

Craig Woods

Dog Days:

Reflections on Time, Abandonment, and Pedro Páramo

It stares at me through a film of dust - a second-hand copy of Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, the dog-eared cover adorned with an illustration of two vandalized Mexican figurines; bride and groom, arm in arm, their once featureless faces now scarred with black eyeless sockets and cold skeletal grins. I can taste their tragedy in the dust, Jo-Jo. The bland report of time's grey train as it grinds meaninglessly forwards in your absence. This dust has become my home since you left. I can trace my runaway thoughts and dreams in the tiny furrows carved there by phantom winds.

Those same winds have carried my emissary to Comala. As I type, I can sense her progress; my heart reverberating with the rhythms of her lithe muscles and the fires of her feral breath. Though an enormity of time and space separates her from me, Soledad is as symbiotically joined to me now as she has ever been. Like every other character I have ever written, she has accompanied me since childhood; skulking anonymously in the grey afternoon shadows of hazily remembered play-grounds, lying curled tight by the open fire on long-forgotten Christmas eves, her low canine growls lacing my boyish dreams with a latent but gorgeous fury. She had endured those years with the patience of a volcano. Waiting for me to write her story. Waiting to become it. Now our roles are reversed. It's the natural way of things. As her writer I can but only report on her progress. I can no more influence her actions nor decide her destiny than I could do so for my friends and associates in the corporeal realm. She has slipped out of time while I am laboured with it. It is only she and not I who can properly interrogate the landscape of her birth. In the fractured heart of modernizing Mexico, her keen hybrid senses can pick out the shards of dream and memory necessary for me to continue writing her story. Like her wild lupine ancestors she will hunt, capture and retrieve the material with savage single-mindedness. It is my duty to catalogue and assemble the material she retrieves. I must be prepared.



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