

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---------|
| Translator's Foreword/Nota de la traductora | 11/215 |
| Dedication/Dedicatoria | 15/219 |
| Epigraphs/Epígrafes | 17/221 |
| <hr/> | |
| Gertrude/Gertrudis | 19/223 |
| | 42/245 |
| | 72/273 |
| | 103/300 |
| | 124/320 |
| | 145/339 |
| | 162/355 |
| | 187/377 |
| | 206/395 |
| <hr/> | |
| Martin/Martín | 20/224 |
| | 26/229 |
| | 44/246 |
| | 63/263 |
| | 90/289 |
| | 105/302 |
| | 120/317 |
| | 136/331 |
| | 149/343 |
| | 192/382 |
| | 202/391 |
| <hr/> | |
| Woman Who Talks to Herself in the Park/ Mujer que habla sola en el parque | 22/225 |
| | 31/234 |
| | 37/239 |

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| Micaela/Micaela | 22/226 |
| | 46/248 |
| | 86/285 |
| | 128/323 |
| | 173/365 |
| | 195/385 |

| | |
|---------------|--------|
| Estela/Estela | 23/227 |
| | 47/249 |
| | 66/266 |
| | 93/292 |

117/313

159/352

171/363

181/372

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Daontaon/Daontaon | 28/231 |
| | 74/274 |
| | 82/282 |
| | 99/296 |
| | 119/315 |
| | 132/327 |
| | 142/337 |
| | 184/375 |

Lola/Lola 31/234

51/253

The air that surrounds man is unfamiliar and strange, and within it we
are exposed to our own destruction.

Prologue to *La Celestina*
Fernando de Rojas

I'm pretty sure he yelled "Good luck!" at me. I hope not. I hope to hell
not. I'd never yell "Good luck!" at anybody. It sounds terrible, when
you think about it.

Catcher in the Rye
J.D. Salinger

At the very end, one's answers to the questions the world has posed
with such relentlessness are to be found in the facts of one's life.
Questions such as: Who are you? ... What did you actually want? ...
What could you actually achieve? ... At what points were you loyal
or disloyal or brave or a coward? And one answers as best as one can,
honestly or dishonestly; that's not so important. What's important is
that finally one answers with one's life.¹

Embers
Sándor Márai

¹ Originally *A gyertyák csonkig égnek* (1942), translated as *Embers* by Carol Brown Janeway. New York: Knopf, 2001. P. 120.

WOMAN WHO TALKS TO HERSELF IN THE PARK

The sky turned blood orange, and a strong wind came out of the northeast. And then a black cloud ran into a red one, and suddenly, the two plummeted down onto Havana. And Havana is dying...

MICAELA

Micaela was woken up by the dog's cries. Over the last few days, that same lament, a sort of anguished howl, started a few hours before dawn to end just a little bit later. You could also hear it around noon, and on one or two occasions she had heard it at midnight.

Most times Micaela didn't realize when it started. At some moment, the dog's whining, a consistently sharp and helpless sound, infiltrated her dreams and woke her up. When she already had her eyes open and was wavering between feelings of compassion and annoyance, the moans would stop abruptly. The sudden cut-off made her think that the puppy, for without a doubt it was some little bitty animal, stopped whimpering when it was given whatever it had been begging for.

The first time she had thought the dog had been abandoned, and gritting her teeth she had gotten up to look out through the blinds. Despite the fact that she couldn't tell exactly which patio the sounds were coming from, she was sure that the cries were coming from the building behind hers. On that occasion, when silence broke out, she had imagined the dog dying, from some painful disease, and she had felt bad for it, a sort of far away sadness like the one you get when the dramatic part of a movie is really well done.

Over the next few mornings, whenever the yelps started up again, she started to be haunted by those absurd thoughts of death and loneliness. On the surface, these didn't have anything to do with the dog's complaints, and they made her feel reluctantly disgusted with herself for climbing out so far on that limb of self-pity.

Last night, however, the pup's crying interrupted the Russian novel

MUJER QUE HABLA SOLA EN EL PARQUE

Una alcantarilla de la calle explotó y salió una nata negra que lo inundó todo. Y entonces hasta los edificios más altos quedaron sumergidos bajo los excrementos. Y La Habana se muere...

LOLA

A casa de Lola, Micaela iba de vez en cuando. No le decía a nadie por qué, eran asuntos de los que no se hablaba. Hace unas semanas conoció a sus pollitos recién nacidos, apenas un puñado inquieto de plumones amarillos. Lola los tenía al calor de una incubadora improvisada. ¡Allí estaban los futuros almuerzos de su precaria subsistencia!

Micaela observó a uno de ellos, el más débil, cojeaba y le costaba bastante esfuerzo alimentarse. Se lo comentó a Lola en una de aquellas fútiles conversaciones convenidas entre ambas para ahuyentar el silencio o evitar ciertos temas. Lola, cortés y distanciada, le explicó que siempre ocurría así, uno de la camada, el más indefenso, debía sucumbir.

El tono indiferente de Lola atribuló a Micaela hasta un extremo descomedido, tal vez por culpa de la impotencia. Nada podía hacer, no era su casa, no era su pollero, y, en este caso, Lola, como los antiguos señores feudales, poseía la potestad de la vida y la muerte, al menos sobre esas alucinantes criaturas amarillas, aquellos pollitos entregados al albur de la crianza familiar, subterfugio con que algún ocurrente había pretendido solucionar el problema de escasez de pienso, miles de recién salidos del huevo distribuidos por los hogares habaneros para que se convirtieran en gallos y gallinas.

Micaela pensaba, con exagerado desconsuelo, en los pollitos que habían capitulado por inapropiadas temperaturas, enfermedades, asfixiados entre las manos de los niños o en bocas de gatos tan hambrientos como sus dueños. Micaela se negó de plano a adquirir los suyos, los que "le tocaban". Los polluelos de Lola, sin embargo, no se sabe por cuáles misterios o mañas, se convirtieron en hermosas aves.