

## The Generalife Gardens, Alhambra, Granada; Almeria, 1996

Generalife, el día 18, Lunes

At first it seems the water, murky, stagnant holds a deep gloom of ending. Yet here, the moss, leaves of lotus and lily, almost lifeless in appearance provide the silent sector where goldfish might rest hidden. This stagnation is nothing less than the potential to reflect all it can contain of the surrounding sky when the sun beams while concealing its proper depth. It's here where light can thus invite contemplation, stubbornness to one's regard. And too from the water-course in its movement, there is elsewhere the vivacious fountain which fills my ears, the dream and nearness of paradise and change. It is what makes the virtually unmoving mask of water before me even more provocative, to penetrate further the seeds sibilant in my bowels.

What is it about crowds of people, travellers on the same route, make us run, to find a place untrammelled. A garden should be this but yet, its intent is to draw us all in, without discrimination so, the greatest gardens of history are filled with camera-carrying crowds who mar our way and the photo we anxiously try to snap.

Legs, legs; legs such movement. More a disco than anything. Which is held in the prostate; what is held in the portal of cervix, the arch of the legs stretched in aerobic, the pull and strain, the fibrous root which does not easily come away in a verdiginous killing, from which the *baillora flamenca* may back down the stairs, fearful of the breath of the pointing *cantaor*.

It is everywhere where one can hide, here in the Generalife, everywhere corner a bench in the winter sun or summer shade, a view to al-Andalus. That way all of us might live together, make space in our accented tongues. Underfoot

pebble, paved walk or deep stagnant pools there is release which is the held fibrous root, the clay of, to be glazed green upon white, marble and dust azuela.

Friends, we the tourists, cameras swaying, come to you barely breathing space as the bus swerves through *ciudad*, Ketama's young flamenco amplified abundant wail — we come to you leaping, leaping a guitar-string broken and suspended from our heels in the sunlight myrtles over Albaycin.



Let us remember that though a garden may have some grand magnificent overall plan and contain thousands of varieties of plants and possible arrangements — the regard can as easily fall solely to a small ground-level fountain with its gentle vital spout of water and the filling lotus reservoir. Here. A tiny fallen verdant leaf will but stagnate then die. Let us bear in mind that this vast garden always invites our gaze to the smallest detail and the constant shift under new seasonal conditions which the very seed of the *baille*, the very sweat in the hand of the guitarist strings, at 10 past 6 a.m., *cueva*, a Sacromonte bar.

Beauteous the way, crowds follow one another, yet at some point one of a couple will suggest a slight change to the course and partner automatically, with a gentle glance of the eye, follows.

a corner,

And the water moves from patio to chamber under arch cooling the space, and only the footstep is heard, but falls just again to silence. And what is it you do upon hearing a language foreign to your own mind's habit? And the heart taken up at once or after explodes its mute gasp amplifies digitalized pluck; the mind rivets itself.

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To correct a text written in red to blue, the margin, the arrow, the line. At once our hearts were taken aback by the sound, the voices at once exotic and charming, could transport us destinations away, yet in the days which ensued, became abrasive and splinter distracting to our process in thought. Camera.

The need, the pride we took in this, the way to solve for ourselves the most banal and penultimate questions of everyday life, scoping towards our largest plans in republic, federation — for this we received the space in our garden: to debate and think, to delete those things unnecessary to civilized survival. Congress.

At once charming and music to our ears, what became interference to our progress, our intelligent means projectile. A lizard, a chameleon, an insect, a delight to our eyes that sense of life become problem to bullet in increasing dense agitant population and yes we till, weed, and sow, listening for the whitewash sound of rain.

Read, re-read, read . . . .

A language music body, appropriate to poetry, another is hard aggressive, another so quiet, at once frustrating.

Groups of German tourists pass by and those of Japanese, as they walk lifting their feet in the most curious up and down manner, and we see Rising Sun, swastika, buck teeth and the sound of clicked heels : flamenco in breaths and guttural.

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*A plan for the City, blueprint, civil engineering.* The problems of tourist control, traffic control. Day after day, we need the space, quiet, freed from distraction, the exotic sounds to at last resolve by the silent pools of the patio, on the bench of the garden, overlooking the city, and the mind under tool, reinforcement of the bond, the forged metals of construction.

Holiday, fireworks display, airshow v-formation.

March 23

It is this stretch come upon after leaving the Alhambra I turn up onto a straight path, survey the Generalife green. The land descends below. Most often, crowds notwithstanding, seems yet a retreat present to the foot's stroll past flower beds fronting a wall to right — the yellow-leafed pot plants to the left by the rail. And there are to the right, the gold and orange blooms, and blue, tiny delicate blooms, a luminous almond tree in full blossom.

Also, that I leave the path, benches wait siesta.



## On Leaving— for Rocio Liñas y José María Cabeza

There then arrives the time to proceed past the pebbled path hard under sole and hold only the gathering of leaves, the depart, the words of grace, of respect to the other stored under tongue. There then comes this post to leave undone, to keep the garden gate closed, not enter another time, a last time.

The crowds will come and go, the roses, palms, the almond trees in spring bloom. Postcards will be written, pottery bought and sold, camera lens left neglected, open.

The garden will persist grow with the strength of the regard of strangers of passage, and I will not pass a last time I repeat, for here is a garden best left for others. It is at these times that as I hesitate at portal, then turn, shift reflections elsewhere and find a cafe terrace open, that moments can sharpen, tart oranges left neglected and uneaten, the earth damp once cold.

But now, in temperature's seasonal change, the postcard racks do fill, paperwrap from film packets gust in intermittent breeze. The foot over stone hurts, a stranger offers a gentle smile, one leg draped over a chair's arm. It is not a regarding wisp sent in particular to me or another, but such face blind in the hot morning sun. Where coffee's hazelnut and toast perfumes mix with myrtle and orange, where a camera is forgotten, rosemary, twig, sausan, the water flows from fountain to chamber, inside to out, my hand outstretched for Rocio Liñas, José María Cabeza, Anna María, the guardians of the visit, their regards upon me from overhead, the painting, it's electric cord affixed to light. Let me leave the garden gate closed with its poem of Ibn Zamrak, of al-Mutamid — of the legends of azul tiles and scattered twigs, leave the garden gate closed, step towards the music of a quiet sentry pool, open to a newspaper's front page, turn on the TV, keep attentions to the path and stone bench.



I am swept here, betwixt the *café con leches* of a Sunday morning, swept breathless into the arms of friends. Almería's weekend, Sunday, hurtles me gently to its relax, the busyness of *cafés* open for breakfast. The arms of friends, those family of Joaquín and Bonnie back in Toronto, here, these spaces to occupy — sister Loly in Granada, Ángel, his brother, and wife Gloria here, this path wounded by elation, election, gratitude, to wear the robe I've found, humbled on itinerant track.

Because of a poverty of thanks. Because of dead mother and father, because of Paul and Maria, Dominique and Diane in Paris, the cloak I don, into this late morning and where I have gone, I step to the shaded arcade.

Again through this happenstance to land here in this modern Almería I take, the brisk, the light of comfort and ease among modern apartments, the longing of such, when youth is spent in gritty alleyways, old houses of the city, the return at summer dusk into the home, the cleansmells of vinegar and toasted seaweed, that the path was emerald and ruby, the picnic of home, the ease into hot summer night with siblings

What is here is a distance, a larger, lake beyond the seconds I step to correct on a watch — inhale quick, brief, in Almería. What escape me through the words in the poems of Loly, the pages of a dictionary, the phrases to parse through the conversations last night, Ángel, Gloria, those distances too fast and moving for translation, which arrive only as tone and rhythm strike the heart, and teach the focus of singular breath and which hold the moon's lamp over this Andalu night sky.

Why is it still to be so romanced by the modern, the fresh, the possibility of comfort — the issue of a better life, the regard each day at the morning newspaper, that everything is solved, a partner will appear, potential to proposal.

In this, Joaquín, Bonnie, Joshua in Toronto, to hold this pen, uncontrolled over paper, this lap, this cafe con leche, swept into what was washed by swifts, the attentions to all that was possible on Spadina, on Ross Street our homes, Masajiro, that old guy, hands upon green plastic hose, the yellow forsythia growing furiously to his left against the clay-red brick, as lightning behind him, while he is fading vapour into the dusky water's spray.