

MOUNT BALDY/WINTER *IS ONS SEISOEN*
CRÓNICA

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Para H, Feliz (si early) Cumpleaños

DESPERTÉ deseando ver si tú me habías textualizado. It was raining. Llovió toda la noche. I slept badly—desperté varias veces. Strange, I don't remember my dreams from last night. OB-vio, I don't really want to be sleeping where I'm sleeping. Más bien: with whom. Pero . . . uf. That's another story.

En cuanto me levanté, right away I sprayed on “Halston Z-14,” ese late 70s-early 80's perfume. I found it en el Internido, bien fácil. Melancólicamente I turned on my cell phone, and was immediately greeted por ese reassuring *beep beep*. Cuatro *beeps*. Me habías mandado un SMS, informing me que Mt. Baldy was where you'd skiied (tú, Ken y el Sea Lawyer, aka el Du Toit) ese long-ago invierno californiano del '82, right before driving up Highway 1 to San Francisco. To your destiny, me escribiste.

And your “immuring” memory . . . that was the very word you used about yourself, cuando me escribiste back in 2003, I suddenly remembered—that laser-precise, somehow a la vez casi aggressive, Cask of Amontillado-ish and yet undeniably erudite, beautiful word—cuando murió mi mamá. At that time, you told me you remembered, “perfectly,” that lunch in *Tung Fong*, con mis padres, corner of Pacific and Stockton en el Chinatown de San Francisco. Ese restaurante *long* gone now, like so much of *our* San

Francisco. Esa modesta, Daddy-discovered, *dim sum* joya, long long gone. Coño, pero anygüey, Howie darling, *I* didn't even remember, hasta que me lo recordaste, that you'd actually *met* my Dad!

So, who has the *real olifant* memory, then? What does this mean? Your “immuring” memoria has kept hold of *this* fact también: ese ski-trip. Has retenido el recuerdo de ese northbound drive (y de mí: your true Norte, pero you didn't—we didn't—know that then). You've kept it—kept *me*—inside, todos estos años.

How? Debe haber alguna explicación. Some mechanism. Algún filtro. Perhaps you remember that you remember something when *my* memory—mi tejeño insistente—reminds you (to remember). Hey? Uf, suena bien bizantino esto, I admit, pero no more so than the way you put it: *it's not that one forgets, Shug, but that we forget to remember.*

Montenegro: te escribí el lunes pasado que puedo ver la nieve on Mt. Baldy, close, as if I could reach out my hand and touch it. Y ahora me mandas un sms patrás que estuviste allí, digo aquí, *right* here, in my (now) hometown, antes de que yo jamás hubiera puesto pie aquí, or even dreamt of it.

Winter is our season, *ne*. We met on a freezing 28th of January night, un jueves en San Francisco, entre tu invernal, Capricornian, end-of-year cumpleaños y mi beginning of spring (Boreal) birthday.

Howard: maybe *you* gave me this place, then. This place where I would settle. “The Great Settling,” Wim calls my life in recent years—o bueno, not so recent anymore: desde que acepté la chamba en Pomona College, he means, o desde que vivo con P. Here, at the foot of Mount Baldy. Este lugar—incongruous, remote, under-the-radar college town al *este* del este de Los Angeles—where I would find myself.

The homestead from which I would venture last year, returning (mi propio northbound *groot trek* to Montalvo, to my artist residency), to our San Francisco Bay Area: para encontrarte de nuevo. To find us.

Ah, *nada* es casual, Montenegro, amor. No hay coincidencias.

Te escribí de la nieve; you write me today about having been here—en mi *ahora* aquí—nearly 28 years ago. This must've been but a *dorp*, back then.

Me acuerdo cuando mamá nos traía, a mí y a mi hermana, Sarita, to see the Padua Players performing esos plays, esos Christmas pageant-like shows, *bien* camp, al recordarlo: “Amal y los Night Visitors,” plays like that. She’d drive us *all* the way out here, from the San Fernando Valley. It took *ages*, it seemed. Creo que nos recostábamos, in the back of the station wagon, and we’d look out at the Los Angeles cuenca orange smog-streaked evening sky, as Mom confidently skirted the north-easternmost edge del condado de Los Angeles. En el Padua Hills Theater, me parecía que we were were *way* the hell out, out in the country. Back of the beyond. And now I *live* right here, fíjate. And you were here.

Your footprint silently pressed into the Mt. Baldy snow, for us to uncover, juntos (cual love note, en una botella al mar), ahora, en este casi fin del 2009, en nuestros cell phones.

I feel buoyed, contenida, hasta contenta, o casi. As much as I can be sin tenerte aquí, a mi lado. Something stirring in me, stirring y a la vez peaceful. Loving you y sabiéndome (be)loved by you.