

# Pepe Mendez Llarosa

## *Infrarrealismo*

My name is Pepe Mendez Llarosa. I told them. To my friends, I am Pepito. Soy Mexicano. From this great and dirty ciudad that was once Tenochtitlan. And now has become the place where dusty midnight cats dance along the chipped and broken pave-ments through which the sooty jewels - Forever stained by those emerald waters of Texcoco - push up and glimmer in the lamp-lit labyrinths, the very same ones crossed by today's tired and hungry youths who listen to cassettes and whistle their resemblances, their own words of astonishment and rage.

At first, it was my mind that they wanted, that they watched - Like an hourglass about to expire. A bitter mind. Not one they understood too well. 'Madness', they told me. They nodded. 'Madness', they told themselves. But the difference, I told them, be-tween and a madman and I is that I am not mad. But sad! Sad about this boundless ocean of emptiness, I fore-see, where all that is left is greed and the endless self perpetuating hate for which we shall all be responsible.

They sneered. Then straightening up, one said, 'Cuenteme un poco de usted, Pepe'. He said, 'Tell me about this sadness of yours and how it came to be'. He leant back into the big, green armchair and I could see the hundred and one adulteries behind these thick windows of his glasses.

I was a lonely teenager, I began. Like most I fantasised, romanti-cised too much. I never saw what was around me.

And this is true. At night, I would sit in my father's office at his big desk. I would take a cigar from his drawers and read the important French novels. At times I would pause - in vanity - to watch the smoke swirl up under the light's shade.

Or - And more often - I would go to 'Amoureuse', a bar owned by a neat Porteña lady named Silvia. I liked it there. Depende on how I feel. But most nights I wanted to be here in 'Amoureuse'. I wanted to be anywhere other than Mexico, anything other than Mexicano...

So the truth is I liked to be tucked away tidily from the filth of the centre in this large red room with high ceiling. All around me nicely framed



photographs of these old musicians, these writers - the high-classed, civilised European ones of course!{laugh} From the corner I would stand and watch the jazz band play whilst I drink martinis and watch the couples would turn round and round the room. I loved myself. Do you say this in North America? I was in denial about myself and my situation. I would



imagine myself in Europe, a European.

Maybe I would be a young romantic woman from London learning Spanish and dreaming of Mexico...

You see, I was born into Cárdenas era – I said to them - and glad of it *then*. Things were beginning to settle down, *saben*, and though there was still this post revolutionary buzz – still I recall the cries ‘*tierra y libertad*’ filling our streets - I found it easy enough to hide myself away from it. And I tried many a time later to query this. I think now I must have been in denial of my background and class and I could do nothing but live up to my stereotype. But {laugh} maybe this is an excuse.

I continued. I was lonely. Yes. But I could afford to be. My father was one of these high class diplomat man who pretend he work with the law but really he was a sucker just like them all and that allow himself to be exploited, really. He cared only for others perception of him. As my rebellion, I would never work or seek a job. I would spend my day writing - No, *imitating* I realise now - The likes of Wilde and Gide.

‘Signor Llarosa’. I remember they interrupt me here.

‘I know, I know. I’m getting there’, I tell them. ‘*Paciencia!*’

So one day my whole life change. And it was like I was expecting it to happen. I woke up with these hot rays on my face. I jump out the bed. Threw water all over me – not shower, no – I didn’t have time apparently.

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And I walk straight into my street, busy with people, traffic jam, and those sour fumes, the quantity of which can only be found in Mexico City.

For today I can tell you directly of my enlightenment.

I saw things I never see before. I notice: Franco-snipers, lonely cowboys who frequented the cafes of Chinese Latin-Americans, the priceless things found in supermarkets, their terrible dilemmas of individual-collectivity; the impotence of action and the search of poetic action.

And as the way with all these things. I suddenly realise, I suddenly *remembered* that these observations they were all from my sleep, from a dream the night before. And that it too was this dream that cause me to rise that morning just so, and that now my dream and my reality were – together!

-How do you say?

{Member of audience }

Entwined!

{Pepe Mendez Llarosa }

Yes

{Another member of audience }

Indistinguishable!

{Pepe Mendez Llarosa }

Yes, exactly. Thank you. They were *indistinguishable* from one another. Or maybe not – who knows? – But that is how it *seemed* at this time. Like the two, consciousness and unconsciousness were {pause} coincided.

So I continue and I continue to the Calle Bucareli. You might not know this street but it is one of the dirtiest street in la ciudad, filled only with the pertinence of poor drunk poets, and certainly not somewhere I would ever go before. Well, I reach this Cafe - La Habana - and I sit down inside. The day turn to night. And I kid you not. I like this expression because a kid is a baby goat too, no? So it make it kind of senseless – how things should be. {Laughter} Oh! You are laughing at me but it is your language that is funny. I just say it, hmm...

So I kid you not. I sat there in this chair till night time and the sky turn silver, and the air turn frozen. Slowly ice flakes began to fall down. And then more and then more. Like never before in Mexico! Really it was most {pause} *extraño!* The lines of cars became a landscape of ivory. Purity. Infused - Can I say this? - with fierce red and amber lights accompanied by

the ringing bells and horns of the street. Un fenómeno brumoso! So unusual in these Mexican nights. I cannot with words explain it. But as I watched this image, I became distracted by a man, a large man unshaved, unsophisticated who had appeared in my vision. I heard his voice, so profound, como de terciopelo, one that would never change with the passage of time. Dijo: es una noche a la medida de Jack.

He was of course referring to Jack, El Destripador - The ripper, you say? But the sounding of his voice evoked the lawless lands beyond where anything is possible. We were just these adolescents {laugh}. Adolescents bragados. Yes. And poets. And we laughed here this night altogether like many a night to come.

‘Signor Llarosa!’ They said – They kept interrupting me, you see. This is all a very nice story, they said, but it has nothing to do with anything! Nothing to do with anything? I could not believe it. You ask me for my story, I return

How I came to be! How I can do these things with my mind that so amaze you! Then you will listen with patience to what I say because the man I speak of is my master, and your master too.

The man I speak is, of course, Mario Papasquiario.

Well, they looked at one another and then one without moustache leant forward to me and almost in a whisper, he said, ‘Papasquiario, signor?’ ‘Si, signor.’ ‘But he is a criminal with holes in his shoes.’ ‘He is a poet.’ I said. ‘*Sin exito!*’ Another hiss, ‘Surely it can’t be from him that you learnt these tricks of the mind...or powers as you call them?’

As I said at the beginning of the talk, these were de Guzman’s men. They were careful because I think even then they realised our power. I was lucky that they didn’t kill me actually. Los brutos. Puta *porfiriatos*. But at the time I did not think like this. Quite young, invincible. And maybe it was this that they were afraid of. Naturally they wanted to find out how much a threat we were. And they could only get this information from me. Also let us not underestimate their curiosity – like yours here today. An invitation based on curiosity and I take it and I will come to why later...

I go back to the history a bit. Another man said, ‘Let him speak. Go on Signor Llarosa.’ So I said this, and the bit I expect the want to hear: Papasquiario and I. We spent each day together. Learning from each other and teaching one another. {laugh} I more than him, eh, because I was this pathetic little man as I portray.

We read many, many books and he showed me the true poets. The ones of today’s struggle. The likes of Roberto Bolaño – oh yes you know him, hmm, Bolaño he is one of our biggest protégé yet – and Cuahtec Estrada, Bruno Montané, Jose Peguero, Guadalupe Ochoa, Jose Vincente Anaya. Now some big guys. But you have to remember this was a long time