

*His Excellency Antonio Jara Andreu
Mayor of Granada*

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Dear Friends,

Once again I have the pleasure of beginning my speech by saluting with respect and affection the presence of the King and Queen of Spain in Granada. With their constantly supportive stance and their uncompromising message of modernity and progress to all the people of Spain, they are a welcome, necessary, and, if I may be permitted to be extremely frank, a very useful presence for all Spaniards who work every day to improve that lively and fertile reality known as Spain.

On yet another day and in the name of all the citizens of Granada, with great affection and devotion I welcome you, Your Majesties.

With the same pleasure, this morning I have the honour to salute the presence in Granada

for Your Highnesses the Prince Aga Khan and the Princess Begum Aga Khan

Your Highnesses, together with our warmest welcome, please accept the hospitality that Granada offers. This is a city that is proud to have been a meeting place, a place of peaceful co-existence of peoples and cultures. We are happy to have you in our city, and we would like you to feel at home with us. May Granada be like home to you. Welcome.

Dear Friends, as before Istanbul, Jakarta, Fez, Amman, Dakar and Cairo and, today Granada receives you with obvious pleasure and, if I may say so, special hope for good results from this Tenth International Seminar of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

Few tasks are as noble as the effort to reconcile tradition and cultural diversity with

progress and the achievement of a better quality of life for all citizens. To promote the consideration of the nexus, history-culture-living space, is always necessary effort and one that deserves applause. I wish you success in your work.

We hope that Granada may contribute to the accomplishment of your noble objectives. Particularly this city which has suffered, and sometimes still suffers, from the effects of architectural ignorance, an urban space that has historically been subject to intolerant and traumatic interventions, would feel itself honoured if some day, in the near future, it would merit the attention of a seminar devoted to it by the Aga Khan Award, like the one it welcomes.

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Dear Friends, in the name of the municipality and the people of Granada and in my own name, once again welcome.



View of the Alhambra from Albaicín

Photo G. Otte

Welcoming Remarks

*His Excellency Jose Rodriguez de la Borbolla
President of the Junta de Andalucia*

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before beginning my brief speech, I would very much like to express my great pleasure in having Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain present at the official opening ceremony of the Aga Khan Award Seminar on Architecture Education in the Islamic world, organised under the auspices of His Highness the Aga Khan. With such prestigious patronage this seminar is surely destined to be a success, an achievement that will only be further enhanced by the presence of outstanding personalities and renowned specialists who are here with us today. I would like to wish you all a pleasant stay in Granada and in Andalusia, hoping that together with the fruits of your labour here, you will return to your homes with pleasant memories of Andalusian hospitality.

A more appropriate setting in which to hold this seminar would have been difficult to find, considering the topic that will be discussed. Your deliberations are surely to be enhanced by the magical atmosphere of the setting. Granada and Architecture, Andalusia and the Islamic world, are concepts and realities linked by strong historical and aesthetic affinities.

As you all know, Andalusia was, from times immemorial, a distant lodestar to the West for those venerable civilisations that ventured to travel towards the dazzling Mediterranean lights. The ancient and endearing Hispanic soil became a land longed for by many, attracting peoples of different races, customs and beliefs. The region was soon transformed into a universal cultural stage: a true melting pot of fruitful interchange. But in the long and cosmopolitan history of Spain, the Islamic period has a special place. Almost eight centuries of Muslim rule made a definitive mark in the memory of the Spanish people. Andalusia and her people would most certainly lose some of their special characteristics were this splendid moment in Spain's history simply ignored. It would be impossible to understand the

characteristic traits that define us, our way of living or the words we use to express ourselves, without referring to this past.

Moreover, the most outstanding artistic and architectural expressions created on Andalusian soil bear the indelible mark of the Islamic period. I am not just referring to the impressive dimensions of Cordoba's Mosque, the vertical gracefulness of the Giralda or the Nasrid splendour of the Alhambra and Generalife of Granada; I am also referring to the rugged enchantment of Rhonda or of Priego de Baeza. Andalusian cities preserve a singular architectural style which may serve as a model capable of meeting contemporary needs for space and sociability. The open, tolerant and straightforward Andalusian character is partly shaped by those cities in which her people live. With the discovery of America, the region's people transmitted their building forms and technology to the new land, along with Islamic designs. Arches, roofing and skirting-boards in Mexico or in Quito share a common background with Islam, which from the Amazon to the steppes of Central Asia, has inspired one of the most universally disseminated architectural styles.

Andalusia and the Mediterranean countries lie at the centre of a unique aesthetic crossroads. When today's Europe heeds the mysterious call from the South, with its meridional attractiveness, the people who make up a part of this privileged universe, will do their utmost to transform it into a harmonious one, a peaceful frontier of culture, progress and tolerance.

Together with the achievements of this Seminar, I would like to express my hope that this higher objective may also become a reality.

Thank you very much.

His Highness The Aga Khan

It is the greatest privilege for all those concerned with the Aga Khan Award for Architecture that Your Majesty has graciously consented to preside over the inauguration of this seminar. Your honouring us today is not only an affirmation of the importance which Spain attaches to preserving her magnificent architectural inheritance. Your presence symbolises support for a wider concept: that the cultural heritage of the world is a global responsibility and that the richer, more industrialised nations should be concerned for the cultures of the less developed ones.

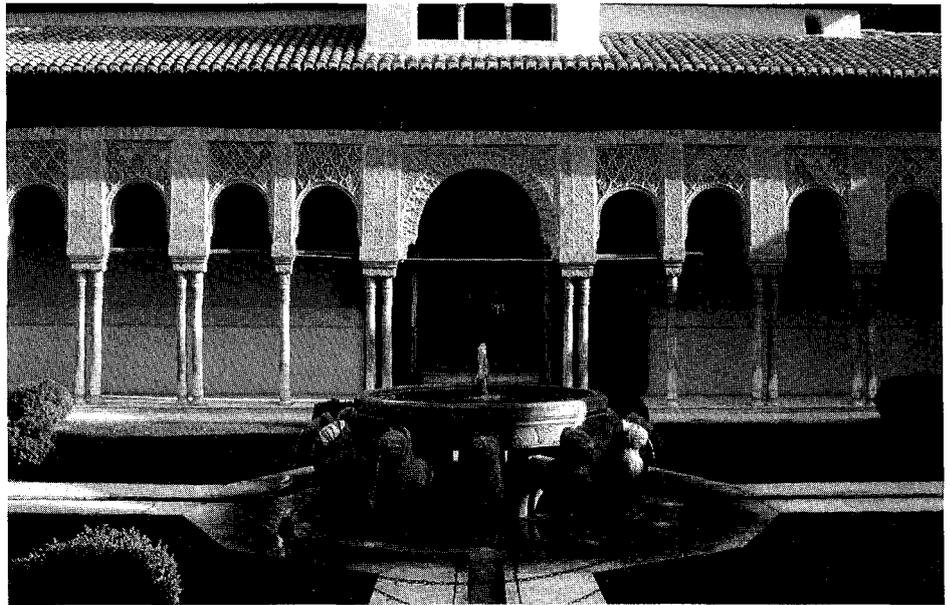
Your Majesty, your welcoming us to this legendary Palace of the Alhambra is a vivid reminder that Spain is uniquely qualified to foster such understanding. Your country protects some of the most beautiful manifestations of Islamic architecture. At the same time the living links your own civilisation maintains internationally through its achievements, faith and history and the constant renewal of its energies can give inspiration to the parallel efforts of those seeking to revive the creativity of Islamic culture.

Thus the famous city of Granada is the right place in which to hold a seminar concerned with a key aspect of the re-invigoration of Islamic architectural practice: the education of architects.

Your Majesty, some of this distinguished audience may wonder why I should be sponsoring such a seminar when I am neither an architect nor an educator; when, at best, I am probably no more than a rather difficult client of architects.

The reason is that, as a client, I have long been aware of how acutely the built environment which we inhabit affects the qualities of all our lives, whether we are Christians or Muslims, rich or poor. To prove satisfactory and stimulating the multifarious structures comprising that environment must express the ethos of its civilisation.

The starting point for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture was a realisation that changing social and economic conditions, coupled with the accelerating pace of technological development, were inflicting



Alhambra, Court of the Myrtles.

Photo: University of Pennsylvania

upon the world's 800 million Muslims an environment which often did not reflect their culture, their life-styles, their faith and hopes or even the demands of the climates in which they live.

Accordingly, since its foundation ten years ago the Award has sought to focus professional and public attention on directions in architecture which will enrich the physical environment of the Islamic world.

As part of this process the Award has organised a series of seminars on contemporary architectural issues. There was previously no established international forum for the discussions and analysis of problems facing those who design for Muslims.

The seminar which Your Majesty is inaugurating today is in many respects a culmination of all the work that has gone before.

The education of architects is the key to the profession's competence; its attitude towards its role and responsibilities; and, especially, to its social, cultural and environmental sensibility.

In the past the horizons of architectural education have often been limited to principles of construction and the aesthetics of design and decoration. The Award seeks to stimulate architects to think and learn more widely about their art; about the vast spectrum of sources from which they legitimately can and should draw inspiration; about the impact their work will have on the future of the societies they serve.

Through exchanges of information the Award can promote understanding of the Islamic design vocabulary and the cultural and humanistic implications of the Islamic faith relative to its built environment. An architectural language is usually a distinctive trait of any major culture and continuity in the culture requires continuity in the evolution of that language.

Whilst a broader based education embracing cultural, demographic and economic influences will improve the student's comprehension, later in his career he is likely to need more specific qualifications. Such buildings as airports and hospitals, corpo-

rate offices and hotels, even sports facilities, have become so closely focussed on the activities they support that each has its own high technology. The architect's professional upbringing must probably now cater both for a wide basic learning and a narrowing toward specialisation as he progresses.

Because the Award is not an educational institution, I established the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture in 1979 jointly at Harvard University and MIT. Its aim is to promote research and teaching in Islamic art, architecture and urbanism. Two aspects of the Program's work deserve mention here. One is the compilation of an illustrated, analytic archive, recording Muslim built environments and accessible to students. The second is the development of relationships with schools of architecture in Islamic countries: in my view a vital activity. I am delighted that experts from the Program and noted academics from other schools are contributing to the theme lectures, case studies and workshops of this seminar.

Students who later practise outside their own countries or cultures will face unfamiliar considerations which you, the educators, can help them understand. Whether they serve Hispanic, Far Eastern, African or other societies, or whether they work in the Islamic world, they will have to emphasise with that civilisation's cultural base and bridge a vast gap between it and the predominantly Western idioms and technology which have become the stock in trade of so-called "international" architecture.

This is not the moment to recall the historic origin of this gap; the point is that the situation is now changing. Within the Islamic world, it is increasingly being recognised by the politicians, financiers, industrialists, planners and architects who control development that architectural idioms which reflect Muslims' social patterns *are* compatible with an improvement in their quality of life; indeed, are likely to be a pre-condition of such betterment. It has been a major concern of the Award to promote that recognition.

One fundamental issue is the evolution of a design language capable of satisfying Muslim values. This does not mean copying the outward forms of the past. For example, the Master Jury has premiated the Kuwait Water Towers as being advanced technologically whilst enhancing the Islamic architectural vocabulary.

However, it is not only in the realm of technology that we must seek appropriate design. The vast majority of Muslims are rural dwellers and are poor. For them the self built house has always been the principal form of shelter and it is certain to remain so. But this need not exclude these people from the benefits of modern architectural practice.

The architect can have a valued role in Third-World rural development by being the professional who both enables development to take place and raises its standards, by assisting villagers to build more effectively for themselves.

Such guidance can involve complex factors. *Safety*, from fire and seismic disturbance; *health*, improved through protection against climatic extremes and through proper ventilation; *siting concepts* that conserve productive agricultural land and permit the cost-effective concentration of services. The architect-planner must re-examine local materials which the vernacular architecture employs, but which are often eclipsed in the minds of developers by concrete, glass and steel, and suggest a blend which is viable aesthetically, technically and in price. He will have to regard dormant traditions as domains of knowledge with contemporary relevance.

And what of the rural immigrants who crowd inexorably into the Third World's cities with no comprehension of the patterns of life and space which used to make city living tolerable?

By the year 2000 — already uncomfortably close — there are expected to be fifty cities with populations over fifteen million. Forty of those fifty are in the Third World. Many are Muslim or have substantial Muslim communities. One has only to study pro-

jections for the growth of Cairo or Jakarta to appreciate that urbanisation is likely to be the outstanding architectural and planning issue of the early twenty-first century.

Unofficial housing in cities reveals elements of poverty, lack of facilities and uncontrolled — often unsafe — housing that are also found in villages. This comparability was demonstrated by the effectiveness of simple indigenous techniques in the Jakarta Kampung Improvement Programme, which the Award also premiated.

Will the rising generation of architects have been educated to participate in the restructuring either of the cities or the rural areas? Will they be able to do so within the terms of a specific culture?

Only the educators can provide the tools of knowledge with which the coming generation of architects will address these issues.

In most of the Islamic world formal architectural education — as opposed to apprenticeship — is a relatively recent phenomenon. What we are seeking of those who will build in the Islamic world is a sympathetic approach to our culture and faith: a willingness to share in finding solutions to changing circumstances.

Your Majesty, through your generous patronage this week's discussions are being held in the Alhambra at the heart of a fabled Spanish city: appropriately linked symbols of the great cultures, both of which have had an enduring impact on the built environment of the world, both of which must educate their architects to face the challenges of the coming century. If this Seminar can contribute to a revival of Islamic architecture which emulates the superb continuity of Hispanic achievement, then this activity of the Award will have fully served its purpose.

Your Majesty, it is my honour and privilege to ask you to declare these proceedings open.

*His Majesty The King of Spain
Don Juan Carlos I*

Your Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen,
The Queen and I are both very happy to be in this beautiful city of Granada and to have the opportunity of meeting the members of the Steering Committee of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture that today begins an international seminar.

The support which the Award offers for the preservation of the various cultural traditions of the Islamic World, especially regarding buildings and towns is worthy of the highest praise and admiration.

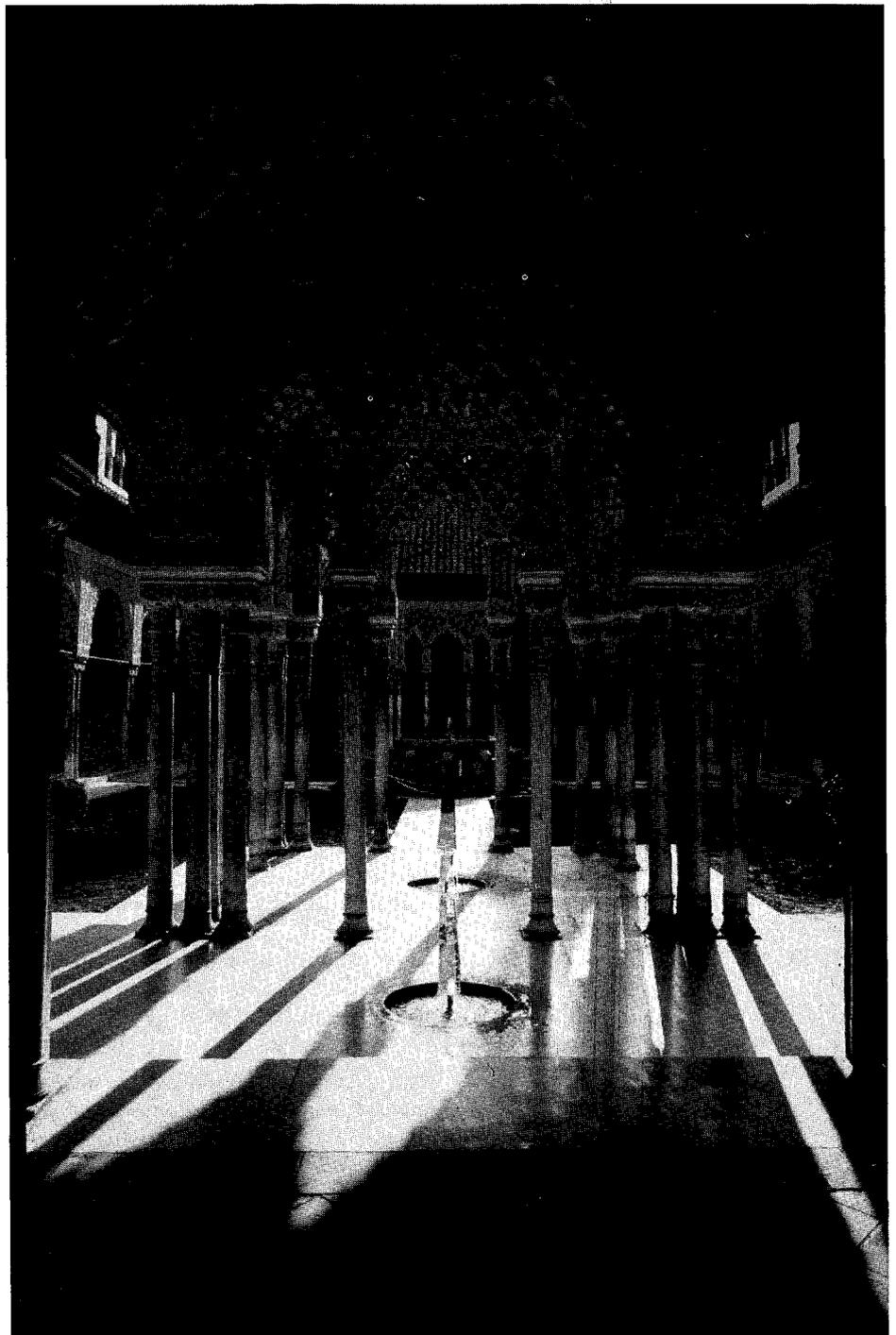
The accomplishments of the Award in suggesting future directions for Islamic culture and at the same time contributing to its conservation and diffusion are manifested in the awards given every three years, the studies and publications that are realised, the seminars that are organised and the funds so generously donated.

The links of our Arabic heritage with the Islamic world make even more interesting for Spain the attention that the Aga Khan Award for Architecture directs to our country, where so many samples of a common historical past are to be found.

I thank the Steering Committee of the Award and especially, His Most Serene Highness, Prince Karim Aga Khan, for selecting this magnificent setting of the Alhambra, so full of evocations and memories, to celebrate this international seminar.

I warmly greet, in the name of the Queen and in my own name, the distinguished personalities who will take part in this seminar, wishing them all a happy stay in our country, and I offer my best wishes that the results of the sessions that commence today be very brilliant ones.

I hereby officially inaugurate the seminar on "Architecture Education in the Islamic World" of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

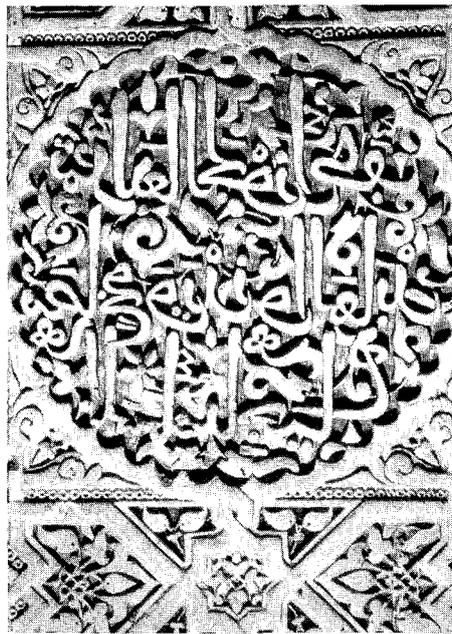


Emilio Garcia Gomez

Destiny is inscrutable and Time is fraught with unpredictable vicissitudes, what the Arabs call *duwal*. A favourable gust of wind, which a few years ago took me to the Mosque of Cordoba to speak on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate, has brought me today to take the floor, in the presence of my King and of a Prince who is Imam of the Isma'is and a descendent of the Prophet, in no less a place than the heart of the Alhambra, facing the inscription of a poem by Ibn Zamrak whose spirit has accompanied me through half a lifetime. Your Highness it would be presumptuous of me to voice my approval of your choice of the Alhambra as the venue of this seminar, but it is not impertinent on my part to express my respectful gratitude to Your Highness for this choice. Related to the important fields of study that the Aga Khan Award promotes, the Alhambra complements two of the prior settings, which I know very well: the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore, that are unrivalled save by those of the Generalife, and the Palace of Topkapı in Istanbul, unrivalled in its situation. They constitute a marvellous triad.

Historically, the Alhambra is the only remaining Muslim royal palace from the medieval times. But its survival would count for little were it not for its great beauty, and especially for us, were it not the fact that the Alhambra combines not all (for the domain of Islam is vast) but, certainly, many of the characteristics that meet together in its great art.

It is to some degree true that royalty and architects in the Islamic world did not build with blasphemous audacity for eternity, because they knew that all is perishable save the Countenance of God (*kullu fanin illa wajhu-hu*). The Alhambra, too, is fragile and has survived only by a miracle. In essence, it is the great tent that the nomadic sheikh pitches in the desert, upon stout poles, but garnished with exquisite carpets, represented in the pavilion of the Alhambra by ornamental and glazed tiles, columns, star-sprinkled plastering and escutcheons, eaves of precious wood and *muqarnas*



Alhambra inscription of a poem by Ibn Zamrak
Photo University of Pennsylvania.

If a golden rule for sound building is integrity of materials, which must not disguise themselves or dissemble — as men should not do either — the Alhambra is free from falsity. Just as we say in common parlance “for bread, bread; for wine, wine”, so, too, the Alhambra calls plaster, plaster; sun-dried brick, brick; glazed clay, tiling; the wooden roof, woodwork. But, what it does do is to project onto those ordinary materials the light of supreme perfection.

The great Islamic sovereigns, true to the principle that everything is ephemeral, did not take their seats upon a traditional throne. Instead each, while respecting the work of his ancestors, renovated his own surroundings and there pitched his tent. The Nasrid kings in their creative period, the fourteenth century, did not depart from this rule. I hold it to be incorrect that the renowned Tower of Comares now before our eyes, the work of the great Yusuf I, was the definitive official seat of his monarchy. In a very recent work I have pointed out for

the benefit of the scholarly community, and in a forthcoming book I shall do so for the general public, that the Court of the Lions was not, as was thought, either a private residence or a harem, but a new ceremonial and administrative quarter, a new *mashwar* (council chamber), created by Mohammed V. It is smaller, but more elegant and refined. In truth, in this quarter Charles V pruned the Arab constructions with a far sharper hook than is thought, and consequently, he shut off their light. I hope to prove it.

No one has been able to establish incontrovertibly that the Holy Writ of Islam contains an absolute injunction against the representation of living beings. The question goes much deeper. In Islam, as also in other Oriental spiritual traditions of which it is the heir, there has always been an aversion to any sacrilegious attempts at imitating the Creator. Hence, the absence of plastic arts, and moreover, in ancient literature, the absence of the novel and drama. The ornamentation tends towards inanimate abstraction, and it is curious how, after all these centuries, the troubled West is showing a convergent trend. In the Alhambra this predisposition to favour abstraction translated into practice reached its peak. There are exceptions: the stylised lions of the fountain that look towards the ancient Orient, and the later paintings of the Hall of the Kings, the work of an Italianate brush. Aside from these anomalies, the only living thing represented in the Nasrid palace is the word: religious phrases, eulogies and poems, which I have just finished translating into Castilian verse. But in Islam the word lives; it is life, as is the alphabet. The rest is sublime geometry, from the floor paving to the coffered ceiling: glazed tiling, plaster mouldings, cupolas with *muqarnas* and ceilings intricately carved. To decipher them we have to read *Arte de la Laceria* by Prieto Vives (the only name I cite, because his book is underservedly neglected). His detailed interpretation involves enigmatic calculations, and they are not precise ones. But for the simple spectator the fascination of beauty suffices, not forgetting the colour, which must have been delicate and brilliant.

From the calligraphic inscriptions we know that the gilded letters glittered amid ornamental plasterwork of ultramarine blue, or ground lapis lazuli. As for the mural ceramic work, either it evoked a coloured sea, according to Arab metaphors, or, for a Western viewer, Harlequin costumes out of which, due to a horror of anthropomorphism, the body of Harlequin has escaped. Never had there been such beautiful decoration in the past, nor was there to be again in the future, despite its mechanical adoption in North Africa.

We know that Islam is less ascetic than other creeds and not only permits but even encourages the enjoyment of God's ephemeral gifts in this world. It is even said in the Koranic depiction of Paradise that its fruits will resemble those of the Earth (*les nourritures terrestres*). Hence the fondness of Muslims for naturalism. The most resplendent light enters the Alhambra, turning some of its halls into wondrous lanterns (others are left in semi-darkness), or, if we listen to the sounds, into gigantic bells. From what we now call The Tower of the Peinador de la Reina, also the work of Mohammed V, it was said that, apart from its function as a lookout post for spying, it allowed one not only to see the houses of Granada's citizens but also to hear their inhabitants cough. Hence the Nasrid garden, whose miraculous prototype is the Generalife, *hortus clausus*, a tapestry of vegetation, a foretaste of Paradise. And, there was water to supply palaces and gardens, the delight of those whose ancestors had been thirsty nomads; water brought from the mountains, not much, for it was not abundant, but enough to seem abundant, flowing softly or precipitately and gushing out in fountains and springs.

In their attitude towards water the Arabs were like those money-changers in the old Flemish paintings caressing their little columns of gold coins. There is no more moving sight than that little "water stairway" in the Generalife, whose handrails are inverted tiles down which the water runs bubbling in miniature cascades.

I have tried, with necessary brevity, to make the point that, while the Alhambra does not exhibit by any means all the characteristics of Islamic art, it does to an exalted degree combine many of them, and resolves not a few paradoxes.

There is, in fact, a conflict between economic poverty (and hence, poverty of materials) and art. But we know that art, as unpredictable and fleeting as time, comes to rest where it pleases and for as long as it chooses, just as a people's cultural apogee does not always coincide with the zenith of political power. Some see a contradiction between artistic refinement and defensive and martial vigour. I do not agree. When King Abdullah of Jordan visited the Alhambra in 1949, he remarked as he left, stroking a column in the Court of the Lions, "Now I understand why the Arabs left Spain". It was the comment of a Bedouin, as he called himself. But, in the Topkapı in Istanbul, there is a picture by Sinan Bey which shows Mehmet II, the proud conqueror of Constantinople, bringing towards his nostrils an exquisite little rose. False analogies are also invoked to suggest, for example, that refinement encourages voluptuous sensuality, and from this the Alhambra's reputation has suffered greatly at times. I do not see the connection. When refinement is as subtle as the Alhambra's, it seems to me a sign of majesty. Inside, with its polychromy gone, the Alhambra is now white, as are many Greek statues, for monuments grow old like people, and it is not necessary to colour their white hair. But, outside it is red. Its name (a very ancient one, far antedating the Nasrids) means precisely that: "the red one". What is curious — I refer to a strange coincidence that I have never seen properly stressed — is that the last dynasty to reign in it were called the *Banu'l-Ahmar*, meaning "Sons of the Red". Red was the heraldic colour of the monarchs of Granada, who we know even wrote officially on red paper ("scarlet letters"). White and red! They are the colours of majesty. The ancient imperial mantles were purple with an ermine lining that showed at the cuffs and collar, as the

snows of the Sierra Nevada form the background to the blood-red Alhambra

Another main colour of the Alhambra is the green of its grove. The grove is, of course, Christian: the Alhambra's greenery was all within its walls, for the idea of a fortress in use being surrounded by leafy trees, providing ideal hiding-places and protection for enemies, is a sheer absurdity. The Christians, in love with the Alhambra, wrapped it in the dark, quivering emerald of the grove as if with a protective quilt. I once said that even the magnificent fortified Palace of Charles V was the stone pillow presented by the Crown of Spain to the plaster Alhambra for its delicate and feminine frailty to rest upon.

If Your Highness were to ask any citizen of Granada, or any Spaniard, about the Alhambra, he will tell you that it is Arab, but at the same time, viscerally Spanish. It has spent more time with us than it has with the Arabs. It is bonded to us, to that complex organism called Spain. And there you have the solution to the last and abiding contradiction of this monument. How can the Alhambra, in all its fragility, have come down to us almost intact? The answer is: because it was loved by the Monarchy who made it a royal residence, by the nobility who lived in it, and by the commoners who once occupied it — by all. The Alhambra lives on because it has been protected by the strongest binding force that resides in human beings; it has been preserved by love.