

THE ALHAMBRA SKETCHBOOK

Luis Ruiz



With the collaboration of the Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife

Translation: Josephine Watson

Copy-editing: Daniel Lacasta Fitzsimmons

All rights reserved. Any form of reproduction, distribution, public transmission or transformation of this work may only be undertaken with the authorization of the copyright holders, legally constituted exceptions aside. If you need to photocopy or scan any part of this work, please get in touch with the publisher.

The publisher makes no representation, express or implied, with regard to the accuracy of the information contained in this book and cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability of any errors or omissions that may be made.

Text and illustrations: © Luis Ruiz Padrón

Translation: © Josephine Watson

© Editorial Gustavo Gili, SL, Barcelona, 2017

Printed in Spain

ISBN: 978-84-252-3004-2

Legal deposit: B. 22576-2017

Printing: agpograf impressors, Barcelona

"The Moorish King rides up and down,
Through Granada's royal town;
From Elvira's gate to those
Of Bivarambra on he goes."

*A Mournful Ballad on the Siege
and Conquest of Alhama*

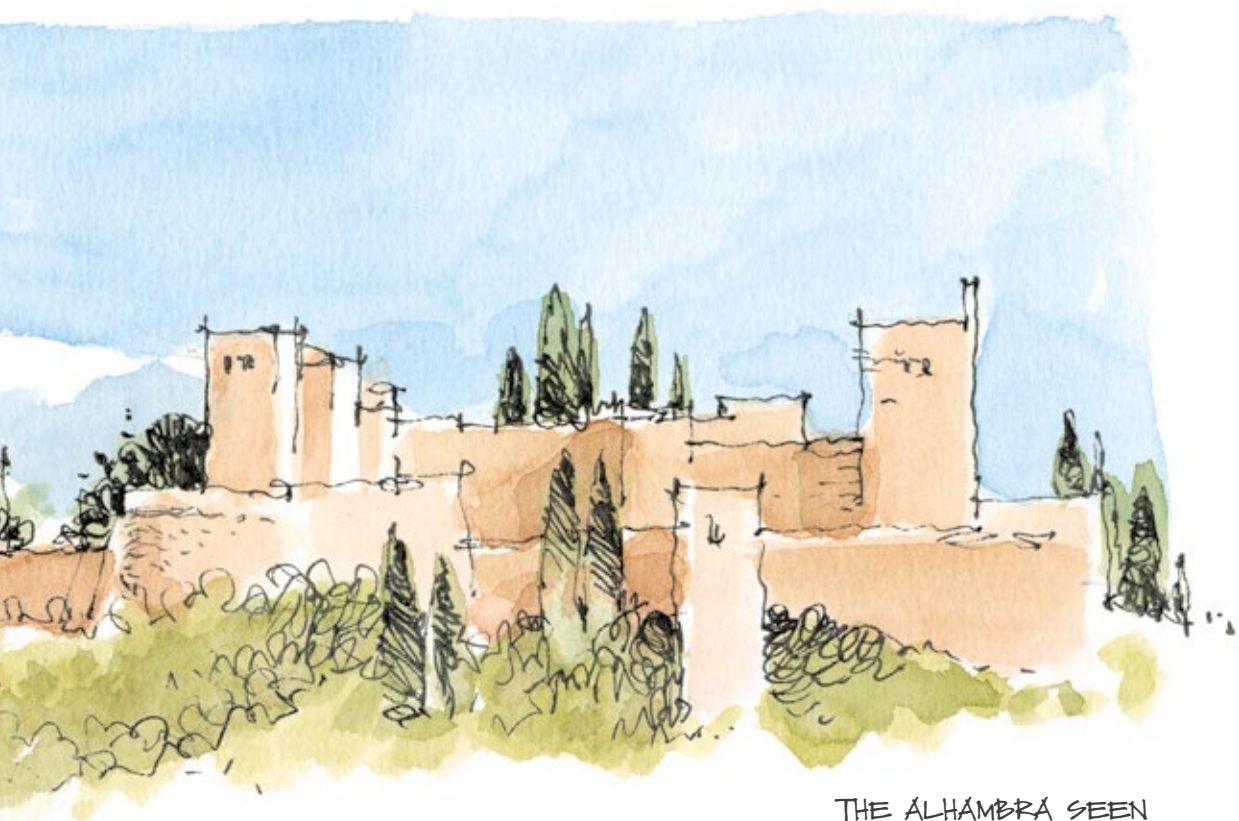
Translation by Lord Byron



FOR AN EASTERN ANDALUSIAN LIKE MYSELF, THE ALHAMBRA IS NOT THE MYTHICALLY EXOTIC PILGRIMAGE DESTINATION ONE VISITS AT SOME POINT IN LIFE; IT IS SIMPLY THE FORTRESS THAT STANDS THERE, HIGH ON THE HILLTOP.

WELL, NOT QUITE SO SIMPLY. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT WORDS SUCH AS ABENCERRAJES, LINDARAJA OR ARRAYANES, ARE FAMILIAR TERMS WHOSE MEANINGS WE NEED NOT LOOK UP IN ENCYCLOPÆDIAS AS THEY WERE IN THE VERSES OF THE ROMÁNCEO VEJO, WHICH OUR GRANDMOTHERS READ TO US AS LULLABIES.

ALSO, THE ALHAMBRA IS A PLACE THAT WELCOMES A VAST NUMBER OF VISITORS FROM ALL ORIGINS, GIVING RISE TO MANY INTERESTING SITUATIONS. THIS CIRCUMSTANCE, ALONG WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, MEANS THAT OVER THE COURSE OF A DAY, AND OVER THE FOUR SEASONS OF A YEAR, THE PERCEPTION OF THE ALHAMBRA LANDSCAPE IS EVER-CHANGING, AS IS TO BE EXPECTED IN ALL LIVING THINGS.



THE ALHAMBRA SEEN
FROM THE ALBAICÍN

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE NOT A GUIDE TO THE ALHAMBRA. NOR ARE THEY INTENDED AS AN ARCHITECTURE HANDBOOK - DESPITE THE AUTHOR BEING AN ARCHITECT -, BUT RATHER A SKETCHED CHRONICLE OF THE TOUR OF THE MONUMENT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

THE DRAWINGS IT CONTAINS TRY TO CAPTURE SOME OF THE MAGIC EVOKED BY THE NASRID ARCHITECTS, AS WELL AS SOME OF THE SURPRISES EXPERIENCED OVER SUCCESSIVE VISITS.

I WANDERED AROUND THE ALHAMBRA, SKETCHBOOK IN HAND, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS BETWEEN JUNE 2016 AND JANUARY 2017. THIS IS THE RESULT OF THAT EXPERIENCE. IN ALMOST ALL CASES, THE SKETCHES WERE DONE ON LOCATION, HENCE THEIR IMPERFECTIONS AND THEIR GENUINENESS, OR AT LEAST SO I HOPE.



THE BEST WAY OF REACHING THE ALHAMBRA IS CLIMBING THE HILL ON FOOT FROM THE CITY CENTRE, CROSSING THE PUERTA DE LAS GRANADAS (GATE OF POMEGRANATES), AT THE END OF THE STREET CALLED CUESTA DE GOMÉREZ. THE EFFORT IS WELL WORTH IT. THIS IS WHERE THE LUSH FOREST OF THE ALHAMBRA BEGINS, AND WHERE I CAN GET MY BREATH BACK NEXT TO THE MONUMENT TO WASHINGTON IRVING, IN THE SHADOW OF THE LARGE HORSE CHESTNUTS.



ROBIN
(ERITHACUS RUBECULA)

AUTHOR OF THE FAMOUS
TALES OF THE ALHAMBRA.