

The *General View of Toledo* from the *Cross of the Canons*

in Pérez Villaamil's oeuvre



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**BILBOKO ARTE
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To mark the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum's acquisition, in 2004, of a painting entitled *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* by Spanish romantic artist Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (El Ferrol, La Coruña, 1807-Madrid, 1854), I was asked to write an essay for the museum's annual Bulletin that would set the painting in the context of the artist's early Romantic phase and review the place the Imperial City held in the artist's output, with particular reference to that phase.

The *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* [fig. 1] is a 90 x 110 cm oil painting on canvas signed and dated "TOLEDO / VILLA-AMIL / 1836" on the base of the cross at lower right centre [fig. 2]. The painting is a broad, distorted general view of Toledo, taken from the spot then known as Cruz de los Canónigos, or Cross of the Canons, at the gateway to the city and to the left of the road from Madrid; as the painting shows, the cross, long since disappeared, was on the outskirts of the city. The cross is in fact what used to be known in Spain as a *rollo*, which usually consisted of a stone column on a stone base or pedestal, in most cases topped with a cross. Besides marking the boundary between two municipalities (its usual purpose) the *rollo* was also occasionally used as a make-shift pillory.

Although in general terms, the view corresponds to the way things were, it does also make room for a number of features the artist introduced, including the distortion of the view itself and the modification of proportions, scale and at times the location of the buildings shown.

Moving from the foreground to the background, the view begins upfront with the cross, behind which, to the left of the road, is the convent of the friars of the order of the Trinitarios Descalzos, or Discalced Trinitarians, popularly known as the *barbones*, after their characteristic beards (*barba* in Spanish). Founded by St. Juan Bautista de la Concepción, reformer of the Order of the Trinitarians in 1612, the convent is in the Renaissance style, with a church dedicated to St. Ildephonsus, Archbishop of Toledo. It was destroyed during the Peninsular War, although the friars returned after the French invasion and restored most of it; subsequently,



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1. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons, 1836
 Oil on canvas, 90 x 110 cm
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Inv. no. 04/7



2. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons, 1836
 Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
 Detail

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the *Desamortización Eclesiástica* or Ecclesiastical Confiscation of Spanish Treasury Minister Juan Álvarez Mendizábal and the monks' subsequent expulsion led to the convent's definitive ruin in the mid-19th century¹.

A road packed with country folk runs before the Trinitarian convent and ends at the Puerta Nueva de Bisagra gateway, clearly visible in the right background. A general vista of the city extends behind the gateway, with the walls clearly in view; the Alcázar, at the highest point, its towers bereft of capitals, as they were at the time Pérez Villaamil painted the picture; to the left, lower down, is the Hospital de Santiago, the original home of the Order of that name in Toledo, founded in 1175 and demolished in 1884; a building just in front possesses the old *alcázares reales*, later converted into the convent of Santa Fe, and which today is part of the Provincial Museum of Santa Cruz; to the right of the Alcázar is a somewhat idealized version of the church and tower of San Nicolás, which survive to this day; next is the cathedral tower which is not in fact quite so close to the Alcázar as it seems to be here, this being a spatial distortion introduced by the artist, perhaps intended to centre the picture and make the monument more visible within the whole; further to the right is the dome of the Jesuit church, the only one in Toledo to boast twin towers; and on the left hand side of the painting are the meadows of the river Tajo (Tagus) with the river itself, the Alcántara bridge and the castle of San Servando behind, backed by some remote, unreal heights.

Previously in an as yet unidentified private collection, the painting itself appeared on the market in 1978, when it came up for auction at Durán in Madrid, where Barcelona art collector Dr. Luis Rotellar bought it. The painting remained in his collection until its acquisition by the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum in 2004. In other words, from the date Pérez Villaamil painted the work in 1836, until its appearance in Madrid in 1978, it had been "missing" for one hundred and forty years. Although mentioned in literary references of the time, the painting was for all practical purposes unknown, after remaining hidden from the public and art experts alike for so long. If we add the twenty-six years it spent in the Rotellar collection, the painting has been hidden from view for one hundred and sixty-eight years in all, confined exclusively to private viewing. Although the painting was published² and included in an exhibition I organized³, and reproduced in some other essays of mine⁴, and, more recently, by other authors⁵, the fact is that, after its acquisition by the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, it is only now that we can see and freely admire this magnificent work by Pérez Villaamil. In our appreciation of this new situation, we should remember how few works of such quality by this artist ever appear on the market; despite his long-standing fame as a highly prolific artist, good works by Pérez Villaamil rarely come onto the market. This may be because, as an antique dealer once told me, people tend to "hoard" Pérez Villaamil. If true, there's probably a very good reason for it.

Besides being a genuinely beautiful work, the painting is fairly representative of the artist's output as a whole, and of his early Romantic phase in particular, which we can date from between 1833 —the year he met Scottish painter David Roberts (1796–1864) in Seville and adapted his style to resemble Roberts's romantic landscapes— and 1840, when he left for exile in France and Belgium.

Technically speaking, the painting is very similar to Pérez Villaamil's Romantic style: loose, impastoed, with warm colours and golden-toned lighting, smooth and silvered in the backgrounds, to create an atmosphere that gives the composition an air of late afternoon thickening to dusk, with dream-like distances that fade

1 These and other details concerning the Convent of the Trinitarios Descalzos are taken from Puerta/Becquer 1857, p. 105.

2 Arias Anglés 1980a, p. 70.

3 Madrid 1990, pp. 186-187.

4 Arias Anglés 1980b, pp. 13 and 20; Arias Anglés 1986, p. 213, no. 34, fig. 8.

5 Salamanca/Seville 1999, p. 228; Álvarez Lopera 2004; Viar 2005; Ana Sánchez-Lassa in Salamanca 2006, pp. 66-67; Ana Sánchez-Lassa in Bilbao Fine Arts Museum... 2006, p. 97.

into vague diaphanousness in the remoter depths of the painting. As Sánchez-Lassa so rightly notes, here the artist uses “a balanced colour range featuring especially sepia tones of a bituminous transparency that enables him to intensify shading and to draw, as a sort of glaze, many of the figures dotted about the landscape”⁶. This limited, sepia-based colour range gives the work an extraordinary delicacy of tone.

Equally characteristic in Pérez Villaamil’s works of this type are his vibrant filigrees, which he plays up with the actual paint paste to bring out particular lighting effects. This technique, relying so heavily on impasto, comes to look a little like a sort of lacework, and although he uses it largely to create and highlight architectural embellishments and features, he also employs it for other ingredients, including ornaments on people’s clothing and in certain plant forms.

Also unmistakable, from the technical and aesthetic viewpoint, are the small popular characters that people the composition; features of virtually all his works, Pérez Villaamil generally uses them to create a popular scene within a landscape or interior scene. In the way they are painted, the ones here are very much trademark figures, being entirely representative of his painting. Usually well finished, with abundant impasto, tight but easy brushwork for the clothing and some touches of warm colours, they are pretty much permanent features of the artist’s oeuvre, employed to give his compositions a picturesque local or historical dimension.

Another very representative feature of his work is his trick, as here, of placing a building in roughly the central area of the painting, enveloped in atmospheric glazes that make it a sort of screen and spatial reference. His technique for executing these central areas is usually quite exquisite, showing great atmospheric resolution, as is the case here.

With the gauzy, delicately warm, slightly misty atmosphere that encloses the scarcely suggested city buildings, the backgrounds are also beautifully done, very much in line with the artist’s usual practice; a thin luminosity that fades into the horizon, mixing and merging with the sky. The same goes for the cloud effects, with the soft, crepuscular colouring, so typical of Pérez Villaamil’s work.

Here Toledo is transformed into a city of dreams in an extraordinarily ample, magical view that perfectly conveys the artist’s powerfully spectacular romantic vision (deformed in perspective, colouring, in proportions and the occasional fantastical addition), producing a deviation toward an unreal, dream-like beauty analogous (despite the obvious differences) to El Greco’s hallucinatory vision of the city, in that even more dream-like, expressionist landscape that is the *View of Toledo in the storm* (Metropolitan Museum, New York), seen curiously enough from the same view point used by Pérez Villaamil for his painting.

The work itself was executed three years after Pérez Villaamil met David Roberts in Seville in 1833⁷ and changed his previous style for the kind of Romanticism practiced by the Scottish painter. In other words, it is one the artist’s early Romantic paintings, very close in time to his previous phase, which elsewhere I have referred to as his “pre-Romantic decade”⁸, going from 1823, when he arrived in Cadiz as a prisoner of war of the Hundred Thousand Sons of St. Louis (as the French troops sent to bolster Ferdinand VII on the throne were —and are— popularly known) and took up painting, to 1833, when he met Roberts and began the transformation of his original style into Romantic British landscape painting. Although Roberts’ influence was undoubtedly responsible for a major change in the Spaniard’s painting, it wasn’t so all-pervasive as to enable us to assume that Pérez Villaamil’s Romantic style had absolutely nothing to with the output from his previous, largely ignored pre-Romantic decade.

6 Ana Sánchez-Lassa in Salamanca 2006, p. 67.

7 Arias Anglés 1980a, pp. 67-69; Arias Anglés 1986, pp. 44-48.

8 Arias Anglés 1976.

While the change observable in Pérez Villaamil's work after his meeting with David Roberts was indeed basically stylistic and, to a certain extent, also thematic, in general his landscapes in the new Romantic phase were not radically different in this sense from his previous work, as he retained his initial taste for large scenes peopled by popular or historical characters arranged in groups⁹. That said, he did change his conception and vision of the landscape, in that he paid more attention to historical monuments real and imagined, further adding the thematic novelty —picked up from Roberts— of the broad perspectives of cathedral, church and palace interiors with characters grouped into different historic or popular scenes; a thematic issue dealt with in similar fashion to his outdoors views. In short, it's fair to say that, from a primitive, usually stage-set style of landscape, he subsequently developed an ample British Romantic structure¹⁰.

This taste for broad panoramic views very probably came from his apprenticeship in the Santiago Military College in Galicia with his father, who gave classes there on Fortification, Topography and Drawing¹¹, and the topographical work he did in 1823 as Lieutenant Staff Adjutant in the Third Army¹², defending the constitutional government against the pro-Absolute Monarchy invasion of the Hundred Thousand Sons of St. Louis. His earliest concerns of a not entirely inartistic nature equipped him with the kind of panoramic overview of things that would subsequently inspire so many of his works. Méndez Casal certainly saw it that way, attributing to his early occupation a lifelong influence on the artist: "On paper he addresses the general panoramic view, the large extensions, with extraordinary faithfulness and simplicity, resolving very difficult problems of perspective with the greatest of ease. He recovered this liking for the panoramic scene in his later years, and the number of works of this kind he left at his death is enormous, inconceivable"¹³. While we can be fairly sure Méndez Casal exaggerated the huge number of works, he is right about Pérez Villaamil's taste for big general views, which is clear even in the scenes he painted of cathedral interiors. This early predisposition for large views crystallized in the pre-Romantic decade (1823-1833) when he took as his models the 18th-century French Pre-Romantics C. J. Vernet and J. Pillement¹⁴; the tendency was further accentuated by Roberts' influence.

For the above reasons, *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* fits perfectly into Pérez Villaamil's overall production, linking to a certain extent his initial pre-Romantic phase with the early works of his recently initiated Romanticism. To see that this is so, all we need to do is compare this work with one or other of his known works from that early phase, such as *Landscape with river, castle and a group of fishermen* (Museum, Pontevedra) [fig. 3]¹⁵, the *View of Cadiz* (Saldaña Suances Collection, Barcelona) [fig. 4]¹⁶ or the *View of the bay at San Juan de Puerto Rico* and the *Landscape with medieval tower and peasants* (both in Private Collection, Bilbao) (figs. 5 and 6)¹⁷.

So we have placed the *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* in the context of the painter's landscape and stylistic development. Now we need to do the same with the themes he explored during this phase of his career.

9 Arias Anglés 1986, p. 180.

10 Ibid., p. 176.

11 Ibid., pp. 18-19 and 174.

12 Ibid., pp. 27-28.

13 Méndez Casal [192-?], p. 12.

14 Arias Anglés 1976, p. 45; Arias Anglés 1986, p. 178.

15 Arias Anglés 1986, plate I, fig. 3.

16 Ibid., fig. 7.

17 Ibid., figs. 9 and 10.



3. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Landscape with River, Castle, and Fishermen, 1828
 Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 80 cm
 Museum of Pontevedra



4. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
View of Cadiz, 1829
 Oil on canvas, 44 x 57 cm
 Saldaña Suances Collection, Barcelona

Our starting point must inevitably be the painting's appearance on the Madrid market in 1978. This event revealed a good deal about its past, clearly a vital factor in contextualizing the work within the painter's early Romantic period.

Indeed, in Manuel Ossorio y Bernard's famous *Galería biográfica de artistas españoles del siglo XIX* (*Biographical gallery of 19th century Spanish artists*, 1883-1884), under "Pérez Villaamil" the author includes two views of Toledo on the list he provides of the painter's most important works: one entitled *General View of Toledo* and the other *View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons*¹⁸. I am in no doubt that the painting discussed in this essay is the second of these works, because, although both titles tell us that the paintings are two general views of the Imperial City, the fact the second actually names the Cruz de los Canónigos means

¹⁸ Ossorio y Bernard 1883-1884, p. 528.



5. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
View of the Bay at San Juan de Puerto Rico, c. 1830-1833
 Oil on canvas, 80 x 170 cm
 Private collection, Bilbao



6. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Fantastic Landscape with Medieval Turret and Peasants, c. 1830-1833
 Oil on canvas, 80 x 170 cm
 Private collection, Bilbao

it coincides with the view in the painting in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, which shows the cross very much in the foreground, just beyond the artist's viewpoint. The other painting, entitled *General view of Toledo*, as yet unknown to me, would logically have had a different viewpoint from this one; the view would most likely be taken from one of the heights beyond the defile of the Tagus, roughly on the site of the present-day Parador hotel, a spot that gives us the most coherent and spectacular view of the city, and which has been the preferred, paradigmatic viewpoint for the visions of Toledo so many artists have given us.

Now we have identified the painting on the list of works by Pérez Villaamil in Ossorio y Bernard's enormously useful dictionary, and, by virtue of its inclusion therein, being fully persuaded that it is one of the artist's major works, we now need to explore the literary source from which Ossorio y Bernard took his information,

to see whether this provides any further details. Apart from making specific, direct mention of artists with whom he was on friendly terms, Ossorio y Bernard compiled his dictionary using the art information taken essentially from the press and the illustrated journals of the time.

Further investigation brought to light a review, in a famous illustrated weekly journal of the time *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, of the *Public Exhibition of Paintings at the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts for 1836*, held like all the Academy's exhibitions of the age in September during the Madrid Fair. The review mentions Pérez Villaamil's participation, and actually refers to the painting under discussion here¹⁹. After lamenting the lack of good "paintings of composition" in the exhibition, in which "the artist's philosophical genius shines through"²⁰, the anonymous critic complains that Spanish artists were being forcibly employed in what the writer considered as the secondary task of portraits and copies (a circumstance he attributes to the Carlist War and to the widespread misery in the country caused by the war and a number of other factors). He then singles out Pérez Villaamil as the most notable participant in the exhibition²¹, for the sheer quantity of paintings presented and for the originality and importance of the themes they addressed. Amidst some fulsome praise of the artist, the critic points to his "amazing fecundity and ingenious and picturesque way of describing national objects", and unhesitatingly calls him "the Scribe of our painters"²². Although somewhat ingenuous, the comparison with the remarkably prolific French playwright is not entirely lacking in significance, as Pérez Villaamil presented fourteen paintings to the Academy's exhibition:

1. *Ancient Arab tower or church of the Feria in Seville.*
2. *Ruins and mills in Alcalá de Guadaira.*
3. *Seville cathedral from the side of the Gradass or Steps.*
4. *Interior of the cloister of S. Juan de los reyes in Toledo.*
5. *General view of Toledo from the cruz de los canónigos.*
6. *The broad street, Toledo.*
7. *Castle of S. Cervantes of Toledo from the mills.*
8. *Alcalá la Real.*
9. *A fragment of Granada.*
10. *Family of gypsies.*
11. *Landscape, in imitation of Venguén.*
12. Another id. For a clock.
13. *View of Alcalá de Guadaira from the road to Madrid.*
14. *Present characteristic aspect of the Arab cities of Spain*²³.

The critic ends his review with further praise for the artist, which I quote below, as it clarifies aspects of Pérez Villaamil's work and reflects his contemporaries' opinions of him: "I cannot conclude this paragraph without paying Señor Villa-amil the tribute of appreciation he merits for his extraordinary skill and industry,

19 "Esposicion [sic] de 1836", *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, no. 28, 9 de octubre de 1836, pp. 225-227 (p. 225; the painting is placed fifth on the list).

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., pp. 225-226.

and the patriotic zeal with which, bereft of stimulus or protection, he works tirelessly to convey and portray our natural and artistic riches, visiting at his own cost the towns and villages that contain them, despite the sad conviction that his labours shall receive no other recompense than the appreciation of the perspicacious and the patriotic”²⁴. The artist’s industry is clearly reflected in the remarkable number of works he presented to the Academy exhibition that year and the considerable number he had exhibited in 1834²⁵—the year he settled in Madrid— and 1835²⁶; this was something that occurred regularly in other exhibitions he took part in throughout his life. Not that this was the first time the artist’s “patriotic zeal” had been singled out for mention. The year before, the *El Artista* journal’s review of the Academy of San Fernando’s 1835 exhibition described Pérez Villaamil for the first time as a “Romantic artist” and a “patriot”²⁷.

Pérez Villaamil’s Romantic leanings were clear from the moment when, in 1833, he decided to follow the style of David Roberts. His patriotism was likely to have been appreciated from two different, but complementary perspectives, one of which was political, especially in view of his militancy in the liberal cause, more so at the time of the First Carlist War. The other involved the appreciation of his fellow countrymen for doggedly exploring themes and issues relating to his country’s ancient monuments and cities, an undertaking interpreted as a valiant attempt to use his art to preserve the memory of Spain’s past and to recover it for the present, endowing it with a certain educational value in the process. Besides its intrinsic artistic worth, his work acquired in the eyes of his contemporaries something of an archaeological enterprise, understood in a sense that has little or nothing to do with the modern meaning of the term, and more to do with the sort of significance it might have had for an artist of this type in the Romantic age; the kind of significance given, for instance, to the works of Roberts, Avrial or Carderera.

Following these comments on the review of the 1836 San Fernando Academy exhibition, we need to look at the title of the paintings Pérez Villaamil exhibited there, largely for any clues they might furnish about his output in his early Romantic phase in Spain and to see in what context he produced the *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons*.

Of the fourteen paintings the artist presented, six deal with Andalusian themes, four with Toledo and the other four with a range of more general themes. It is perfectly understandable that, at this stage of Pérez Villaamil’s development, themes with an Andalusian flavour should outnumber both the other two groups of themes taken separately. The artist returned to Spain from Puerto Rico in 1833, the year he met David Roberts in Seville, during the long sojourn the latter spent in the city. In that year, Pérez Villaamil’s painting underwent a sea change so radical that only by comparing work he produced prior to that year (those in figs. 3, 4, 5 or 6 for instance) with paintings executed that year or afterwards (we could take *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* itself, from 1836) [fig. 1], do we realize the actual extent of the transformation: they appear to be works by two different artists. The style is different and the themes have also changed, albeit to a lesser extent.

Assimilating the image of Spain in general, and Andalusia in particular, that he discovered in European painting through Roberts, Pérez Villaamil tackled exterior and interior views of Spanish monuments (especially mediaeval and Moorish ones) as well as urban views and country landscapes, both charged with “popular” features. Pérez Villaamil learnt to look at Spain the way foreign visitors of the time saw, or wanted

24 Ibid., p. 226.

25 Arias Anglés 1986, p. 52, note 8; p. 434, document 2.

26 Ibid., p. 56.

27 “Ecsposición [sic.] pública de pintura en la Real Academia de San Fernando”, *El Artista*, t. II, 1835, pp. 155 and 165.

to see it²⁸ (with the foundations of Romantic discourse on all things Spanish in place, the country was rapidly becoming an alternative itinerary for the traditional *Grand Tour*²⁹). He also coincided with the tastes of a bourgeois Spanish clientele and public who looked to Europe in their desire to identify with its fashions and inclinations.

As I said, Pérez Villaamil transformed his painting style and his vision of Spain in Andalusia in 1833, the year we know he was in Seville and Granada³⁰. His earliest Romantic works were produced in Andalusia and dealt with Andalusian issues. This explains how, three years after his return to Spain and the radical transformation of his style, most of the themes of the paintings submitted to the 1836 San Fernando Academy exhibition were still Andalusian, although the majority was not quite so marked that year as in his submittals to the 1834 and 1835 editions. He was undoubtedly reaping the harvest of what he had sown on his painting campaign in Andalusia in 1833, when he made an enormous number of drawings and notes and which, back in the studio, he gradually turned into paintings to be sold directly to willing buyers or through exhibitions.

Even so, by the time the 1836 Academy exhibition was held, the city of Toledo had acquired a substantial presence in his paintings. This development is important because both Andalusian and Toledo-related themes were to be cornerstones of Pérez Villaamil's artistic output. Indeed, it seems to me that the paintings associated with Toledo that appeared in the 1836 Exhibition are the first we know of on the city. Pérez Villaamil took a closer interest in the Imperial City, in my view at least, when he settled in Madrid in 1834. Besides painting Madrid scenes, nearby Toledo was a rich quarry of magnificent artistic themes, and it was an opportunity he could not afford to pass up. Indeed, he had the honour of being one of the first Romantic painters to give Toledo a major role in paintings, much as he did, 'though to a lesser extent, with other Spanish cities boasting a similar artistic and architectural heritage.

In the San Fernando Academy exhibitions of 1837, 1838, 1839 and 1840, the year he went into exile and to all intents and purposes the last year of the artist's early Romantic period, Pérez Villaamil recurred rather less often to Toledo than he did for the 1836 exhibition. In 1837 he presented six works, none of the three singled out in the *Semanario Pintoresco Español* review for special attention having to do with Toledo³¹, although that doesn't of course prevent the other three from being concerned in some way with the city. He submitted ten paintings to the 1838 Exhibition, two of them addressing themes connected with Toledo³². First, one entitled *Interesting fragment of Arab fortification* (National Fine Arts Museum of Buenos Aires, Argentina) [fig. 7]³³, which is in fact a fantasy on the famous Puerta del Sol of Toledo, transposed to the Mediterranean coast, as one critic noted: "...with some modifications it is clearly painted direct from the Puerta del Sol in Toledo. Obviously, by adorning the painting with several *faluchos*, *tartanas* and other sail-and fishing boats from the Mediterranean, what the artist wanted to do was..."³⁴. The second, called *Part of the transept of the convent of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo*, I identified in a private collection in Madrid, thanks to the description of the painting in the Exhibition review published in *Semanario Pintoresco Español*,

28 Arias Anglés 1981, p. 88.

29 Henares 1995, pp. 20-21.

30 Arias Anglés 1986, pp. 44-45; p. 343, no. 474, fig. 173.

31 Ibid., p. 67-68; "Exposición de pinturas (continuación)", *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. II, no. 84, 5 November 1837, pp. 343-344 (p. 343).

32 "Academia de Nobles Artes : Exposición de 1838", *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. III, no. 135, 28 October 1838, pp. 753-755; Arias Anglés 1986, pp. 73-74.

33 Arias Anglés 1986, p. 226, no. 72, fig. 39.

34 Ibid.; "Academia de Nobles Artes : Exposición de 1838", *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. III, no. 135, 28 October 1838, pp. 753-755 (p. 754).

which specifies that “The setting for this extremely handsome painting shows the moment of a *Sermon*, and the figures that adorn it are a sort of compendium of Spanish clothing in the reign of Philip IV”³⁵. I later published the work with the modified title *Sermon in San Juan de los Reyes, Toledo* [fig. 8]³⁶.

In 1838 Pérez Villaamil also submitted a fair number of works to the inaugural exhibition of the Liceo Artístico y Literario Español³⁷, of which he was one of the leading founders and directors. Three of these at least had Toledo-related themes. The most outstanding would be the one entitled *Quartering in Toledo*³⁸, later acquired by Queen María Cristina, both for its quality and the philosophical and Romantic idea of the scene, which illustrates the sad fate of the arts, victims of war and the negligence brought about by ignorance resulting from people’s lack of culture; it is a fantasy composition based on the interior of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo³⁹. The other two works were an exterior and interior view of Toledo cathedral⁴⁰. The former, which I published with the title *Exterior View of Toledo Cathedral* [figs. 9 and 10]⁴¹, and identified in a private collection in Toledo, was considered by González Bravo as one of Pérez Villaamil most important works from that stage of his career⁴². The second, which I also published, under the title *View of the Epistle Aisle of Toledo Cathedral* [fig. 11], I identified in a private collection in Cadiz. Dated 1837, it is the same size as the other one, making the two a pair⁴³.

Although *Semanario Pintoresco Español* praises Pérez Villaamil as an artist in its review of the 1839 Exhibition of Painting at the Academy of San Fernando, it does not mention or discuss a specific work⁴⁴. One suspects he did not submit at all to the 1840 Academy Exhibition, as the *Semanario Pintoresco Español* review doesn’t mention him, not even in a discussion of landscape artists like Avrial or Ruiz de Ogarrio, which is strange given the praise heaped on the artist’s head since 1834. However that might be, the exhibition must have been disastrous in comparison with other years, to judge by the comments in the review, which specifically states that it had been “very poor indeed, not only in terms of entries, but also in the quality of the works submitted”⁴⁵. Obviously the worrying political events of the time did not help, least of all the crisis in September of that year, the month the annual Exhibition was held. In October the Queen Regent, María Cristina, was forced to abdicate, leaving power in the hands of General Espartero, a *progresista* who assumed full Regency powers. Pérez Villaamil, a moderate liberal, a *cristino*, left the country in the wake of the Queen’s departure, and in December of that year he was in Paris, where, according to man of letters Eugenio de Ochoa, writing to his brother-in law Federico de Madrazo, he immediately visited the deposed Queen⁴⁶; so began his four-year exile, lived out basically in France and Belgium, from 1840 to 1844, when Espartero’s Regency came to an end.

35 “Academia de Nobles Artes : Exposición de 1838”, *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. III, no. 135, 28 October 1838, pp. 753-755 (p. 754).

36 Arias Anglés 1986, p. 221, no. 58.

37 “Exposición del Liceo (Segundo artículo)”, *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. III, no. 100, 25 February 1838, pp. 477-478.

38 “Exposición del Liceo (Primer artículo)”, *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. III, no. 99, 18 February 1838, pp. 469-470 (p. 470); Luis González Bravo. “Crónica artística y literaria : exposición de objetos artísticos verificada en los salones del Liceo (febrero de 1838)”, *El Liceo Artístico y Literario Español*, 1838, vol. I, pp. 95-96.

39 “Exposición del Liceo (Segundo artículo)”, *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, first series, vol. III, no. 100, 25 February 1838, pp. 477-478 (p. 478).

40 Ibid.; Luis González Bravo. “Crónica artística y literaria : exposición de objetos artísticos verificada en los salones del Liceo (febrero de 1838)”, *El Liceo Artístico y Literario Español*, 1838, vol. I, pp. 95-96.

41 Arias Anglés 1986, p. 224, no. 67.

42 Luis González Bravo. “Crónica artística y literaria : exposición de objetos artísticos verificada en los salones del Liceo (febrero de 1838)”, *El Liceo Artístico y Literario Español*, 1838, vol. I, pp. 95-96.

43 Arias Anglés 1986, p. 217, no. 47.

44 “Bellas Artes : exposición de pinturas de 1839”, *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, second series, vol. I, no. 50, 15 December 1839, p. 394.

45 “Bellas Artes : esposicion [sic] de la Academia de San Fernando”, *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, second series, vol. II, no. 43, 25 October 1840, pp. 339-340 (p. 339).

46 Randolph 1967, pp. 32-43.



7. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Interesting Fragment of Arab Fortification, c. 1837-1838
 Oil on canvas, 146 x 110 cm
 Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires



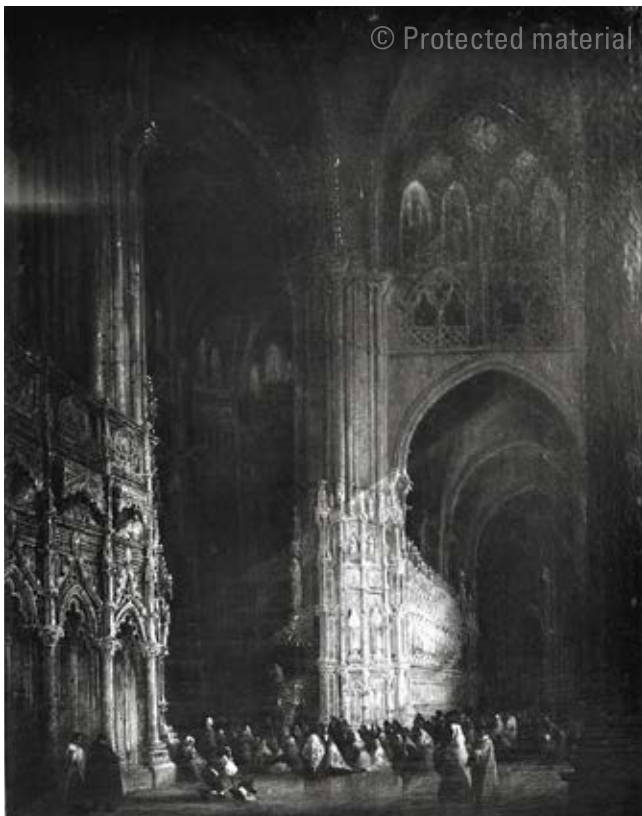
8. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Sermon inside San Juan de los Reyes, Toledo, 1838
 Oil on canvas, 101 x 71 cm
 Private collection, Madrid



9. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
View of Toledo Cathedral, c. 1838
 Oil on canvas, 75 x 61 cm
 Private collection, Toledo



10. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
View of the Main Façade of Toledo Cathedral
 Preliminary drawing for fig. 9
 Pencil and wash on paper, 68 x 50 cm
 The Old Varela Collection, Madrid



11. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
View of Epistle Aisle, Toledo Cathedral, 1837
 Oil on canvas, 76 x 60 cm
 Private collection, Cádiz

I think this sequence of Toledo themes, from the time he settled in Madrid in 1834 and his exile in 1840, makes sufficiently clear Pérez Villaamil's interest in the artistic monuments of the Imperial City and how the ease of access from Madrid led him to use it as major source for his production. Toledo was a sort of artistic joker card for the painter, that he was to have up his sleeve all his life, and which he brought out for use in his creative work as required.

Apart from his paintings, there are a number of other testimonies of Pérez Villaamil's interest in Toledo. One such is a document, of which only the reference survives, recorded in the documentation archived in Madrid's Museum of Romanticism relative to an exhibition mounted in 1954 to mark the centenary of the artist's death, and which at the time belonged to the collection of Victorino Simón. Although I am unable to reproduce the original text, we do know it was dated 2 August 1839, and that it was issued by the "Secretariat to the Chamber and Government of the Archbishop of Toledo. See vacant"⁴⁷, in the light of which we may hazard a guess that the painter was in the city around that time, as the document in question appears to be a permit giving the artist access to draw in areas restricted to the clergy. Further support for this suggestion comes from the fact that, at the end of the month, the *Semanario Pintoresco Español* published an engraving by Castelló from a painting by Pérez Villaamil, copied by D. A. Bravo, of *The Castle of San Cervantes of Toledo, from the Mills* [fig. 12]⁴⁸.

That apart, we have reliable evidence placing the artist in Toledo the following summer of 1840 for a repeat of his drawing campaign, in the shape of a series of sketches of Toledo scenes dated by Pérez Villaamil between June and September of that year. Placed in chronological order, the dates and places he drew in were as follows: on 30 June he sketched the *Mudejar gateway on a house in Toledo* [fig. 13]; on 12, 16, 17, 19, 22 and 23 July he drew different interior views of the cathedral; on 31 July he sketched the *Puerta Vieja de Bisagra* gateway; on 2 August, *A procession in the streets of Toledo*; on 3, 4, 5 and 6 August he drew the interior of the cathedral's *Chapel of the Reyes Nuevos* [fig. 14]; on 15 August he drew the *Arco de la Sangre (Arch of the Blood)*; on 17 August he produced a view of a Toledo street known as the *Calle de la Feria de Toledo*; on 18 August, he drew the *Sepulchre of Pedro López de Ayala*; on 25 August he did another drawing of the *Interior of the Synagogue of the Tránsito*; on 8 September he sketched an *Interior of the Palacios de Galiana and Norias del Palacio de Galiana*; and on the 17th of that month we find him in Humanejos, between Parla and Torrejoncillo de la Calzada, approaching Madrid, drawing the *Ruins of a Mudejar construction, Humanejos* [fig. 15], clearly on his way back to the capital⁴⁹.

The drawings and sketches, with annotations and dates by the artist, suggest that he stayed in Toledo for those four months, although the possibility that he travelled from Madrid to Toledo and back several times cannot be ruled out.

Whatever the truth of the matter, that was to be the artist's last sketching and drawing campaign in this phase of his career, as the political events of the summer and autumn of 1840 forced many Spaniards, Pérez Villaamil included, into exile, in flight from the effects of the revolutionary fever abroad in the country⁵⁰.

Although Toledo would continue to be present in the artist's production throughout his life, his first and probably most regular contact with the landscapes and monuments of Toledo had pretty much come to an end,

47 Arias Anglés 1972, p. 302.

48 *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, second series, vol. I, no. 34, 25 August 1839, p. 265.

49 For the location and analysis of these drawings, which evince the artist's time and movements in Toledo in summer 1839, see Arias Anglés 1986, p. 296, no. 316; p. 297, no. 317, 318 and 319; p. 344, no. 477 and 478; p. 345, no. 479; p. 346, no. 480, 481 and 482; p. 347, no. 483 and 484; p. 348, no. 487 and 488; p. 349, no. 490 and 491; p. 350, no. 492.

50 Randolph 1967.



12. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
The Castle of San Cervantes of Toledo, from the Mills
 Engraving
 Published in *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, 1839



13. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Mudejar Gateway in a House in Toledo, 1840
 Watercolour on paper, 26 x 19 cm
 The Old F. G. de Castro Collection, Madrid

coinciding with the end of the second period of his oeuvre, his first Romantic period. The artist did, of course, continue to produce work on Toledo themes, some of it quite spectacular and of high painterly quality; by way of example, I could mention *Ceremony in the Chapel of the Reyes Nuevos in Toledo cathedral* (Prado Museum, Madrid) [fig. 16], *A procession in Toledo cathedral* (Private collection, Madrid) [fig. 17], *Interior of Toledo cathedral while Mass is sung at the high altar* (Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid) [fig. 18], *Alcántara Bridge (Toledo)* (Private Collection) [fig. 19], *Puerta de los Canónigos (Canons' Gate) in Toledo cathedral* (today the Capilla [chapel] del Tesoro) (Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid) [fig. 20] and *Moro's studio in Toledo* (old Varela Collection, Madrid) [fig. 21]. However, I know of no other general view of Toledo similar to the one in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum; because although Ossorio y Bernard mentions another view of Toledo in his list of works by the artist, the fact is that the whereabouts of the painting referred to are unknown, if in fact it still exists. While it remains lost from view, this *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* is the only known view of the city by Pérez Villaamil.

So these are, then, the only two general views of Toledo, the only landscapes as such of the Imperial City, we know the artist painted; the only two authentic landscapes. A closer look at the titles of the paintings with Toledo themes mentioned in this essay shows that they are, first and foremost, specific views of the city's monuments, which, despite the peppering of picturesque features, underscores their archaeological nature. One can only consider these "city heritage" views—roughly equivalent to his interior views—as landscapes in the very loosest sense of the term.

As a sort of epilogue, I would like to add that when the artist went into exile in late 1840, he took a number of paintings with him, together with sketches and drawings from his recent art campaigns in and around



14. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Reyes Nuevos Chapel, Toledo Cathedral, 1840
 Watercolour on paper, 62 x 46 cm
 Private collection

15. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Remains of Mudejar Building, 1840
 Watercolour on paper, 20 x 26 cm
 The Old Xavier de Salas Collection, Madrid





16. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Ceremony in Reyes Nuevos Chapel, Toledo Cathedral
 Oil on canvas, 162.5 x 110 cm
 Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Toledo. We know about the paintings from a letter the artist wrote to David Roberts, which appeared a few years ago in the National Library of Scotland and which I published in 2002⁵¹. From the letter it is clear that, during his exile, Pérez Villaamil made a short trip from France to Great Britain in 1841, and wrote to Roberts, obviously out of the capital at the time, from London in August. Pérez Villaamil says he wants to sell seven paintings he has brought with him to London that had previously been in the Collnaghi house and he asks Roberts to recommend him to his friends. It is by no means impossible that *Interior of San Juan de los Reyes of Toledo* [fig. 22], auctioned at Christie's in London in November 2006⁵², and again at Durán in Madrid in January 2007⁵³, was one of those seven paintings, coming as it does from the British collections of Lady Manners and the Bishop of Exeter, and, perhaps more importantly, dated 1839, the year Pérez Villaamil spent the summer sketching and drawing monuments in and around Toledo. If we add that he left Spain the following year, 1840, it is clear that this particular painting was a product of his summer 1839 Toledo drawing campaign, and that he took it and other paintings into exile, something he also did on two other journeys to France, presumably with the idea of selling them to help him survive until he could live off his work.

51 Arias Anglés 2002.

52 *19th Century European Art*, Christie's, London, 16 November 2006, p. 88, no. 64.

53 *Durán Subastas de Arte*, subasta número 423, first session, Tuesday 23 January 2007, pp. 54-55.



17. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Procession, Toledo Cathedral, 1840-1844
 Oil on canvas, 148 x 130 cm (approximately)
 Private collection, Madrid

To conclude, we also know that between 11 February and 17 March 1843 he painted another *Interior of San Juan de los Reyes, in Toledo* in Louvain, where he lived while in Belgium. He mentions this painting repeatedly in his *Diary* entries for the month or so he was working on it, basically for the problems he had with it⁵⁴. When it was finished, he sent it to that year's Le Hague exhibition, where it was bought by the "Old King" —William I of Holland, who had abdicated in 1840 in favour of his son William II— for 600 florins⁵⁵. It is hardly surprising that Villaamil should paint a Toledo picture in Belgium, as he must have had with him the 1839 and 1840 sketches and drawings of the city's monuments, and possibly earlier ones too. According to entries in his *Diary*⁵⁶ he painted many more works on Spanish themes while he was abroad to satisfy demand from a European clientele that now saw Spain as a highly picturesque country, with Toledo, Granada and Seville being a central part of that vision.

54 Méndez Casal [192-?], pp. 50-52; Arias Anglés 1986, pp. 545-547.

55 Méndez Casal [192-?], pp. 52 ("18 de abril de 1843, Bruselas") and 53 ("Hasta el 22 de Mayo"); Arias Anglés 1986, pp. 548 ("18 de abril de 1843, Bruselas") p. 549 ("Hasta el 22 de Mayo").

56 Méndez Casal [192-?], pp. 41-61; Arias Anglés 1986, pp. 537-560.



18. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Interior, Toledo Cathedral, during High Mass at High Altar, 1847-1852
 Oil on canvas, 136 x 184 cm
 National Heritage, Madrid
 Inv. no. 10079160



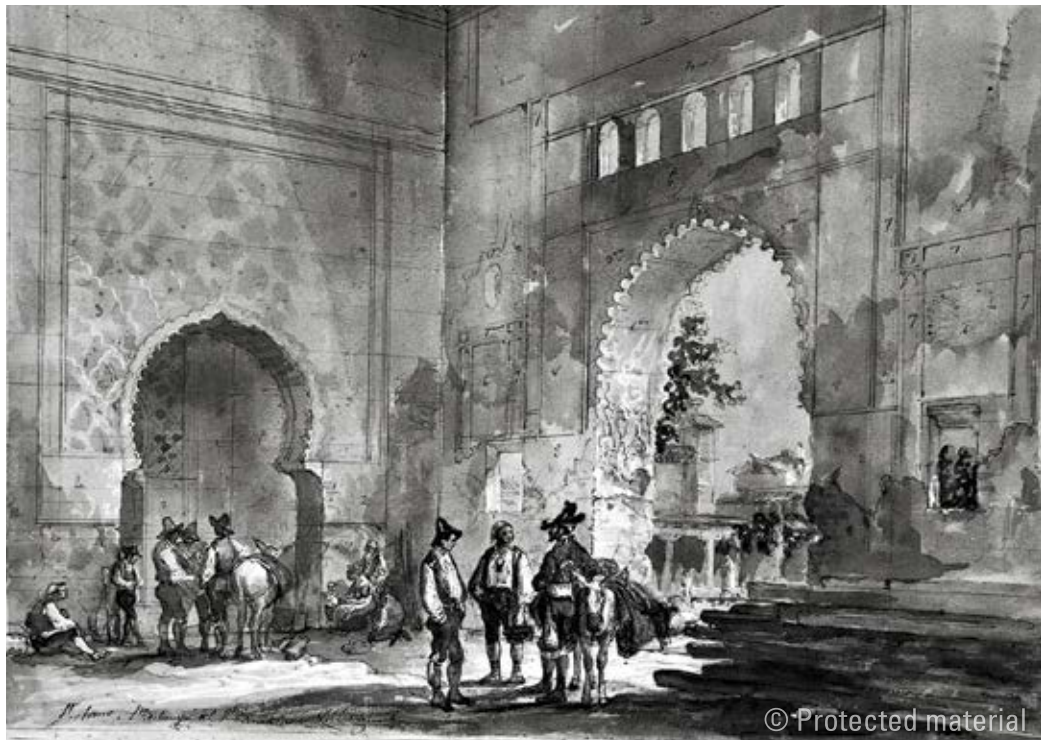
19. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Alcántara Bridge, Toledo
 Oil on canvas
 Private collection



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20. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Canons' Gate, Toledo Cathedral (Treasure Chapel)
 Pen and wash on paper, 40.1 x 30 cm
 Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid
 Inv. no. 10056

21. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Moor's workshop, Toledo
 Watercolour on paper, 29 x 38 cm
 The Old Varela Collection, Madrid



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22. Jenaro Pérez Villaamil (1807-1854)
Interior of San Juan de los Reyes of Toledo, 1839
 Oil on canvas, 89 x 114.2 cm
 Old Lady Manners Collection, United Kingdom

It is fair to consider the paintings on Toledo-related themes he produced and sold between 1840 and 1844 as a sort of epilogue to his early Romantic period and those early contacts with themes concerning the city he worked on at that time. And it is wholly appropriate to judge the *General View of Toledo from the Cross of the Canons* in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum discussed here as a paradigm of that style and period.

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