salido con su nombre alterado -«Para preservar su intimidad », se excusaba el texto- y su mirada oculta en la foto tras una tira negra -«Para que no tengamos problemas, estas cosas son muy delicadas», había exigido el director-. No quería explicarle que sentía que lo había traicionado de alguna manera cediendo a esas precauciones pusilánimes para disimular su identidad. En lugar de eso, le preguntó si podía hacerle algún favor. «Un día que te acuerdes, ve a poner flores en mi tumba», le dijo con tono de broma. Diego lo tomó en serio y le prometió que lo haría.

Entró un enfermero vestido de verde de hospital y con guantes de plástico en las manos. El hombre, muy robusto, sacó de un bolsillo una maquinilla de afeitar eléctrica y la aplicó sobre la barba del fugitivo. Los dientes metálicos subían y bajaban por la piel, y su movimiento dibujaba el perfil de los huesos faciales, marcados como nudos de sarmiento. «Salvador, ¿tú quieres también?», le preguntó mientras terminaba su obra. Él asintió con la cabeza. «Ofuf, ¡si yo lo decía de broma! Verás ahora el trabajito que me vas a dar», contestó jocoso el enfermero. Pero pasó a la acción con diligencia: manipuló la manivela de la cama para erguirlo, le puso una cubeta debajo de la barbilla y empezó a rebanarle la barba. Diego observó cómo iba asomando la piel escocida, el ágil resbalar de las cuchillas móviles ciñéndose a sus rasgos, la firmeza con que el enfermero le sujetaba el mentón con una mano y con la otra lo afeitaba. Viéndolo, se imaginó al empleado de la funeraria que horas o días más tarde tendría que adecentar su cara con cosméticos y afeites sobre la mesa de mármol, y esa visión se fundió en su memoria con el cadáver destripado que había visto en el Instituto Anatómico Forense. «Otro favor te pido. En vez de enterrarme ya, ¿no podría donar yo mi cuerpo a los médicos, tú sabes, para que estudien con él esta enfermedad y descubran una vacuna?», le rogó con los ojos alzados hacia el techo, mientras la maquinilla apuraba su garganta. «Lo voy a preguntar», dijo Diego. Sin embargo, sabía que la Facultad de Medicina no aceptaría nunca un cadáver infectado, por miedo a que los estudiantes se contagiasen al abrirle las entrañas con el bisturí y mancharse con su sangre. El enfermero terminó su faena y se la enseñó a Salvador, reflejada en un espejo. «Mu bien, así estoy más presentable», susurró, como si no hubiera nadie en la habitación y le hablara a su conciencia, cada vez más cansado. Diego esperó a que Salvador se quedara dormido, y entonces se levantó y se despidió de él poniéndole la mano en la frente. Desde la puerta se giró para verlo por última vez, antes de perderse en el pasillo.



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«¿Salimos o no?»: la pregunta saltaba de boca en boca. Los empleados de talleres habían subido a hablar con los de redacción y por una vez, con el sudor chorreándoles por la cara, ambos discutían juntos un destino común: «¿Salimos o no?». Sacar el periódico o declararse en huelga. El director en funciones había dimitido y se había largado de vuelta a Madrid. Por unanimidad habían nombrado a Cabañeros director temporal y representante en las negociaciones. La discusión hervía a gritos, la desesperación se propagaba como el fuego. «El periódico tiene que salir, aunque sea con tres páginas. Si los lectores no nos ven en el quiosco, entonces sí que estamos perdidos», argüía Cabañeros, inflamado. «Que no, coño, que no podemos ser tan gilipollas de que no nos paguen y encima seguir trabajando», gritaba fuera de sí Manolo el de talleres, con los ojos desorbitados, mientras se paseaba entre la gente buscando apoyos. «Vamos a ponernos en huelga». Voces tensas hicieron coro. Para los redactores, romper la continuidad del periódico, la ligazón temporal que lo unía a la realidad, era algo impensable y extremo que solo supondría adelantar el fin desastroso que se avecinaba. Para los operarios de talleres, que solían despreciar la falta de conciencia sindical de los de arriba, indicando con el pulgar a los redactores que trabajaban en la planta superior, seguir trabajando gratis era una humillación intolerable y una falta de respeto a sí mismos. Esas opiniones antagónicas partían en dos a la plantilla. «¿Salimos o no?». Cabañeros y Manolo elevaron el tono de la discusión. De allí pasaron a los insultos, y de los insultos a los manotazos al aire. No llegaron a pegarse porque Rosa, de Sociedad, se metió en medio chillando. Diego asistía a la escena con asombro, como si no se la creyera. Rosa, al borde de las lágrimas, se puso a gritar pidiendo unidad entre los compañeros. Pero calló de repente cuando Rómulo, el fotógrafo más veterano, apareció en el marco de la puerta, con el rostro desencajado y jadeando: «Alonso se ha matado en un accidente». El silencio cayó como una losa. «Vi dos coches estrellados en la cuneta y me paré a hacer la foto. Había cuatro cuerpos tapados con mantas, y al acercarme le he visto la cara». Nadie respira. Una garganta de mujer arranca a llorar, luego otra. «Vamos a sacar el periódico, hostias», sostiene en voz baja alguien entre dientes. Nadie discute. Al día siguiente salió en portada la foto de cuatro cadáveres cubiertos con mantas en una cuneta, junto a un amasijo de hierros y el titular: «Mueren cuatro personas en accidente de tráfico, entre ellos el abogado de los trabajadores de *Diario de Noticias*».

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[...] El cielo estaba azul como no lo había visto en mucho tiempo. El sol le calentaba las mejillas. No tenía prisa, quería llegar a su tumba como se llega a la salida de un laberinto, pues no otra cosa sino un laberinto de memorias desencajadas en el tiempo se le figuraban las hileras de nichos encalados, los panteones como palacios de ultratumba, las cruces de hierro herrumbroso clavadas en el suelo entre los jaramagos y la yerba. Se detuvo en el rincón de los personajes legendarios: el escultórico sepulcro de Paquirri, con el torero congelado en un perpetuo pase de muleta; el de Joselito el Gallo; el de Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, el de Antonio Machín. Sus tumbas tenían flores frescas, tributo de manos fervorosas que los seguían adorando después de la muerte. [...] Encontró a un hombre que había alargado su vida cien años, y la tumba de un bebé que había nacido muerto. A medio camino, quedaban los demás. Incluidos, pensó, los mil doscientos hombres que fusilaron en la guerra civil contra las paredes del cementerio, para que sus verdugos

no perdieran tiempo y fuerzas arrastrando desde lejos los cadáveres hasta la fosa común. Intentó imaginar qué cielo, qué luz habrían visto aquellos hombres en el momento de ser asesinados y desprenderse de modo irrevocable de la vida. Acabó llegando sin darse cuenta a la zona que buscaba. Encontró su nicho en la penúltima columna de la calle, en la hilera superior. Su nombre estaba inscrito a punzón en el centro de una modesta lápida de piedra. Salvador Ortega Serrano. Las flores de plástico caían sobre el borde de la jarra. El agua se había evaporado. Buscó una fuente y la volvió a llenar. Luego metió su ramo de claveles, mezclándolo con las flores falsas, y colocó la jarra en su sitio. Acarició el relieve de las letras que componían su nombre. Si hubiera sido practicante habría rezado un padrenuestro. En cambio creyó que el único homenaje era llenar por un momento la mente con el recuerdo de su rostro, antes de que saliese a la calle y el torbellino de la vida le hiciera olvidarlo. Pasó un minuto, dos minutos, intentando moldear las facciones del moribundo, como si el pensamiento fuera barro. Quería imaginarse su rostro tal como habría sido de muchacho, cuando se agarraba a la vida, cuando se creía inmortal. Vio a ese chaval vivo y sano, sin magulladuras, sin marcas, sin veladuras en los ojos, apenas un instante. Luego se esfumó. Volvió al camino principal del cementerio con la cabeza agachada, siguiendo las sombras de los cipreses en el suelo hasta llegar a la salida. Allí, entre los puestos de flores, abarcó con la mirada el horizonte del extrarradio. Tras las paredes del hospital de San Lázaro se alzaban los bloques del Polígono Norte. Aguzó la vista. Allí estaba, con la persiana a medio bajar, la ventana del cuarto donde Tina y él se habían amado tanto. Respiró: estaba vivo.

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A *Diario de Noticias* le pasó lo peor que le puede ocurrir a un periódico: convertirse en noticia de sí mismo, y que los medios de la competencia tengan que hablar de él por compromiso solidario o para hacer leña del árbol caído. «*Diario de Noticias* no salió ayer a la calle », titulaba la columna de uno. « Por los compañeros de *Diario* », dedicaba otro su viñeta de humor negro. En la redacción agradecían las menciones, las dedicatorias. Pensaban: mientras te nombran, estás vivo. Después de la huelga consiguieron cobrar dos meses de atrasos, y brilló de nuevo una luz de esperanza, pero era una esperanza irreal, pálida, como la de la bombilla roja en el cuarto de revelado. El desánimo empezó a ser mayor que la capacidad de lucha, sostenida con buen humor durante meses. Solo un poco mayor, pero lo bastante para desequilibrar la balanza y hacer comprender a Diego que el final estaba al caer, que había que moverse y saltar en marcha. En el periódico, los que podían se iban largando a otro sitio, donde fuera. Real se fue a *El País*, Netti a la Junta. Cabañeros, encorajinado, quería morir con las botas puestas, y se agarraba aún, con los que quedaban, a la posibilidad de que un grupo editorial vasco reflatara el periódico. Lo importante, decía, es no desaparecer del quiosco: « La gente se acuerda de ti un día, dos días, una semana. Después, si no te ve, por mucho que te haya querido, se habitúa a tu ausencia y se olvida de tu nombre ». Diego, para sí, le daba la razón, y todavía era capaz de envalentonarse, con ese orgullo de los desesperados, cuando Cabañeros le decía señalando con el dedo hacia la rotativa en la planta de abajo: « Ahí tenemos bobinas para un mes. Mientras haya papel, el periódico sale ». Pero la fe le duró a Diego menos que las bobinas. A la semana, ya solo pensaba en marcharse. El periódico, su periódico, iba a cerrar. Y sin ruidos, sin pena en la calle, cerró. « Provisionalmente », pero cerró.

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Salieron de la facultad a la calle.

—A Barcelona.

—¿A Barcelona?

—Sí, a Barcelona.

—¿Y aquí por qué no? Te podrías meter en otro sitio, ya te conocen.

—Quiero empezar algo nuevo, Tina. Aquí ya sé lo que me espera.

—Pero todavía pueden recuperar el periódico, ¿no? ¿No me has dicho tú eso?

—*Diario* ya no sale, Tina. Mejor lo acepto y dejo de deprimirme.

—Pues venga, nos vamos a Barcelona. Vale. Al principio nos podemos quedar en casa de mi tío, mientras buscamos trabajo.

—Claro, mujer. Hay mucho movimiento. Seguro que encontramos algo. Lo que sea, seguro. El catalán se aprende rápido. Y fíjate, para ti, la vida artística que hay. Pero quiero verte convencida de que quieres ir. ¿Tú estás animada?

—Sí, claro que sí. No somos los primeros que emigran. Y es una ciudad preciosa además. Siempre habíamos querido ir de vacaciones, ¿no? Pues ha llegado el momento. Vamos a verlo como una aventura.

—Como una aventura, eso es. Como una aventura.

#### **Pgs. 406-410**

[...] Plano medio presentadora (mirada de comprensión y condolencia, pelo teñido de rubio, traje de Christian Dior, micrófono aferrado con las dos manos como si se tratase de un báculo):

—Sabemos que es un momento difícil para ti. Antonia, sin duda sacar a la luz las heridas del pasado es una experiencia dolorosa, y por eso te agradecemos esta noche tu presencia en nuestros platós para contar tu experiencia, la experiencia, recordemos el tema de esta edición especial, de las mujeres prostitutas. ¿Mujeres de mala vida?

Primer plano testigo. Un segundo y fuera.

Primer plano presentadora:

—¿Mujeres de la calle?

Planos cortos público (caras compungidas, expresiones piadosas, mirada de muchacha adolescente con los ojos brillantes). Dos segundos y fuera.

Plano medio presentadora:

—¿Debería la prostitución ser un oficio cotizado en la Seguridad Social o se trata de una lacra que hay que prohibir? ¿Cómo reaccionaría si su calle se convirtiese en un mercado del sexo? Pueden participar en nuestro programa y votar sobre el debate de esta noche. Prostitución: vicio u oficio.

Plano general público (rostros atentos, cuchicheos de adolescentes entre los asientos).

Primer plano testigo (se sorbe la nariz, respira profundo, acompasa el corazón. Con una mano se retira un mechón de pelo que le molesta en la cara. Ya ha recuperado la voz. Se pone el micrófono debajo de los labios, esperando la próxima pregunta).

Plano general de presentadora y testigo. Habla presentadora:

—Clientes, caricias anónimas, peligro en la calle, explotación, malos tratos, desamparo. ¿Hasta cuándo, Antonia? ¿Hasta cuándo tendrás fuerzas para seguir así?

Seguimos en plano general. Habla testigo:

—Muchas veces me levanto por la mañana y eso es lo que me digo a mí misma en el espejo: Antonia, hija, ¿hasta cuándo va a durar sin romperse la guita? La vida me ha dao muchos palos, muchos. Muchos. Y ya estoy cansá. Pasan los días y una se ve más vieja. Si pudiera, cambiaría, empezaría una...

Planos cortos público (ojillos despectivos de mujeres, jóvenes que cabecean asintiendo, con empatía). Audio en off: habla testigo tres segundos.

...nueva existencia ahora mismo. A lo mejor en el futuro me reencarno...

Primer plano testigo:

... en una princesa, vete tú a saber. Pero qué queréis que le haga. Es la única manera que tengo de ganarme la vida, nadie va a venir ahora a darme trabajo de otra cosa. No tengo por qué avergonzarme. He penado mucho, pero el dinero que me he ganado es tan limpio como el de cualquiera. Y te digo una cosa: no me arrepiento de nada.

—¿Qué estás viendo, Diego? -el vapor escapa por un resquicio de la tapadera de la olla. En el fondo marrón, bulle el caldo de las lentejas con grandes burbujas que estallan a coro. Tina mete la cuchara, recoge un poco en su hueco y se lleva el contenido a la punta de la lengua.

—Nada. Un *reality show* de esos. Que si la prostitución es un oficio -sintetiza Diego, puesto de pie frente al televisor. Tina saborea el sorbo de la cuchara. La lengua siente el tacto poroso de la madera, y se quema con el caldo.

—Esto ya está. ¿Hago una ensalada o no?

En alguna curva del cerebro Diego ya conserva la imagen de esa mujer. En alguna parte la ha visto. Pero ¿dónde?

—Por mí no la hagas.

Primer plano presentadora:

—Mira en tu corazón, Antonia. ¿De verdad que no te arrepientes de nada? Si pudieras empezar de nuevo y cambiar algo, aunque solo fuera una cosa, ¿qué harías?

Plano general estrado de invitados. Habla testigo:

—Mira, el pasado, pasado es, y eso no se puede cambiar. Pero lo voy a decir. El mayor dolor de mi vida es haber perdido a mi hijo: eso lo tengo clavao como un puñal en el corazón. Lo tuve que dar en adopción recién nacido, pero claro, yo entonces estaba sola en el mundo, no tenía ni qué darle. El dolor mío es que esa cosita de mis entrañas ha crecido en la vida sin yo verlo, y ahora me lo cruzo por la calle y no sé quién es.

Los ojos de Diego se reflejan en el cristal de la pantalla. «Dónde la he visto», se pregunta. «Dónde la he visto».

La mujer acarició la naricita del bebé con la yema del dedo. El niño ahogó su angustia en el llanto, convertido ya, a medida que se iba quedando dormido, en gemidos intermitentes, sobresaltados. La pareja reanudó marcha a paso lento, camino del seiscientos aparcado frente a las vallas de una obra. El hombre deslizó el brazo sobre el hombro de la mujer, hizo el ademán de pellizcar el moflete deshinchado del niño.

—¿Se lo diremos algún día? -preguntó el hombre.

—Para qué. Ya lo hemos hablado. En el orfanato no saben nada de la madre. Si se lo dijéramos, se pondría a buscarla como loco, no la encontraría, y al final acabaría sufriendo mucho más. Y encima con nosotros cambiarían las cosas. Puede que nos dejara de querer.

Primer plano presentadora:

—¿Te gustaría ver a tu hijo, Antonia?

Primer plano testigo:

—Daría por verlo lo que me quede de vida.

Plano medio presentadora:

—¿Qué le dirías si lo vieses? Imagina que te está viendo ahora mismo en directo desde su casa. Dile algo.

Primer plano testigo (la voz temblona, afónica, los ojos brillantes, la boca contraída).

—Hijo (pausa).

Planos cortos público (gestos emocionados, curiosidad morbosa). Dos segundos y fuera.

Primer plano testigo:

—Hijo. A lo mejor me estás viendo, pero tú no me conoces. Yo soy la mujer que te trajo al mundo. Tu madre.

Diego repasa escenas en su memoria, vertiginosamente, intentando ubicar aquella en que encaja esa mujer con la voz rota. Tina pasa a su lado haciendo equilibrios con dos platos de lentejas sobre una bandeja.

—A esta mujer la conozco yo y no sé de qué.

Tina pone los platos en la mesa, a su lado los cubiertos y el pan. Alza la cabeza hacia la tele, y se encuentra con el busto teñido de la presentadora.

—¿A esa?

—No, a la pu --vacila, se corrige--, a la prostituta que está entrevistando. A ver si sale.

Primer plano testigo:

—Yo te tuve que abandonar, y ahora tú tienes otros padres, padres buenos y honrados, seguro, que te habrán querido y te habrán dado lo que yo no pude darte. Solo quiero decirte que me alegro en el alma de que hoy seas un hombre de bien, y no hayas tenido la vida que yo tuve.

—La comida ya está puesta.

—Voy, voy. Joé, a esta mujer de qué la conozco.

Yo lo único que espero de la vida es poder conocerte un día y darte un abrazo,

—Apaga ya la tele, Diego, que te quedas embobao con todo.

Diego, de pie, vuelve la cabeza y ve los platos humeando en el lado opuesto del comedor. Las tripas le hacen ruido de hambre.

...para que sientas con el calor de mi corazón...

De un impulso, se vuelve, pulsa el botón y apaga la tele. La imagen de la mujer se condensa en un punto luminoso en el centro de la pantalla oscura. Permanece allí unos segundos, fijo, resistiéndose a irse, hasta que, poco a poco, palidece y se disuelve en la negrura, volviendo al remoto sueño del que nació.

...que nunca me he olvidado de ti.

—Pero mejor que se lo digamos nosotros a que se entere por alguien.

—¿Quién se lo va a decir?

—Nadie, es verdad.

La pareja se detuvo al costado del seiscientos. El niño había caído en un sueño frágil, del que lo sacaba, convulsionado, cualquier ruido, cualquier movimiento. Había rumor de vigas y martillazos en lo alto del esqueleto en construcción. La mujer no dejaba de acunar al niño en sus brazos.

—Ya está, hombre, ahora me acuerdo. Es la mujer que me encontré el sábado de Feria en el ambulatorio. La que me dijo que tenía un hijo de mi edad.

—No le des más vueltas. Es nuestro hijo, y punto. Y yo soy su madre.

—Come, anda, que se te van a enfriar las lentejas.