

This article was downloaded by: [Lara Eggleton]

On: 09 May 2014, At: 00:56

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Architectural Theory Review

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ratr20>

"A Living Ruin" : Palace, City, and Landscape in Nineteenth-Century Travel Descriptions of Granada

Lara Eggleton

Published online: 06 May 2014.

To cite this article: Lara Eggleton (2013) "A Living Ruin" : Palace, City, and Landscape in Nineteenth-Century Travel Descriptions of Granada, *Architectural Theory Review*, 18:3, 372-387, DOI: [10.1080/13264826.2013.875612](https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2013.875612)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2013.875612>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

LARA EGGLETON

“A LIVING RUIN”: Palace, City, and Landscape in Nineteenth-Century Travel Descriptions of Granada

This paper explores British travellers' initial encounters with the landscape and architecture of Granada and the Alhambra fortress-palace throughout the nineteenth century. Travel journal descriptions are examined alongside handbooks and guides to Spain, and considered in relation to the architectural tropes and viewing techniques that became common during the era of picturesque travel. Travellers' expectations and preconceived notions are revealed through their negotiation of style and integration of features within the view and through the association of the ruin with the Islamic monument and, in some cases, with the city of Granada. The resulting body of travel literature is shown to play a role in the historical positioning of modern Spain on the cultural outskirts of Europe.

The popularity of Granada as a tourist destination amongst nineteenth-century British travellers was in large part due to the Romantic reputation of the Alhambra, a remarkably intact Islamic fortress-palace perched on a mountainous outcrop overlooking the city. Built for a succession of Nasrid Kings in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it was the last stronghold to fall to the Catholic monarchs and symbolised for many foreigners Spain's "Other" history of Muslim occupation.¹ The reception of the monument in relation to a larger experience of place is documented within numerous volumes of travel journals, handbooks, and guides. These would structure the expectations of subsequent visitors and reinforce a perception of Spain as an exotic location suspended in an imagined, pre-modern stage of its history. Published journals contain a range of responses to the city and its famed Alhambra, with some visitors expressing disappointment at its unornamented fortress walls, while others see it as a ruin or relic of an Orientalised past. Neoclassical and Gothic architectural revivals in Britain would heavily influence these readings, as would the Romantic legacy of the city and its history, themes that emerged in the previous century. I show here that the historical value of travellers' observations lies within their richness and variety, which exhibit a range of individual responses and preconceived notions. Importantly, they reveal the perceptual frameworks and dominant visualising tropes that informed popular readings of the landscape, the city, and its key historical monument.

By the mid-nineteenth century, many Europeans had "discovered" Granada through recreational travel as Spain and its "Moorish" heritage represented an exotic and accessible frontier.² The particular brand of exoticism that grew up around the Alhambra of the British imagination, however, was particularly caught up with

domestic anxieties connected to industrial progress and colonial expansion. In the case of Granada, this resulted in an escapist narrative that rejected a modern conception of Spain in favour of imaginative readings of its Eastern antiquities. In the following sections, I examine a number of travel accounts published between 1830 and 1905 in which several typologies associated with the picturesque gaze are found to recur. This includes the movement and organisation of features within the view, particularly as travellers approached the city, and the description of the Alhambra in terms of neoclassical, Gothic, or Oriental tropes. These individual testimonies are balanced with descriptions found within handbooks and guides from the period. Both forms are discussed in relation to a strong naturalistic concern with landscape in domestic and foreign settings, which informed the philosophical and moral undertones of British travel texts. Drawing on a multitude of stylistic categories and literary themes, these accounts shaped an enduring perception of Granada as a place located outside of time and on the outskirts of modern Europe.

While Romantic responses to the decorated interiors of Alhambra have been discussed at length within the scholarship, the fortress-like exterior of the monument and the act of viewing from the outside have remained largely under-theorised phenomena.³ Moreover, the substantial body of studies of European encounters with the Alhambra tend to prioritise the visual legacy of painting and illustration over the written tradition, and whimsical descriptions over more critical responses.⁴ For many travellers, the city and its monument, nestled within the oasis-like greenery of Granada's Vega, or agricultural plain, triggered a range of associations both familiar and exotic. I suggest that this era of

reception must be understood as a process of “working through” the view, which allowed its material and spatial components to be naturalised through the familiar language of the picturesque. Approached in this way, the polyphony of descriptions resulting from British encounters can be seen as indicative of the complex relationship of the individual subject to Granada and its unique architectural heritage.

Given that picturesque sightseeing was primarily driven by a new breed of non-specialist, middle-class travellers who wished to emotively or expressively engage with the world, it is important to recognise that the tradition was born from the earlier Enlightenment practice of information gathering and cartographic mapping.⁵ Judith Adler writes that the emergence of a new art of sensory-inspired travel would gradually replace the science-driven model that had served to “objectively” plot locations in the service of an expanding knowledge economy.⁶ Yet, this new passion-driven approach still required a certain level of expertise and knowledge on the part of the viewer: Adler explains that the traveller would evaluate their experience in a similar manner to that of the art connoisseur: categorising by style and judging aesthetic merit, so that travel also became an occasion for the cultivation and display of taste.⁷ Borrowing from both fine art and literary devices, the picturesque tradition developed in the eighteenth century as a way of making sense of both domestic and foreign landscapes, functioning to absorb and position features within the view.⁸ For many travellers, it was also a tool used to match unfamiliar features with known types of architecture or modes of viewing. The fact that many approaching visitors struggled to place the Alhambra within a particular style or oeuvre reveals something of the insufficiency of existing categories, and the perceptual gap between predetermined

notions and an actual experience of the monument and its surroundings. Different approaches to negotiating the view reveal the inherent contradictions of the picturesque gaze as it grew to accommodate both domestic and foreign locales.

John Ruskin, who revisited the picturesque in his writings, distinguished a foreign brand of picturesqueness that was superior to British counterparts. An idea first developed in his 1849 *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, he identified within the ruin a “parasitical” form of the picturesque, due to its “accidental or unconscious” evocation of landscape characteristics, such that a crumbling cottage roof might take on the rugged appearance of a mountain range.⁹ His insistence on the natural disintegration of structures and their equally unforced depiction within paintings of the period was aligned with his theory that elements of “suffering, poverty and decay” effectively delayed a shallow, pleasure-seeking response to landscape. In *Modern Painters*, he argues that unlike the small-scale, tidily restored monuments found in England, ruins on the Continent showed signs of “poverty-stricken rusticity”, such that “the links are unbroken between the past and the present”.¹⁰ Ruskin was one of the first intellectuals to promote foreign picturesque travel on the basis that it combined the familiar with the abject, and the ordinary with the extraordinary. This formula would recur within colonial and commercial travel campaigns in the latter half of the nineteenth century, where the allegorical landscapes of tourist consumption, complete with objects in various stages of decay and obsolescence, became “sanctuaries from the effects of time and modern life”.¹¹

As international travel became increasingly accessible to middle-class men and women, a

visit to Granada to see the Alhambra was seen as a compromise between practical and exotic modes of travel. Its neglected state and manageable distance from Britain (at least compared with farther-flung sites in Egypt and India) allowed more moderate adventure-seekers to visit the palace with relative ease. As Tonia Raquejo has observed, a developing taste for lesser-known cultures and art forms made Spain, a formerly unexplored location of little academic interest, a new and exciting place for Romantic travellers, largely because of its unusual mixture of Christian and "Moorish" remains.¹² It provided an exotic experience for travellers wishing to remain within the safe confines of Europe, while its mountainous scenery appealed to those with an appetite for the Sublime. Bradshaw's *Illustrated Handbook to Spain and Portugal* of 1865, for example, compares the beauty and variety of Spanish scenery to that of the Tyrol and Styria, claiming that "few parts of the Continent are so worthy of a visit as Spain".¹³ At the same time, the guide highlights the inferiority of its hotel accommodation compared with France, Belgium, Germany, or Switzerland.¹⁴ Throughout the century, Spain was regarded as a less developed and "wild" corner of Europe that presented certain challenges to the traveller. Writing in 1905, Sybil Fitzgerald warns that it is not possible to enjoy Spain with "idle pleasure" as it is in Italy, and visitors should not look for the "beauty, harmony or common sense" possessed by the landscape and people of such "fairer" countries.¹⁵ Spain, she writes, has an individual character "fiercely contrasted to all other European lands", one that she attributes to its uncivilised, medieval character. For Fitzgerald, travelling in Spain is equivalent to travelling back in time:

Take a seat on the omnibus drawn by jingling mules and the whole modernity of

life seems at an end—to fall down the abyss of time with the first crack of the muleteer's whip. This is not our time, our century. The mind slips back to a medieval setting as completely as though it had never left it.¹⁶

It was through such testimonies that readers at home came to learn about Spain as a country out of step with the progressive reforms of modernity. Victorian Hispanist Richard Ford's immensely popular *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* of 1845 was instrumental in reinforcing this view, in which he blames the Spanish for the neglect of the city's historic monuments and contrasts their ignorance with the "all-absorbing interest and concentrated devotion" of the foreign visitor.¹⁷ At the same time, the history of al-Andalus (a period spanning nearly eight centuries of Muslim rule over large areas of Spain) added a sense of mystery and intrigue around Spanish culture, so that Spain itself became "an enigma to foreigners", distinct from other European countries.¹⁸ One of the earliest English-language sources about the history of Spain was William Robertson's widely-read *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769), which presented Charles as a heroic failure and the decline of the Habsburg Empire as a lesson in international politics.¹⁹ Robertson was also an early sympathiser with aspects of Islamic culture, and his rare historical account of imperial Spain also helped to draw attention to the history of al-Andalus and its relationship to Europe, a historical theme taken up with fervour by writers and poets in the early nineteenth century.²⁰ In 1803, Thomas Rodd's translation of the first part of Ginés Pérez de Hita's 1595 historical novel, *Las Guerras Civiles de Granada*, was published, spurning a number of "Spanish-Moorish prose works", including Washington Irving's *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829) and *The*

Alhambra (1832), and Edward Bulwer Lytton's historical novel, *Leila, or the Siege of Granada* (1838).²¹ This literary tradition strongly influenced a new generation of travel writers, particularly in the way that it "capitalised on the nexus of fact and fiction, or the conflicts and contacts between East and West".²²

The late eighteenth century also saw the arrival of illustrated travel guides such as Henry Swinburne's *Travels through Spain, in the Years 1775 and 1776* (1779) and Richard Twiss' *Travels through Portugal and Spain, in 1772 and 1773* (1775), both of which took up a special interest in the monuments and antiquities of Spain. The tradition was continued in the following century within lavish guides such as the four-volume Spanish edition of *Jenning's Landscape Annuals* (1835), which featured illustrations by the Scottish Orientalist painter, David Roberts.²³ These combined personal response with empirical fact in order to convey the history and character of a place, with architectural monuments often providing the setting for quasi-fictional historical narratives. Travel writing had inherited a mixture of informative or "mimetic" descriptions and "diegetic" opinions or reflections, what Mary Louise Pratt describes as the "narration-description duality", a popular nineteenth-century model that often resulted in the publication of two separate volumes.²⁴

As a way of unpacking these layered encounters with place, I examine a cross-section of texts that show attempts to reconcile difference through systems of ordering, both spatial and typological. Diego Saglia has identified within British travel texts a general cultural fascination with the "multiform experience of Spanish difference", and also the individual traveller's need to "delimit, control, and often demonize such cultural otherness".²⁵ Apart

from a brief period between 1808 and 1812, when Britain and Spain were united against Bonapartism, the two countries remained divided over religious and political matters. This has caused David Howarth to argue that "for all the intermittent bursts of interest in Spain throughout the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, the British never really understood the Peninsula on its own terms".²⁶ He has suggested that to the Georgian and Victorian mind, "Spain was romance, invention".²⁷ It was through the double filter of prejudice and intrigue that the city of Granada came to be seen as "a living ruin", as a Karl Baedeker handbook described it in 1898.²⁸ In the following sections, I examine recurring themes of the travellers' encounter: the negotiation of the view of the landscape, city, and monument on the approach to Granada; the interpretation of the Alhambra according to a series of stylistic categories; and, finally, the perception of the city and its palace as an integrated ruin.

Framing the Approach in Descriptions of Granada

Writing in 1847, Dorothy Wordsworth Quillinan (daughter of William Wordsworth) describes arriving into Granada at nightfall, regretfully "losing the approach" in the darkness:

I cannot attempt to describe the face of the country further; for night was now fast closing in, and I could see little more than the outline of the hills; only I know for some time the bed of the river was our carriage-road...and this within a few miles of Granada! It was mortifying to lose the approach to this city of song and romance.²⁹

Quillinan's remorse reveals the significance of the initial view of the city for travellers of the period. Central to Mary Louise Pratt's theory of transculturation is the convention of the arrival scene, which she argues plays the significant role within travel-writing of revealing "optimal sites for framing relations of contact and setting the terms of its representation".³⁰ The long and difficult journey to Granada meant that the dramatic effect of this arrival scene was heightened within descriptions. Though transportation improved throughout the century, the journey to Granada was long and difficult. The most direct route from Britain to Spain even as late as 1865 was a five-and-a-half-day steamer trip from Southampton to Gibraltar (or an extended eight-day voyage stopping at Vigo, Oporto, Lisbon, and Cádiz).³¹ A journey from Ronda to Malaga on horseback took approximately 14 h, and while traveller Augustus Hare reported an improvement in roads and a branch of railway between Loja and Granada in 1873, Granada remained unattainable by rail for much of the nineteenth century.³² The only way to reach the city from Malaga or Loja was by omnibus or diligence, which constituted a bumpy ride in a public stagecoach over irregular dirt tracks and required at least one night's stopover.

As might be expected on such a prolonged journey, views of the landscape and changing scenery are enthusiastically described and elaborated, and a sense of anticipation builds as travellers stop in villages and towns along the way. Most approached the city from the south or southwest, with access obstructed from the north and west by the two major spurs that extend from the Sierra Nevada and the deep, narrow ravine that separates them. Upon arriving, visitors were met with a stunning view of the verdant Vega, the white buildings of the medieval town, or Albaicín on the gradually

sloping hill in the middle distance, and the Vermilion Towers of the Alhambra set against the dramatic background of snow-capped mountains. Thomas Roscoe provides a description of this view in 1835: "On emerging from the hills, into the spacious and blooming plain, the old Moorish capital is seen in the distance, and more conspicuously the ruddy light of its Vermilion Towers, high overhung by the range of the snow-clad Sierra".³³ The agrarian richness of Granada's Vega (also a site of the legendary "Battle of the Vega" in 1319 involving the Nasrid defeat of Christian troops) promised reprieve from the rugged countryside of Andalusia. For the British traveller, the fertile plains satisfied a hunger for the quickly disappearing (albeit romanticised) pastures of England. Writing of the English landscape painting tradition, Ann Bermingham has described the agrarian countryside as signifying the relationship between man and nature during the "rediscovery" of rural Britain in the nineteenth century. She explains that through recognition of the nostalgic value of the domestic countryside in the wake of the industrial revolution, landscape came to represent the homely and the ahistorical precisely when large portions of the countryside were becoming unrecognisable and "dramatically marked by historical change".³⁴ As an additional boon to Granada's landscape, the Sierra Nevada offered the allure of a wilder and more majestic setting, a taste that had been cultivated in the earlier century with the incorporation of Switzerland and the Alps into the Grand Tour.³⁵

As travellers draw closer to the city, the Alhambra becomes the central focus within many descriptions. Henry David Inglis, writing in 1830, suddenly shifts his attention in the direction of the Alhambra and away from the "heathy country...wild, open, and covered with

aromatic plants".³⁶ His description of the natural features dissolves into an inspired account of the monument as it "rises up with greater distinctness and magnificence":

The situation of Granada eclipses that of any city that I have ever seen; and altogether, the view in approaching it, struck me more forcibly than any other view that I could at the moment recollect. As yet, the description would not perhaps be very striking on paper; because the ingredients of its magnificence consist in the vastness and splendour of its Moorish remains—not a single Alcazar; not a few isolated ruins, whose dimensions the eye at once embraces—but ranges of palaces, and castles, and towers, covering elevations a league in circumference, rising above and stretching beyond one another, with a subject city at their feet; and almost vying in grandeur with the gigantic range of the snowy Sierra that towers above them.³⁷

The wonder or awe experienced by Inglis is in itself meaningful, even while it may have been written at a later point. Caroline Walker-Bynum has observed that as part of the initial encounter between people and places, "wonder" must be understood as "a deeply perspectival response" born of an interdependent relationship of an "us" to a perceived "other".³⁸ The prolonged approach facilitated a sustained visual dialogue with the unfamiliar aspects of the landscape and its features, which was reapplied with fervour upon arrival. For many a traveller, the sight of Granada initiated an excited process of aligning an imagined picture of the monument with the actual physical and spatial coordinates of the view. This required overcoming a sense of difference through a reworking of space and the

designation of unfamiliar features within established categories. As W. J. T. Mitchell argues, the crucially formative moment of cognitive encounter with a place is accompanied by the need to apprehend its spatial "vectors", or to determine the position of one point in relation to others.³⁹ The traveller's approach thus involves a translation of features and overall impressions according to a culturally and individually specific set of expectations.

It is no accident that as many travellers approached Granada, the Alhambra was seen as part of the surrounding landscape. Pedro Salmerón has argued that the Alhambra is a landscape itself and should not be considered a single point of reference, but, rather, as a "silhouette that leaves an indelible mark on the relationships between city and landscape".⁴⁰ The material of the Alhambra's thick outer walls lends itself to this process as it is coated with stucco made from a mixture of lime and the red clay of the Sabika Hill.⁴¹ According to Salmerón, this gives the Alhambra a special ability to "capture the horizon" and to appear as a cave full of cavities and chests.⁴² Comprised of hard rubble faced with stone and brick masonry, the monument's outer fabric was often described as an extension of the rocky outcrop of the Sabika, and the city a white mantle from which it rose.⁴³ The incorporation of many elements into one inclusive view is common to many accounts, such as in this passage written in 1834 by "S. S. Cook":

The view of Granada, on the side of the Vega by which I approached it, is on the whole the best; it embraces the entire extent of a place, which in magnificence of exterior will not disappoint the most sanguine expectation. The length of the city, with its numerous spires and domes,

from the suburb beyond the gate of Elvira on the east, to the bank of the Xenil, which encloses it to the west, crowned by the red towers of the Alhambra, with the numerous gardens and vineyards interspread, the rugged and broken range which conducts the eye to the eternal snow on the south, form an ensemble which scarcely requires the assistance of the romance attached to its history to heighten.⁴⁴

Here, the Alhambra is only one of many elements that make up a view of Granada (interestingly, the "spires and domes" are found within the city, rather than the palace). Designating the monument as part of an ensemble, Cook attempts to combine and consolidate natural and architectural features within a singular frame, a visual device borrowed from the picturesque painting tradition. This compositional affectation is aided by the Alhambra's unique jumble of buildings that have grown organically along the Sabika over many centuries. Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar has noted that the shape of the fortress is "obviously determined by the contours and defensive possibilities of the terrain", observing that its 20 irregularly spaced towers of different shapes (which either protrude or lie flush with the fortress wall) make it difficult to distinguish its separate structures.⁴⁵ As a result, the Alhambra appears to rise as an earthy, ungainly mass, its plain outer surfaces lacking the ornamented splendour that had captured the imagination of Britain elsewhere. This prompted William George Clark (writing in 1851), after enthusiastically praising the palace's ornamented interiors, to disappointedly state: "I speak of the interior only, for, from without, it looks as grim and solid as the rocky hill on which it stands".⁴⁶

Raimonda Modiano argues that the picturesque, by virtue of its "paramount insistence on variety and intricacy", confronts the observer with a dazzling multiplicity of objects that "renders attachment to any one of them impossible".⁴⁷ The observer is thereby placed in a position of mastery: never visually dependent upon any one object and, therefore, "free to seek yet another sight".⁴⁸ It is through this restless reordering of the view that Alhambra changes position within the landscape, taking on different sets of relationships with other features. The use of pictorial devices continued to give writers a template in which objects could be shifted into the foreground, middle ground, or background, combined with other features, or moved from the centre to the edges of a traveller's field of vision. In a journal from 1843, Martin Haverty goes so far as to orient a view of Granada in relation to "the remainder of the horizon, to the extreme left".⁴⁹

Given the wide distribution of descriptive and historical material relating to the city and its Moorish past, the view of Granada also came as no surprise to many nineteenth-century visitors. Glimpsing mountains in the far distance, William George Clark remarked, "I needed no one to tell me that this was the Sierra Nevada", or that "the white town lying on the hill-side, crowned with red towers and belted with green woods" was the famed city of Granada.⁵⁰ By mid-century, it was impossible to approach the city without a raft of associations. This led many to adjust or creatively edit the dimensions of the Alhambra in accordance with an ideal notion of the palace or with existing stylistic categories. Saglia has explored the tendency in written descriptions and illustrations of the monument, which produced the effect that "normal perspectives are modified, distances between objects transformed, and

buildings added or subtracted".⁵¹ In the following section, this propensity for modification is examined in relation to a number of dominant stylistic categories.

A Collision of Styles: "Saracenic", Gothic, and Neoclassical Readings

Distorted and skewed descriptions of monuments are not simply misinterpretations, they are indicators of the expectations, preoccupations, and anxieties of the Victorian traveller. Whilst elements of the landscape could be easily defined in relation to the Sublime and the pastoral picturesque, categorising the Alhambra proved less straightforward. There was certainly no shortage of descriptive or stylistic vocabulary, as hopefully became clear in the preceding passages. Instead, there emerges an overabundance of terms and categories, which are varied and sometimes contradictory. As the picturesque gaze was cast across Britain as well as exotic destinations such as Egypt and India, the tradition evolved along parallel tracks of the domestic and foreign. While a large portion of the middle classes had avidly pursued international travel, those who lacked the resources to venture abroad were investing in domestic holidays. Advancements in British roads and communications ensured that new travel patterns abroad were matched by a return to local scenery. This domestic turn also meant that earlier approaches to representing the exotic, such as the Neoclassical monumentality made popular by early Orientalist painters, become somewhat outdated. This is not to suggest that foreign travel abated during this period (in fact, the case was quite the opposite), but it is relevant in the sense that standard features of the English landscape tradition, such as the Gothic ruin, were increasingly transferred onto scenes abroad.

One of the problems encountered through this "double vision" of the domestic and foreign was the historiographical association of the Gothic with Islamic or Arabic influence. A connection made popular by Christopher Wren in 1750, the pointed Gothic arch was thought to have originated through "Saracenic" influence via the Greeks, some believing that it entered Europe by way of "Moorish Spain", rather than the Middle East.⁵² This would change, however, as the Gothic style was gradually embraced as the official architectural mode of "modern" Britain, causing some to question the link with Eastern origins. Between 1820 and 1870, thousands of churches underwent a form of Gothic restoration, alongside domestic structures, universities, and prisons, establishing a model that was then reproduced through colonial channels.⁵³ According to Kathleen Biddick, this allowed the English to imagine and sustain a progressive vision of the nation through a process of internal colonisation.⁵⁴ The former tie to Islamic architecture was broken during what John Ganim has described as "a brief celebration of cultural relativism" at the mid-century, during which a number of comparative philological studies emphasised the creative energy of the Gothic over the relatively static quality of Oriental architectures.⁵⁵ Islamic architecture was subsequently re-labelled as unchanging and uncreative, while the Gothic was attributed distinct phases and a rich history of development.⁵⁶

It was at this crucial point in national stylistic development that the innovative qualities of the Alhambra were recast as derivative and chaotic, seen in direct opposition to the ordered functionalism of the Gothic. The Gothic revival in Britain was pioneered by architect Augustus Pugin, who championed the order and corresponding set of moral principles of late

medieval Christian architecture.⁵⁷ Despite these associations with religious piety and functionality, the Gothic continued to offend Victorian sensibilities. William Ousby explains that "with its complex rhythms, its love of dramatic contrast and its delight in rich decoration, medieval architecture was bound to look 'fantastical and licentious' to people whose eyes were trained in the cool harmonies of Neo-classicism".⁵⁸ Nevertheless, as Meyer Schapiro once pointed out, the earlier view of the Gothic as inartistic and undesirable based on the "extraordinary caprice and irrationality of its forms" was later completely reversed and the style was championed as the "paragon of a completely functional art".⁵⁹ Following this shift, even advocates of Islamic art such as designer-architect Owen Jones separated the Gothic style from its supposed Eastern roots, contrasting the spirituality of Gothic with the sensuousness of Islamic architecture. In his guide to the Sydenham Palace Alhambra Court of 1854, he advises his readers that "while the Gothic strikes awe, the Mosque echoes the calm voluptuousness of the Koran".⁶⁰

The shifting stylistic and moralising frameworks associated with the Gothic are evident within descriptions of the Alhambra, often through metaphor and hyperbole. They vary greatly across late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts. Udal Rhys writes in 1749 that it possessed the sumptuous qualities of a palace belonging to "Moorish Kings",⁶¹ while, in 1854, Jones likens the fortress to the Acropolis at Athens.⁶² By the mid-nineteenth century, the palaces were described from a variety of positions that alternately reflected a taste for the stoicism of the Neoclassical or the unpredictability of the Gothic. In 1844, Haverty writes: "Externally, the Alhambra presents the appearance of an assemblage of mean and irregularly built houses, without unity of effect

or design; and the walls are for the most part constructed of no better materials than a kind of compressed earth or cement, made of clay, pebbles &c".⁶³ Others attributed opposite traits to the same features. Quillinan, for example, writes that "the stern simplicity of those plain square towers and turrets have an indescribable charm".⁶⁴ Its geometric regularity appears to be at odds with the Gothic aesthetic, its fortress walls more akin to what Ousby calls the "outmoded harmonies of Neo-classicism".⁶⁵ He suggests that the nineteenth-century English tourist generally preferred ruins to intact buildings such as cathedrals or parish churches, partly because "time and decay had created irregularities the builders had not intended".⁶⁶ Preference and taste ultimately came to shape and define the outer forms of the monument, such that the Alhambra could be both a majestic and imposing monument and an unimpressive and disordered mess of buildings. This confusion and incongruity within individual testimonies is indicative of the fragile nature of such stylistic classifications and their uncertain attribution to foreign monuments.

Collapsing the View: City as Ruin

A final point of consideration in a study of the Alhambra's reception is the popular nineteenth-century trope of the ruin. Despite its ubiquity within the picturesque composition (featuring strongly within paintings and poetry of the period), the ruin was considered by some to have an antithetical relationship to beauty. Ruskin argued against the idealised depiction of ruins in picturesque representations on the basis that pleasure was an unsavoury and immoral response to the sight of waste and decay.⁶⁷ He was not alone in his contempt for what became known as the "cult

of ruins"; by the end of the century, many saw the remains of ancient or medieval buildings as "mere fashionable ornament" within pastoral views, which no longer evoked feelings of regret or pity for the passing of time.⁶⁸ Despite these criticisms, the ruin remained a standard feature in the landscape long after its Neoclassical roots had been severed, which is possibly an effect of the contradictory emotions aroused by their forms. While representation of fragmented cathedrals and abbeys within natural scenery became a nostalgic formula that blissfully negated historical meaning or specificity, the ruin could simultaneously signal death, disintegration, and the fall of civilisations.⁶⁹ A paradoxical symbol of timelessness and decay produced what Malcolm Andrews has identified as "pleasing melancholy" and "agreeable horror", a complex response that compelled the eighteenth-century picturesque tourist to visit ruined abbeys and castles.⁷⁰ The fear and awe evoked by "monstrous, broken and irregular forms" allowed viewers to ruminate over the loss of great civilisations being overtaken by nature, whilst at the same time admiring the beauty and compositional balance of the view.⁷¹

Raimonda Modiano describes the picturesque ruin as a "transitory and unstable object".⁷² She explains that the integration of ruins as minor features of the picturesque landscape, which emphasised their ordinariness while maintaining their monumental scale, functioned to "break the spell of the Sublime object".⁷³ Whilst the Oriental ruin often dominated or framed the view with Orientalist depictions, the English landscape ruin is tamed and softened within the fecundity of the British countryside.⁷⁴ It is perhaps of significance then that both types were drawn upon to describe the Alhambra. The sublime and pastoral elements offered by the natural surroundings of Granada, and the

relationship of the monument to these features, meant that at different times, travellers could view it as either monumental or ordinary. I suggest that the flexibility of these interpretative frameworks extended not only to descriptions of the Alhambra, but also to the city of Granada.

As I argued earlier, the variation of descriptions of the Alhambra on approach reveal that the monument remained a fluid feature in the landscape throughout the nineteenth century, changing according to individual perspectives and taste. The monument became a dynamic site of meaning through the use of metaphor, stylistic attribution, and compositional repositioning. It is often referred to as a ruin, a decaying reminder of Granada's history of Otherness, whilst at the same time being incorporated into the wider view. I propose that this practice led to descriptions of the city as a material and historical extension of the monument, thus taking on the characteristics of a ruin. This effectively formed a picture of Granada as untouched by the forces of Modernity, its natural features, antiquities, and people assigned a fixed place within an imagined medieval past. When Roscoe, for example, describes the city as a "mighty relic of vanished empire", it is unclear whether he is referring to the decline of the Habsburg Empire or the end of the period of Muslim rule in the region.⁷⁵ In the early decades of the twentieth century, a Baedeker guide discusses Spain's perceived social decay with its Islamic "remains" within the same passage. This passage echoes observations made in the previous century. Looking out over the landscape from within the walls of the Alhambra in 1868, H. Pemberton reflects upon the majestic, but nevertheless melancholic effect of the view:

The eye never wearies at gazing at this panorama, but the red hues that still

capped the Sierra Nevada were fast leaving them cold and grey, and we turned homewards, not joyously, but silent and thoughtful: there is something in these scenes with which we were surrounded, all ruins of the past, their decayed grandeur, the dilapidation and desolation, that is calculated to depress the spirits rather than elevate them.⁷⁶

Suddenly, it is the whole of Granada, its urban and natural landscapes, and not only the monument atop the Sabika Hill, that take on the quality of a ruin. This facilitated the desire to travel back in time to a place set apart from any real-world associations, leading Augustus Hare to describe being "translated out of fact-land into fairy-land" upon entering the city walls.⁷⁷ It is clear from the anticipatory tone of accounts that by the early decades of the nineteenth century, this was an expected part of the experience. Inglis, for example, writes that:

It is impossible to approach and to enter Granada without a thousand associations,—half reality, half romance,—being awakened within us: many centuries are suddenly swept from the records of time; and the events of other days are pictured in our imagination. A page of history is written upon every object that surrounds us.⁷⁸

Inglis was one of many early Victorian "time travellers" who discovered a medieval past in modern Granada. Like the Alhambra, the crumbling ornament and sagging structures of the city are seen to repair themselves before the eyes of visitors, history coming alive upon its surfaces. Matilda Betham-Edwards, likening the Alhambra to a piece of beautiful antique jewellery, writes that although "some of the jewels have dropped out and the gold is

tarnished" (the clasp is broken, the crown is bent, etc.), if one gazes a little while, "all becomes as it once was".⁷⁹ This contemplative and transformative gaze was similarly cast on the city's buildings and streets so that the Romantic traveller came to see its modern inhabitants in an exoticising and ahistorical light. This re-envisioning within travel texts would not only inform the experiences of subsequent Victorian travellers, but also concretise an understanding of Spain as a site of difference located conveniently within the borders of Europe. The relocation of place—complete with monuments, city, and landscape—within a realm of historical fantasy meant that its Orientalised past came to stand in for a modern vision of Spain. A passage from 1830 by Roscoe aptly illustrates this point as he weaves an interpretation of the traits of Muslim "conquerors" into a description of the landscape:

Wildly romantic, and strange as magnificent in its solitude, the aspect of Spain combines with the softer features and enchantments of the south, all the stern bleak air of grandeur so characteristic of the eastern desert [*sic*]. With its bulwarks of dark sierras, its sweep of wide cheerless plains, alternating with the most delightful and fertile regions, abounding in all the exquisite beauties of its southern clime; it may be said to resemble the architecture of its singular conquerors,—vast and massy, dark and forbidding in its exterior, but suddenly opening upon all the interior beauty, glory, and refined luxurious taste, which pictured to their eastern imaginations the paradise of the blessed.... Thus Granada, like some mighty relic of vanished empire, every where [*sic*] presents traces of her palmy days of splendour.⁸⁰

Here, Roscoe expertly weaves together descriptions of landscape and architecture so that the natural environs also become an embodiment of the past. Through such vivid and imaginative travel testimonies, it is possible to identify ways in which the Victorian traveller placed the Alhambra, and subsequently Spain, on the outskirts of European history. By assigning them a range of picturesque tropes, each with its own set of values, an idea of place was steadily built and rebuilt throughout the century. Whether the Alhambra was described as the crown of Granada (with a notable lack of jewels) or a monumental ruin (however humble and squat), its incorporation into its surrounding features reflects visitors' attempts to reconcile cultural and historical difference using a familiarising set of visual devices. The exact nature of these readings

fluctuates with the perspective of each individual, and their changing view as they approach and enter the city. Within these readings, distortions of the Alhambra's exterior render the inner workings of the picturesque transparent, and the way that it was used to mediate the complex landscapes of Spain and its foreign features. The fluid and uneasy positioning of the monument across a range of descriptions attests to the difficulty faced by travellers in attempting to "make sense" of the view and to negotiate the gap between their expectations and the material reality of Granada and its Alhambra. Thus, while its exterior lacked both the dimensions of a colossal ruin and the embellished ornament of an Oriental palace, the Alhambra, and by association Granada, was nonetheless pictured as a relic of a distant and exoticised past.

Notes

1. Scholarship on the subject of the Alhambra and its symbolic relationship to the Spanish conquest is extensive. For an overview, see Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, Leiden: Brill, 1992.
2. For a definition of "Moorish Architecture" in the context of nineteenth-century Britain, see Pascual de Gayangos, *Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, Vol. 15, London: Charles Knight and Co., 1839, 381–390.
3. Noteworthy exceptions include the work of María Antonia Raquejo Grado (Tonia Raquejo), *El Palacio Encantado: La Alhambra en el Arte Británico*, Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1990; and "'The Arab Cathedrals': Moorish Architecture as Seen by British Travellers", *The Burlington Magazine*, 128, no. 1001 (1986), 555–563. See also Marie-Sofie Lundström's recent article, "Experiencing the Alhambra, an Illusive Site of Oriental Otherness", *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 1, no. 1 (2012), 83–106. For an overview of the historiography of the Alhambra and its Romantic legacy, see
4. Lara Eggleton, "History in the Making: The Ornament of the Alhambra and the Past-Facing Present", *Journal of Art Historiography*, 6 (June 2012), 6-LE/1, <http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/eggleton.pdf> (accessed 28 March 2014).
5. Take, for example, the catalogue for the 1995 exhibition held in Almuñecar: *La Imagen Romántica del Legado Andaluz*, Mauricio Pastor Muñoz (ed.), Barcelona: Lunwerg Editores, 1995.
6. James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 16.
7. Judith Adler, "Origins of Sightseeing", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 16, no. 1 (1989), 23.
8. Adler, "Origins of Sightseeing", 23.
9. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, "Introduction", in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 6.

9. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1849, 179.
10. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters, IV*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1856, 3.
11. Jon Goss, "The Souvenir and Sacrifice in Tourist Consumption", in *Seductions of Place: Geographical Perspectives on Globalisation and Touristed Landscapes*, in Carolyn Cartier and Alan A. Lew (eds), London and New York: Routledge, 2005, 63.
12. Raquejo, "The Arab Cathedrals", 556.
13. Richard Stephen Charnock, *Bradshaw's Illustrated Hand-Book to Spain and Portugal. With Maps By Dr. Charnock, Vol. 34*, London: W. J. Adams, 1865, preface.
14. Charnock, *Bradshaw's Illustrated Hand-Book*, preface.
15. Sybil Fitzgerald, *In the Track of the Moors: Sketches in Spain and Northern Africa, with 63 Illustrations in Colour and Many Drawings in the Text by Augustine Fitzgerald*, London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1905, 1, 8–9.
16. Fitzgerald, *In the Track of the Moors*, 11.
17. Richard Ford, *Hand-Book for Travellers in Spain and Readers At Home: Describing the Country and Cities, the Natives and their Manners, the Antiquities, Religion, Legends, Fine Arts, Literature, Sports, and Gastronomy: With Notices on Spanish History, Vol. 1*, London: John Murray, 1845, 363.
18. Martin Haverty, *Wandering in Spain in 1843, Vol. 2*, London: n.p., 1844, 1.
19. David Howarth, *The Invention of Spain: Cultural Relations between Britain and Spain, 1770–1870*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press and Palgrave, 2007, 5.
20. Howarth, *The Invention of Spain*, 4.
21. See Diane Sieber, "The Frontier Ballad and Spanish Golden Age Historiography: Recontextualizing the *Guerras Civiles de Granada*", *Hispanic Review*, 65, no. 3 (1997), 291–306.
22. Diego Saglia, "The Moor's Last Sigh: Spanish–Moorish Exoticism and the Gender of History in British Romantic Poetry", *Journal of English Studies*, 3 (2001–2002), 193–215.
23. For an analysis of Roberts' and other artists' illustrations of the Alhambra, see Diego Saglia, "Imag(in)ing Iberia: Landscape Annuals and Multimedia Narratives of the Spanish Journey in British Romanticism", *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 12, no. 2 (2006), 123–146.
24. Mary Louise Pratt, "Fieldwork in Common Places", in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1986, 35.
25. Saglia, "Imag(in)ing Iberia", 124.
26. Howarth, *The Invention of Spain*, ix–xi.
27. Howarth, *The Invention of Spain*, ix–xi.
28. Karl Baedeker, *Spain and Portugal: Handbook for Travellers*, Leipsic and London: Karl Baedeker Dulau and Co., 1898, 334.
29. Dorothy Wordsworth Quillinan, *Journal of a Few Months' Residence in Portugal, and Glimpses of the South of Spain*, London: Moxon, 1847, 164.
30. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, 79–80.
31. Charnock, *Bradshaw's Illustrated Hand-Book*, 42.
32. Augustus John Cuthbert Hare, *Wanderings in Spain*, 5th edn., London: George Allen, 1883 (originally published 1873), 141.
33. Thomas Roscoe, *The Tourist in Spain: Granada* (illustrated from drawings by David Roberts), *Jennings' Landscape Annual*, London: Robert Jennings and Co., 1835, 3.
34. Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, 9.
35. Mohamad Ali Hachicho, "English Travel Books about the Arab Near East in the Eighteenth Century", *Die Welt des Islams*, 9, no. 1/4 (1964), 6.

36. Henry David Inglis, *Spain in 1830*, London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1831, 217
37. Inglis, *Spain in 1830*, 218.
38. Caroline Walker-Bynum, "Wonder", in Caroline Walker-Bynum (ed.), *Metamorphosis and Identity*, New York: Zone Books, 2001, 55.
39. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power*", in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, 2nd edn., Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002, x.
40. Pedro Salmerón, *The Alhambra Structure and Landscape*, trans. Diana Kelham, Granada: La Biblioteca de la Alhambra, 2007, 43.
41. Salmerón notes that while the eleventh- and thirteenth-century structures were red, the outermost surfaces of later structures such as the Comares and Lions palaces may have been white, but were chipped off over time to reveal the intense red nucleus of the walls, thus becoming a point of reference for later restoration work; see *The Alhambra Structure and Landscape*, 50–51.
42. Salmerón, *The Alhambra Structure and Landscape*, 50.
43. Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra*, 2nd edn., London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1992 (originally published 1978), 41.
44. S. S. Cook, *Sketches in Spain during the Years 1829, 30, 31 & 32; Containing Notices of Some Districts Very Little Known; of the Manners of the People, Government, Recent Changes, Commerce, Fine Arts and Natural History*, London: Thomas and William Boone, 1834, 10.
45. Grabar, *The Alhambra*, 41.
46. William George Clark, *Gazpacho, or, Summer Months in Spain*, 2nd edn., London: J. W. Parker, 1851, 109.
47. Raimonda Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque: Landscape, Property and the Ruin", in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 198.
48. Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque", 198.
49. Martin Haverty, *Wandering in Spain in 1843*, Vol. 2, London: 1844, 149.
50. Clark, *Gazpacho*, 105.
51. Saglia, "Imag(in)ing Iberia", 128.
52. Raquejo, "The Arab Cathedrals", 555.
53. Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism*, Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1998, 29.
54. Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism*, 29.
55. John M. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity*, New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 88.
56. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism*, 88.
57. See Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *Contrasts: or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste. Accompanied by Appropriate Text*, London: James Moyes, 1836.
58. Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 104.
59. Meyer Schapiro, *Romanesque Art*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1977, 3.
60. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism*, 90.
61. Udal Rhys, *An Account of the Most Remarkable Places in Spain and Portugal*, London: printed for J. Osborn, A. Millar, J. and J. Rivington, and J. Leake, at Bath, 1749, 130.
62. Owen Jones, *The Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace*, London: Crystal Palace Library and Bradbury and Evans, 1854, 23.
63. Haverty, *Wandering in Spain*, 158.
64. Quillinan, *Journal of a Few Months' Residence*, 174.
65. Ousby, *The Englishman's England*, 122.

66. Ousby, *The Englishman's England*, 122.
67. Quoted in Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque", 204.
68. Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque", 204.
69. Garside and Copley, "Introduction", 6.
70. Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800*, Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1989, 41–46.
71. Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 47.
72. Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque", 213.
73. Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque", 213.
74. John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500–1920*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 75.
75. Roscoe, *The Tourist in Spain*, 18.
76. H. Pemberton, *A Winter Tour in Spain*, London: Tinsley Bros, 1868, 214.
77. Hare, *Wanderings in Spain*, 146.
78. Inglis, *Spain in 1830*, 218–219.
79. Matilda Barbara Betham-Edwards, *Through Spain to the Sahara*, London: Hurst and Blacket, 1868, 176.
80. Roscoe, *The Tourist in Spain*, 17–18.