

A detailed painting of a Spanish street scene, likely Seville, featuring the Giralda tower in the background. The street is filled with people in traditional Spanish attire, and the architecture is characterized by ornate balconies and a warm, golden light. The sky is a deep blue with soft white clouds. The title 'Romantic Spain' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font, and the authors' names are at the bottom in a smaller, white, serif font.

Romantic Spain

David Roberts and
Genaro Pérez Villaamil

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CLAUDIA HOPKINS (ed.)

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1.

David Roberts /
Genaro Pérez Villaamil

no puedo menos de
de Valeriano del favor
mi amigo que para
o de la Embajada de
B. para que le de
le recuerde nuestra
— espero de V. me hag
ionarse enantas dista



Introduction

CLAUDIA HOPKINS*

David Roberts (1796–1864) and Genaro Pérez Villaamil (1807–1854) were giants in the topographical art of their respective countries, Britain and Spain. Between them they generated several hundred views of Spanish landscapes and monuments – castles, cathedrals, convents, palaces – often with a flavour of local traditional culture. Fully versed in the aesthetic conventions of the Picturesque and the Sublime, Roberts and Villaamil helped form a Romantic image of Spain in the nineteenth century, one that still colours the perception of the country today. Roberts’s influence on Villaamil has long been noted by critics and art historians but there is no consensus when it comes to its importance and nature, and it has never been explored in all its complexity.

Roberts’s arrival in Seville in 1833 caused a stir in the local art world and had lasting effects on Spanish art and his own career. A successful artist-traveller who had produced pictures of Scotland, Britain, Germany, Belgium and France, and who had worked as a scene painter for Glasgow, Edinburgh and London’s most prestigious theatres, Roberts arrived in Irún in the autumn of 1832. Seville was his last stop on a long tour that led him via Burgos and Madrid to Andalusia and the north of Morocco. When Genaro Pérez Villaamil, of Galician origin and eleven years Roberts’s junior, heard of the older artist’s presence in Seville, he naturally wanted to meet him. Villaamil was an aspiring landscape painter himself and, like Roberts, he had travelled, having returned to Cádiz from a three-year sojourn in Puerto Rico, where he had worked on the decoration of the newly built theatre in San Juan. On Villaamil’s request, the British consul in Cádiz introduced him to Roberts on 19 July 1833. Their subsequent encounter in Seville had consequences for Villaamil and for Spanish landscape painting as a whole. Although their meeting had a less profound impact on Roberts’s work – by 1833, his style was already well established – Roberts painted important pictures in Seville, where he stayed for five months, longer than in any other city in Spain. Later in life, Roberts fondly recalled his time in Spain, boasting that he knew ‘as much of the old Spanish Painters’ as the President of the Royal Academy himself, and ‘much more of their modern [painters]’.¹

The artists’ friendship and Roberts’s impact on Villaamil has never been fully examined. Already in Villaamil’s own time, opinions about the nature of Roberts’s artistic

* I am grateful to Krystyna Matyjaszkiewicz for commenting on this chapter.

¹ Roberts’s journal, 1859, transcript, p. 148 (NLS, Acc. 13056/2).

1.4 **David Roberts**, *Cross of Melrose*. 1831. Pencil, wash and gouache with watercolour on paper, 210 × 286 mm. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh. Bequeathed by Helen Guiterman through the Art Fund, 2008 [D 5630.5]

Inscribed: Lower left: 'D. Roberts 1831'.

Provenance: Perhaps Ralph Bernal, and sold by him at Christie's, London, 21 April 1853, lot 193, as *The Cross, Melrose*, and acquired by Colnaghi; purchased by Helen Guiterman from an unnamed dealer c. 1963 as *Market Place in Caen*; bequeathed by Helen Guiterman to the National Galleries of Scotland through the Art Fund, 2008.

Bibliography: *LANDSCAPE ILLUSTRATIONS* 1832, engraving by W. Finden, vol. 2, facing p. 45, illustrating the novel *Monastery*; SIGOURNEY 1843, engraving by W. Finden as *Melrose and its Abbey*, frontispiece; MUIR 1865, p. 11; GUITERMAN AND LLEWELLYN 1986, p. 100, cat. 32.

Exhibitions: *David Roberts*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1986–87, cat. 32; *David Roberts: Drawings from the Helen Guiterman Bequest*, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, 2015, and Duff House, Banff, 2016.



CAT. 1.4

Madrid 19 de Febrero de 1834

Sr D. David Roberts

A pesar del silencio que V. guarda con
sus amigos de Sevilla, no puedo menos de
aprovechar la ocasion y de valerme del favor
del caballero Medem, amigo que pasa
a' era como secretario de la Embajada de
España cerca de S. M. B. para que le de
a V. noticias mias y le recuerde nuestra
antigua amistad, y yo espero de V. me haga
el obsequio de proporcionarle cuantas distrac-
ciones ofrezca Londres a' los extrangeros, que
desean gozar de esa hermosa corte.

He tenido la mayor satisfaccion al
saber la brillante acogida que han mere-

2. Encounter





Seville, summer 1833

CLAUDIA HOPKINS

There has been speculation as to when David Roberts and Genaro Pérez Villaamil first met, and how much time they spent together. Previous suggestions that they met in Cádiz, after Villaamil's return to the city in late April 1833, can be rejected.¹ The British consul in Cádiz, John MacPherson Brackenbury, a Scotsman, warmly introduced Villaamil to Roberts by letter on 19 July 1833 (cat. 1.9), presenting him as a 'Spanish gentlemen of talent', an artist with a military background, as well as a friend whom he had known for 'some years'.² Villaamil, Brackenbury explained to Roberts, had a 'great desire to become acquainted with you and your works' and was heading for Seville for that purpose. The two artists must have met shortly afterwards, as Brackenbury wrote again to Roberts on 16 August 1833, thanking him for all the 'kindness' he had shown to Villaamil,³ adding that 'to in[form?] the talent of another is a proof of high principle and the characteristic [sic] of true merit [...] Charity envieth not – charity vaunteth do itself – is not puffed up – does not behave itself unseemly seeketh of her own'.

Before discussing the interactions between Villaamil and Roberts in the time between Brackenbury's letter of introduction and thank-you letter, it is helpful to consider Roberts's time in Seville prior to the encounter. Roberts, who had arrived in the city by May 1833, was already immersed in local artistic circles, which gravitated around the British vice-consul Julian B. Williams, a pioneering collector of Spanish art, who spent his time between the Consulate in Seville and his second residence in nearby Alcalá de Guadaira. Williams was on friendly terms with local artists as well as other British visitors, including John Frederick Lewis, and with Harriet and Richard Ford, author of the first comprehensive guidebook to Spain in English, published in 1845 (cat. 3.35). Lewis and the Fords were, however, in Granada when Roberts visited Seville. In their absence, Williams became good friends with Roberts, as did Brackenbury, a Scot like Roberts. Brackenbury first wrote to Roberts on 29 April from Alcalá de Guadaira, where he was visiting his 'excellent friend', describing Williams's house as 'a very delightful small residence here to which he will

¹ QUESADA 1996, p. 90. Quesada's suggestion that they met in Cádiz had already been questioned by GIMÉNEZ CRUZ 2002, p. 284.

² Brackenbury to Roberts, British Consulate Cádiz, 19 July 1833 (NLS, Acc. 12158).

³ Brackenbury to Roberts, British Consulate Cádiz, 16 August 1833 (NLS, Acc. 12158).

gladly conduct you'.⁴ At some point after this, Roberts was indeed welcomed by Williams and his family in Alcalá de Guadaira, which he must have visited a few times from his base in Seville. A note written by Williams's young son Manuel to Roberts reveals the warm relationship that the artist had with the family:

We all enjoy perfect health and I hope you will too and that your toothache and inflammation is gone and your picture is finished so wonderfully as the other. We expect that you will come to see us on Sunday next with my father and then the house will be in order and cleaned because it was very dirty and full of dust. My brother has not drawn nothing yet on account of the wether that is very hot out in the morning in the evening we go out at six o'clock.⁵

After many months travelling mostly on his own, Roberts clearly enjoyed being in Seville and Alcalá de Guadaira, and the Williams family's hospitality in particular. He was also impressed by Williams's Old Masters collection, 'one of the finest' in Seville, which David Wilkie had also admired when visiting the city in 1828. Williams also introduced Roberts to 'several of the Seville artists', but Roberts judged them as

woefully behind than their more gifted townsman Valazquez & Murilo but still very good fellows – and anxious to see an Englishman paint – especially as Lewis had already staggered [*paper torn/illegible*] in which they were profoundly ignorant – as my friends the Moors of Barbary [...] – Scumbling & glazing they appear to have no idea of and as to the effects of light & shadow – that very essence of all that is great in art – I regret to say it appears totally beyond their comprehension – still they are curious to learn.⁶

Scumbling refers to the technique of applying a layer of opaque or semi-opaque colour over an underlayer of colour. A 'scumble' is thin enough to allow some light to penetrate through to the upper surface, or it is applied irregularly in such a way that small areas of the underlying colour show through. 'Glazing' refers to the application of translucent paint over an underlying colour. Roberts was thus demonstrating scumbling and glazing to the 'Seville artists' – techniques that are important for achieving effects of luminosity and atmosphere, and which cannot be obtained by mixing colours directly together.

In an earlier letter, Roberts had expressed a low opinion of modern Spanish painting. In Madrid, he had 'seen what they call the best', referring to the artist Pedro de Madrazo, but he was dismissive of modern 'scene painting' (landscape or interior painting), declaring that 'it is a libel upon Art to call it so'.⁷ Generally, Roberts's remarks about Spanish modern art seem to match the indifference and even contempt typically felt by nineteenth-century

⁴ Brackenbury to Roberts, Alcalá de Guadaira, 29 April 1833 (NLS, Acc. 12158).

⁵ Manuel Williams to Roberts, Alcalá de Guadaira, 1833 [dated 'Wednesday 4th 1833'] (NLS, Acc. 12158).

⁶ Roberts to Hay, Seville, 2 July 1833 (NLS, Acc. 8729). The letter is damaged and illegible in places. It is quoted in Ballantine's biography, smoothing out Roberts's writing and spelling. Ballantine also omitted 'as my friends the Moors of Barbary' and filled in the missing and illegible portion (after 'staggering') with 'them by his skill in an art'. BALLANTINE 1866, p. 60.

⁷ Roberts to Hay, Córdoba, 30 January 1833 (NLS, Acc. 3521, fol. 54). An edited version is in BALLANTINE 1866, p. 48.



Fig. 14. David Roberts, *Plaza Real and Procession*. 1835. Watercolour and gouache over graphite on paper, 277 × 381 mm. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. Paul Mellon Collection.

Duque Cornejo (1678–1757): Seville’s two patron saints, Justa and Rufina, holding between them a replica of the Giralda, which, according to legend, they saved from destruction during an earthquake in the sixteenth century.¹⁷ Behind is Arfe’s silver monstrance. Roberts was impressed by this ‘exquisite shrine’ and intrigued by the way it was placed on a pedestal, then ‘born through the streets by thirty men concealed within the pedestal’. He also admired the robes of the clergy as being made of ‘the richest stuffs – velvets, satin, gold and silver brocades enriched with precious stones that they would require to be seen to be believed’.¹⁸

Roberts was also much taken by the figures of Saints Justa and Rufina, dressed in ‘silk modern dresse’, with eyes that moved with the aid of ‘concealed wires. The same as you have seen in a child’s doll to the great astonishment and no doubt to the great edification in the gulling trade’.¹⁹ Bemused, Roberts compared the legend of the saints supporting the Giralda during an earthquake to the absurd idea of a ‘frog’ supporting Arthur’s Seat, the great

¹⁷ PALOMERO PÁRAMO 1992, p. 79.

¹⁸ Roberts to Hay, Seville, 2 July 1833 (NLS, Acc. 8729).

¹⁹ Roberts to Hay, Seville, 2 July 1833 (NLS, Acc. 8729).

2.5 David Roberts, *Golden Tower*. 1833. Oil on panel, 39 × 48 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid [P002853]

Inscribed: Lower right: 'D Roberts 1833'.

Provenance: Collection of the Duke and Duchess of Montpensier in Seville; acquired by the Museo Nacional del Prado in 1943. It could have been a present from David Roberts to viceconsul Julian B. Williams in 1833¹; acquired by the Museo del Prado in 1943.

Bibliography: *CATÁLOGO DE LOS CUADROS* 1866, no. 365–66; BALLANTINE 1866, p. 60; *MUSEO DEL PRADO* 1972, p. 567, no. 2853; *IMAGEN ROMÁNTICA DE ESPAÑA* 1981, p. 43; SIM 1984; CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1991, p. 188; CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1993, p. 321; RODRÍGUEZ REBOLLO 2005, cover; RODRÍGUEZ BARBERÁN 2007, p. 56; FERNÁNDEZ LACOMBA 2007b, vol. 1, p. 62; SOLKIN 2010, p. 92; VALDIVIESO AND FERNÁNDEZ 2011, p. 15; BARÓN 2012, pp. 305–33; BARÓN 2014, p. 25; *PINTURA DEL SIGLO XIX* 2015, p. 509; ZOIDO NARANJO AND RODRÍGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ 2015, p. 45.

Exhibitions: *La Sevilla de Richard Ford*, Centro Cultural El Monte, Seville, 2007, cat. 115; *Vistas monumentales de ciudades españolas. El pintor romántico Genaro Pérez Villaamil*, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 2014–15.

This oil painting forms a pair with Roberts's view of Alcalá de Guadaira castle (cat. 2.2), also in the Prado Museum, which is similar in size and in the careful handling of the landscape and water.

The Torre del Oro (Golden Tower), like the Giralda tower, is a crowning achievement of Almohad architecture and a symbol of Seville. This twelve-sided construction was built around 1220 at the former mouth of the Tagarete stream as the end of a section of a defensive wall. The wall, which connected it with the Torre de la Plata (Silver Tower), was demolished around 1822, leaving it freestanding. The top part of the upper structure and the balconied windows were added during the restoration after the earthquake of 1 November 1755.²

From the sixteenth century onwards, the tower was the salient feature of countless views looking towards the River Guadalquivir and harbour, emblems of the city's prosperity.³ It is important to remember that Seville enjoyed a period of splendour on account of its monopoly on trade with the Americas, and many published images therefore displayed the popular motto 'Quien no ha visto Sevilla, no ha visto maravilla' (He who has not seen Seville has not seen wonder).⁴

In the nineteenth century, many travellers such as Ford,⁵ Roberts⁶ and others⁷ depicted this view of the Torre del Oro and its surrounding area from the Gordales bend

when approaching the city by boat. The course of this stretch of the river was altered before the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929, and the Seville Fair is now held there.

On the left is the convent of Los Remedios, which was often flooded due to its proximity to the river.⁸ It was confiscated and sold in 1835 and demolished in 1844. Its church, which is still extant, was converted into the Instituto Hispano-Cubano in 1928. The Remedios district sprang up around it in the twentieth century. Visible in the background is the Barcas bridge, of Islamic origin, which connected the city with the suburb of Triana and the Aljarafe district until it was replaced by the current bridge around 1855.

The scene features boats and people in the foreground, and in the distance are figures on the avenue of Paseo de las Delicias, which had been completed a few years earlier. The Palacio de San Telmo is hidden behind vegetation. The Golden Tower stood closer to the water in the artist's day, as the current quays of the harbour had not yet been built. Positioning himself at a certain distance from the centre of Seville, David Roberts thus masterfully captured this delightful outlying landscape, which has a very different appearance today owing to the expansion of the city and its harbour.

AGG

¹ Roberts to Hay, 2 July 1833 (NLS, Acc. 8729 1); Brackenbury to Roberts, 30 August 1833 (NLS, Acc. 12158); BALLANTINE 1866, p. 60. I am grateful to Krystyna Matyjaszkiewicz for this information.

² FALCÓN MÁRQUEZ 1993.

³ GARCÍA BAQUERO AND SERRERA CONTRERAS 2007; PORTÚS 2007.

⁴ GÁMIZ GORDO AND DÍAZ ZAMUDIO 2019.

⁵ RODRÍGUEZ BARBERÁN 2007; RODRÍGUEZ BARBERÁN, GÁMIZ GORDO AND ROBERTSON 2014.

⁶ Drawing signed and dated 1833 in The Morgan Library & Museum, New York (1974.12).

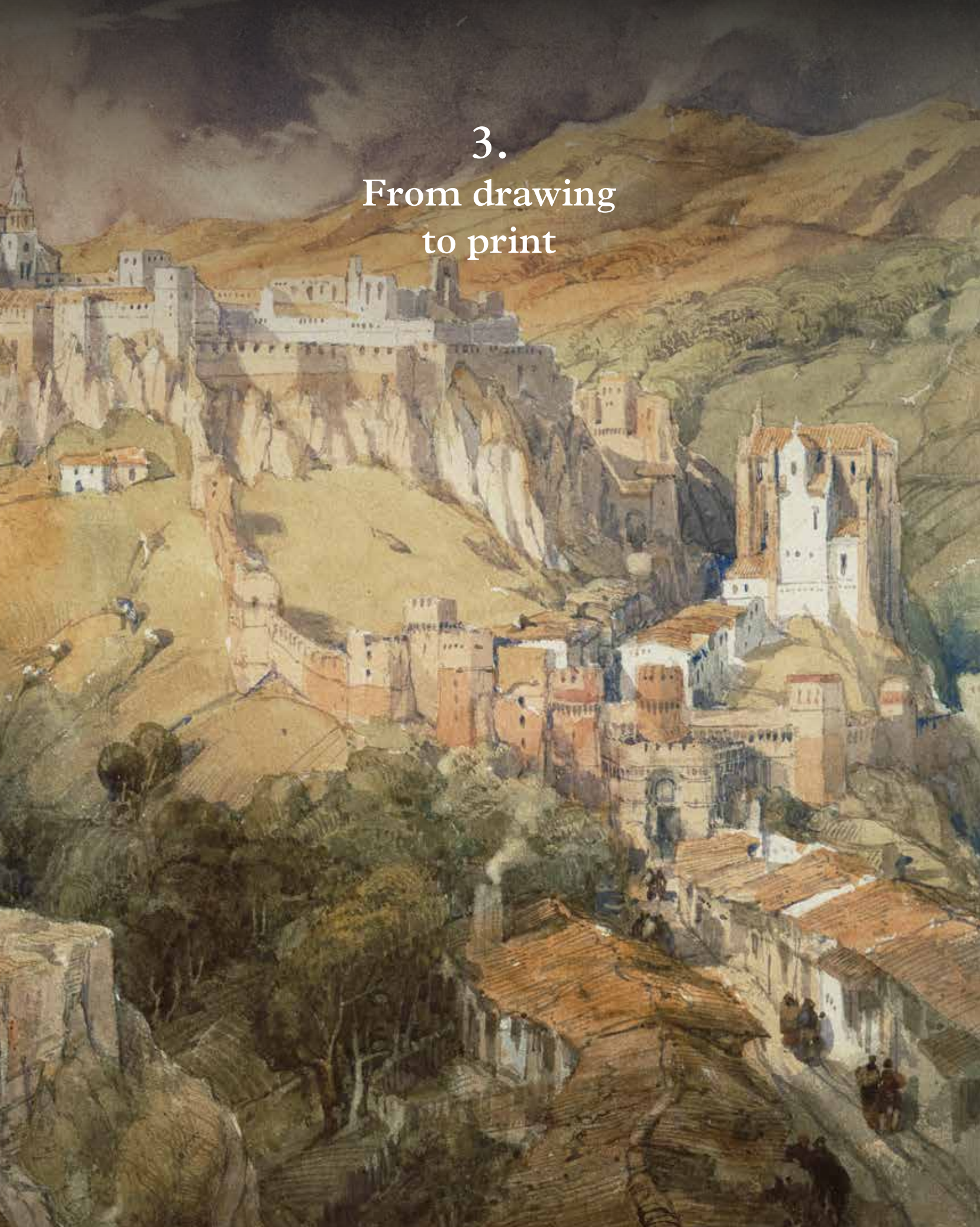
⁷ CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1991.

⁸ FERNÁNDEZ ROJAS 2008.



CAT. 2.5

3.
From drawing
to print





Inventing and popularising the Spanish picturesque

CLAUDIA HOPKINS

Roberts's success did not rely so much on the works he had finished in Spain, but on the many paintings, watercolours and prints that he produced in his London studio after his return from Seville in 1833. If we compare his original on-the-spot drawings with the versions worked up in the studio, we can see the extent to which the artist transformed his original vistas to make them more 'Picturesque' and therefore palatable to his audiences. This is exemplified by his versions of *Seville from the Cruz del Campo*. His on-the-spot drawing, dated 11 September 1833 (cat. 3.2), offers a moody vista of Seville's townscape from the limits of the city across a flat landscape. The receding lines of the composition – formed by the covered water channel on the left and the aqueduct in the centre – lead the eye from the foreground towards the horizon, which is dominated by the emblematic tower of the Giralda. In the foreground, a group of resting travellers and shrubs add some interest to the otherwise barren landscape. Another sketch made on the same day depicts the various architectural structures that mark this site, including a small church (or hermitage), an inn and an open *mudéjar*-style temple housing the cross that gave the location its name: Cruz del Campo. Based on these drawings, Roberts designed a more elaborate view in a watercolour in 1835 (cat. 3.3). As pointed out by in the entry by Martin P. Sorowka, Roberts embellished the architectural structures, adding pilasters to the hermitage and transforming the inn into a more complex building. In addition, he placed greater emphasis on the group of figures and introduced animals and carts, possibly inspired by a different drawing or aided by the terracotta figures he had acquired in Málaga. This artificial composition, reinvented in the studio, exemplifies what we might call 'Roberts's Spanish Picturesque': it draws on his taste for the exotic and the theatrical, based on his experience as a painter of stage scenery in the theatre, and on earlier theoretical writings about the Picturesque, which encouraged artists to adopt a manipulative approach to landscape views. Advocating 'roughness' over 'smoothness', William Gilpin's (1762–1843) ideas about 'Picturesque Beauty', published in the late eighteenth century, were clearly still relevant in Roberts's time and informed the definition of the term 'Picturesque' in James Elmes's *General and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Fine Arts* (1826). To achieve effects of the Picturesque, the artist should:

Turn the lawn into a piece of broken ground: plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs, break the edges of the walk, give it a rudeness of a road: mark it with wheel-tracks; and scatter around a few stones, and brushwood; in a word, instead of making the whole smooth, make it rough, and you make it also picturesque [...] Often, too, on these vast tracts of intersecting grounds, we see beautiful lights softening off along the sides of hills; and often we see them adorned with cattle, flocks of sheep, heath-

cocks [...] A group of cattle standing in the shade on the edge of a dark hill, and relieved by a lighter distance beyond them, will often make a complete picture, without any other accompaniment. In many other situations, also we find them wonderfully pleasing, and capable of making pictures amidst all the deficiencies of landscape. Even a winding road itself is an object of beauty; while the richness of the heath on either side, with the little hillhocks and crumbling earth, give many an excellent lesson for a foreground.¹

Although Gilpin's recommendations were addressed to artists sketching in the British countryside, Roberts applied them with ease to the different kinds of landscapes he had drawn in Spain. In his 1835 watercolour version of the distant view of Seville, Gilpin's notion of the 'rudeness' of a road and the idea of animals forming a 'picture' within a landscape translate into a living tableau of travelling figures with their animals. The temple with the cross and other subsidiary architectural structures serve as framing devices, like elements on a stage. On the left, a man with two two-wheeled carts and three cattle, rests by the dirt road; a driver leading an ox cart enters the scene on the right, advancing on the road, which is marked by wheel tracks. Further along, a figure on foot and two on horseback are seen from behind, passing between the temple and the small house on the left. The range of earthy colours with touches of white, red, blue and yellow supply the picture with a warm glow, contrasting with the darker tones in the original drawing. As the beholder takes in the rich foreground scene, which anchors the composition, the eye moves to the alternate areas of light and shadow in the middle ground, towards the townscape, and the tower of the Giralda on the horizon under the light blue sky.

The reinvented *Seville from the Cruz del Campo* was one of over eighty drawings that Roberts produced for the engravers of the illustrations for *The Tourist in Spain*, published in four volumes between 1835 and 1838 (cat. 3.5, 3.8, 4.21, 5.1). These Spanish volumes were, in turn, part of the series of *Landscape Annuals* initiated by the London publisher Robert Jennings & Co. in 1830, starting with *Italy and Switzerland* (1830) with engraved views of monuments, townscapes and landscapes based on drawings by Samuel Prout. This was followed by *Italy* (1832) and *France* (1834) with engraved views from drawings by J. D. Harding. Thomas Roscoe (1791–1871) provided the texts for all volumes. Based on their commercial success with an appreciative middle-class audience, and considering the increased enthusiasm for all things Spanish at the time, Jennings turned to Roberts to collaborate on four volumes dedicated to Spain. The first two volumes, dedicated to Granada and Andalusia respectively, included twenty-one engraved views and ten woodcut vignettes each. The third and fourth volumes (*Biscay and the Castiles*, 1837, and *Spain and Morocco*, 1838) also included twenty-one engraved views but no woodcuts.

In these four volumes 'Spain' unfolds through a complex interplay of images and text. If Roberts's original drawings lost their vivacity in their engraved form, they gained in meaning, which was invariably inflected by a selection of Roberts's own observations and Roscoe's text. Roscoe was a prolific writer and editor, who had translated and compiled several volumes of foreign literature,² including *The Spanish Novelists: A series of tales, from the earliest period to the close of the seventeenth century translated from the originals, with critical and biographical notices* (1832). For that work, Roscoe had received the help of Pablo de Mendibil, the first Professor of Spanish at King's College in London and editor of the Spanish emigré

¹ ELMES 1826, n. p.

² Thomas Roscoe, *The Italian Novelists*, 1836; *The German Novelists*, 1826.



Fig. 33. Edward Francis Finden after John Frederick Lewis, *Seville, the Giralda*. Engraving (235 × 176 mm) from *Landscape Illustrations to the Life and Works of Lord Byron*, by Edward Francis Finden (London, John Murray, 1834). British Museum, London.

3.29 Genaro Pérez Villaamil, *Interior of Seville Cathedral*. 1838. Oil on canvas, 75 × 65 cm. Museo Nacional del Romanticismo, Madrid [CE2039]

Inscribed: Lower left: 'Pérez de Villaamil, 1838'.

Provenance: T'Serclaes Collection.

Bibliography: ARIAS ANGLÉS 1986, fig. 41, cat. 75; ROBERTSON 1988, p. 269; CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1991, p. 176; QUESADA 1992, p. 102; QUESADA 1996, p. 90.

Exhibitions: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid, 1838.

This oil painting by Villaamil shows the interior of Seville Cathedral during the Corpus Christi celebrations. The view is captured from the nave, near the main entrance called Door of Assumption. The Gothic nave and aisles are bathed in an intriguing warm light, which the painter has manipulated to emphasise the marble, jasper and bronze surfaces of the back choir. Behind it, on either side of the nave, stands the monumental organ. The artist also depicts the crossing that collapsed and fell on the organ on 1 August 1888 as the result of a minor earthquake, which toppled a pillar and the lantern dome. The magnificent altar placed on the high altar during the festivities is visible in the background.

In 1833 David Roberts produced a large oil painting of the *Interior of the Cathedral of Seville During the Ceremony of Corpus Christi* (cat. 2.6)¹ including a complex, lifelike scene showing the monstrance, the canopy and an altar with a baldachin installed against the retrochoir. This oil painting inspired Villaamil to produce a very similar one in 1835 with slight variations (cat. 2.8).

Back in England, in 1837 Roberts made a similar drawing (cat. 3.28), which was engraved by W. Wallis and published in *The Tourist in Spain and Morocco* in 1838.² He used a similar viewpoint but did not include the festive scene mentioned above or the altar installed against the retrochoir. To execute it, he had to invent details he may not have been able to see in 1833 because they would have been covered by the temporary altar and are not found in earlier drawings

of his. This explains why, in the centre of the retrochoir, he depicted a sculpture instead of the Gothic picture of *Santa María de los Remedios*, which actually hangs in this space. Above the small doors on either side he drew paintings where there are in fact openings with railings, and topped everything with a larger number of crests, which are somewhat distorted. He also invented double columns where the retrochoir meets the Gothic pillars, which are covered in red fabric in another drawing of his.³ These details do not match those depicted in the detailed view drawn by Chapuy and lithographed by Asselineau, which captures a similar perspective and was published in Chapuy's *Le Moyen-Âge monumental et archéologique* (1844–51).⁴

The fact that this oil painting by Villaamil incorporates the features invented by Roberts indicates that it must have been based on the abovementioned steel engraving published in 1838.⁵ However, the Spaniard made significant changes of his own, depicting two large stained-glass windows in the upper left corner between the Gothic columns (whereas Roberts drew only one) to heighten the luminosity of the space. And instead of the complex foreground scene in the above oil paintings and a similar picture by Joaquín Domínguez Bécquer entitled *Procession in the Interior of the Cathedral*, dated 1836,⁶ here we find a simple scene with common folk.

AGG and MPS

¹ CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1991, núm. 102, p. 323; RODRÍGUEZ BARBERÁN 2007, cat. 126, p. 64.

² ROSCOE 1838.

³ CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1991, p. 178.

⁴ *VER SEVILLA* 2002, pp. 58–59.

⁵ Villaamil had views published by Roberts in his studio. ARIAS ANGLÉS 1986, p. 182.

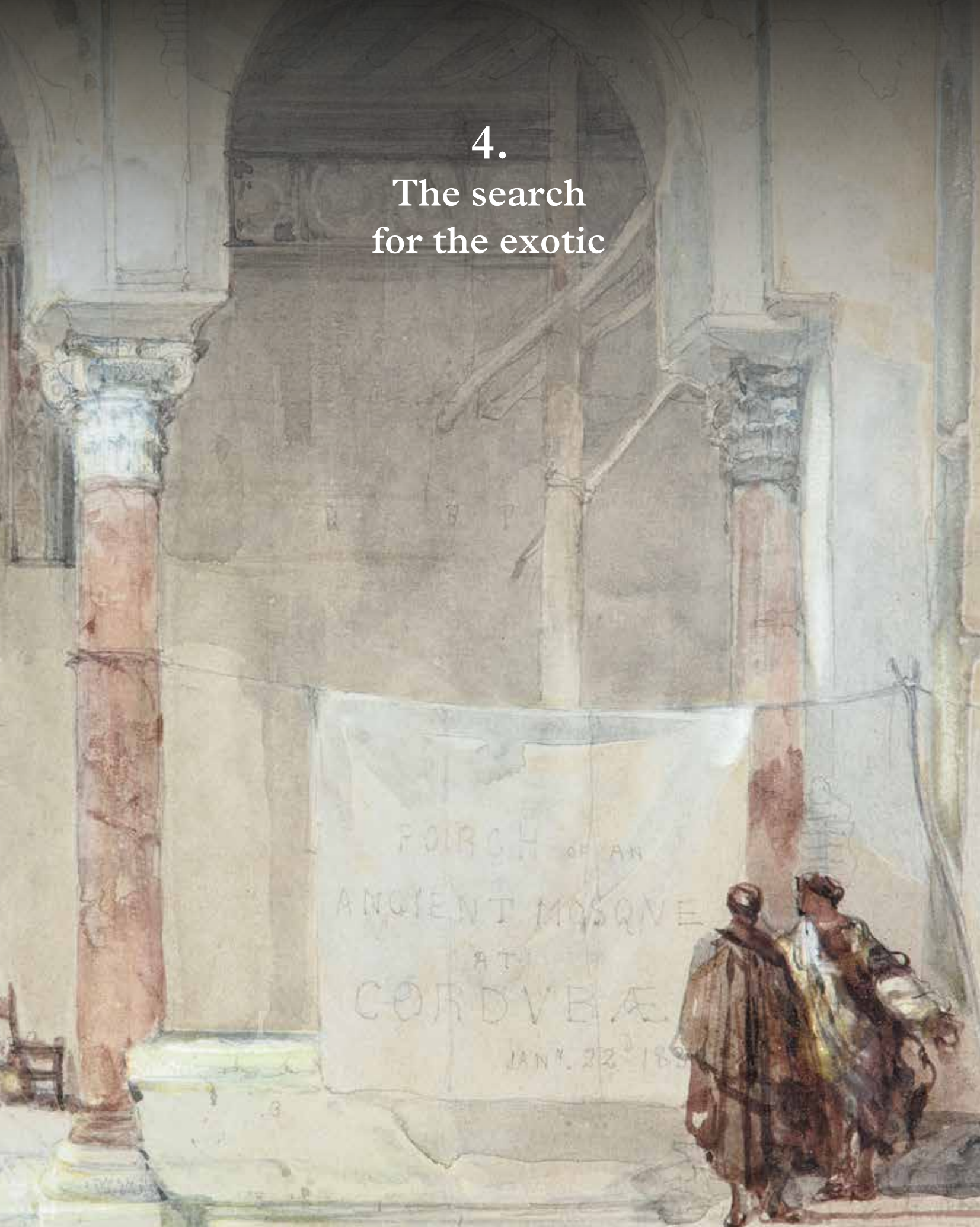
⁶ CALVO SERRALLER ET AL. 1991, p. 331.



CAT. 3.29

4.

The search
for the exotic





From al-Andalus to the East

CLAUDIA HOPKINS

Roberts and Villaamil were among the first artists to depict the architecture and landscapes relating to Spain's Islamic past in both large-format paintings and prints. They converged in their sympathetic attitudes to the medieval Muslims and the Moriscos (converted Muslims), but differed in their focus. Roberts's preference was dominated by the beauty of Nasrid architecture in Granada, where Muslim rule had persisted the longest (711–1492), whilst Villaamil felt a greater attraction to the Mosque-Cathedral in Córdoba, the Giralda in Seville, and Islamic and *mudéjar* architecture in Toledo and other parts of Spain. Of course, neither artist came to their subject with a neutral mind. For Roberts and contemporary foreign travellers, such as Eugène Delacroix or John Frederick Lewis, Andalusia represented the most accessible place to gain a flavour of the 'exotic' and a gateway to the living Islamic world in North Africa. By contrast, Villaamil's Oriental obsessions were not based on geographical distance. Contemplating the architectural legacy of Arab culture in Spain involved reflecting on an 'Orient' within his own country.

Roberts's and Villaamil's works may generally be seen as part of a wider increasing artistic fascination with the so-called Orient, which often involved a journey to Andalusia, North Africa and/or the Middle East and developed against the background of European imperial and economic interests in the Middle East and North Africa.¹ As many scholars have demonstrated over the last three decades, the motivations and effects of Orientalism in the visual arts are exceedingly complex. In order to understand Roberts's and Villaamil's approaches to Spain's Islamic past, it is useful to outline the development of attitudes towards al-Andalus that underpinned their art.

¹ Edward Said's influential theory of Orientalism (SAID 1978) argued that the Western act of describing the Arab East resulted in a construct of the East as a primitive 'Orient' inferior to the West, and that this discourse justified Western imperialism and economic interests in the region. Over the last four decades, many scholars have shown that European Orientalism was more complex; that the intentions and outcomes of Orientalism were not always to subjugate or to point out cultural difference. In the field of art history, see for example MACKENZIE 1995, LEWIS 1996, ÇELİK 2002, SCHMIDT-LINSENHOFF 2010 and ROBERTS 2015. In 2003, Said admitted that Spain offered a notable exception to his cultural analysis of French, British and US Orientalism (SAID 2003, preface).

4.24 **François Stroobant** after **David Roberts**, *Cana*. 1843. Hand-coloured lithograph, 360 × 530 mm, from *La Terre Sainte: vues & monuments*. Brussels, Société des Beaux Arts, 1843. Instituto Ceán Bermúdez, Madrid

Inscribed: Lower left: 'F. Stroobant'; lower edge, centre: 'Cana'.

Provenance: The Antiquarium, Houston 2020.

Bibliography: BALLANTINE 1866, pp. 140–41, 146, 148, 158; ABBEY TRAVEL 1957, vol. 2, no. 385, pp. 334–41; GUTTERMAN AND LLEWELLYN 1986, p. 125; *EUROPEANS IN EGYPT* 1987.



CAT. 4.24

5.
Between history
and romance





The past as a national fantasy

CLAUDIA HOPKINS

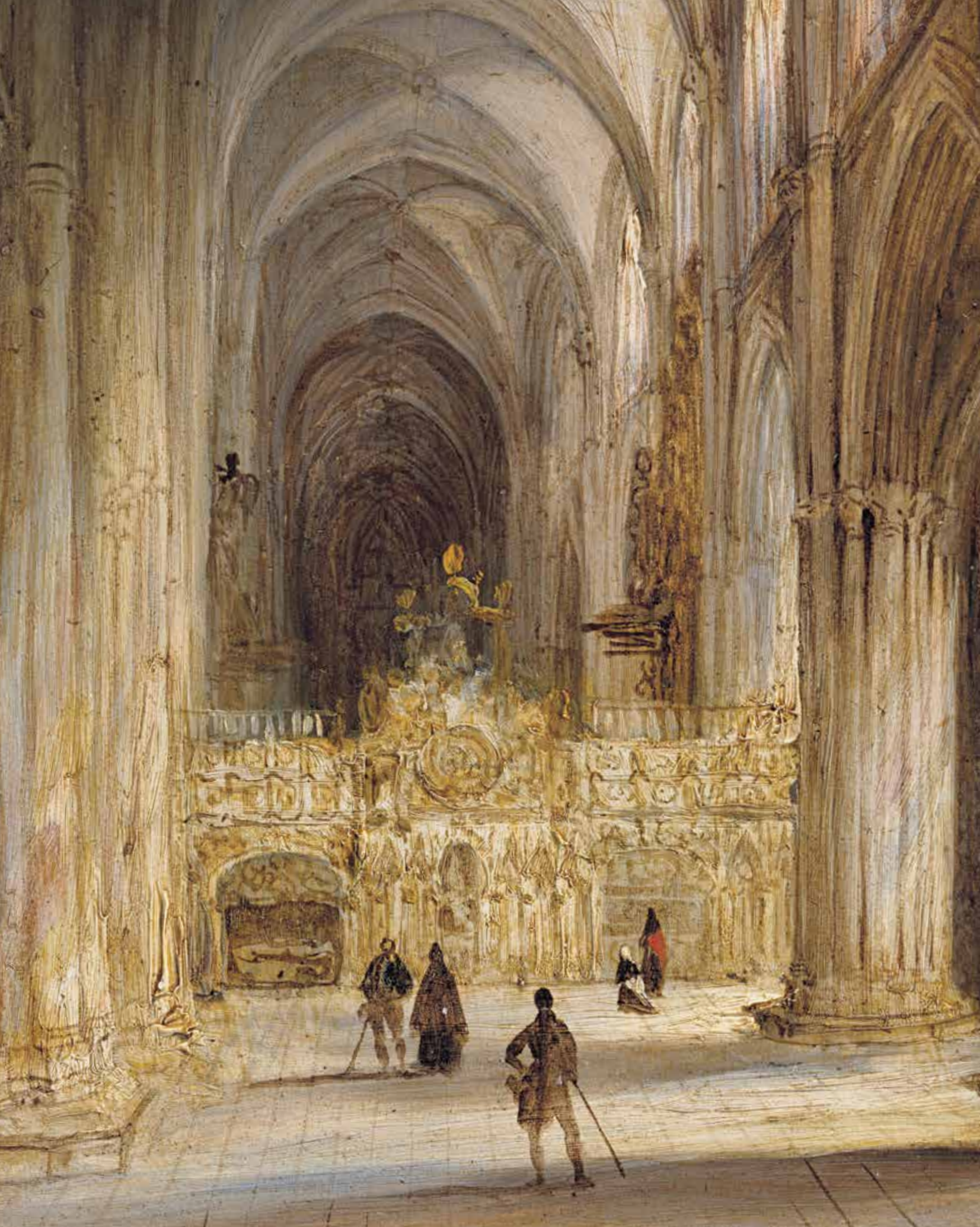
Castile and the northern provinces of Spain had a limited role in Roberts's work but they were a major source of inspiration for Villaamil's *España artística y monumental* and for his most imaginative paintings. Roberts had passed through northern Spain quickly, as his main goal was Andalusia. Obsessed with the south, Roberts's printed output offered fewer than forty Spanish vistas located outside Andalusia. Four lithographic views (relating to Burgos, Madrid and the Escorial) were included in Roberts's *Picturesque Sketches in Spain Taken During the Years 1832 & 1833*. Roscoe's *The Tourist in Spain. Biscay and the Castiles* (1837; cat. 5.1) comprised twenty-one steel-engraved views of northern sites: Fuenterrabía, the Bidasoa, Vitoria, Miranda de Ebro, the Pass of Pancorbo (fig. 69), Burgos (cat. 5.12), Segovia (cat. 5.1), the Escorial, Madrid and Toledo. *The Tourist in Spain and Morocco* (1838) included six views of the two Castiles, Galicia, Aragon and Extremadura, and three views of Valencia on the east coast. Since many places had been off Roberts's itinerary, the images relating to Salamanca, Santiago de Compostela and Plasencia (fig. 70) were modelled on drawings by Richard Ford, who had travelled widely through Spain (cat. 3.35); the views of Segovia, Valencia, Zaragoza, the Escorial and Toledo were also based on other travellers' drawings.

In contrast to Roberts, Villaamil travelled extensively in Castile and northern Spain, making hundreds of sketches of medieval architecture, regional types and customs, and mountainous landscapes. Based in Madrid from 1834 onwards, Toledo's medieval and Renaissance heritage was an obvious attraction for the artist. His *Diptych with 42 Monumental Views of Spanish Cities* for George Villiers (fig. 31) already featured twenty-two views of the town, including the Gothic cloister of San Juan de los Reyes, the Franciscan monastery founded by Isabella I of Castile.¹ A related drawing, quickly executed in pen, ink and wash, was one of Villaamil's earliest drawings used for the lithographs in *España artística y monumental* (cat. 5.5).

The *Diptych* also includes a view of Oviedo Cathedral with a procession, which in turn relates to a number of other drawings and a painting exhibited in Madrid in 1837 (fig. 71). It was described as a view of the cathedral 'with the procession of Corpus Christi', featuring figures in sixteenth-century dress, and was praised for the 'exact' rendering of the architecture.² Yet, as several historians have pointed out, only the bell tower is a faithful

¹ BARÓN 2014, p. 48.

² SEMANARIO 1837, p. 343; SEMANARIO 1838, p. 478.



The pleasure of the imagination: distortion and truth in the Gothic cathedrals of Roberts and Villaamil

MATILDE MATEO

If there be in painting anything which operates, as words do, not by resembling anything, but by being taken as a symbol and substitute for it, and thus inducing the effect of it, then this channel of communication can convey uncorrupted truth, though it does not in any degree resemble the facts whose conception it induces.¹

These eloquent words were written by John Ruskin (1819–1900), one of the most influential critics of the Victorian era, in response to the attacks levelled against J. M. W. Turner for failing to imitate the appearance of nature faithfully or follow the pictorial dictates of the fine arts academies. Ruskin's passage was therefore not a direct commentary on the work of David Roberts and Genaro Pérez Villaamil, though it could well have been, as both artists received similar criticism. The main interest of these words – and the reason for beginning this essay with them – lies in how masterfully they sum up three critical issues of artistic representation: What truth or reality can be known through painting? How is this truth related to physical appearance? And how can painting communicate this truth? These questions, and the answer Ruskin provides, are consistent with one of the cornerstones of Romantic philosophy, namely the epistemological potential of art and aesthetic experience, the complexities of which he succeeded in boiling down to the following general proposition: the reality, or truth, of what a painting represents is not conveyed by imitating the physical appearance of that reality but by producing its effect or response in the spectator.

The principal question in Ruskin's proposition is the truthfulness of artistic representation, a problem that is crucial in the work of Roberts and Villaamil, and which will be explored here in light of both Ruskin's theory of pictorial truth and Romantic philosophy. This is not to say that both artists were influenced by Ruskin, that they attempted to imitate Turner, that their paintings were similar, or that they shared Ruskin's ideas in all their complexities and nuances.²

¹ RUSKIN 1843, pp. 104–05. The argument expressed in this quotation is contemporaneous with the art of Roberts and Villaamil, as it dates back to at least 1836, the year Ruskin enrolled at Oxford University.

² Indeed, Ruskin was not an admirer of Roberts, whom he compared unfavourably to Turner and Samuel Prout. It should, however, be pointed out that Ruskin's criticisms of Roberts were not based on the degree of accuracy of the representation but rather on the use of colour and shading

5.12 **Ebenezer Challis** after **David Roberts**, *The Staircase of the North Transept, Cathedral of Burgos*. 1837. Steel engraving, 250 × 160 mm, from *The Tourist in Spain. Biscay and the Castiles*, London, Robert Jennings & Co., 1837, facing p. 82. Instituto Ceán Bermúdez, Madrid

Bibliography: GUTTERMAN AND LLEWELLYN 1986, pp. 107–08, nos. 81, 82.

The Renaissance staircase by Diego de Siloé in the northern transept of the cathedral was a favourite subject with both Villaamil and Roberts. The steel engraving exhibited here, which was published in Thomas Roscoe's *Tourist in Spain* (1837), was based on a watercolour drawing entitled *Grand Staircase, Burgos Cathedral* (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester). Roberts interpreted the view of the staircase with great imagination. He not only exaggerated the size of the stone sculptures on the balustrades, but also manipulated the architectural décor and light in order to create a sumptuous, almost fantastical space. In the accompanying text Roscoe lends a sensual, exotic character to the scene, stimulating the viewer's imagination:

Far in the interior [of the cathedral] we observed a group of ladies, with dark veils partly concealing their snowy shoulders, clustering round an image, some standing, some upon their knees. Others were congregated near the staircase, whose massive stone balustrades are surmounted by dragon-shaped monsters couched like sphinxes. These were practicing singing; and near them a young priest, engaged in reading to his superior, was casting clandestine glances at the fair ones. The artist has happily reproduced this group [...], and his representation will, better than any language, convey an

idea of the magnificent style in which the cathedral in every part is decorated with ornaments: pictures, statues, pillars, fantastic abaci, cornices, entablatures, friezes, the whole harmonizing wonderfully together in the soft light shed from vast windows far above.²

Roberts also painted this view in oil in a vertical format with an arched top (see fig. 74). Exhibited in London in 1835, the painting achieved fame at the time; it was engraved for the *Art Journal* in 1849.²

Villaamil depicted the Golden Staircase several times. In a pencil drawing he pictures the staircase from a slightly oblique angle,³ a view that provided the basis for a painting (private collection) and the lithograph *Interior of the Staircase of the Upper Door, Cathedral of Burgos* published in the second volume of *España artística y monumental* (see fig. 75). In contrast to Roberts, Villaamil renders the proportions of the architectural space relatively faithfully, but his figures are depicted in early modern dress, referring the viewer to Spain's Golden Age. In his commentary, Patricio de la Escosura points out that the figures in Villaamil's print are dressed in sixteenth-century clothes and should not be mistaken for contemporary Spaniards.⁴

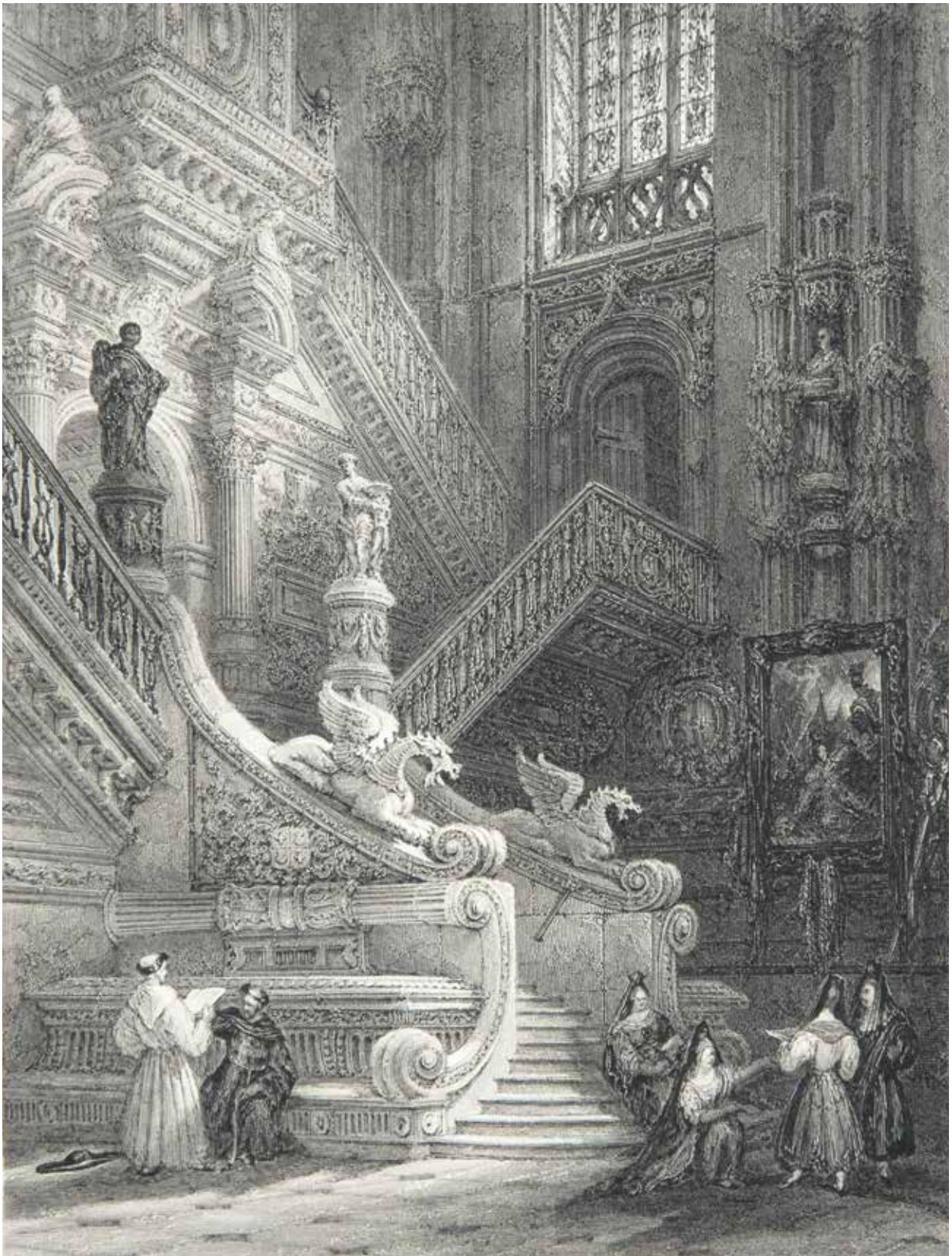
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¹ ROSCOE 1837, p. 68.

² GUTTERMAN AND LLEWELLYN 1986, p. 107, no. 81.

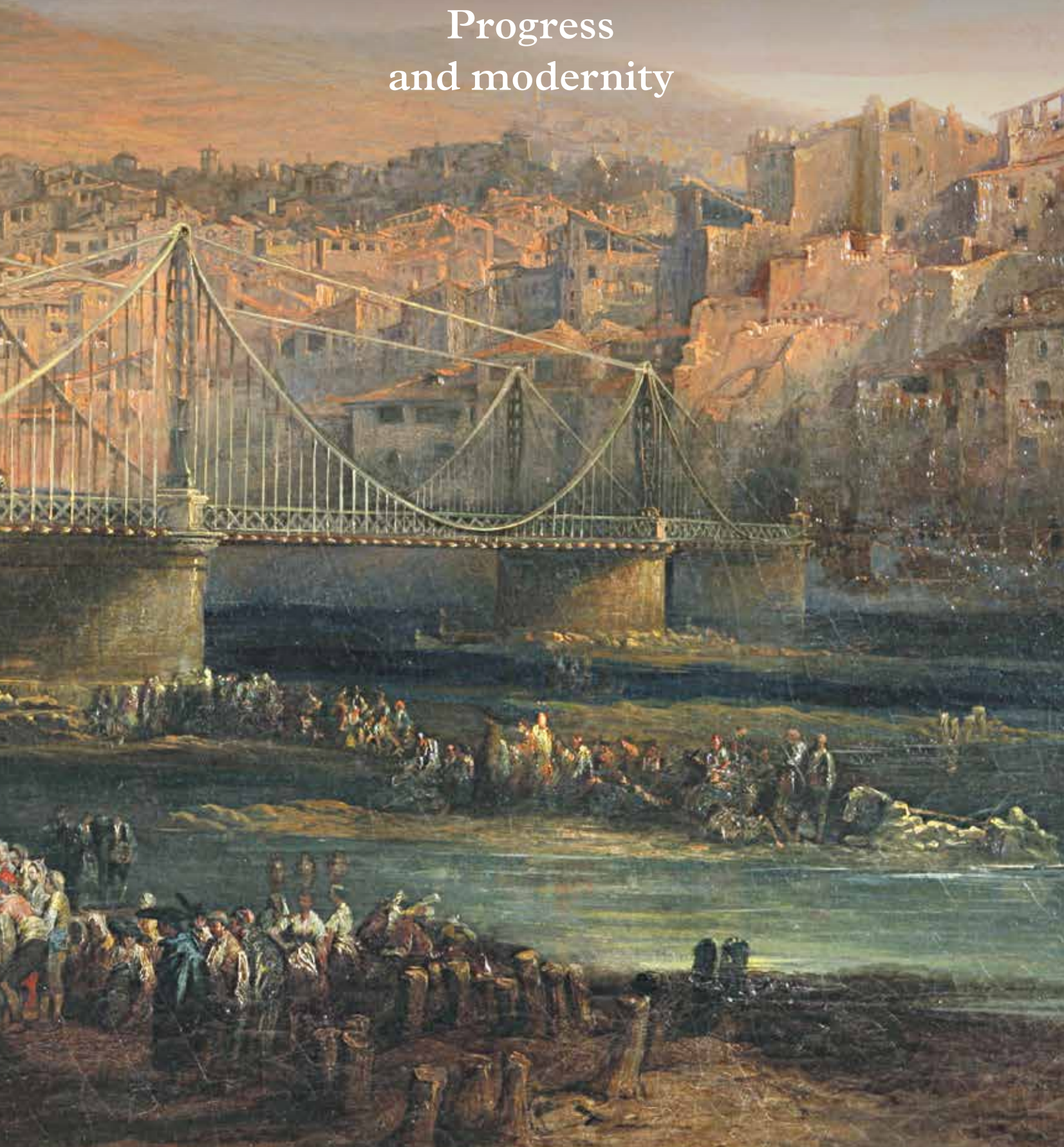
³ Drawing, 390 × 295 mm. Sold by Subastas Segre, Madrid, 'Dibujos antiguos hasta 1900', 18 December 2006, lot 100.

⁴ PÉREZ VILLAAMIL AND ESCOSURA 1844, p. 83.



CAT. 5.12

6.
Progress
and modernity





Looking forward

ANDREW GINGER

As the mid-century dawned, both David Roberts and Genaro Pérez Villaamil pursued bold new avenues in the arts, even as they continued with their earlier preoccupations. For Villaamil in particular, the early 1850s were a time of intense renewal. It is hard to contemplate his creativity in these years without a feeling of melancholy. By mid-1854 he was dead, succumbing to a liver disease that truncated his reinvigoration of Spanish art. Obituary after obituary in the press spoke of a sense of devastation, the loss not just of the man but of the hopes for the future of national culture that he embodied. It was a 'calamity for the arts', declared *El Clamor Público* on 7 June. 'It is an immense loss for the arts', *El Heraldo* mourned on the same day; 'the void in painting that he leaves as a landscapist will not be filled in a long time'. By then, Villaamil had become not just an admired artist but a kind of national celebrity. He appears again and again in press notices between 1850 and 1854, reporting on the progress of his travels across the country, among other things. His demise brought home the stark contrast between his achievements and fame, and his personal circumstances. He had died poor; his widow and son were hungry, *La Época* reported on 10 March 1855. Like other newspapers, *La Época* took the opportunity to remark on Spain's national neglect of its leading artists.

The more fortunate Roberts was to outlive Villaamil by almost exactly a decade, dying in 1864. By then, perhaps even more than Villaamil, he was celebrated in Scotland and England, and was prominent in national life. He was on personal terms with the Prince Consort, had established a friendship with England's most daring landscapist J. M. W. Turner, and was a regular figure at dinners and parties among the social elite in London and Edinburgh. In 1829, he was named an Honorary Member of the Scottish Royal Academy, and, in 1857, he received two medals from the academy, one which recalled his earlier honorary fellowship, and the other presented to him by the 'unanimous vote of the annual general assembly of the academicians on the 11th ult., they are desirous should remain in your family as a permanent record of their regard'.¹ In the following year he received the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh.

Having endured a period of illness (an enlarged prostate) in the late 1850s and at the start of the 1860s, and despite some poor reception for his works exhibited at the Royal

¹ BALLANTINE 1866, p. 188.

Romantic Spain.

David Roberts and Genaro Pérez Villaamil

From 7 October 2021

to 16 January 2022

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Cover image

Genaro Pérez Villaamil, *View of the Giralda from the calle Borceguinería* (cat. 2.10). 1833. Oil on canvas, 82 × 62 cm. Leopoldo P. de Villaamil Alfaro.

Front flyleaf

Genaro Pérez Villaamil, *Patio of the Archbishop's Palace at Alcalá de Henares* (cat. 5.13). C. 1840. Ink and wash on paper, 305 × 360 mm. Instituto Ceán Bermúdez, Madrid.

Back flyleaf

David Roberts, *Alcalá de Guadaira* (cat. 2.1). 1833. Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper, 251 × 356 mm. Instituto Ceán Bermúdez, Madrid.