



Do you remember what I remember?

Loreto Martínez Troncoso

Edurne Rubio

edurne **19:09**

I can't remember it all. We remembered very early that day.

loreto **19:09**

?

edurne **19:09**

: -)

19:10

acordar

v. intr.

3. Sair do sono;

loreto **19:11**

But where are we?

edurne **19:11**

Before dawn.

loreto **19:11**

Was it still night? I can't really remember... but I remember we were there, as they say here: *excités comme de puces*.

edurne **19:12**

It was night even though the nights are very short at that time of year ... but yes, we got to the border by night.

loreto **19:12**

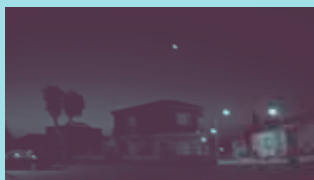
To be exact, the station, where we took in what Vila-Matas' later called «the expedition». That's one thing I do remember, seeing the day rising (literal trans. of *le jour se lève*).

edurne **19:13**

Actually, the photos I took at the station are blurred because there wasn't enough light... I've sometimes thought of deleting them (I always have the same doubts about blurred photos). So you see, now I'm glad I kept them.

19:15

edurne a posté le fichier IMG_1172. JPG aux membres de ce clavardage



loreto 19:16

Oh, the memories!

edurne 19:16

Yesss...

loreto 19:18

Did we initially call that experience, that moment, an hour for nothing or/and a no-man's hour...? I don't know what order it should be in exactly but it's funny to think of it today: an hour for nothing isn't the same thing at all as an hour for nobody.

edurne 19:19

An hour of nobody!!!

loreto 19:19

That's right, an hour for nothing never existed, right?

edurne 19:19

As Santi said later²: an hour with no owner, either in Spain or in Portugal³...

loreto 19:21

Yes, a «no-man's» hour is... would be/was... an hour of infinite possibles... an hour full of intersection points, a crossroads with lots of directions, an hour of action : to make the decision to go towards. Would «for nothing» be a closed street? Or a dead-end street?

19:22

I remember Clément Rosset talks about that crossroads moment in his *Le réel: Traité de l'idiotie*. (I'll hunt down the extract)

19:22

edurne a posté le fichier IMG_1179. JPG aux membres de ce clavardage



edurne 19:24

I remember we met there, we hugged, kissed, introduced ourselves... we woke up (with autonomous *cafeses*) and then we went walking round Fuentes de Oñoro⁴ towards the customs area (the border?)

edurne 19:25

Autonomous *cafeses*?????

loreto 19:25

The day before we bought everyone coffee. One of those coffees you heat up by shaking the plastic thing it comes in... I think it breaks some capsule at the bottom and the coffee «self-heats», autocoffee?

edurne 19:26

Ah!!! Nomad cafeses! :-) :-)

loreto 19:26

just a second, phone.

edurne **19:29**

I've been reading Chris Marker this weekend. Do you remember the other day we talked about subjective cartography?

Look: On *Immemory*

→ www.derives.tv/spip.php?article78

(extract) «Mon hypothèse de travail était que toute mémoire un peu longue est plus structurée qu'il ne semble. Que des photos prises apparemment par hasard, des cartes postales choisies selon l'humeur du moment, à partir d'une certaine quantité commencent à dessiner un itinéraire, à cartographier le pays imaginaire qui s'étend au dedans de nous. En le parcourant systématiquement j'étais sûr de découvrir que l'apparent désordre de mon imagerie cachait un plan, comme dans les histoires de pirates»⁵.

loreto **19:35**

I'm back. Just a moment while I read...

edurne **19:35**

I didn't experience the road from the station to the border... Well, yes, but not with the expedition. Ion⁶ and I went ahead as an «advance party» to find a place to stay. We were in a hurry and we were a bit stressed... We needed to find electricity for the speaker and the computers and it was getting close to «no-man's hour», it was twenty to nine...

Ion wanted to go to a gypsy camp near the customs post and ask them for somewhere to plug our things in...

loreto **19:38**

I'd forgotten the gypsy camp!

edurne **19:38**

We liked the idea of the camp, but in the end we decided not to move away, to stay at the border. We had to make the decision in a matter of seconds. I wonder what would have happened if we'd gone to the gypsy camp...

loreto **19:39**

What would it have been like?

edurne **19:39**

And what happened while Ion and I were looking for a place?

loreto **19:40**

Yes, I started out on the road with the expedition, but then Júlio and I went ahead to meet you and finish installing everything for the *conversas*, on the other side of the border, in Vilar Formoso, in the Turismo bar (what a coincidence, wasn't it?)

I remember before we crossed the line there were loads of swallows flying over the area.

edurne **19:41**

That's right! You came a bit early to connect the phone up to the computer. We were running tests: Júlio rang from his mobile 10 metres away and you tried to record it...

What I do remember perfectly was the noise of the morning machines hosing down the border with high-pressure water.

loreto **19:42**

It didn't work! I remember Júlio described the place, the architecture, the differences (the between)...., and he finished up by singing us a song in Portuguese.

19:43

So do I..., I can still hear the machines on our *beira*.

edurne **19:43**

À nosso lado...

loreto **19:44**

I wonder what the assistants in the Turismo bar thought when they saw us out there with our computers, telephones, loudspeakers...

edurne **19:45**

When we asked the manager of the bar if we could put an extension cord out onto the terrace and use all the tables, he looked at us in surprise, but he didn't ask any questions... which is very Portuguese, isn't it?

loreto 19:46

Quê saudades! Um bolo de arroz e uma meia de leite por favor!

edurne 19:46

:-P

loreto 19:47

We couldn't say that it's a no-man's land...

edurne 19:47

Yes, it's actually a very specific place.

loreto 19:48

I remember what a woman said in *Performing the Border* by Ursula Biemann. That for the border to become real you need the crossing of bodies; without them, it is no more than a discursive construction.

19:49

The film is set on the USA (/) (-) Mexican border. As the narrator is saying that, a car drives along beside a section of the border in the middle of nowhere, in the desert, built like a no-man's land.

19:51

Here, there are two towns, which are almost joined. In the middle, you have the customs huts, which are empty (but the flags standing out proud in the wind). Is that all that will be left of this discursive construction? The aduana/alfândega (as well as the individual and collective memory)?

edurne 19:54

I remember Santi began the first talk, and he started by saying: «Here we are, surrounded by wonderful people and useless flags». It was 9am, Spanish time, 8am, Portuguese time. I rang Alicia in Seville⁷, who had just dropped her daughter off at the day care centre.

loreto 19:55

How did we think of interviewing Alicia?

edurne 19:55

We were reading about the *fadaiat* project, in the Straits.

19:57

«An action-event-laboratory dealing with freedom of knowledge and freedom of movement in the Straits of Gibraltar, the border between Fortress Europe and Africa of the Masses». → <http://fadaiat.net>

We were interested in their search for new terms, new geographies, new forms of beauty... They spoke about new technologies with such passion, proposing other uses... We were attracted by their Utopian account... New relations between work, policy and art.

loreto 19:58

That's right, but she didn't talk to us about *fadaiat*, did she? She talked about another project on the border between El Alentejo and Extremadura, didn't she?

edurne 19:59

That's right! I'd forgotten! I've got ahead of myself...

loreto 19:59

Gone ahead? Where from? Where to?

edurne 20:00

Actually I don't know if we even talked to her about *fadaiat*... *fadaiat* happened in 2005 and it was a continuation of the project Alicia did talk about: *Almadraba* (1997).

But actually the first project she told us about was *Além da Agua* (1996), also on the Portuguese border.

loreto 20:01

Ah! Yes! *Além* = beyond (the water). Beyond that section of the Guadiana that marks the border between... Water, as a metaphor, as a source of life, as a flowing...

20:02

...as a vehicle of knowledge and the transmission of ideas...

edurne 21:02

«Floating culture» she said.

21:04
Do you remember the notes she read about an action with some pateras or boats?

loreto 20:05
That was an action that was already in the *Almadraba* project. They wanted to explore that proximity (15km separates Europe from Africa) and that distance at the same time, the closeness and what separates us...

20:06
The intervention was called *La misma tierra*. Two pateras [small fishing boats, used to ferry undocumented immigrants across the Straits of Gibraltar] full of sand would each set out from one side. They were going to meet in the middle of the straits and exchange the sand there. Return to the beaches to deposit the foreign sand, which in that way would cease to be foreign.

20:07
But they weren't able to do it...

edurne 20:07
To be honest, I can't remember exactly what the action consisted of, but I remember the frustration, the impossibility... I think she talked about naivety (culture/reality) and TIME, waiting for the permit, the waiting time...

20:08
Well, I'm not sure that's what she said. Maybe that's just my way of interpreting it.

loreto 20:09
They were waiting for two days, but one of the permits didn't come through.

20:11
Yes, I'm reading back over my notes and she wonders there whether that 'not possible' might be because of «our inexperience? Our naivety? Our lack of understanding? Our arrogance? Our impositional Western way of looking at things? Our lack of time?»

edurne 20:12
Yes.

20:14
The order of the three talks actually worked well: first Alicia with a very political and social point of view, then Oskar⁸ talking about the proximity of the bodies, and then Vila-Matas, who I seem to remember, talked more about the journey...

loreto 20:15
...about the idea of the journey. Not so much the physical journey but the mental journey. Between those two journeys. He spoke for example about Roussel who sailed round the world twice but wrote very little about it in his books... (apparently, he travelled to Africa to write *Impressions d'Afrique*, but never left his hotel room).

20:16
He also said that he travelled a lot but his real travelling was around his writing desk, in his writing.

edurne 20:16
And Santi mentioned the unmoving traveller, Robert Walser.

20:19
Yes. But let's get back to TIME. Oskar talked about time, do you remember?

edurne 20:20
That's what made me think about the way the talks tied in with each other: Alicia finished up by talking about time (western time) and then Oskar was wondering how to get out of time?

loreto 20:21
He said «a drama or a tragedy we have as a species, the time it has befallen us to live in».

edurne **20:23**

In some way, our thing was an attempt to «get out of time». The no-man's hour consisted of a spatial and temporary parenthesis: we were living and working, from 9am to 9pm, between two places. Depending on which side of the border you looked at the clock in, we were living in the future or the past of one or the other. A one-hour time travel.

loreto **20:25**

He said: «You are on a journey and the journey is in itself a frontier situation».

edurne **20:25**

Ion and Oskar spoke about the border at the River Bidasoa, the International Bridge in Irun.

loreto **20:26**

Yes, we crossed three borders with them: Irun, where they were born, Vilar Formoso, where we were and from the customs in Geneva, where Oskar was working at that exact time, surrounded by trucks, train carriages... like Irun, as he remembered it, and like our surroundings...

(we travelled mentally, each with their own experience of, their memory –collective or not– their imagination, their fiction)

edurne **20:29**

And I remember he spoke about living in a country that is not your own, a sort of frontier life... It's something I've always felt since I've been living here.

loreto **20:29**

(moi aussi)

edurne **20:30**

Être un étranger à vie.

loreto **20:30**

And when you «go home», you're not from there any more, you're «between».

(and«*dans la vie*»)

edurne **20:31**

Maybe it's got something to do with the straight journey Vila-Matas talked about:

20:31

«Without wanting to frighten the expedition: there is a modern journey which is not the circular journey of the Odyssey; it is a straight journey which Magris talks about, a journey with no possible return» he said (and it made me shiver).

20:32

Later, I heard him say the same thing in lectures and interviews, but it's never made such an impression on me as it did that day at the border.

loreto **20:36**

It was Pessoa who wrote:

«Viajar! Perder países!
Ser outro constantemente,
Por a alma não ter raízes
De viver de ver somente!

Não pertencer nem a mim!
Ir em frente, ir a seguir
A ausência de ter um fim,
E a ânsia de o conseguir!

Viajar assim é viagem.
Mas faço-o sem ter de meu
Mais que o sonho da passagem.
O resto é só terra ecéu»⁹.

edurne **20:38**

When you asked him how he reintroduces, paraphrases Pessoa, saying : «To travel, to lose suicides, to lose them all. To travel until we have exhausted any noble options of death that exist», he said it was a phrase he had used for many things.

:-)

loreto **20:39**

«To travel, to lose theories, to lose them all»; when he was invited to Lyon, nobody was there to pick him up when he arrived and he spent 24 hours in his hotel room writing a theory of the novel... On his way back by train to Barcelona he realised that what he had to write was not a theory but a novel. And that was how he came to lose all the theories and start a novel.

edurne **20:43**

Oskar also talked about losing, about losing weight (of the past?)

loreto **20:43**

Of the past? I don't remember if he said anything about the past but he did talk about relaxing intellectually and letting yourself go. (And yes, intellectually is past, isn't it?).

edurne **20:46**

The piece he told us about was called *The Sandwich*, wasn't it?

loreto **20:46**

No, *The Sandwich* was the title *entre nous*, he said. The real title is *Untitled*.

20:47

After a walk, the members of the audience came into a room and were invited to lie down on some other body already lying there on the ground. Then another body lay down on top, turning the member of the audience into a sandwich. So they were being told a self-fiction that talked about «losing weight»

...I don't remember right now whether this situation happened individually or whether they were a group of bodies in a sandwich (I imagine them all in a line)

edurne **20:50**

A situation in which you can't tell a lie.

20:51

The bodies are so close that it's impossible to lie.

loreto **20:51**

Obviously, if you get an attack of the giggles, if you shiver or sweat, there's nothing you can do.

edurne **20:53**

Vila-Matas also talked about truth/fiction (= lie?) in literature... «A Christian dichotomy and a bit stupid, nobody writes to lie».

loreto **20:53**

:-D

20:53

He told us about when they invited him to go a meeting with Bernardo Atxaga at UNIA on reality and fiction. On the way to Seville he had this idea that Atxaga wouldn't come to the meeting. When he got to the station, there was a taxi driver waiting for him, but there and then he decided that it would be him who wouldn't go to the meeting and he just decided to disappear.

edurne **20:56**

That's how *Doctor Pasavento* begins, isn't it? He decides not to take the taxi and go to Naples instead. And ever since then, the escalators in the station (which exist) remind him that one day he disappeared.

(the disappearance was much more believable than what actually happened in real life)

loreto **20:58**

Yes, he said: «I have the impression that something important in my life happened there».

edurne **21:00**

What would have happened if instead of having the talks in the Turismo bar, we'd gone to the gypsy camp?

loreto **21:01**

That's it! Maybe that's where our story can begin.

Post Data

loreto

I was wondering... why and how the idea of doing that moment... this halt between, first came up.

edurne

I think the idea of the talks on the border, came up practically at the same time as *miaketak*... I can't remember whether it was at a meeting in Arteleku or in Serralves. Ion and Blanca had suggested that we re-think Mugatxoan with them.

loreto

We talked about the mobility of Mugatxoan, as an autonomous and itinerant project (a family on wheels?), hosted by different structures...

And in addition, because we had been through the Mugatxoan experience, we said that the moment of travelling, that passage between San Sebastian and Porto formed part of the experience, and that we had to take it into account.

edurne

Out of those meetings we created *miaketak* (which means "explorers"). Since then we've travelled with Mugatxoan (which meant "on the border").

loreto and edurne

miaketak are: alejandra, amaia, edurne, júlio, larraitz, loreto, maría, sandra.

- 1 Enrique Vila-Matas, writer. («But the best part of a writer's biography is not the record of his adventures, but the story of his style». Vladimir Nabokov. *Strong Opinions*).
- 2 Santiago Eraso, former director of Arteleku, has inspired, accompanied and supported Mugatxoan from its beginnings down to the present day. He is currently a member of the content design team of UNIA arteypensamiento at the International University of Andalusia and is an independent collaborator with a number of public institutions, cultural companies and social movements.
- 3 When travelling to Portugal it is important to remember that there is a 60 minutes time difference between the countries. Portugal is one hour behind Spain. → www.emprenderviajes.com/informacion_de_interés_de_portugal.htm



- 5 «My working hypothesis is that every fairly long memory is more structured than it seems; that photos apparently taken by chance, postcards chosen on a passing whim, after a certain number, begin to plot an itinerary, to map out the imaginary country that stretches as far as our inner self. Making a systematic tour of it, I was sure that I would discover that the apparent chaos of my imagery concealed a secret map, just like in a story of pirates».
- 6 Ion Munduate directs, together with Blanca Calvo, the arts project Mugatxoan. *La hora de nadie* was carried out on 30 June 2008 during the journey that Mugatxoan made, as they do for each edition, from Donostia to Porto. → www.mugatxoan.org/blog
- 7 Alicia Pinteño is a member of BNV productions, a cultural company which organised *Além da Água*, *Copia Cabana* in 1996 and *Almadra* in 1997. A critical dialogue between art and the globalisation of market and culture, between art and life.
- 8 Oskar Gómez-Mata is the director of the theatre company L'Alakran, and took part in Mugatxoan 2006 offering a workshop and presenting the work *Optimistic vs Pesimistic*. In Mugatxoan 2009 he presented his new work: *Kairos*, *Sísifos y Zombies*.
- 9 «To travel! To change countries! / To be forever someone else, / With a soul that has no roots, / Living only off what it sees! / To belong not even to me! / To go forward, to follow after / The absence of any goal / And any desire to achieve it! / This is what I call travel. / But there's nothing in it of me / Besides my dream of the journey. / The rest is just land and sky».