

Letter, tripping

by Elvira Hernández (1988)
translated by Liz Henry, 2004

Look, the squall-shark I'm riding
- the figured savage -
newbie up over there
in my labor, fishing
piled up over there
saddled astride on this my fish
finflick and twitch
hobbled touching earth

him hobbled
me a herm

the storm-shark I ride
like meteor or hailstone
perching on the colossal pedastal
my magnificent insect
parks its paws in the airport tarmac
silences the control tower
rolls through the gangway ladder of its teeth
vomit and miracle

&

Robinson Crusoe accompanied/attended by Friday his days. He played
his game all week long. Me, no one accompanies me through this white land where dust is flour that
falls from the sky.

My covered wagon drags itself along in vain.
The compass is sleeping.

It's the Hour of the Wolf.
In white and black the panorama of space and time.

I'm a herm
cuchepa
southamerican india/girl

I'm not going back across the Behring Strait to give back my hand to no-one.

In that white boreal bread they won't find any trace of my limbs.

I don't mean to make a plusmark with the little wheels of my undercarriage.

I'm not Captain Avalos
I'm not "the Shark" Contreras
I'm a tongue blistered by electricity

I'll never be clinging to a tear of Mount Everest
I'm sitting and swinging in the saddleback of my pelvis
the knife edge of the world.

&

I come from the Country of the Eternal Garbagedump, of the Moderated Aerosol, from the Mountains of Piety submerging. Flora and Fauna Crossdressed letting themselves go, letting loose from the pole of the ensabled earth. Precipitate from the False Mountain/Roller Coaster our brains crying Eden and Land-ho, Heaven and Earth.

And, here I be, in the lobby of the Old World!
They were left behind, the Blue Hills, in the Persian-Korean Bazaar.

&

"With good weather, making good time, the 12th of October of 1987
I have crossed the border"

Patagonia I raise up the tent village of my sterility.
I breakfast on New Zealand albatross and whatever falls into my pot.
Sparrow or buzzard
That's the impasse
The horizon of a desert morning.

I come from the Country of the Flowerclock, of Three and Four
Willows. I've come back from "Faust" and I have searched all these years for Juan Alacalufe
Disappeared.

In my sentimental journey, the search for
Impossible Love. It's my mutilations that are setting themselves
down in their restless grave turning and like a centaur
tunelessly humming I rush headlong shoving tumbling the rectitude
of the tundra.

It costs dear to hit the target's center.

The page steppe-like doesn't cede to the handling of the callous.
The page isn't bannister or pastime
nor guardrail for children.
The page of apparent emptiness comes writ
you've just got to touch it.

And you, on the other side of the world, past the Columns of Hercules, easily locatable through
ENTEL, through a ground-to-ground missile, through a communications satellite, through a Pen-Pal,

where are you?

&

NO ENTER

I advance by way of Nueva Limay in an Eastern direction
 bristling crossgrained from my suspicions
 - the mangle of voyages
I go edging along the platform of departure

NO FUCK

The yuyos grow tall
Blue Velvet "the girlfriend's mattress"

I don't hear you
the white wind eats your voice

Cradled in my body wearing my special suit
 a weave blue with scars
 the coat rocky with years
 You should recognize me!

I've passed through the Port of San Jose and I climb
the Numbered Stadium of tombs

1.564.381

The story has begun regressive at the speed of light.

(the sun like an icarus falls into the sea)

The procession goes [by going] and being seen by eyes.
Tears gleam like cyanide capsules.
Heads fall cut by razorslash

NO LITTERING

(automatically the compartments close off)

At the edge of the world, where nothing distinguishes us from nothing
 how the trolls protect us.

Neither by sea nor by land will you find the way that leads to the eternal ice.
PINDAR

Ten million winters are curdling on the heights. A precise pendulum is balanced and balances as an
avalanche of tears in a clouded eye. We'll never find ourselves! our ultimate horizon has closed
through bad timing. Our last horizon.

Horizon caille?

I couldn't tell if it ever rains there. A raincoat, a windbreaker, a coverall and the protective moons of some sunglasses, they sheltered me from the world while I wandered through the unreal beaches of Thule.

It's not the mountain, that which buries itself in the sea, they're living promontories that the wave has cast up. Jonas! Jonas! Shipwrecks start on land. On the rocky shores pollution spills cetacean doom. The marine cemetery. The grand architecture of bone and unease where I find myself beached.

There's not a soul to be seen. Eyes open like one time I opened windows and only divined the desire to see. Has your shade already wandered/walked through the mirror of Arlanda, those hangars, the bitter cloak of concrete blocks.

I detained myself in hidden places/obscure places, I walked by aquatic roads/ watery avenues/ badly lit, between [vespasianas] where a drop of memory [passed the night, spent the night] and in its walls I saw written the prophecy of Onan. At a distance the baggy flags were flapping — flags of the stateless ones that invited me. And, in my compact mirror I noticed that I was staying on target.

&

The hour of the wolf
the white hour
the shortcircuit of the light
the sun unsharpening itself on the plane of my avid eye
a lens/center/focus
the white and the black confused in my voracity
the screen stayed white and on target
Veronica Vogler
Veronica Voss
Veronica Zondek
aligned in fullcolor on the billboard of my memory
walking slow thru my white chambers
trying to leave exit from this snow that drowns them
their dark silhouettes walking in slow motion
flare-flash
burning white
multicolor
at fortyfive frames a second
projected by me
the strength that remains to me

&

DIE KUNST ZU REISEN, brother
the act and the art of leaving
of confusing oneself with the white/center of the target

To go through the impassableness of things
to pass through the hoop, the trapeze
leaping through space

and the suitcase full of nothing, accompanying.
The canopy of night has a double base/ false bottom
a secret passage, incommunicable.

We live in this circus magician's box
suddenly doves and rabbits fly out
suddenly it fills with worms.

I can't agree with anyone but it's
the same with myself, brother.
I can't raise my hand but to drink
my own blood, that's what stops me.

The landscape is one alone
exhausted and methodical and
it raises its arms to wave goodbye
halting.

&

Buried in the snow, crippled limping with cold, my eyes have borne fruit. Like white figs or dark lights
roll falling from the tree of sight. Now I can't see. I breathe on the little hand that gives me a carrot-
nose and a scarf for my neck, a noose of warmth.

I don't know if I am [miando] towards the dark
past, or If I reveal myself to the abysses of
time. If some memory might remain from
before my arrival here, perhaps
remember how I arrived at this place.

I'M REAL!

A scarecrow created in the edges of the
New World, a Rose of the Winds without a legend.

I weighed anchor from Puerto Engaño in the afternoon of my age. When
I looked at the maps in the eyes of my people and discovered that the
world was square.

I listened all my life to the song of the times:

I HAVE TO LEAVE
(National Choir)

The winds were running strong, boxed-up in the back patio, confined to the exile's quarter, caging so
many in the restroom of emigration.

The forest sways and sways

It was the Law of the Jungle

The winds brought bursts of a thousand bullets per second.
They threw out the fallen leaves of history.

I weighed anchor from Port Deceit in the merchant ship "Our Roots." One more time we had breakfasted on shit and I packed myself up in the hold in order to sleep over the cuspid of the National Product:

'Flowers of Pravia'
The Paradise of My Loves
June 16, 1986
Year of Decision

What the wave cast up in the shadow fo the New World
What the wave cast up in the lobby of the Old World

&

It's freezing my feet, hermetic statue. All those lost places, how they reawaken my nostalgia. I freeze and I melt inside the final shelter of my body. My skin turns me into gelatin. My blood moves one centimeter per second. My icy fingers and toes don't want to untangle the red thread of time.

I'm covered in a cape of dew, I'm covered in an ancient avalanche a snowdrift. Now the scythe only takes me away, and I end in solitude of covering my own self, in that gigantic bed of savanna, white frost.

I come from the Country of Never Ending and Never Telling, where the account tangles up for a while. any one can see this film - they say - tell your own Cuento del Tío, and it's the Old Film of Everything: yellowing, ancient, with lost words
and it runs red, cut at the beginning

NO END

santiago-Uppsala
1987-1988

Liz's notes

I know there are errors here and in my translation, my apologies; please email me lizhenry@gmail.com if you have corrections or explanations, thank you!

carta de viaje: carta could be a map or a chart. or a charter or travel pass. So "Chart for travelling" or perhaps "Transit Manifesto" or "letter in transit"

cuchepa: A pejorative term for someone missing a limb or limbs. Cuchepo was a character, a comic figure who was crippled and pushed himself with his hands around on a sort of dolly or skateboard. It's also slang for someone very short.

Herma: an armless bust or statue; herm An armless bust on a (phallic) pillar, the herm was a tribute to Hermes, the god of roads.

haciendo natas: "making cream" Chilean idiom for swarming, drowned in, inundated, rife, teeming...

Blue Velvet - this must be a reference to the movie or to something else, but I don't understand it

"en blanco, el blanco" the white, the center of a target. blank. *I could leave "blanco" in spanish.

Captain Avalos - Captain Manuel Avalos Prado, founder of the Chilean air force

The Shark Contreras Famous Chilean swimmer known for his expertise in cold-water swimming

ENTEL - Telecommunications company based in Chile that was the initial satellite link for Latin America in the late 1960s

Arlanda - Swedish airport near Uppsala and Stockholm

Pindar - wrote about Hyperborea, the land furthest north, in his 10th Pythian ode.

Thule - Ultima Thule, mentioned by classical Greek and Roman authors as the northernmost point of the world. A ship captain reported that in the far north, the sea became slush, neither frozen solid nor really liquid. Herodotus mentioned this "brash ice" or slushy sea ice in his retelling of the story of Pytheas the explorer, who was forced to turn back by the ice and dense fog which made it difficult to discern land, sea, and air from one another.

horizon caille — "caille" french for "curdled" or congealed

Veronica Vogler - a character in a film, Hour of the Wolf (Vargtimmen), 1968. Dir. Ingmar Bergman. Veronica is played by Ingrid Thulin. The movie explores fantasy and reality, art and madness.

Veronica Voss - a film "The Secret of Veronica Voss" Fassbinder washed-up german actress affair with younger man possible past nazi involvement, drugged out escapism

Veronica Zondek - a poet, translator, and editor from Chile

Die Kunst zu reisen — Kurt "The art of travel" "El arte de viajar" text by Kurt Tucholsky German poet, photographer, editor and literary critic who emigrated to Sweden. He had many pseudonyms : Theobald Tiger, Peter Panter, Ignaz Wrobel, and Kaspar Hauser known for cabaret songs. denounced by nazis, his work banned, stripped of german citizenship.

Flores de Pravia: a chilean brand of perfumed soap.

Cuento del Tio: a TV show in Chile

CARTA DE VIAJE

Ediciones Ultimo Reino
1989

Vean el escualo que monto
.... -la fiera figurada-
principianta ahí arriba
en mis faenas de pesca
.... encimera ahí
a horcajadas sobre ese pez mío
.... aletazo y aletazo
.... mancornados tocando tierra

..... él manco
..... yo herma

el escualo que monto
como meteoro o granizo
posándose en la colosal losa
..... mi magnífico insecto
pone sus patas en el parking de aviones
silencia la torre de control
y rueda por la escalerilla de sus dientes
..... hecha vómito y milagro

&

Robinson Crusoe se acompañó de Viernes sus días. Hizo
su juego toda la semana. A mí nadie me acompañará
por esta tierra blanca donde el polvo es harina que cae
del cielo.

..... Mi carromato se arrastrará en vano.
..... La brújula está dormida.

..... Es la hora del lobo.
En blanco y negro el panorama de espacio y tiempo.

..... Yo herma
..... cuchepa
..... india sudamericana

No vuelvo a cruzar el Estrecho de Behring para devolverle la mano a nadie.

En esa blanca torta boreal no encontrarán la huella de mis extremidades.

No intento una plusmarca con las ruedecitas de mi trasero.

..... No soy el Capitán Avalos
..... No soy el Tiburón Contreras
..... Soy lengua ampollada por la electricidad

Nunca estaré colgando de una lágrima del Everest
Estoy sentada y me columpio en el sillar de mi pelvis

..... el filo del mundo.

&

Vengo del País de los Vertederos Eternos, del Aerosol Templado, de los Montes de Piedad haciendo nata. Flora y Fauna Travesti largándose por el larguero de tierra sableada. Despeñados por la Montaña Rusa nuestros sesos lloran Edén y Landia, Cielo y Tierra.

..... Y, ¡héme aquí en el lobby del Viejo Mundo!

Atrás quedaron los Piececitos Azules en la Feria Persa

..... y Coreana.

&

..... "Con buen tiempo, el 12 de octubre de 1987

..... he cruzado la frontera"

Patagona levanto las tolдерías de mi esterilidad.

Desayunos albatros de Nueva Zelanda y lo que caiga

..... a mi olla.

..... Chincol o jote

..... Ese es el impasse

..... El horizonte de una mañana desierta.

Vengo del País del Reloj de Flores, de Tres y Cuatro Alamos. Vengo de vuelta del "Fausto" y he buscado todos estos años a Juan Alacalufe Desaparecido.

En mi sentimental journey, la búsqueda del Amor Imposible. Son mis mutilaciones las que toman asiento en la yacija del rodado y como un centauro chirriante me precipito dando tumbos por la rectitud de la tundra.

..... Cuesta dar en el blanco.

..... La página esteparia no cede al manoseo de

..... la callosidad.

..... La página no es pasamano ni pasatiempo

..... ni baranda para niños.

..... La página del vacío aparente viene escrita

..... sólo hay que tactar.

Y tú, al otro lado del mundo, más allá de las Columnas de Hércules, fácilmente ubicable por ENTEL, por un misil tierra-a-tierra, por un satélite de comunicación, por un Correo-Amigo ¿dónde estás?

&

..... NO ENTER

Avanzo por Nueva Limay en dirección Este
..... ortigada a contrapelo por mis escamas
..... -la sarna de los viajes-
voy orillando la plataforma de despegue

..... NO FUCK

..... Los yuyos están altos
..... Blue Velvet "el colchón de la novia"

..... No te oigo
..... el viento blanco se come tu voz

A cuestras en mi cuerpo va mi traje especial
..... un tejido azul de cicatrices
..... el abrigo pedregoso de los años
..... ¡Me reconocerás!

He traspasado la Puerta de San José y trepo
la Tribuna Numerada de los nichos
..... 1.564.381
Se ha iniciado la cuenta regresiva a la velocidad de la luz.

..... (el sol como un ícaro se precipita al mar)

..... La procesión va por fuera y a ojos vista.
..... Las lágrimas brillan como cápsulas de cianuro.
..... Las cabezas caen cortadas al rape.

..... NO BOTE BASURA

..... (automáticamente las compuertas se cierran)

En el confín del mundo, donde nada nos distinguirá de nada
..... que los trolls nos protejan.

Ni por mar ni por tierra, encontrarás
el camino que lleva hacia los eternos
hielos.....
.....PINDARO

Diez millones de inviernos se están cuajando en las alturas. Un péndulo preciso se balancea y balancea

como alud de lágrimas sobre un ojo nublado. ¡Nunca nos encontraremos! Nuestro último horizonte se ha cerrado por mal tiempo. Nuestro último horizonte.
¿Horizón caille?

No podré decir jamás si llueve. Un impermeable, un cortavientos, un sobretodo y las lunas protectoras de unos anteojos, me cobijan del mundo mientras camino por las irreales playas de Thule.

No es la montaña la que se interna en el mar, son promontorios vivos que ha botado la ola. ¡Jonás!
¡Jonás! Los naufragios comienzan tierra adentro. Sobre la piedrecilla se derrama contaminante el tánatos cetáceo. El cementerio marino. La gran arquitectura de hueso y desazón donde me encuentro varada.

No se ve un alma. Abiertos los ojos como alguna vez abrí ventanas y sólo divisé el deseo de ver.
¿Paseabas ya tu sombra por el espejo de Arlanda, esos hangares, el manto amargo de escollos?

Yo me detuve en lugares oscuros, caminé por avenidas acuosas, mal iluminadas, entre vespasianas donde pernoctaba una gota de recuerdo y en sus muros vi escrita la profecía de Onán. A distancia se agitaban las banderas ojeras de los apátridas que me recibían. Y, en mi espejo de bolsillo noté que iba quedando en blanco.

&

La hora del lobo
..... la hora blanca
..... el cortocircuito de la luz
el sol despuntando en el plano de mi ojo ávido
..... un foco
el blanco y el negro confundidos en mi voracidad
..... la pantalla queda y en blanco
..... Verónica Vogler
..... Verónica Voss
..... Verónica Zondek
alineadas a todocolor en la cartelera de mi memoria
caminando lentas por mis aposentos blancos
tratando de salir de esa nieve que las hunde
..... sus siluetas oscuras caminando en ralenti
fogonazo
..... quemadura blanca
..... multicolor
a cuarenta y cinco cuadros por segundo
..... proyectadas por mí
..... la fuerza que me queda

&

..... DIE KUNST ZU REISEN, hermano
..... el acto y el arte de partir
..... de confundirse con el blanco.

..... Pasar el límite infranqueable de las cosas
..... pasar por el aro, el trapecio
..... saltar al vacío
..... y la maleta cargada de nada que acompaña.

La capota de la noche tiene un doble fondo
..... un pasaje secreto incomunicable.

Vivimos en un cajón de circo
..... de pronto vuelan palomas y conejos
..... de pronto se llena de gusanos.

No puedo pactar con nadie sino es
..... conmigo misma, hermano.
No puedo alzar la mano sino para beber
..... mi propia sangre que se detiene.

El paisaje es uno solo
..... cansado y metódico y
..... levanta los brazos para despedirse
..... herma.

&

Enterrada en la nieve, maniatada de frío, mis ojos han dado frutos. Como higos blancos o luces oscuras
ruedan desprendidos de su árbol visual. Ya no veo. Respiro la mano pequeñita que me pone una
zanahoria-nariz y una bufanda al cuello, una soga de calor.

No sé si estoy miando hacia el oscuro
pasado, o me asomo a los abismos del
tiempo. Si algún recuerdo guardara de
antes de venir hasta acá, quizás.....
recuerde cómo llegué a este lugar.....

..... ¡SOY REAL!
Una espantapájaros confeccionada en el confín del
Nuevo Mundo, una Rosa de los Vientos sin etiqueta.

Zarpé de Puerto Engaño la tarde de mi vejez. Cuando
miré los mapas en los ojos de mi gente y descubrí que el
mundo era cuadrado.

Escuché toda mi vida la canción de moda:
..... HAY QUE IRSE
..... (Coro Nacional)

Los vientos corrían fuertes, arrinconaban en el patio trasero, confinaban al cuarto del exilio,
encajonando a muchos en el retrete de la emigración.

..... La selva se remecía
..... Era la Ley de la Selva
Los vientos traían ráfagas de mil tiros por segundo.
Botaban la hojarasca de la historia.

Zarpé de Puerto Engaño en el mercante "Nuestras Raíces". Una vez más habíamos desayunado mierda y me enfardé en la bodega para dormir sobre la cúspide del Producto Nacional:

..... Flores de Pravia
..... El Paraíso de Mis Amores
..... junio 16, 1986
..... Año Decisivo

..... Lo que botó la ola a la sombra del Nuevo Mundo
..... Lo que botó la ola en el lobby del Viejo Mundo

&

Se me hielan los pies, herma. Todas esas partes perdidas que reviven mi nostalgia. Me hielo y me deshielo dentro de la última guarida de mi cuerpo. La piel se me deshace en gelatina. La sangre avanza un centímetro por segundo. Los dedos congelados no quieren soltar la fibra roja del tiempo.

Me cubre una capa de rocío, me cubre el reboso viejo de la ventisca. Ya sólo me removerá la guadaña y yo termino en soledad de cubrirme a mí misma, en esa cama gigantesca de la sabana blanca y helada.

Vengo del País de Nunca Acabar y de Nunca Contar, donde el rollo se enreda para rato. Cada uno puede pasar su película -dicen- contar su Cuento del Tío, y es la Vieja Película de Todos: amarillenta, vieja, con los textos idos
..... se le corre el rouge, cortada en principio

SIN FIN

Santiago - Upsala
1987 - 1988