

Three poems from Lorca to the Umpteenth Power

CYRUS CASSELLS

How Flamenco Undresses Granada

for Cristo de Anda

In ready-to-roll *duende*'s wordless gospel,
Cristo insists,

it's always braver,
more sacrosanct to embrace

the Invisible, the Indelible,
the Impossible—

Deep in the Albaicín, on his sun-struck,
Alhambra-facing terrace,

Cristo and I practice clapping
until contagious dusk's ardent

bronze and russet balcony.
Then robust maestro and earnest pupil

climb to the renowned venue,
Tablao Jardines de Zoraya,

to assess the rumored-to-be-surefire performers:
Señor De Anda's mode of deepening the day's lessons—

To no snatch-gossip or sage's surprise,
risk-it-all *duende* abhors

the mundane: for instance, mid-show,
the spotlight dancer abandons

his no-longer-salient boots—maverick,
rare as a coursing satellite

(or a trapeze genius
refusing a buffering net)—

for the rest of his set.
This is how flamenco undresses Granada:

(I have Cristo as my witness!):
barefoot flamenco!

Santiago Teaching Me the History of Flamenco Guitar

In his studio, Santi dons the role of Sherlock:
and what of death, Querido Watson?

*Tell me, poet, when does the duende
sneak into the fresh-wrought tune
and deepen it?*

To complement his silvery, sublime playing,
Maestro Santiago explains,
in his marketplace studio,
how the fierce, exclamatory *ay*
of gripping, poker-hot flamenco
is cousin to an avid muezzin's
ribbon-like prayer-call
or a graveside Romany grandmother's
all-out wail!

His soulful flamenco instrumental solo
on Calle Santa Isabel
(just for me tonight—
no one else has come to class),
Santi's just-minted music,
redolent of heat, multiple diasporas,
and tarrying Andalusian dust,
is, as Lorca once pronounced,
“perfect and round as a ring.”

Jacinto Praises the City of Hidden Water

In Jacinto's lesson of water's pulse
and indispensable power,
it's his paramour's mission to teach me
"the city of hidden water that cries."
A gypsy Virgil, he dazzles me
with two diligent rivers,
the Darro and the Génil,
a dozen night-lit metropolitan fountains,
a tucked-away hillside cascade,
and deft water-works,
circa 14th century Granada.

Jacinto muses: *why label it "Earth,"
when this sea-laden planet
looms in space,
so blue-green and reflective?*

*And we "earthlings" as well:
clashing mammals mostly comprised
of molecules that spell and signal Water—*

In García Lorca's city, we examine
lichened cisterns, adored
by the flagrant summer heat's
savvy escapees: animated families—
everybody from *abuelita* to the baby—
who reign, carouse, or banter
from 10pm to 6am, on fostering
plaza benches, as though enthroned
in the family parlor....

About the author

Is There Room for Another Horse on Your Horse Ranch? (Four Way Books: March 2024) is Cyrus Cassells's latest volume. *Everything in Life is Resurrection: Selected Poems, 1982-2022* (TCU Press) and *Lorca to the Umpteenth Power* (3: A Taos Press) are forthcoming in 2025 and 2026. Among his honors: a Guggenheim fellowship and a Lambda Literary Award. *The World That the Shooter Left Us* was a Houstonic Book Award finalist and *The Gospel according to Wild Indigo*, a finalist for the NAACP Image Award. His two books of Catalan translations, *Still Life with Children: Selected Poems of Francesc Parcerisas* and *To The Cypress Again and Again: Tribute to Salvador Espriu*, both received the Texas Institute of Letters' biennial Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translated Book. The 2021 Poet Laureate of Texas, Cassells is a Regents' and University Distinguished Professor of English at Texas State University.