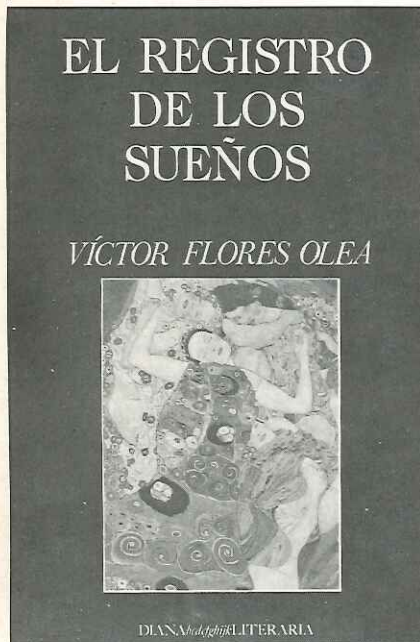


Register of dreams

Víctor Flores Olea
El Registro de los Sueños
 Diana Literaria
 Mexico, 1990. 139pp.



Story-tellers and photographers know that the universe we live in is complex, not simple: every instant captured and every scene described may branch off in countless directions. The photographer, when capturing an instant on film, focuses the passing of time and opens up the prospect of a different one. In this sense, photography rebels against the laws governing our world. The closed sphere exposed by a photograph upsets the flow of time, the image of an instant becomes poetry.

The narrator, on the other hand, uses elements of the surrounding universe to build fragile creations. Characters may well be inspired by reality, but when they become words,

they are trapped into a fictional imaginary world, distinct from the original reality. Both the photographer and the story-teller destroy time as we know it; one through immobility, the other through fiction.

Víctor Flores Olea combines languages that seemed to be mutually exclusive. His photography book, *Meetings* (Fondo de Cultural Económica, 1984) explored the potential of the world of frozen time. In *Register of Dreams* he embarks on an inquiry into conjectural universes, the hypothetical genre of fiction.

Like all collections of short stories, *Register of Dreams* is varied. Each tale is subject to its own logic and internal coherence. Flores Olea has integrated into his literary style the sensitivity of the photographer. Every character and every scene is described with rapid, accurate images. Every word is placed with the precision of a camera shot.

Flores Olea's interest in the visual world is manifest. For example, in "The Revelation" we meet an obsessed man who watches the video of his surgery over and over until he detects a surgeon's mistake, which leads to his death. In "The Stranger of Santa Cruz" we witness the obsession of a woman who falls in love at first sight with a man she will only see once more.

Like many good modern artists, Flores Olea also pays homage to objects and the world of fetishes where, for example, a woman's apparel can take on a vast importance. A woman's coat with a boa constrictor collar plays an important role in the story "Meetings" as does the red gauze garment covering Leda's body in the title-story. In the story "The Fragrance of an Impossible Love", it is Bolívar's revolver that is

the main character. Flores Olea knows, as Nabokov and Italo Calvino, that elements that build a story are as essential as the characters themselves.

The characters in this book often act out dramas that culminate in decisive moments. "The Glories of Dawn" and "Meetings" build up to a single critical moment. In the first, it is an overdue confrontation, and in the second the unreal moment of Víctor Floriz's death, anticipated by a poster he had seen twenty-four hours earlier.

One should stress the wide range of settings that Flores Olea explores: from rural countryside and small towns to large cities. His pen captures the world of village pubs, cafes, bars and inns. The story that gives the book its title, *Register of Dreams*, is assuredly the most complex. The nostalgic presentation of Mexico City's night life in the fifties depicts dens of iniquity, tenements and popular idols.

According to Borges and quantum physics, the universe is apt to branch off in different directions. When we choose one, we cancel other possibilities. In one world, Borges is a writer, in another, a scientist who explores elementary particles. Keeping within this format, we might suggest that in one universe, Víctor Flores Olea is the photographer-author of the book "Meetings", and in another he is the author of the book of short stories *Register of Dreams*. A mystical event has meshed both into one. The photographer seeking chance encounters in villages and towns and the writer creating fiction and redesigning time have crossed the mirror that divided them and shook hands. Now they are one and the same person.

Mauricio Molina
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