

## El Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos, Córdoba

Late February, 1991

Again. Again. Again. Dark sound, *brut, bruit, las lunas* in *pluriel* ear. Mozaráb. Momento. Monument. Again. The U. *Las Noches. La Luna.* A pen. The door. It opens. The port transmit. *Palabra. Las Ramblas. Profundo. Museo* deep skin. Again. Again. *Café con leche* it comes. *Cortado.* Again, the shortened span of living. Here. To ear. *Las Lunas* in *pluriel*. The make. Its wake o Mozaráb. Morisco. *Pescador.* The gut-opened. Fish of the moon. *de Torres. de Torres. de Flores,* the masque *de la luna. Una.* The one. Again. Again. Córdoba. *Los Jardines.* A street of flowers. Of trucks, the *brut* bright of yellow and *sol.* The *amo.* Of passages. Pass, the peace. *La Luna. Sobre. Sobre,* against. *La Luz.* The fish of the door. To catch, cut open. It opens. Again. *Con leche.* Café. A street of flowers. Of dead children in Baghdad. O in eye, in Nam. *Muertas.* A tower for princesses and the Dead. Oranges and lemon. Single. A strike. A strophe, a breath in *naranja.* The lemon breasts nipple dark halting the eye. Skirt of. Because of *tierra firma,* the brittle cobble in the dancer. Córdoba. *El Córdobaes in sangre negro. Todos, el siempre* to say. *Pasaje,* again this way. A Patio of Orange Blossoms, pass this way, a street of dead flowers. Brittle cobble *está,* the bite *zapato,* in heel. Heel. Street of my. Street of dead flowers, "*El — Siempre.*" *Se . . . qué casa? Su casa está —*

## Marzo

or the Balcony, or the sky  
grate and open, the folding  
light. The gate or  
the sky. *Azul, naranja*  
in this pocket of day ripe, or  
the heavy weight of stone,  
the child stillborn in a woman  
a woman in this sky,  
*naranja o limón,*  
*el cielo, azul.*

“And the presence always there,” she says, my friend Esther, “in prison, the *gitano*,” and such same, disenfranchised, First Nations in Canada. Always outside ourselves, the gypsy we want to palm, a pleasant night’s entertainment, *bulería, seguirilla*. Aid to the world’s poor, what alms to live in them, work, our canapés we like. Recipes I create, a measure for measure—eggplant, artichoke, caviar, tomatoes dried in the sun and imported, this heat we feed in due conversation the “A” “Ah this is the life” we live like ourselves in the simile of absence only the presence am but in the escape to another. I am this Japanese guy but proudly Canadian made, false release to the naught, valor I am, oh yes, gitan, oh yes the “dark” strum how we invest, such good, seek the “light” of day hah-hah the key to the kingdom, dark-skinned night porter we wake with the ringing in his ear

## Alcázar Canción<sup>4</sup>

To find what is in the heart and in the grove Mary Rose, the matter in this lawn, forth and the background of music, verbena and then there's his Rosemary. The fuschia now in bloom, the mature fish come to the surface for the morsels of food. This is not the place to take political action. This is not the place to waste these words. Rosemary. Rosemary, he loves you, wants you to return to His House, I only the envoy of parole.

Goldfish in my eye leap for the oranges ready to fall. Music in my ears, this poetry thing. Come again, we all had a blast of a time. Let me piss in the bathtub, make it warm. Course straight and narrow through the lawn, the water it warms me with the music now forth in my ears, water plugging all. No place here to think of history, the millions of Jews frying in the nice sun; no place here to ponder of black rain in the fall, no matter, be cool, be happy, a hard rain's gonna fall. Garlic under the skin, hot pepper, not flash in the crackle of skin, perfume, rosemary. Rosemary, my little *Pollo*.

*In the 10th Century a true renaissance of Hebrew culture took place in Spain and there is no doubt that Córdoba was the place where it originated.*

*Abd-ar-Rahman III (912-961) managed to pacify Moslem Spain. After subjecting dissident political powers, he restores a united and powerful kingdom, and its high cultural level enjoyed a great reputation throughout Europe . . .*

*Caliph abd-ar-Rahman III maintained an intelligent policy of religious tolerance, overcoming tribal barriers and reinforcing the central authority . . . He conceived the idea of conciliating the followers of different religions and the members of different ethnical groups who lived under him, turning them into a nation.*

— María de Los Ángeles Navarro Peiro  
*Panorama of Hispano-Hebrew Literature*

Rotten, rotten, I say, this orange, I ain't gonna pay for it, this stupid path between the sombre groves of winter. Mary Rose my little *ripou*, come to me walking backward, guidebook in hand, take a snapshot, flip a coin, do a raindance Mister Injun, get your mojo running. Music's wha I wan to hear, I fuck you Rosemary in the splendour of these gardens, Reyes Católicos, Córdoba.

. . . Writers (Jonas Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*; John Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*) have described the importance of water in the gardens of Córdoba's Alcázar — the play of contrasting levels of water creating effects of light, water running in paths from pools irrigating flower beds often set below, typical of Moorish layout.

So, I buy a pair of socks from her, for a buck or so, so I ask is there a *flamenco peña* a small around around here? Who is this guy anyway, his pants pulled down that semi-hard, it's ol' me the crotch, me the Jap-Ger in the afternoon of Córdoba. The end.

*The role of non-Muslims in this cultural flowering was crucial, especially as Arabs, Christians and Jews alike were bilingual in Arabic and the local Hispano-Latin dialect. Córdoba poets like Ibn Hazm developed forms unknown to the Muslim east which, according to some scholars, strongly influenced the poetry of the troubadours, notably in their emphasis on romantic love; the delight in the beauties of nature is also a distinctive feature of the school.*<sup>5</sup>

— Robert Hillenbrand  
*Medieval Córdoba as Cultural Centre*

The lawn as he sees it; the lawn as he cuts it; the lawn as he writes it; the lawn as he finds it; the lawn as he trims it; the green how much he wants green, green, with Rosemary who smokes too much, who sits in the grove in the shade, a pool of water, resisting these lines, the patterns we define.



It is by such stone pillar foundation I come, to rest, not a garden adjunct nor flowing spring by the ear; but the cloud of myrrh and frankincense caught stippled in sun, the open portal to traffic of sounds, my nostrils filled to taste, speak with exotic peace.



No words parabolic. A garden gives release. A church then, a sacred place, the support of stone, bench and wooden pew too give this odd assurance to a tired longing Nikkei body, my mother now dead almost 18 months past, the candles votive haphazard pattern of question and surrender, a surrender of narrative or insistence, as they trace, fire and die out, these beacons to the weight of our collective days, friends.

The church of Spain I'm told by some here, remains powerful, conservative to obedient faithful. The young are now in great numbers, the young women I see now, and no longer she strolls in the garden, while the PP<sup>6</sup> moves tomorrow with confident intent, the hand of rule, "Move back the hands of abortion," her young sister would say, how her garden has grown.

Yet, at last, this not a garden. But it is peace. The naught my keyboard cannot symbol, which holds through the beaconing rays, rose, most azul, yet yellow, white, a trace of green at the heart here, stained glass, and red, the blood kissed upon the feet, to kneel surrender. This is the rose, the risen of our own spirit, the diesel exhaust of buses outside, glaring February afternoon light. What choice but to surrender my father's cancer once spread from stomach to liver, my mother's clogged heart cleared and years later, the diagnostic trace of tests, the growing death intestinal. Ah, to grow, the garden, the water-hose in his hands, the forsythia— yellow, huge and healthy in this February sun. Ah, the fresh-sliced cukes of mother's *sunomono*. Walk this path to a terrace, beneath the lemon tree. Why do you enter again. Rosemary — whose name, whose fragrance, as she tosses in a bed, says, "Franco rises again."

This is the end of the Third Canción.

●  
This the next candle I will light for Mitsuko Mukai Shikatani, in the name of  
my father Masajiro, who preceded her to death, a fine chef he was.

### A Counting of Palms & Cypress

3 palms 1      4 palms 6      4 palms 5

wherein the last digit is always the cypress.

Which there placed addend height to the orange trees  
at inferior grade.

Which maps unfolded to locate the street,  
the curving road which suddenly is a change in name,  
a hand briefly raised to shield the eyes  
the air is cold in the finger,  
the sun is warm to the neck,  
a twist of the head, the pigeon's warble  
know not this rhythm,  
why then

interrupt conscious human thought,  
abstract,  
numbers which provide a legend,  
codices digitals without terminals end, digitalis  
digits cypress@

89 @ eighty-nine maybe 108 @ one hundred and eight pigeons, walking about hither and thither, flying and landing, perching like my tierra, this the concrete description of a site, a sight indeterminate always, oh, hi there white pidge, flapping away, always moving, accounting without end.

of pigeons, not unlike but unlike the cypress and palms such and such figures against/to the stand of orange trees, always moving, a count of pigeons, honorably.



*Córdoba now disputed with Baghdad the intellectual leadership of the Islamic world. Its mosque was famed as a centre for higher learning on a par with Cairo and Baghdad and was the earliest medieval university in Europe. (Hillenbrand)*



*In such favourable circumstances a unique figure appears — a cultured Jew, doctor, efficient administrator, translator of scientific tracts, diplomat and faithful servant to the reigning authority: Joshua Hadai ibn Shaprut, founder of rabbinic teaching centres independent of the Eastern gaons.*

*Moses ben Maimon, Maimonides (1135-1204), is the most universal personality of the Jewish diaspora. RaMBaN, born in Córdoba, Talmudist, philosopher, exegetist, doctor, lawyer and finally encyclopaedian. But above all he was an authentic spiritual leader; his Moreh Nebukhim (Guide of the Perplexed) written for simple people, that is, the majority of Jews spread about the diaspora, is the most representative of his creations.*

— Carlos Carrete Parrondo

*The Renovating Legacy Left by the Spanish Jews*





What is of the inner and outer, Córdoba is, as one the weekend before the national elections, numbers are shifted, those which apportion to the social security, what is taken from the national phone service, Telefónica. What is the garden in Córdoba is of neither inner nor outer, but the whole of, to cross back and forth as cruciform, to move about the inner and not cross through, flower pots against walls, the water which might enter a pool, not a place left wild or made so the English of Gertrude Jekyll, but confined always to the geometry and abstract of architectural plan, to ply the water, its play whisper of a dead bloom or a late winter bud, into the bed beneath the covers or the microwave kitchen, grinding an opening between sock and shoe.



To count, an abstract made concrete, the steps say, accounted by Richard Long on a walk through India or Northern Canada, across the Yukon border to the United States, marked with degrees and numeral to count say, what is abstract and impossible the movements of these eyes a courtyard of pigeons, which one, ones.

## An Abstract Chiffre X

Shift. A way of counting, keeping trax. Like  
so many bees being (hither thither), give the figures the hatchet under the sweet  
candlelight.

A shortened breath by diseased lung,  
a blockage or abstract  
of the fully drawn air.

The colours over the arcade of the Mezquita  
to the Courtyard of Narajanas,  
a number from the longview down  
the palisades, and number 18, yet those  
partially blocked to view. This is vague. Drifts  
in  
and  
out, waters  
of this heart. An.

An abstract, a shortened  
breath of thought culled  
to such, a geometric wedge  
the sharpening stone to  
a conglomerate point of view. Point  
of view. Curd, cut of air.

Wherein, collected debris of twigs  
swept to corner, a nest

to place these words in gently,  
cannot replace this pigeon. twigs in mouth, a future  
to be liked  
of the new and born, delivery  
dropped by this hand of mine now,  
this pen which yet does  
no faithful judicial sentence,  
nor at base, even spell  
my death.



Because of the way a public garden institutes its hours of opening, its hours of closing, the visitors who wait among palms, the benches filled with sound idle talk and meeting. Because figures come together, then the way a computer has its date and own clock set to repeat, exact as it's on. Because of this inner truth to which we attend outside, growing idle thoughts in our attentions backpack moving inwards outwards through the bench and entry gate, the tides of a seashell once brought to ear.



*I believe there is no other city in the world that Hebrew poetry owes so much to, as to Córdoba. Córdoba is the home of Hispano Hebrew poetry, the laboratory where the most fundamental changes in technique and subjects were initiated and materialized . . .*

*This abundant vein, nourished by language and traditions from the Bible, would be enriched precisely in Córdoba by another completely different poetical tradition: that of the Arab poets, who had also been singing praises, laments, to love and beauty in the language of the Koran for many hundreds of years. The Jewish poets in this city were able to appreciate the beauty of Arab poetry and would begin to emulate it using the language of the Scriptures. And not many years would pass before they would also assimilate the rhythm of popular tunes, in Romance, that common people sang; a rhythm they would also attempt to reflect and imitate in their muwashshahat [sic], very often terminating with those unequalled stanzas in Romance — the Khardjas. In this way, three different cultures would merge successfully in one single language . . . (Badillos)*



"What is the election about?" I ask.

A governing plan of thought to design  
what could lie as music below, stretching  
out from here, these in pebbled steps. The line of cypress to distant left, the  
dome-cut orange trees to their right.  
And across from them, the long pools divide,  
their arc of spouting, plumed  
water, orange trees but these  
more discordant as they stand beneath an apartment of modern construction  
rising just barely above them ahead. Direction, levels from here to the next, to  
the next of, pool to a subsequent pool again, what this repeats of the passage  
above, like the folded, worn wrap, refrain. Two figures to preside the distant  
pool. A March of Tourists! All populous of order.  
To hold in time and description palm this to the left, what election is about,  
kind, such governing plan, I ask, this the 2nd day of March.



To give up on solving. With  
beauty. The abstract and the lemon tree  
all still in my head, only one  
leaf, fruit  
what is above me,  
beyond me.