

SUEÑO FINITO (*IN DREAMS*)

Jesús Rosales

I lay in bed curled up in a fetus position, a human question mark. Under the blankets my body shelters an empty space that is secure and inviting. I cannot hear my heart beat. I cannot feel the blood run through my veins. The warm embrace of my hands—laid motionless between my knees—comforts me. I lay thinking that my protruding face may not belong to the body that hides beneath the blankets that cover my bed. I have not slept for hours. I have spent a great amount of time staring at the streaks of light that torment the darkness of the room. I open and close my eyes snapping shots at everything unconditionally. Nothing matters in my solitude, at least not until the powerful leonine voice that thunders through the stereo speakers slips into my ears. Vulnerable and unprotected, I surrender to the story of the song that unfolds inside my mind.

The voice that speaks to me comes from a man dressed in a black suit and dark glasses. He stands stoically inside a circle created by a bright spotlight. I cannot determine if his feet are touching the ground for the spotlight only draws attention to the upper part of his body. It is not possible for me to see outside that circle of light that shines over him. His electric guitar shields part of his body as he slowly strums it. My eyes focus on his timeless face but are unable to penetrate his gaze. His magnified tinted glasses impede such intimacy. But it is of no consequence for the power of his voice overpowers my senses. His story unfolds before my eyes as the melodramatic first stanza of the song induces me into the mystery of his world:

*A candy-colored clown they call the Sandman
Tiptoes to my room every night
Just to sprinkle stardust and to whisper:
“Go to sleep, everything is all right”¹*

The landscape that the singer has created in the opening lines of the song soon becomes my own. I appropriate it to serve my self-seeking melodrama. The “candy-colored clown” tiptoes into my room slowly soothing its silence. He approaches and whispers in my ear to surrender my worries to the darkness, assuring me that the silence of the night is a friendly and faithful companion to the lonely. Do not fear it, he reassures. It is soothing for the soul. He tells me that the singer believes in him. And I want to believe he who believes.

I slowly emerge from the center of a stage that is lighted by multicolored floodlights. They guide me to the entrance of a Catholic church carnival where the “candy-colored clown” greets me. He takes the moistened entrance ticket from my sweaty hand and welcomes me in, patting me on the shoulders as he silently leads me through the gate. Inside, I stand alone captivated by the powerful colored light bulbs that illuminate the festival grounds. In the distance I hear the singer’s voice encouraging me to speak to myself and confess my concealed desires. To crave like all dreamers do.

In dreams... I walk with you

In dreams... I talk to you

In dreams... You’re mine

I faithfully obey what the author of the story—now my story—commands and an unexpected scene unfolds before my eyes. A familiar face steps out from the side of a giant tent. Anna walks towards me with the resilience of a Puritan pilgrim. In our cultural history her people and mine have known each other for centuries but to this day still speak in different tongues. Her self-confidence deeply attracts me. She smiles as she approaches me and gently holds my hand. Momentarily, her presence weakens my will without either one of us articulating a word. That intimidation soon dissipates and we walk side by side up to the main altar of my barrio church. Together—facing the towering suffering Jesus that is nailed to the cross—our reciprocal embrace celebrates the mestizaje of our cultures in the silence of a reconstructed language. There is no pain or contradictions in our relationship. There is no cultural nationalism to be voiced. No tragic corrido stories to be sung. No conquering country specifying war treaty promises to be signed and later broken. It is not an affirmative action love story. Anna caresses my face while the image

of a nurturing Guadalupana watches us from her pedestal on a side altar. I desire to perform a human ritual that is both sacrilegious and sacred. I am urged to seize the moment and melt my body into hers. But as I proceed to perform my ceremony, I hear the thundering cry of the man that altered my reality several minutes ago as if to admonish me for my contemplated intentions. Ironically, he who has led me to dramatize a fleeting love affair abruptly eradicates it with the power of that familiar leonine voice. And I acquiesce, for I have no power to contradict the reality of a make-believe story.

Unexpectedly, the intangible images begin to fade away. My wishful lover is the first to disappear from the melodramatic scene. Then the buildings, the mechanical toys and the clown's colorful costume vanish. The lights rapidly begin to diminish. Soon, only I am the only one left standing in the spotlight generated from the fabricated moon hanging from somewhere in the sky. But, promptly, I am also erased from the magic circle of the spotlight. The man in black suit and dark glasses has returned to his domain.

*But just before the dawn
I awake and find you gone*

The agonizing gestures on his face stress the emotion that encompasses the final chord of his stirring song. The dramatic voice and the equally powerful music seem to be heading on a collision course, and they do, abruptly ending the story of the song. The music stops, the voice subsides and once again complete silence reigns over me.

As the song ends, again I lay motionless, overwhelmed by the darkness of the room. I am curled inside the covers with my hands praying between my knees. My protruding head remains a spectacle and my eyes blink sluggishly. But inside I feel alive. My mind rejoices to the fact that Roy Orbison was destined to write and sing—"In Dreams"—for the lonely. Because of this I am able to emancipate the feeling that tumbles inside my muted heart. I feel fulfilled and rejuvenated. My faith is restored, momentarily. In my mind I look forward to tomorrow's night when, once again, I will fold myself into a fetus position, create another human question mark, and be swept away into another imaginary story. In dreams I will be born and I will die, and in between I will resurrect another, or perhaps the same timeless *sueño finito* through the voice of the man in the black suit and dark glasses.

Tonight, like countless times before, the singer has assured me that dreams do have a purpose. That their vision and truth create a deep emotional impact that will allow me to someday step out of bed and decipher their meaning. Like stain glass windows inside of a church's wall, dreams unite the multiple hues of light that carry the secrets and answers of one's existence. The man in the dark glasses has convinced me that dreams are real, as long as within them, one is able to remember the dreamer's name: Carlos. With this truth firmly in place, it is determined that dreams do imitate life, thus validating the enchanted power of the fairy tale and of the miracle.

And I want to believe he who believes.

NOTES

- 1 All the quotes in this selection are taken from *In Dreams* written by Roy Orbison.