

MAKING MEN: SPANISH ART AND THE POLITICS OF MASCULINITY, 1898-1936

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the formation of new gender-fluid masculine paradigms in Spanish visual culture from 1898 to 1936. It delves into the diverse constructions of gender and sexuality and their impact on the production of historical, national and sexual identities in the wake of Spain's defeat and subsequent loss of its empire in the Spanish-American War of 1898. I argue that new masculine categories – namely the androgyne, the aesthete and the homosexual – emerged not only in marginalized and queer-dominated spaces, such as cabarets and specialized journals like *La Esfera*, but also in widely distributed illustrated novels and periodical illustration, and in the art of official painters. I analyze how Spanish mass culture disseminated these new masculine scripts in book illustrations, performer photographs, as well as photography featured in popular turn-of-the-century press.

My research points to newer circuits of production evident in illustrated journals and erotic novels from the period that rupture the traditional art historical accounts of Spanish masculinity as heterosexual and grounded in Castilian values. I argue that the visual production of new masculine scripts ran parallel to and questioned the hegemony of the state-sanctioned heteronormative accounts of masculinity by introducing the alternative constructions of the national history and gender.

*To my father, Andrei Lipson*

## **NOTE ON DOCUMENTATION**

All the translations in this dissertation are mine. In most instances only the English-language text is provided, but in some cases, the original text in Spanish or in French is also included, if required for clarification purposes. In citing Spanish sources, I retained the original spelling and punctuation from the sources named.

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## INTRODUCTION

Between 1920 and 1936, the Basque painter Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945) worked on an unfinished large-scale charcoal and oil drawing, titled *My Friends* [Mis Amigos] [Fig. 1].<sup>1</sup> This group portrait – in what is a revisiting of the conversation piece – includes the leading Spanish intellectuals of the day engaged in discussion within a *tertulia*-like setting, or, in other words, a social gathering with a literary and artistic purpose.<sup>2</sup> The artist himself looks down upon his friends from behind his easel on the left-hand side of the middle register of the canvas, against the El-Greco inspired backdrop. This work is at once a tribute to Zuloaga’s Spanish friends, a self-portrait of the artist as an heir to the Spanish artistic tradition, and a manifestation of Castile-centric, masculinist aesthetic that Zuloaga and his friends espoused. This unfinished work merits an in-depth discussion, since it offers a snapshot of the gendered and national issues that I will address in this dissertation.

The artist’s friends and supporters featured in the image come from a wide variety of cultural spheres. They include the writers Miguel de Unamuno, Pío Baroja, José Ortega y Gasset and Ramón del Valle-Inclán, among others; the elegantly attired medical doctor Gregorio Marañón, famous for his writings on human sexuality; the sculptor Julio Beobide and painter Pablo Uranga; a one-time President of the Prado Museum Board of Trustees, the 17th Duke of Alba; and the famed bullfighter Juan Belmonte [Fig. 2]. Attired in a traditional Basque *txapel* (beret), Zuloaga himself is peeking behind his canvas just above Belmonte, recreating Diego Velázquez’s iconic self-portrait in *Las Meninas* [Fig. 3] – the painting that encapsulated the

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<sup>1</sup> The detailed nature of the drawing suggests that it was not meant to be a painting, however the degree to which the artist intended to complete it is unknown.

<sup>2</sup> A “conversation piece” is a genre of portraiture, depicting informal groups engaged in genteel conversation and posed in landscape or domestic settings, that developed in the Low Countries in the seventeenth century. See: Kate Retford, *The Conversation Piece: Making Modern Art in 18th-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press and Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2017).

Spanish national artistic tradition and emblemized masculine virtue of the Spanish Golden-Age for the early twentieth-century Spanish intelligentsia. By referencing Velázquez in this manner, Zuloaga positioned himself as a spiritual heir to the Spanish artists that came before him and the paragon of Spanish masculinity in visual arts, as both his supporters and critics consistently emphasized in their reception of the artist and his works. Clearly, beyond setting out to portray his intellectual “amigos,” the painting offers us a view into the ideological construction of masculinity at a particular moment in modern Spanish history.

This drawing is dominated by male characters, envisioning the intellectual gathering as an exclusively male affair. Indeed, the only female figures featured in *My Friends* appear in the background as part of the recreation of the central scene from El Greco’s 1608-1614 composition *The Vision of Saint John* [Fig. 4], a painting that Zuloaga kept in his personal collection. The Basque artist worked tirelessly to situate the Cretan painter, whose art he passionately admired, at the epicenter of Spanish artistic tradition.<sup>3</sup> The biblical protagonists of *The Vision of Saint John* were immersed in the Castilian landscape, which according to Zuloaga and his friends was the birthplace of the Spanish people. It is important to highlight that while Zuloaga promoted a centralized, Castilian vision of Spain, his position was always that of an outsider, of a Basque looking at Spain, through the prism of French modernism.

The intellectuals affiliated with the Basque painter and his vision selected Castilian terrain, often portrayed as harsh, yet resilient, and its people to serve as the living embodiment of the austere, Catholic, and patriarchal values of “true” Spain. Furthermore, they used gendered rhetoric to discuss the art of El Greco and Velázquez as Spanish painters who incarnated the authentic Castilian values, aligned with the notion of noble, rural, and heteronormative Spanish

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<sup>3</sup> Javier Barón, “La influencia del Greco en la Pintura Moderna del Siglo XIX a la Difusión del Cubismo,” in *El Greco & la Pintura Moderna*, ed. Javier Barón (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2014), 140.



masculinity. While the rhetoric of Zuloaga's friends and colleagues emphasized the Castilian aesthetics of these artists as a way to intellectually unify Spain, other regions, like Galicia, Andalusia and the Canary Islands were queered, reflecting the crisis of masculine values embedded in the art of Zuloaga. Moreover, other artists – ranging from painters and printmakers to drag performers of the era – explored alternative constructions of masculinity that went beyond the hegemonic Castilian paradigm.

Zuloaga and the members of his imaginary tertulia – writers, artists, sexologists and bullfighters – as well as the fields they represent that helped shape notions of the masculine, are at the conceptual heart of this dissertation. However, Zuloaga's ideological construction of masculinity through representation of chief disciplinary fields offers only one facet of a much larger story that concerns the development of new forms of masculinity in the visual cultures of early twentieth-century Spain. These visual cultures included a wide array of media outside of traditional high art forms, but also new sites of production and reception. Even as the drawing makes present the intersection between the various discourses at play in the visual arts, literature and bullfighting, it leaves out many other visual cultures and their practitioners, including drag performers, graphic illustrators, and regional symbolist artists, all of whom explored and negotiated new masculine scripts through their work. Without their voices during this key historical moment for the emergence of queer culture in Spain, our understanding of the new models of gender and sexuality in the early twentieth century would be incomplete. A careful examination and analysis of the visual materials and their critical role in the construction and emergence of queer culture in Spain is the aim of this investigation.

My dissertation reveals the formation of new gender-fluid masculine paradigms in Spanish visual culture from 1898 to 1936. It delves into the diverse constructions of gender and

sexuality and their impact on the production of historical, national and sexual identities in the wake of Spain's defeat and subsequent loss of its empire in the Spanish-American War of 1898. I argue that new masculine categories – namely the androgyne, the aesthete and the homosexual – emerged not only in marginalized and queer-dominated spaces, such as cabarets and specialized journals like *La Esfera*, but also in widely distributed illustrated novels and periodicals, and in the art of official painters. My research points to newer circuits of production evident in pictorial practices from the period that rupture the traditional art historical accounts of Spanish masculinity as heterosexual and grounded in Castilian values. I argue that the visual production of new masculine scripts ran parallel to and questioned the hegemony of the state-sanctioned heteronormative accounts of masculinity by introducing the alternative constructions of the national history and gender. <sup>4</sup>

The years following Spain's national crisis, sparked by the defeat in the War of 1898 and the loss of its remaining colonies in Latin America and the Caribbean, encompassed the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) and culminated with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. My dissertation highlights these first three decades of the twentieth century, often dubbed the Spanish Silver Age because of the nation's newfound pride in its scientific and cultural accomplishments. More specifically, my dissertation engages with the unprecedented variety of different forms of visual-cultural production that followed the Spanish War of 1898. According to traditional cultural narratives, Spain's loss in the War of 1898 led to the formation of a group of intellectuals who were motivated to find new ways to regenerate their

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<sup>4</sup> While many other models of masculinity existed in Spain at turn-of-the century, including the bodybuilder, the iron worker, and the military man, this dissertation brings to light those that were most prevalent in the visual cultures of Silver Age, but left out of the art historical narrative. Part of my argument is that masculine paradigms, such as the bullfighter, the intellectual, and the androgyne, came to replace previous cultural models of ideal manhood, such as the military man. Moreover, while the visual materials concerning bodybuilding at the turn of the century were abundant for other European countries, they are far less abundant for Spain, but certainly merit further investigation.

emasculated country in the wake of the loss of the empire. Often referred to collectively and somewhat misleadingly as “the Generation of 1898,” these intellectuals and their artistic and literary production dominated critical discussions of gender in both literary and art-historical scholarship on Spain, at the expense of other queer forms of cultural productions to be discussed in this dissertation.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it is important to point out that the literary and cultural notion of the “Generation of 1898” completely ignored contemporaneous female participation, in favor of the male-dominate canon – a narrative that has been challenged in recent literary scholarship.<sup>6</sup> While the ideological construction of the “Generation of 1898” and the heteronormative, Castile-centric masculinity that Zuloaga and his art have embodied for many critics of his time are important to this project, a variety of archives uncovered throughout this research points to a multitude of masculinities and masculine narratives at play during the Silver Age.

High art and other forms of visual culture, which included drag performance or *transformismo*, as it was known in Spain, and the burgeoning illustrated novel industry, came together to forge new masculine scripts in the early twentieth-century Spain, a country traditionally viewed as peripheral to European modernity. Indeed, as I argue, Spain offers fertile ground for the exploration of discourses on gender and sexuality, challenging the longstanding assumptions of heteronormativity as a hegemonic form of masculinity that was promoted by the “Generation of 1898.” Early twentieth-century Spanish culture was marked by censorship, particularly during the Dictatorship of de Rivera, that sought to regulate not just pornography, but also erotic, risqué and sexually suggestive forms of visual production and performance,

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<sup>5</sup> “The Generation of 1898” refers to a diverse group of Spanish novelists, poets, philosophers and other cultural figures working in different fields and styles, committed to the cultural renewal of their country in the wake of the social and spiritual crisis of 1898. It was never an organized movement or a school. To this day, “Generation of 1898” remains a highly contested term that serves as a convenient shorthand to describe the generation of cultural figures, whose work was motivated by the need to restore national pride.

<sup>6</sup> See: Christine Arkininstall, *Spanish Female Writers and the Freethinking Press 1879-1926* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

especially those that catered the images of dissident masculinities. While pornography in Silver-Age Spain was an important facet of cultural production, it is not a focal point of this dissertation. Several scholars (none in art history), including Maite Zubiaurre and Jean-Louis Guereña, analyzed pornography in relation to the early twentieth-century erotic production in Spain. However, no single study on the subject has ever been produced. As Jean-Louis Guereña has demonstrated in 2012, the absence of a unified bibliography of erotic materials in Spain, that would be comparable to the French National Library “L’enfer,” where such materials are stored, frustrate the researchers’ efforts to gain access to the pornographic collections and study the evidence.<sup>7</sup>

Painters, illustrators and drag performers discussed in this dissertation found a way to work around the censorship laws to produce and market new models of gender and sexuality. Silver-Age *transformismo* spectacles or drag acts were put on by male and female *transformistas*, who performed as the “opposite” gender. The leading practitioners of the art in turn-of-the-century Spain included Teresita Saavedra, Antonio Alonso, Egmont de Bries, Wander, Antonio España, Mirko and Derkas. The little that we know about these artists is indebted to Álvaro Retana, who was friends with the leading performers of the day. Retana collected these performers’ ephemera and postcards, several of which he published in his remarkable 1964 book, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, along with some biographical information about the performers. Most *transformistas* adopted stage names that corresponded to their “legal gender,” rather than the gender in their performances. They did so to avoid legal troubles that came with cross-dressing (more on this will be discussed later). We know very little about their

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<sup>7</sup> See: Jean-Louis Guereña, “Un *infierno* español. Hacia una bibliografía de las publicaciones eróticas españolas (siglos XIX-XX). Problemas y realizaciones,” *AnMal Electrónica* 32 (2012): 483-516; Maite Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic in Spain, 1898-1939* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012).

personal lives. While some *transformistas* famous for “female impersonation” were presumably cis-gendered heterosexual men (Monseieur Bertin and Ernesto Foliers both had large families with children), some were homosexual (Egmont de Bries and Antonio Alonso both lived in domestic partnerships with other men), and others would have been identified as queer and/or “transgender,” had such terms have been available to them. I am aware that historically, for legal and other reasons, *transformistas* were referred to and used pronouns in accordance with their legal gender. While mindful of this fact, I strive for a more inclusive language throughout this dissertation, one that moves away from gender binaries and takes into account the gender and sexual diversity of the performers. In order to avoid misgendering the *transformistas*, whose own attitudes towards gender we may never know, I will refer to them by the third-person pronoun, “they.”

To examine the formation of new masculine scripts in visual culture, I rely on the relationship between dominant culture, subcultures, and style proposed by John Clark and others in the 1971 “Subcultures, Cultures and Class.”<sup>8</sup> According to the authors, the greatest legitimacy is given to forms of culture that express the situation of groups who hold the monopoly of power in society most adequately. In this Marxist formulation, the dominant culture represents itself as *the* culture. Nevertheless, the groups and classes that do not stand at the apex of power, like the sexual dissidents and artists affiliated with marginal forms of visual and artistic production who are at the center of this dissertation, find ways of expressing their experiences in their culture. These other cultural configurations will not be merely subordinate to the dominant order, “they will enter into struggle with it, seek to modify, negotiate, resist and even overthrow its reign – its

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<sup>8</sup> John Clark, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, “Subcultures, Cultures and Class,” in *Resistance Through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 1971), 9-74.

*hegemony.*”<sup>9</sup> In this context, different cultural styles become symbolic forms of resistance against the hegemonic culture that represents cultural, moral, and ideological leadership of a group over subaltern groups. I contend that through uses of particular visual styles and display venues, visual artists of the period were able to articulate ideas of gender that diverged from the dominant discourse.

### **State of the Field: Queer Histories of Masculinity in Silver-Age Spain**

This dissertation argues that the critical construction of Castilian masculinity embraced by Zuloaga and many of his contemporaries in the wake of 1898 offered one of many masculine scripts that emerged in Spain during the Silver-Age. And yet, Zuloaga’s masculine paradigm was subsequently embraced by many literary and visual scholars and historians as the dominant expression of Spanish Silver-Age culture and, implicitly, its masculine ideals. The wide variety of studies and exhibition catalogues focused exclusively on the subject of the Generation of 1898, its themes, visual expressions and individual figures is a testament to this fact.<sup>10</sup> Much of the art historical narrative of Spain at the turn of the twentieth century fixated on Zuloaga and his competitor Valencian painter Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863-1923) as visual manifestations of the two poles in turn-of-the-century Spanish painting – the mysterious and archaic “Black Spain” (Zuloaga) and the sunny, modern “White Spain” (Sorolla).<sup>11</sup> While the narrative of the two

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<sup>9</sup> Clark et al, “Subcultures,” 12.

<sup>10</sup> See: José Luis Bernal et al., *La Mirada del 98: Arte y Literatura en La Edad de Plata* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1998); Carlos Seco Serrano et al., *Paisaje y Figura del 98: Ciclo de Conferencias* (Madrid: Fundación Central Hispano, 1998); Manuel Mosquera Cobián, *La Mirada Complacida y la Mirada Inquieta: La Pintura Finisecular entre la Tradición y la Modernidad*. (Xunta de Galicia: Museo de Bellas Artes de Coruña, 1999); Javier Tusell, *Arte, Historia y Política en España (1890-1939)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA, *Sorolla. Zuloaga. Dos visiones para un cambio de siglo* (Madrid: Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA, 1998).

Spains pitted the representations of Central/Castilian Spain against the Levantine Spain at the expense of other Spanish regions' artistic production, other scholars sought to shift the narrative to focus on a more comprehensive view of the Spanish art scene.<sup>12</sup> This dissertation builds on the work of art historians, who sought to broaden the conventional accounts of Spanish art history, which have focused on the artistic developments in Madrid and Barcelona, to incorporate regional perspectives and criticisms into the discussion of the issues of gender and sexuality in visual culture.

Cultural historians revealed the formation of new cultural paradigms of gender-fluid masculinity in turn-of-the-century Spain, including the “homosexual” and the “dandy.”<sup>13</sup> These new constructions of masculinity were prompted by the increased public discussion of homosexuality, following Oscar Wilde’s 1895 trial and the new medico-legal categorization of homosexuality as a “perversion.” Wilde’s trial linked modern aesthetics to an identity viewed as pathological, effectively transforming the public perception of Aestheticism into the “look” of homosexuality and making it the touchstone in the emergence of gay subcultures for decades to come.<sup>14</sup> Many artists and cultural figures at the heart of this dissertation openly embraced a dandy persona in their professional and personal life, exploring gender-fluid models of

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<sup>12</sup> See: Pena, María del Carmen et al., *Centro y Periferia en la modernización de la pintura española, 1880-1918*. (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault made an influential argument that “homosexuality,” and, more specifically, homosexuality as an identity was a modern invention. He wrote, “The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscrete anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality [...] Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite was a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.” In Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 43. For more information on homosexuality in modern Spanish culture see: Alberto Mira, *De Sodoma a Chueca: Una Historia Cultural de Homosexualidad en España en el Siglo XX* (Barcelona: Editorial EGALES, 2004); Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García, *“Los invisibles” A history of male homosexuality in Spain 1850-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007); Nerea Aresti, “Masculinidad y Nación en la España de los Años 1920 y 1930,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 42, no. 2 (2012), 55-72.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 94.

masculinity in their work, during a historical moment when dissident masculinities were punishable by law.

Perceived as a growing national threat, male homosexuality was officially criminalized in the Spanish penal code of 1928, but the anxieties concerning homosexuality prevailed in all branches of visual culture much earlier. Turn-of-the-century critics established a false dichotomy between Spanish Modernism/Symbolism, which was deemed feminine, and the Regenerationists of the Generation of 1898 – the intellectuals and political writers committed to Spain’s moral and social renewal – despite artists’ frequent identification with both.<sup>15</sup> Critics accused Modernists of deploying art to promote “perversion” and of shrouding outright homosexuality in sexual ambiguity. Thus, the distinctions between the homosexual, the dandy and the Modernist increasingly blur, as all three terms came to stand for the dangers of modernity overstepping the boundaries of morality and culminating in the loss of national virility.

In recent scholarship, cultural historians have made important contributions to the study of queer subjects and the histories of the visual and literary cultures of Silver-Age Spain. Yet, to date, there has been no serious scholarship produced on the visual cultures of masculinity, queer aesthetics and nationhood in the early twentieth century. My work is informed by the scholarship on gender, sexuality and visual culture in Spain, particularly the work of Lily Litvak, Lou Charnon-Deutsch, and Akiko Tsuchiya.<sup>16</sup> However, in contrast to their work that focused largely on the participation of women in public sphere, this dissertation turns to previously unheard masculine voices. My focus on Spanish visual culture as a whole, rather than exclusively high art, has been inspired by the approaches from cultural history, adopted by Richard Cleminson,

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<sup>15</sup> Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, *Modernismo Frente a Noventayochó* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1951), 211-212.

<sup>16</sup> Lily Litvak, *Erotismo Fin de Siglo* (Barcelona: A. Bosch, 1979); Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *Gender and Representation: Women in Spanish Realist Fiction* (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co., 1990); Akiko Tsuchiya, *Marginal Subjects: Gender and Deviance in Nineteenth-Century Spain* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011).



Susan Martin-Márquez and Maite Zubiaurre that analyze the sexual discourses across a broad range of visual and textual materials.<sup>17</sup> In her study on the cultures of the erotic in Spain, Zubiaurre has pointed out that sexuality leaves its imprint on all parts of culture, even as its study is being obscured by the “bigger issues” of politics and high culture.<sup>18</sup>

The work of these cultural scholars has unearthed previously unexplored terrains of visual production, although they do privilege textual sources over visual materials that are ripe for art historical analysis. Even as the analysis of queer representations in contemporary visual culture has become increasingly popular in art history over the past two decades, it remains largely unexplored by the art historians of Silver-Age Spain.<sup>19</sup> In his 1996 book, *Apariencia e Identidad Masculina*, the prominent Spanish art historian Carlos Reyero analyzed the role of illustration in the configuration of masculine roles and sexual identities in the nineteenth-century art. However, his project predominantly drew examples from French and British art.<sup>20</sup> The conspicuous absence of scholarship on the topic of representation of masculinity in Spanish visual culture makes queer subjects and artistic practices of the period invisible, thus removing an important dimension from our understanding of the complex cultures of Silver Age Spain.

### **Approaching the Queer Subject: Hegemonic Masculinity and Queer Theory**

My project combines several methodologies from three principle areas: critical queer studies, gender order theory and Spanish cultural studies. Through my analysis of the production and

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<sup>17</sup> Cleminson and Vázquez García, “*Los invisibles*”; Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic*.

<sup>18</sup> Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Juan Vicente Aliaga, *Bajo Vientre: Representación de la Sexualidad en la Cultura y el Arte Contemporáneos* (Valencia: Conselleria de la Cultura, Educació i Ciencia, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Carlos Reyero, *Apariencia e Identidad Masculina* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1996).

display of male bodies in art, media, medicine and cultural criticism, I show how distinct arenas of discourses sought to define the male body in particular ways and for varying aims. To do so, I draw upon Foucauldian discourse and its related “discursive formations,” as sets of statements and practices that helped structure and regulate given fields of knowledge.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, my dissertation underscores the notions of the center and the periphery in the categories of nationalism, gender, sexuality, and history in early twentieth-century Spain. For this reason, my methodology looks to the critical scholarship of gender and queer theorists who draw attention to competing histories and possibilities for the construction of gender and sexuality. In order to examine the formation of new masculine paradigms, I draw from a diverse set of practices in Spanish visual culture, rather than the ones traditionally labeled as high art. To examine the way that masculine discourses work across visual culture, I draw on the work of Spanish cultural theorists.

The social theorist Alan R. Petersen presented ‘masculinity’ as a historically specific social construction, a product of power and knowledge rather than a static, analytic category of research.<sup>22</sup> Since the 1980s, researchers in the field of masculinity studies, including Petersen, Jeffrey Weeks and John D’Emilio, followed Foucault by focusing on the relationship between sexual practices and sexual subjects. They explored the ways in which the legal, medical and political production of various discourses on heterosexualities and homosexualities was linked to changing historical circumstances.<sup>23</sup> In recent years, masculinity studies began to incorporate methodologies from queer theory in order to advance intersectional gender studies due to queer

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<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge; and, the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 80.

<sup>22</sup> Alan R. Petersen, *Unmasking the Masculine: ‘Men’ and ‘Identity’ in the Skeptical Age* (London: Sage Publications, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Rachel Adams and David Savran, “Introduction,” in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, ed. Rachel Adams and David Savran (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 7.

theory's inherent concern with de-naturalizing normative categories.<sup>24</sup> This dissertation draws on the methodology from masculinity and queer studies as a way of challenging hierarchical and fixed dichotomizing of heterosexual/homosexual identities at the turn of the twentieth century.

In 1993 *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler argued that “sex” qualifies a body within the domain of cultural intelligibility.<sup>25</sup> According to Butler, sex is part of an exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed through the creation of abjected beings, who do not appear properly gendered and whose humanity comes into question. Abject beings are not yet “subjects,” but they form the constitutive “outside” in relation to the domain of the subject. My analysis engages Butler’s notion of the “abject” to explore the visual constructions of androgyny and its critical reception in Spanish illustrated periodicals, commissioned portraits and the artistic production of the Symbolist artists. Elaborating on their critiques, my project explores the paradigmatic shift in conceptions of gender and sexuality and the ways in which multiple coexisting masculine paradigms were produced and consumed within the early twentieth-century Spanish visual culture.

I theorize the paradigmatic shift in visual constructions of gender and sexuality using R.W. Connell’s and James Messerschmidt’s concept of “hegemonic masculinity” or the “currently most honored way of being a man” that requires “all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and [that] ideologically legitimate[es] the global subordination of women to men”<sup>26</sup> The notion of hegemonic masculinity recognizes the existence and practice of multiple

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<sup>24</sup> See: Barbara Pini and Bob Pease, *Men, Masculinities and Methodologies* (Hampshire, England: Plagrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Raewyn W. Connell developed the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” in Raewyn W. Connell, *Gender and Power. Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford University Press, 1987). However, my dissertation draws on the expanded and revised notion of “hegemonic masculinity,” that appears in R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (December 1, 2005): 832-833.

models of masculinity across time, culture and individual, suggesting that the very notion of masculinity is open to historical change and the struggle for hegemony, where older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. This dissertation analyzes the often-intersecting visual cultures and complex forms of masculinity that formed in the wake of the War of 1898, offering new gender models that challenged the hegemony of the contemporary masculine paradigm.

As such, the discussions of time, history and gender were central to the art and reception of several key players in this dissertation. I will draw on the concept of queer temporality, to analyze competing visions of masculinity that arose at the turn of the century. Scholars in the field of critical queer studies have made claims for the queer uses of time and space, which developed in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. Their productive explorations of the relationship among sexual politics, time and history in their work, have made major interventions in queer theory.<sup>27</sup> In 2010 *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Elizabeth Freeman develops the idea of “chrono-normativity” as reproduction-oriented use of time, deployed at the advent of the industrial revolution to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity. As a means of resistance to “chrono-normativity,” Freeman proposes alternate time formations, referred to as “queer temporalities,” which work outside the time of modernity and capitalism, and have the power to disrupt chrononormativity, thus connecting a group of people beyond monogamous, enduring couplehood. Freeman offers the notion of “temporal drag” as a means of reenacting the past in the present that interrupts the self-constitution of western modernity as heterosexual, civilized, and advanced, thus disrupting

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<sup>27</sup> See: Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press: 2004); J. Jack Halberstam, *In Queer Time and Place* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward. Loss and Politics of Queer History* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007); José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

the workings of chrono-normativity. My analysis explores the artistic production of Spanish artists working outside of the Castilian masculine paradigm and on the margins of the Spanish artistic establishment within the context of “temporal drag.” I argue that these artists offer alternative masculine scripts and trajectories for the Spanish national future by creatively restaging Spanish history.

My project offers the first in-depth exploration of the relationship between Spanish nationalism and the emerging discourses on sexuality in visual culture, medicine and popular culture. Furthermore, it employs an innovative methodology from gender and queer studies to explore Spanish visual culture, placing high art in dialogue with other forms of visual production, including mass media, ephemera, and the illustrated erotic novel. Finally, it decenters the image of a unified Spain by incorporating regional narratives and contributions to the representations of Spain’s national and sexual identity that are absent from contemporary art historical scholarship.

### **Constructing Queer Subjects in Nationalism and in Visual Culture**

Through the study of the production and display of male bodies in art, media, medicine and cultural criticism, I analyze how various forms of masculinity were formally constructed, gained circulation and influenced the dominant economies of the visible. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to visual culture, my dissertation puts in dialogue a broad range of visual sources, all of which helped construct queer subjects at the turn of the century. My dissertation queers the canonical figures in Spanish visual culture that include Zuloaga and the bullfighters in turn-of-the-century popular illustration, modernist and academic art, as well as commemorative

sculpture. Furthermore, it offers a new reading of Spanish symbolist art and its reception as a queer aesthetic through the analysis of paintings and in prints, alongside contemporary art criticism. The later chapters analyze illustrated erotic novels, postcards, and medical photography – materials left critically unexamined in Spanish art historical scholarship – to trace the pictorial representation, significance and reception of drag performance in Spain. To do so, this dissertation draws on original archival sources, using an innovative methodology based in queer studies. Reading this range of sources together is essential for a fuller, richer understanding of how discourses on masculinity were visually produced in turn-of-the-century Spain.

This dissertation examines how the different, but frequently overlapping visual cultures, associated with the Generation of 1898, symbolist art, drag performance, frivolous arts, and bullfighting imagined Spanish masculinities at the turn of the twentieth century. Luisa Elena Delgado has argued that several national fantasies may be fighting for hegemony at any given time, and that the articulation of new political subjects is, in fact, channeled through new fantasies.<sup>28</sup> In turn, this dissertation shows how the fantasies of masculinity produced by Spanish artists, performers, and other cultural figures were instrumental to the formation and visibility of new masculine scripts that decentered the traditional notions of national manhood. Through their pictorial representations and performances, Ismael Smith, Manuel Bujados, Néstor, Álvaro Retana, Egmont de Bries, and the other subjects of this dissertation at once imagined and embodied new forms of being a man in turn-of-the-century Spain, which they subsequently shared with their public.

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<sup>28</sup> Luisa Elena Delgado, *La Nación Singular: Fantasías de la Normalidad Democrática Española* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2014): 21.

Each of the four chapters of the dissertation is organized thematically around the debate generated by or explored in a particular set of images, rather than by specific artist, medium or time period:

Chapter one, “*El Pintor Macho: Ignacio Zuloaga and the Masculine Paradigm of the Generation 1898*” explores the historic constructions of national manhood through the art and personality of Ignacio Zuloaga. I argue that the critical construction of Zuloaga as the paradigm of Spanish manhood was a response to the Spanish national crisis of 1898, which was also seen as a crisis of masculinity, as well as a critical attempt to forge a unified Spanish sexual identity. It examines the early twentieth-century polemics on Spain’s self-representation, encapsulated in White Spain/Black Spain debates and the adjacent polemic known as the “Zuloaga Question,” ignited by the paintings of Ignacio Zuloaga. It centers on the historic constructions of national manhood through Castilian landscapes, defined in gendered and sexual terms by artists and critics concerned with Spain’s philosophical “Regeneration.”<sup>29</sup> The chapter focuses on Zuloaga’s works, such as *Dwarf Gregorio el Botero* (1907), *The Bleeding Christ* (1911), and *The Portrait of Maurice Barrès* (1913) and their reception. I argue that the artist and his critics drew on the Castilian landscape imagery and Catholic artistic heritage in order to promote a unifying visual narrative, where Spain’s virility could be restored through contact with the nation’s masculine essence, which was itself supposedly deposited in the Castilian land. The subsequent chapters will explore the plurality of aesthetic discourses on masculinity and gender in Spanish visual culture that ran parallel to the macho aesthetics of Zuloaga and his colleagues.

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<sup>29</sup> The term “Regenerationism” or *Regeneracionismo* refers to a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century intellectual and political movement in Spain that was concerned with scientific study of causes of Spain’s decline as a nation and potential solutions to the aforementioned decline. In contrast to the scientific objectives of the Regenerationists, such as the politician Joaquín Acosta (1846-1911), the Regenerationist project of Unamuno, Zuloaga and other intellectuals in their circle had an artistic, literary, and philosophical character.

Chapter two, “Inverted Symbolism: The Aesthetics of Androgyny and Temporal Drag in the Art of Bujados, Néstor, and Morcillo,” reevaluates the critical reception of Symbolism in Spain to argue that it was an aesthetic built on pushing sexual boundaries that was interpreted as queer by its contemporaries. I examine the discourses of sexual ambiguity and androgyny in Spanish medical literature alongside the critical reception of the Symbolist imagery of painters Manuel Bujados, Néstor, and Gabriel Morcillo. In so doing, I reveal how the work of the Symbolist artists from the provinces was critically constructed as queer, which contrasted with the national naturalist aesthetic that was inspired by Velázquez and embodied by Zuloaga. Through the examination of the visual representations of androgyny by the artists from the geographic margins of the Spanish artistic establishment, including the Canary Islands, Andalusia and Galicia, this chapter reveals how the Spanish Symbolists from the provinces disturbed rigid definitions of gender and the notions of a unified Spanish identity.

Chapter three, “‘The Power to Transform:’ The Frivolous Arts, the Visual Culture of Drag, and the Limits of Masculinity” explores the representation and significance of *transformismo* as an art of gender transformation in relation to discourses surrounding sexual inversion, masculinity and the frivolous arts, or arts that were deemed lacking in moral purpose. This chapter examines the representation of *transformistas* as subverting gender expectations through the study of ephemeral materials, including graphic illustration, performer postcards, and illustrated erotic novels. I argue that these modes of representation were embedded in the intersecting cultures of the erotic and the frivolous arts and helped to disseminate new constructions of gender as a performative category in early twentieth-century Spain.

Chapter four, “Idols of Masculinity: The Heroes and Victims of the *Fiesta Nacional*” explores the paradoxical nature of the visual representation of the bullfighter as a popular



national icon of male heroism, as well as an outdated and degenerate model of masculinity that ostensibly stood between Spain and modernity. While previous chapters explored different cultural responses to the crisis of masculinity brought on by “the disaster” of 1898, informed by landscape, Symbolist ideas of androgyny and the popular culture of *transformismo*, this chapter, focuses on the popular, academic, and visual representations and significance of the bullfighter at the turn of the century. Zuloaga, Vázquez Díaz, Smith and others captured the paradox of the torero’s representation as a heroic, outdated and even degenerate model of masculinity that impeded Spain’s entry into modernity. Without resolving this paradox, this chapter explores several facets of torero representation and its implications through the aforementioned artists’ works, as well as other forms of cultural production, including photography in illustrated periodicals and commemorative sculpture.

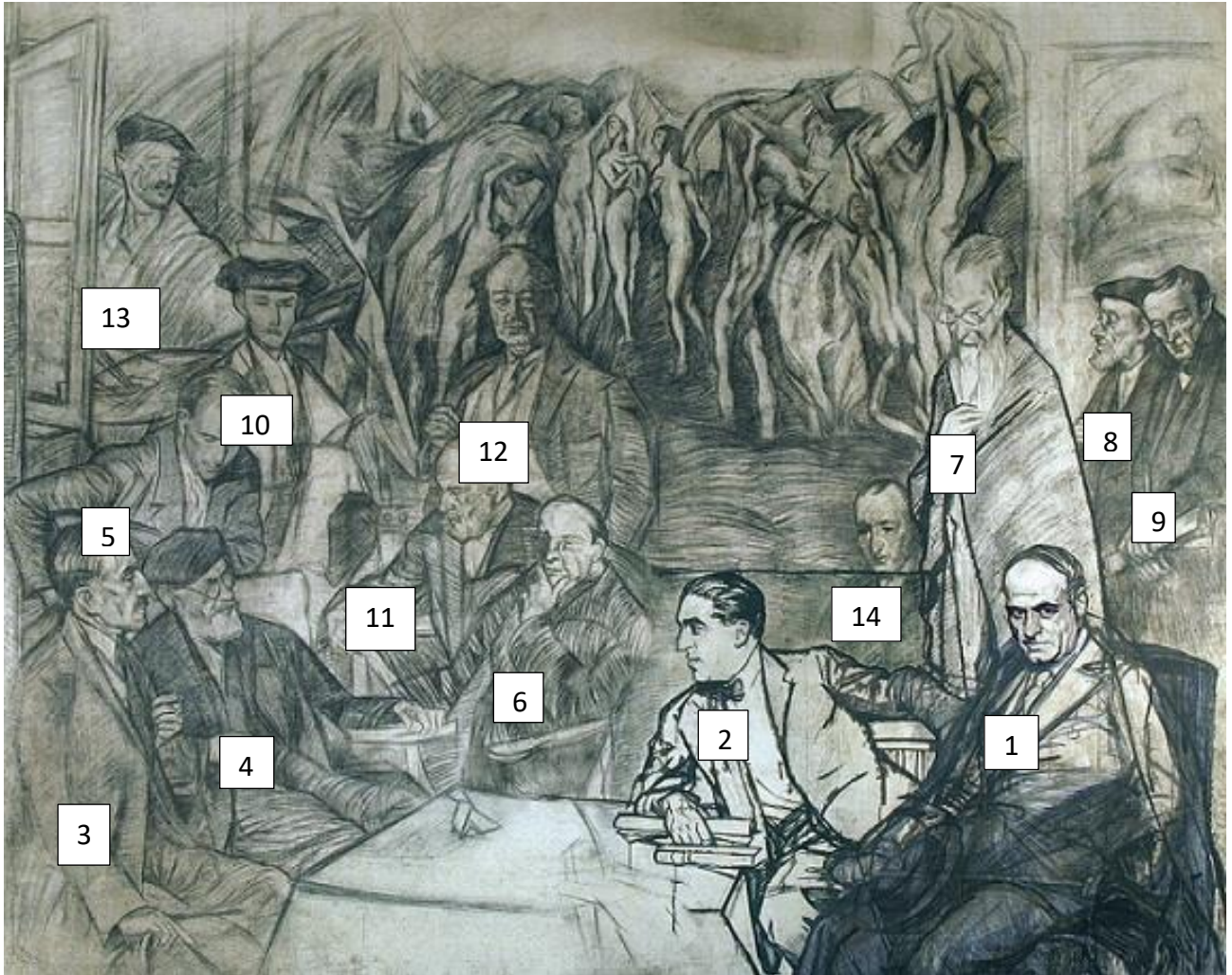
As a whole, this dissertation examines the construction and depiction of masculinities in Spanish visual cultures of the Silver Age, in order to reveal the emergence of new masculine scripts in the wake of the War of 1898. The unprecedented popularity of the drag performer Egmont de Bries, polemics surrounding the significance of adolescent male bodies in Spanish symbolist art, as well the cult of the bullfighter as a heroic ideal, which ultimately cannot be sustained – all reveal the proliferation of conflicted ideals of manhood at play in turn-of-the-century Spain. These newer constructions of gender rubbed against the foil of the heteronormative, Castilian ideals of manhood, embodied by Zuloaga, following the national crisis of 1898. Furthermore, this dissertation employs an innovative methodology from gender and queer studies to explore the place of masculinity in Spanish visual culture. It does so by placing high art in dialogue with other forms of visual production, including mass media,

ephemera, and the illustrated erotic novel and by incorporating regional narratives and perspectives that decenter the notion of a unified Spanish national and sexual identity.

**FIGURES**



**Figure 1**



1. José Ortega y Gasset
2. Dr. Gregorio Marañón
3. Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart y Falcó, 17<sup>th</sup> Duke of Alba
4. Miguel de Unamuno
5. Julio Beobide
6. Azorín
7. Ramon del Valle-Inclán
8. Pablo Uranga
9. Ramón Pérez de Ayala (?)
10. Juan Belmonte
11. Pío Baroja
12. Vicente Blasco Ibañez
13. Ignacio Zuloaga
14. Ramiro de Maeztu

**Figure 2**





Figure 3



Figure 4

## CHAPTER I “EL PINTOR MACHO:” IGNACIO ZULOAGA AND THE MASCULINE PARADIGM OF THE GENERATION OF 1898

“Zuloaga is of the race of those who paint. His barbarism of an exalted and solitary Spanish idealist who continually throws into the face of the world that which is most firm, pungent and virile in our character.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Introduction**

Psychologist Chris Blazina wrote that during the moments of “masculine crisis” myths can become tools for cultural and personal transformation that offer men alternative ways of conceptualizing what is masculine.<sup>31</sup> Spain’s military loss in the War of 1898, marked such a moment of crisis in the nation’s history, exposing the need for new models of masculinity for the nation in all political, cultural, and especially, artistic spheres. As I will argue in this chapter, Basque painter Ignacio Zuloaga and his painting came to embody the hegemonic masculine paradigm in the arts, in the wake of the War of 1898. R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt defined the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” as the “most honored way of being a man” at any given historical moment that requires “all other men to position themselves in relation to it.”<sup>32</sup> Hegemonic masculinities, open to historical change, refer more to an ideal than to any particular male individual and serve as guideposts under which societal relationships are organized. Masculine representations can thus be considered part of an active process that needs to be studied in order to understand how gender is practiced in society. The generation of intellectuals occupied with the spiritual regeneration of their country, framed Zuloaga as the paragon of Spanish masculine virtue in the visual arts. In discussing Zuloaga, the critics

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<sup>30</sup> “Zuloaga es de la raza de los que pinta. Su barbarie de idealista español exaltado y solitario arroja de continuo á la faz del mundo lo que hay de más firme, acre y viril en nuestro carácter.” In Francisco Alcántara, “Ignacio Zuloaga: Arte y Nacionalidad,” *El Imparcial* 44, no. 15.4, March 19, 1910, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Blazina, “Mythos and Men: Toward New Paradigms of Masculinity,” *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 5, no. 4 (May 1, 1997), 285-294.

<sup>32</sup> Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 833. Raewyn Connell coined the term “hegemonic masculinity” in 1987. The concept was originally derived from Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony.

extrapolated their ideals of manhood, mythologizing his figure and projecting their own desires for archetypal Spanish masculinity onto the artist. Within this context, Zuloaga had become a foil against which all other artists and counter-narratives of Spain were measured. As such his case marks a perfect starting point against which to compare other artists and cultural figures in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Ignacio Zuloaga y Zabaleta (1870-1945) was born and raised in the Basque country, but artistically matured in Paris. Nevertheless, he developed a holistic Spanish identity rooted in the Castilian landscape and culture. The majority of Zuloaga's portraits of his friends, family and colleagues who were similarly concerned with defining Spanish values, link the individual sitter's identity to the region of Spain depicted in the portraits' background landscape. The representation of landscape, therefore, is as significant to the interpretation of the sitter's personality as the figure itself. While much ink has been spilled over Zuloaga's imaging of Spain, the significance of his persona and works within the discourses on Spanish national virility in the wake of the 1898 in the arts has yet to be addressed.

In the early twentieth century, Zuloaga came to embody the turn-of-the-century Spanish paradigm of a painter who incarnated the nation's most "authentic" and proudly archaic "masculine" values of austerity, bravery and generosity. These values visually manifested in what the critics perceived as the violent, earthy, coarse, and proud artistic manner associated with its centermost region of Castile and adopted by Basque artists and Zuloaga, in particular.<sup>33</sup> During the early twentieth century, the painter became embroiled in the *Zuloaga Question*, or the

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<sup>33</sup> Ramiro de Maeztu, "La Nueva Pintura Española en París y en Bilbao (Zuloaga, Losada, Iturrino, Uranga, Regoyos, Guiard," *La Lectura* 3, no. 2 (1903): 14-34. Writing about the Basque artists exhibiting in Paris, Ramiro de Maeztu aligning the art of Spanish painters with masculine virtue. He wrote, "...y expresan entre todos las cualidades que caracterizan el arte español contemporáneo: febril y ronco, áspero, caliente y cáustico, á la vez violento y terroso, rudo y soberbio, señorial [stately], desenvuelto y movedizo, reconcentrado en terca gravedad, - imperiosa perpetua de carbon encendido bajo tierra y en eun bosque, de donde proyecta chispas y llamaradas,"<sup>14</sup>.



heated polemic in the Spanish press, regarding the merits and authenticity of Zuloaga's artistic vision of the Spanish nation. Within this polemic Zuloaga's mode of representation was closely aligned with the notion of "Black Spain," that is the philosophical and visual construction of the nation in Romantic terms, as dark, archaic and traditional, with Castile as its spiritual center. This vision of "Black Spain" was pitted against the more popular notion of a progressive, Europeanized, sunny Spain, that was visually correlated to the art of the Valencian painter Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863-1923). While Sorolla's artistic vision of Spain was more popular in Spain and found favor with many contemporary writers, Zuloaga's images and the model of masculinity they embodied was preferred by many thinkers associated with the "Generation of 1898."

José Martínez Ruiz, better known as Azorín (1863-1967), coined the term "Generation of 1898" to refer to a group of writers, including Unamuno, Maeztu and several others, whom he perceived to be responding directly to Spain's humiliating defeat in the Spanish-American War of that year in their writing. The devastating loss to the United States, coupled with the loss of Spain's remaining colonies, came as a paralyzing shock to the country whose cultural identity had been linked to colonialism for many centuries. Ever since the restoration of the monarchy in 1873, Spain had been cultivating delusions of national grandeur, which made the war with "a nation of vulgar meat vendors," as the United States came to be known in popular press, appear as an easy victory for Spain.<sup>34</sup> The war had been portrayed in the Spanish press as a crusade against American atheism, a kind of response to Pope Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum novarum*, which was a plea for a more active socio-political role of Catholics in world politics, including the defense of their religion from the rising atheism. While the Disaster, as the defeat came to be

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<sup>34</sup> Carol A. Hess, *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 14.

known in Spain, created a major crisis of identity it also brought to light many of Spain's more tangible issues, such as rural poverty, illiteracy, regional separatism and social injustice. These issues were central to the writings of the Generation of 1898.

The Generation of 1898 was not a homogenous entity. Rather, the term was used, as it will be in this dissertation, as a shorthand for a diverse group of intellectuals, writers and artists with widely different perspectives on the "problem of Spain." According to the literary historian Jochen Mecke, the cultural production of artists and writers participating in the ideological currents of 1898 espoused an ambiguous and often contradictory attitude towards their country that was marked by both a bitter criticism and an unconditional vindication of Spain, as well as by a desire to Europeanize the country, while also preserving the uniqueness of its national character.<sup>35</sup> In spite of the heterogeneity of associated members, there was one attitude that all those associated with the Generation of '98 had in common: a socially and politically critical attitude towards what they interpreted as the decadence of Spain. Writers and artists of the Generation "recognized the collapse of previously accepted absolute values and traditional modes of thought on which the stability of individual and social life had been supposed to depend" and used it as the point of departure, converging on the idea that Spain needed a new ideology that they would craft.<sup>36</sup> As such, much of the political and cultural discourse of the period was driven by the notion of "regeneration," that is the need to spiritually rejuvenate the nation and, thus, save it from its current state of decadence in the wake of the emasculating national crisis. Within this context, Zuloaga played a key role as the painter whose art had a

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<sup>35</sup> Jochen Mecke, "Discursos del 98: albores españoles de una modernidad europea," in *Discursos del 98: albores españoles de una modernidad europea*, ed. Jochen Mecke (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2012), 12.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Shaw, *The Generation of 1898 in Spain* (New York: Barnes and Noble 1975), 7.

strong potential to regenerate Spain by putting the nation back in contact with its authentic values, embedded within the landscape and culture of Castile

Zuloaga's discursive significance as an emblem of national masculinity within the arts continued after his death, propagated in the scholarship of Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, Arrozamena, and many others. Zuloaga's concentrated on the representation of Castile as the point of national origin and as the locus of Spanish masculine values, seeking to establish the region as an atemporal, moral, and spiritual guide for the rest of the Spanish nation. Zuloaga's image of virtuous Spanish manhood, couched in terms of physical and spiritual health, virility, and his Basque heritage, dominated the representations of the artist by critics and permeated the language that they used to describe the man, his works and his manner.

Carmen Ripollés has demonstrated how the seventeenth-century Spanish art theorists appropriated the language, rhetoric and ideology of warfare to endow Golden Age painters, Velázquez in particular, with qualities traditionally associated with idealized portrayals of Spanish nobility through the use of the gendered language in reference to their artistic manner.<sup>37</sup> Seventeenth-century writers relied on "masculine" terms, such as "valentía" or bravery/audacity to signal "the outward display of one's artistic capabilities, a resoluteness that was conceived as being inherently masculine [where] force and relief imply confidence and action."<sup>38</sup> In a similar fashion, Zuloaga's supporters, including Unamuno, Francisco Alcántara, José Francés, and Juan de la Encina (Ricardo Gutiérrez Abascal), emphasized the artist's masculine features through his physical description, discussion of his character traits and his artistic manner by using the rhetoric that endowed both the art and the artist with an aura of hyper-masculinity. The ideas of

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<sup>37</sup> Carmen Ripollés, "Constructing the Artistic Subject in Golden Age Spain," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011), 21-22.

<sup>38</sup> Ripollés, "Constructing the Artistic Subject," 30.

Spanish masculinity promoted by the Generation of 1898 and the intellectuals affiliated with the group included traditional Catholic values, austerity, strength in mind, body and in spirit, as well as strong emphasis on virility within the monogamous, heterosexual relationships.

To understand the significance of the masculine discourse that developed around Zuloaga during his time, I will begin by exploring the gendered underpinnings of the Black Spain-White Spain debates, with Zuloaga and Sorolla as the main representatives of each side of the binary. I will then focus on the pervasive constructions of Zuloaga as a hyper-masculine figure, a characterization that extends to his works, as well as his figure as a man and as an artist. Finally, I take up the critical discussions of how the masculine body and the landscape fuse in his art in order to show how the artist offers a vision of regenerated Spain based in the notion of Castilian masculinity.

### **Gendering the Two Spains**

The intellectuals associated with the Generation of 1898 envisioned two paths towards national regeneration, embodied within the notion of “Las dos Españas,” or the two Spains. Within the discourse of 1898, the two Spains were the Black Spain and the White Spain, however the historical and political roots of the notion of a divided Spain go back much further.<sup>39</sup> The defeat in the Spanish-American War put the Spanish intellectual elite on a quest for the “recovery” of a

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<sup>39</sup> The notion of the “two Spains” is a multifaceted concept. In eighteenth century, this idea referred to Spain split between Europe and Americas. During the Carlist Wars of Succession (1833-1840), the idea of two separate Spains gained momentum. Before the Generation of 1898, the concept of the two Spains encompassed the social divisions with regards to key issues including Catholicism/anticlericalism in Spain, centralism/peripheral nationalisms, among others in the first half of the nineteenth century. The image of the two Spains became widely popularized in the writings of the Spanish Romantic satirist Mariano José de Larra (1809-1937). In an 1836 article, Larra wrote of one half of Spain being killed by the hand of the other. See: Mariano José de Larra, “El día de los difuntos de 1836. El Figaro en el cementerio,” *El Español* 368 (November 2, 1836), n.p. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the “two Spains” came to refer to the value systems embodied by the Republican and the Fascist camps.

unified national identity, which many believed missing long before then. Two main approaches taken towards the re-establishment of Spain's identity were traditionalism and Europeanization, and each came to be associated with a black and white vision of Spain, respectively. Critics viewed Zuloaga's oeuvre as the most emblematic example of Black Spain in these debates, while Sorolla was considered representative of White Spain. White Spain, in spite of its association with industrial modernity, was often politically identified with conservatism and preferred by Spanish politicians and some intellectuals, including Sorolla's friend, Valencian writer Vicente Blasco Ibañez. Black Spain offered another way of responding to the contemporary national circumstances, but through the lens of traditionalism – that is by means of resurrecting what were seen as “authentic” Spanish values that now lay dormant.

The intellectuals affiliated with Black Spain sought out the national essence and authentic values in the culture of Castile and its people. Black Spain rejected the idea that the salvation of Spain should come from abroad – that is, through its integration into the European culture. Instead, Black Spain sought to reclaim the authentic Spanish culture, in various branches of the arts, music and literature, by turning inward and rediscovering authentic Spanish traditions. The origins of the term “Black Spain” can be traced to *España Negra*, a book published in 1899 by the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren with illustrations, translation and commentaries by the Spanish artist Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913) about their travels through Spain in 1888.<sup>40</sup> Regoyos's pictorial repertoire included black-clad women, a number of cemeteries, a twilight mass at an old cathedral, and several dying horses, bleeding out in the wake of a bullfight. The book produced a strong, polarizing reaction among its readers due to its depiction of Spain as

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<sup>40</sup> Darío Regoyos and Émile Verhaeren, *España Negra* (Barcelona: Pedro Ortega, 1899). The book, featuring Regoyos's translations of Verhaeren's poetry, was first issued in serial format in Barcelona-based publication *La Luz* in 1898.

archaic and steeped in the narratives of the “Black Legend” – a dark, melancholy, Catholic country, consumed by the cult of death.<sup>41</sup> The term “Black Legend” had its roots in the late sixteenth century. It refers to the anti-Spanish narratives, disseminated by Spain’s imperial competitors – the British and the Dutch merchants – that represented the nation as barbaric, ignorant, cruel, and, ultimately, undeserving of its colonies.

Regoyos’s and Verhaeren’s book exalted the attractive and the repulsive elements of Spanish culture and could also be interpreted as a social critique that went against the vision of industrialized Spain – the White Spain – of the new century promoted by the state and by the artists, such as Sorolla. The book had a profound impact on the aesthetic sensibilities of many artists, including Isidre Nonell, José Gutiérrez-Solana and Zuloaga.<sup>42</sup> Within the Black Spain/White Spain debates, Black Spain’s artistic lineage was tied to Goya and the Spanish national school of painting; in contrast White Spain was aesthetically aligned with Impressionism and the values of European and, particularly, French modernity, rejected by Zuloaga and his supporters.<sup>43</sup>

Advocates of Black Spain often relied on gendered language to undermine the art of White Spain, regionally affiliated with Valencia, and to elevate the Castilian artistic tradition, embodied in Basque painting. Of Basque origin, Zuloaga nevertheless focused predominantly on Castile in his art. Zuloaga’s supporters, including Unamuno and the modernist-symbolist writer Ramón del Valle-Inclán argued that the authenticity and power of his Castilian vision was a

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<sup>41</sup> For more information on the reception of Regoyos’s and Verhaeren’s book, see: Angeles Enzama Gil, “*La España Negra* de Verhaeren y Regoyos: Mucho Más que un Libro de Viaje,” *Boletín de la Real Academia Española* 70, no. 250, May – August, 1990, 317-351.

<sup>42</sup> José Gutiérrez-Solana, *La España Negra* (Madrid: G. Hernández y Galo Saénz, 1920).

<sup>43</sup> Goya’s infamous paintings at his *Quinta del Sordo*, which the artist produced between 1819 and 1823, became known as “black paintings” during the 1920s, that is the wake of the Black Spain/White Spain debates, following the publication of Juan de la Encina’s book on Goya in 1920. See: Juan de la Encina, *Goya en Zig-Zag* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe S.A., 1928).

result of the artist's Basque origins, which enabled him to channel the true Castilian spirit. According to Unamuno, Zuloaga's Basque identity made him uniquely suited to express the authentic Castilian soul. The Basques, like Zuloaga and himself, according to Unamuno, were "the last Iberians," and in early twentieth-century Spain, they were the ones left to guard authentic Spanish values. The Basques held on to that which was "truly irreducible, inadaptably to softness, that which is antipathetic, the noble, the gloriously antipathetic."<sup>44</sup> The characteristics that Unamuno ascribes to the Basques, were also the ones that are identified with the traditional and models of salubrious Spanish masculinity. Indeed, Unamuno remarked on the importance of mental and physical health in an artist, as only a healthy artist could produce healthy art, arguing that Zuloaga's art was "the fruit of a radical and fundamentally healthy organism, tempered in the mountains of Eibar." In this context, Zuloaga, a man who is "strong, robust, athletic, [and] full of health" became "a representative Basque, a genuine specimen of our race, [who] has received the Glory and given it to his [people] and to his land, resurrecting the Ancient and Castilian Spanish painting."<sup>45</sup>

Likewise, Valle-Inclán exalted the virtues of the Basque artists associated with Black Spain over the art of the more commercially successful Levantine painters, led by Sorolla.<sup>46</sup> Valle-Inclán lamented that "all of Spain is guided by the Levant," which for him encompassed Andalusia, Valencia, and Catalonia, and represented by the artists who "share in the same false expression, the same science of deceit."<sup>47</sup> According to the writer, artists from these regions used their artistic skills for deception to produce works concerned with superficial realism, color,

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<sup>44</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, "Zuloaga, el Vasco," *La Nación* (Buenos Aires) 3, no. 25 (May 24, 1908), n.p.

<sup>45</sup> Unamuno, "Zuloaga, el Vasco," n.p.

<sup>46</sup> It is important to note that one of Valle-Inclán's favorite artists was Andalusian Julio Romero de Torres, associated with black Spain. For that reason, the generalizing statements that the writer makes in his book with regards to Castilian tradition being the prerogative of the Basque artists should be taken in with caution.

<sup>47</sup> Ramón del Valle Inclán, *La Pintura Vasca, 1909-1919: Antología* (Bilbao: Biblioteca de Amigos del País, 1919), 6-7.

and visual pleasure, with no intellectual underpinnings, motivated primarily by commercial concerns. Since the Renaissance, many critics perceived excessive concentration on color in painting as a way to deceive the public into superficial appreciation of external beauty over substance. Moreover, art concerned with color over drawing/*disegno* was described as superficial and effeminate, and opposed to the supposedly more noble, intellectual and masculine art concerned with *disegno*.<sup>48</sup> By consistently evoking “deceit” and ascribing superficial concerns over the external beauty to the Levantine artists of White Spain, Valle-Inclán feminizes their art and derides its value.

In contrast, he asserts intellectual superiority and virility of the Basque artists by stating that they are guided by “the spermatic logos and generative reason,” that is the virile logic.<sup>49</sup> With his rhetorical choices, Valle-Inclán’s underscored the masculine manner of Basque painters. For instance, he commended Gustavo de Maeztu and Zuloaga for the “patriarchal concept” expressed in his art, where “men and women are extraordinary and enormous stallions capable of generating a strong race.” For Valle-Inclán, even though Levantine art may be superior in technique that is exploited by the artists to sell their wares, Basque art will forever be superior in concept.<sup>50</sup> The idea of “patriarchal concept” and intellectual superiority of the Basque painters became a consistent feature in the laudatory criticism of Zuloaga’s works.

While Sorolla’s detractors, including Unamuno and Valle-Inclán, did not fixate on the Valencian artist’s masculinity, they did focus on what they viewed as the artist’s concern with the superficial and the inauthentic, and his choice of snapshot-like subjects, reserving their

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<sup>48</sup> See Patricia L. Reilly, “The Taming of the blue. Writing out color in Italian Renaissance Theory,” in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Icon Editions, 1992), 86-99.

<sup>49</sup> Valle-Inclán, *La Pintura Vasca*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Valle-Inclán, *La Pintura Vasca*, 7.



highly charged, masculine rhetoric to frame the art and personality of his opponent. Sorolla's critics derided his art by describing it as shallow mirroring of the surface of things, rather than the interpretation of their true nature. Moreover, Sorolla's paintings displayed aspirations towards European modernity in style and in subject, presenting visions of sunshine, happiness, and what Unamuno, Valle-Inclán and other detractors considered to be an inauthentic perspective on their country. The Valencian artist's impressionistically-rendered, luminous subjects ranged from bathing children, sketches of his wife and children by the seaside, and portraits of elegant aristocrats attired in the latest European finery to sun-filled views of his native Valencia, as exemplified by 1910 *Boys on the Beach* [Fig. 5] and 1916 *After the Bath* [Fig. 6]. For Unamuno, Zuloaga's vision of the nation as austere, serious, and Catholic was aligned closely with his own. In contrast, Sorolla's images of White Spain – pagan and progressive – were overly preoccupied with worldly pleasures, portraying the country that “wanted to live and not think of death.”<sup>51</sup> In his 1912 essay “De Arte Pictórica,” Unamuno referred to Sorolla as “the painter who is best liked in Spain, and also the one who makes the most money with his art.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast to Zuloaga and his colleagues who seek out the “manifestations of [Spanish] decadence,” Sorolla embraces happy, healthy, and joyful subjects and “paints them in full sun.”<sup>53</sup> Even though Unamuno admitted the validity of different visions of Spain, he was, nevertheless troubled by Sorolla's perspective on the country, remarking that “in his artistic excursions through the towns and the countryside of Spain, [Sorolla] believed to have observed that the overarching concern of our people is womanizing, or lasciviousness if you will. And I do not see

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<sup>51</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *En Torno a las Artes* (Madrid: Austral, 1975), 48.

<sup>52</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, “De Arte Pictórica,” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires) (August 8, 1912), reprinted in Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA. *Sorolla. Zuloaga. Dos Visiones para un Cambio de Siglo* (Madrid: Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA, 1998), 201-202.

<sup>53</sup> Unamuno, “De Arte,” 202.

it that way.”<sup>54</sup> Unamuno viewed pleasure and frivolous pursuits as alien to the authentic and austere Spanish spirit.

While the juxtaposition of White Spain and Black Spain may appear as a rigidly defined dichotomy, with each side being portrayed as the antithesis of the other, intellectuals associated with these two camps did not belong to either one completely, nor did the critics neatly align themselves with the politics represented by the two thematic/stylistic camps. Furthermore, both Sorolla and Zuloaga drew on the stylistic and rhetorical strategies of the opposing visions of Spain at a certain point in their artistic careers. In fact, Sorolla first achieved fame with paintings that dealt with dark subjects such as prostitution in Spain, as in *Another Marguerite!* from 1892, or with those suggesting an overwhelming sense of humiliation and despair prevalent in Spain after the Disaster, as in *Sad Inheritance* [Fig. 7]. It is only after 1900 that Sorolla came to embrace the picturesque scenes of Valencian seascapes and bathing children. Zuloaga, for his part, started out in Paris working in an impressionistic manner apparent and it was there in 1894 that he created the now lost painting significantly titled *White Spain*. Zuloaga’s attitude towards Sorolla’s art has been a complicated one ever since their first encounter in 1900 during the Universal Exposition in Paris, where Sorolla won the Grand Prize, while Zuloaga was not mentioned in the Spanish press at all. In letters to his uncle Daniel Zuloaga, the artist often praised Sorolla’s craftsmanship, but also said that the public thinks of his competitor as “a draftsman and nothing more.”<sup>55</sup> Despite Zuloaga’s obvious competition with Sorolla and admitted difference of style and subject matter, Zuloaga, nevertheless, acquired a small

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<sup>54</sup> Unamuno, “De Arte,” 202.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from Ignacio Zuloaga to Daniel Zuloaga (28 June, 1906) cited in Mariano Gómez de Caso Estrada, *Correspondencia de Ignacio Zuloaga con Su Tío Daniel* (Segovia: Diputación Provincial de Segovia, Taller Imagen, S.L, 2002), 159.

landscape painting by his competitor for his art collection, now at the Zuloaga Museum in Zumaya.

In his correspondence with American collector Archer Huntington prior to the 1909 exhibition in the United States, Zuloaga expressed the relationship between his own and Sorolla's art in the following terms, "Well, my painting and his are like night and day...in his all is: eyes. In mine, all is: cerebral."<sup>56</sup> By describing his own work as intellectual (cerebral) and Sorolla's as purely visual (eyes), Zuloaga relied on the Renaissance rhetoric of *colore* (sensuality) versus *disegno* (intellect) to characterize his own art and that of his competitor. He did so in a vein similar to Unamuno, Valle-Inclán and other intellectuals affiliated with the Generation of 1898. Thus, in the assessment of his own art and that of his competitor, Zuloaga played up the gendered constructions of Black and White Spain ("night and day") by feminizing Sorolla's work as strictly visual and sensual, and playing up the significance of his own art as intellectual. Many prominent critics, associated with the Generation of 1898, picked up and elaborated on the notion of Zuloaga as a cerebral painter of Spain, contributing to the creation of the masculine aura around the painter.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Pues mi pintura y la suya son: como la noche y el día... En el todo es: ojos. En mi, todo es: cerebral." In Priscilla E. Muller, "Sorolla, Zuloaga y los Estados Unidos: interacciones," in *Sorolla, Zuloaga. Dos Visiones para un Cambio de Siglo* (Madrid: Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, 1998), 87.

<sup>57</sup> In terms similar to Zuloaga's own characterization of his art, Basque critic Estanislao María de Aguirre, stated that while painters, like Hermen Anglada-Camarasa sacrifice everything "al placer de la retina," Zuloaga "sacrifice todo a las ideas porque las sensaciones del color podrían amortiguar las emociones del espíritu." In Estanislao María de Aguirre, "Zuloaga, el Pintor Vasco que Vio Castilla," *El Fígaro, Diario de Madrid* 1, no. 138 (December 31, 1918), 2.

### **“El Pintor Macho:” Zuloaga and His Critics**

Zuloaga’s image as a paradigm of heroic Castilian manhood permeated the critical language used to describe both the man and his art. During the course of the polemic concerning Zuloaga’s vision of Spain, the Generation of 1898 writers and intellectuals affiliated with the group, including Francisco Alcántara, Miguel de Unamuno, and Juan de la Encina, underscored the artist’s prodigious physical and spiritual health as features that signified his virility as a man and as an artist. They also pointed to the artist’s cultural purity as a Basque (discussed earlier) – that is the oldest race on the Spanish peninsula and one that did not mix with any of the other groups- that qualified him to speak for Castile and channel its values. Zuloaga’s critics relied on heroic language to frame the painter as an exemplar of hegemonic Spanish masculinity who would lead the Regenerationist project in the Spanish visual arts.

Critics mythologized Zuloaga as a paragon of Spanish artistic and manly virtue within the context of the *Zuloaga Question*. This phrase was assigned to a series of debates concerning the veracity of the Basque painter’s vision of his country, as it emerged on his canvases. Even though the polemic regarding the artist started as early as 1900, the journalist and writer Ramiro de Maeztu (1875-1936) ascribes the origins of the term to the art critic Francisco Alcántara. Although uncredited for this in contemporary scholarship, Alcántara coined the phrase “the Zuloaga Question” in his 1910 article “Ignacio Zuloaga: Arte y Nacionalidad.”<sup>58</sup>

As Ripollés has demonstrated, seventeenth-century Spanish art theorists appropriated the language, rhetoric and ideology of warfare in relation to painters, particularly Velázquez, to imbue the artists with qualities that were associated with idealized portrayals of Spanish

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<sup>58</sup> Francisco Alcántara, “Ignacio Zuloaga,” 2. Ramiro de Maeztu attributes the term, “Cuestión Zuloaga” to Alcántara in “La vision de Zuloaga,” *Nuevo Mundo* 17, no. 851, April 28, 1910, n.p.

nobility.<sup>59</sup> The deployment of military rhetoric transformed their artistic practice into an explicitly masculine pursuit, thus helping to elevate the artist's status. In similar fashion, Zuloaga's supporters, including Unamuno, Francisco Alcántara, José Francés, and Juan de la Encina, applied heroic descriptors to his work and stressed that the artist's patriotic art reflected his virility as a man and an artist. They did so by referring to Zuloaga's physical features, emphasizing his health, and by describing his personal and artistic character traits with the language that endowed the art and the artist with an aura of heroic hyper-masculinity.

As early as 1908, Zuloaga's supporters, including the French-born Spanish art critic Luis Bonafoux, remarked upon the artist's manly physique in connection with his Basque origins, which altogether translated into the virile representations of the authentic Castilian subjects of Black Spain. Bonafoux wrote:

How luminous is the Spain that is called *black* by the admirers of the Andalusian chrome, of the tambourines, and of the strawberry trees... That harsh, arid Spain of the frightful planes, of dry and yellowish physiognomy; that virile Spain, that appears to be mixed with clay from the Escorial [Palace], needed a manly painter, a Zuloaga, whose artistic complexion is as strong as his physique [which is that] of Basque iron in the environment of the degenerates.<sup>60</sup>

Bonafoux emphasized the prodigious masculinity of Zuloaga as “pintor macho” or “manly painter,” by drawing attention to the artist's physical strength – forged out of “Basque iron.” It is because of this strength that Zuloaga was capable of capturing the virile side of the Spanish character, which for Bonafoux was embodied by the harsh Castilian terrain. The critic makes a link between the landscape and character by using the bodily metaphors, as he suggests that

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<sup>59</sup> Ripollés, “Constructing the Artistic Subject,” 21-22.

<sup>60</sup> “¡Qué luminosa España la que llaman *negra* los adoradores del cromo andaluz, de las panderetas y de los madroños!... Esa España áspera, árida, de llanuras espantosas, de fisonomías secas y amarillentas; esa España viril, que parece amasada con arcilla de El Escorial, necesitaba un pintor macho, un Zuloaga, cuya complejión artística es tan recia como su complejión física de férreo vasco en ambiente de degenerados.” In Luis Bonafoux, “Gloria a España,” *Heraldo de Madrid* 19, no. 6349, April, 17, 1908, 1.

Zuloaga is capable of capturing the virile side of the Spanish character, precisely because he is cut from the same cloth. Moreover, Zuloaga's strength of character is what gives him the ability to speak for "virile Spain" and what makes his art stand out in the "environment of the degenerates" – as the critic referred to the contemporary Parisian and the Spanish art scene.

Bonafoux, Unamuno and other Spanish critics published laudatory articles about the painter prior to 1910; however, the origins of the *Zuloaga Question* are generally traced to the debate between two prominent writers of the Generation of 1898, Ramiro de Maeztu and José Martínez Ruíz, known as Azorín (1873-1967).<sup>61</sup> On March 9, 1910, Maeztu published the article "Los asuntos de Zuloaga" in the *Heraldo de Madrid*, a popular, daily newspaper with a liberal political orientation.<sup>62</sup> In the article, Maeztu argues that Zuloaga's "powerful, strong, passionate" manner of painting, using "energetic lines" and "violent colors" was perfectly suited to the "acrid, tragic and brutal" subjects of his painting. Maeztu called upon his readers not to mistake their distaste for Zuloaga's subjects as their distaste for Zuloaga's work. Maeztu asserted that "the suave tones ought to be reserved for suave subjects," implying that the subjects of Zuloaga, "the son of Nature, of impulsive, energetic, and indomitable temperament" are too brutal and masculine for such a treatment. In "La España de un Pintor," Azorín criticized the artist's work, while admitting his artistic mastery and love of the Spanish classic painters. He argued that

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<sup>61</sup> Ramiro de Maeztu published *Hacia Otra España* in 1899. In this book, he argued that the country ought to integrate itself into the European currents. In contrast, Azorín in works such as *El Alma Castellana/Castilian Soul* (1900) sought to define an essential Spanish identity, as separate from the European.

For excellent summaries of the *Zuloaga Question* and Black Spain-White Spain debates see: Francisco Calvo Serraller, "Sorolla y Zuloaga: Luz y Sombra del Dramo Moderno en España," in Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA Sorolla. *Zuloaga. Dos Visiones para un Cambio de Siglo*, 25-64 (Madrid: Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA, 1998); Gayana Jurkevich "Affinities of Pen and Brush," in Gayana Jurkevich, *In Pursuit of the Natural Sign: Azorín and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (Lewisburg (PA): Bucknell University Press, 1999): 163-186; Facundo Tomás Ferré, *Las Culturas Periféricas y el Síndrome del 98* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2000).; "La España Negra y la España Blanca," in Facundo Tomás Ferré and Felipe Vicente Garín Llombart, *Joaquín Sorolla* (Madrid: TF, 2006): 23-50.

<sup>62</sup> Ramiro de Maeztu, "Los Asuntos de Zuloaga," *Heraldo de Madrid* 21, no. 7040, March 4, 1910, 2.

Zuloaga's concept of Spain does not reflect a contemporary Spaniard's view of his country and that it was greatly influenced by foreign prejudices and stereotypes.<sup>63</sup> He presented Zuloaga as "a painter of literary character," whose "vision corresponds to the fantastic view foreigners have always had of Spain, and that is not the view we ourselves have of our affairs."<sup>64</sup>

Zuloaga's early supporters, including Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Ramiro de Maeztu, and Ángel Guerra, positioned the artist as an heir to the Spanish artistic tradition, an artistic vessel for the authentic Castilian spirit. They also argued that the Basque painter was uniquely capable of regenerating the Spanish nation with his art, referring to his work as "patriotic labor," and underscoring the need to exhibit his work publicly in Spain, where he was so depreciated.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, Zuloaga's detractors, among them the writer and journalist José María Salaverría and the engraver and the art critic Enrique Váquer, perceived him as a market-driven painter, who, in the guise of continuing the tradition of the great Spanish artists, pandered to the foreign taste for Spanish stereotypes with his outdated, picturesque visions of his homeland.<sup>66</sup>

Both camps imbued the artist and his works with masculine values. Alcántara asserted that Zuloaga's art offered that which was "the most firm, pungent, and virile in our [Spanish] character," suggesting that Zuloaga sought out and represented Spain's fundamentally masculine, national features with his art.<sup>67</sup> He commended Zuloaga for his patriotic labor – that is, the production of images of a strong, Castilian nation, done with the "barbarism of an exalted and solitary Spanish idealist."<sup>68</sup> For Alcántara, it was Zuloaga's ability to view the nation united, as it

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<sup>63</sup> Azorín, "La España de un Pintor," *ABC* 6, no. 1763, April 7, 1910, 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> Azorín, "La España de un Pintor," 5.

<sup>65</sup> See: José Ortega y Gasset, "¿Una Exposición Zuloaga?" *El Imparcial* 44, no. 15496, April 29, 1910, 1; Miguel de Unamuno, "La Labor Patriótica de Zuloaga," *Hermes: Revista del País Vasco* 1, no. 8, August 1917, 493-497.

<sup>66</sup> José María Salaverría, "La España Pintoresca," *ABC* 6, no. 1805, May 19, 1910, 4-5; Enrique Váquer, "La Exposición de Bellas Artes," *La Época* 47, no. 23189, May 14, 1915, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Alcántara, "Ignacio Zuloaga," 2.

<sup>68</sup> Alcántara, "Ignacio Zuloaga," 2.

ought to be, that would make the national regeneration possible. In this way, Alcántara, as well as Zuloaga's other champions, including Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset framed the artist's work as being of the utmost national importance, precisely because it would allow Spain to rediscover its own virility in the wake of national crisis.

In 1917, Unamuno published an article under the title "Patriotic Labor of Zuloaga." In the article, Unamuno asserted that Zuloaga's landscapes represent man in constant struggle with his environment, undertaking that which is the ultimate masculine endeavor – a battle. The Spain that emerges on Zuloaga's canvases, according to Unamuno, is the Spain that is not a garden, but a battle arena, a harsh terrain, where all is rock, that can only be conquered and sustained by an equally robust, hard, ascetic, austere race of Spanish men, who are made in the likeness of their land.<sup>69</sup> By painting the images of the eternal struggle between the Spaniard and *his* land, Zuloaga himself performs an equally manly act of labor for the benefit of the *fatherland*.

However, according to José María Salaverría (1873-1940) (who would later change his opinion about the artist), the Basque painter's works were the very opposite of a patriotic endeavor. Salaverría observed that Zuloaga's fixation on the picturesque elements of the national "character," in the capacity of a bemused observer of "Spain as a curious spectacle," is what made his painting so problematic for the Spanish audiences.<sup>70</sup> Masquerading as a "brother to Velázquez, el Greco, and Goya," Zuloaga painted a Spain that was mystical, full of anguish, and passion. He portrayed the nation that was "exaggeratedly strong," "purely literary," and, for this reason while his work is "very artistic; [it] is very unpatriotic." Salaverría situated Zuloaga and his art at the very center of visual and literary cultural production that portrays Spain as picturesque and, in so doing, deprives it of power and virility. More specifically, Salaverría

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<sup>69</sup> Unamuno, "La Labor Patriótica de Zuloaga," 497.

<sup>70</sup> Salaverría, "La España Pintoresca," 4-5.



points out the problematic use of the two terms, “character” and “originality,” as a way for foreigners (and some Spaniards) to marginalize and emasculate Spain by keeping it in the permanent state of regression:

Our poor Spain...is a nation of *character*; character that is, certainly, of a literary nature; this character does not serve the virile effects of science, of economy, of the invading and conquering force; it is a *depressing* character, resistant to innovations; and as it refuses to accept civilization, it remains *original*. Spain is an original people [pueblo] because it obstinately turns its back on the civilized world. Its original character does not signify strength, but weakness in action.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, according to Salaverría, Europe’s single-minded fascination with the picturesque, the original, and the literary traits of the Spanish “character,” led to its depiction of barbarous Spain that exists in opposition to Western civilization. Spain had become an exotic country of superficial *character*, but with no actual conquering power, a nation that is in a permanent state of paralysis – frozen in time and incapable of action. Salaverría equated “originality” and “character” as markers of regression and of stunted progress, that existed in opposition to “fuerza” (strength), which comes with being part of the civilized, that is, Western world. In Salaverría’s view, by pursuing Spanish “character,” Zuloaga continuously positions his homeland further away from the “civilization.” This Spain, he asserted, was prized for its glorious past, yet unable to secure a future for itself. In this way, the Spain transmitted to the audiences through Zuloaga’s canvases is the Spain that once was, striking but ultimately unreproducible; it is a Spain that cannot be regenerated.

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<sup>71</sup> “Nuestra pobre España...es una nación de *carácter*; el carácter este, por supuesto, es de índole literaria; no sirve esa carácter para los efectos viriles de la ciencia, de la economía, de la fuerza invasora y conquistante; es un carácter *depresivo*, resistente á las innovaciones; y como se resiste á aceptar la civilización, se mantiene *original*. España es un pueblo original porque se obstina en Volver la espalda al mundo civilizado. Su carácter original no significa fuerza, sino debilidad para actuar.” In Salaverría, “La España Pintoresca,” 5. Note: the words “carácter,” “depresivo” and “original” are italicized in Salaverría’s text.

In contrast to Salaverría, the art critic José Francés, viewed his art as heroic for its socially critical stance on Spain. Francés passionately argued that the “aggressive sincerity,” which marked “the virile and noble tendency of [Zuloaga’s] paintings, that told the truth harshly to Spain,” explained the artist’s persistent exclusion from the National Fine Arts Exhibitions.<sup>72</sup> In addition to applying heroic, masculine adjectives to Zuloaga’s art, Francés thought it necessary to offer the physical description of the artist as “robust, muscular, and square-shaped.”<sup>73</sup> By including this description, Francés created a moral equivalence between the artist’s physical qualities and the “decisive and virile” manner of his painting.

In a similar manner, other critics saw Zuloaga’s masculinity as a defining feature of his personality, physical appearance, as well as his art. The Catalan Modernist painter, writer and Zuloaga’s close friend Santiago Rusiñol described the twenty-year-old painter in 1894 as “tall, robust, square-shaped, like the peasants of his homeland [the Basque country], and with a wholesome, noble character, of one piece.” Similarly, important art critic and Zuloaga’s early biographer, Juan de la Encina described the artist as “a difficult, implacable man, [with] nothing in his art [being] prone to the sentimental delicacies.”<sup>74</sup> According to Rusiñol, “There was no middle ground for him. He judged men to be bandits or great heroes, women were demons or saints; the painting were to be thrown into the fire or taken to the Louvre.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, in a manner similar to Francés and Unamuno, Rusiñol highlights his comrade’s masculine, physical attributes, including his Basque origins, and then proceeds to satirize them by pointing out the

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<sup>72</sup> Francés, *El pintor de la raza*, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Francés, *El pintor*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Juan de la Encina, *El Arte de Ignacio Zuloaga* (Paris: Hermanos Garnier, 1917), n.p.

<sup>75</sup> Santiago Rusiñol, *Desde el Molino. Impresiones de Arte* (Paris: Garnier Hermanos, Libreros-Editores, 1894), 132-133.

artist's rigid, binary view of the sexes that reduces men to two prescriptive sets of roles, as either heroes or villains, while confining women to being either saints or whores.

The expectations of well-defined models of masculinity and femininity haunted the viewers of Zuloaga's canvases. So much so that when first confronted with Zuloaga's 1910 painting, *My Uncle Daniel and His Family* [Fig. 8], Alcántara, who saw the artist as a painter of that "which is most firm, pungent, and virile in our [Spanish] character," was struck by the "powerful distinction between the sexes."<sup>76</sup> In describing Zuloaga's art, Alcántara pointed out that its reality appears to be born out of the fire. He claimed that, as a "representation of the male sex," the figure of the artist's uncle was "so macho and so bold," that it was unparalleled in contemporary art. Alcántara's response to the canvas reveals the critic's bias in viewing Zuloaga's works through a hyper-masculine lens, leading him to project the values of hegemonic masculinity onto the male figure.

Daniel Zuloaga is the only full-length male character in a six-figure composition, set against the Church of San Juan de los Caballeros in Segovia. He is dressed in floor-length black jacket that conceals his body and emphasizes his sloping shoulders, as he boldly returns the viewer's gaze, while holding a palette. Some women in the painting are taller and more ornate than Daniel and occupy more space on the canvas. Moreover, there is no pronounced difference between the artist's handling of the paint on his male and female subjects, resulting in a harmonious composition where figures are set apart from the background. By projecting the macho masculinity onto the male figure in the painting, Alcántara, like Valle-Inclán in *La Pintura Vasca*, evokes a "patriarchal concept" in Zuloaga's painting that distinguishes the male and the female figures in the work of the Basque artist.

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<sup>76</sup> Francisco Alcántara, "En Segovia: Ignacio Zuloaga," *El Imparcial* 44, no. 15716, December 5, 1910, 4.

Through his self-representation in art and writing, Zuloaga contributed to the dissemination of his own image as a virile Spanish painter par excellence, as well as an heir to the Spanish tradition of salubrious art. Zuloaga's leading biographer Enrique Lafuente Ferrari cited Zuloaga's artistic mission in the artist's own words as "to seek out the eternal value in the art," which cannot be done by adhering to schools or following stylistic trends and "takes man's entire life...strength, personality and artistic sincerity."<sup>77</sup> And yet, even as Zuloaga rejected artistic schools, he, nevertheless, exalted the salubrious effects of tradition on Spanish art. In his letters to friends and family, Zuloaga discussed the importance of continuing the tradition of "healthy art," a tradition that he saw as emblemized within the art of the Spanish Old Masters. Above all, he exalted the art of Velázquez, Goya and El Greco, as "healthy and beautiful," contrasting it to the work of the present-day painters, whom he saw as "all farce and hypocrisy."<sup>78</sup>

Zuloaga's Spanish and international friends and supporters consistently aligned his image with that of that of the Golden Age Spanish masters. For instance, in his 1901-1904 portrait of his friend [Fig. 9], French painter Jacques-Emile Blanche represented Zuloaga posed with palette in one hand and brush in the other, in front of his canvas in a way that evokes Velázquez's self-portrait in *Las Meninas*. Blanche visually referred to Velázquez, the paragon of manly virtue in Spanish painting, not only with the composition of his painting, but also by using an earth-tone based palette associated with the Spanish masters and abstracted, Castile-inspired landscape in the background.

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<sup>77</sup> Cited in Lafuente Ferrari, *La Vida y el Arte de Ignacio Zuloaga* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1990), 214.

<sup>78</sup> Ignacio Zuloaga to Daniel Zuloaga, February 10, 1907, in *Correspondencia de Ignacio Zuloaga con Su Tío Daniel*, ed. Mariano Gómez de Caso Estrada (Segovia: Deputación Provincial de Segovia, 2002), 25.

In a letter to Azorín, which the writer cited in his 1912 article on the painter, Zuloaga explained the motivation behind his art, and his obsession with capturing Spain's Castilian soul in particular: "I seek out the force of the daring, the frankness of ideas, the loud and deep shout, the synthesis of the Castilian soul; the sacrifice of many things to enforce that which is essential."<sup>79</sup> Zuloaga's explanation of his artistic goals uses the established masculinist rhetoric employed by his own contemporaries to characterize his own work, with word choices that include "force," "daring" and "sacrifice." Towards the end of his life in 1945, Zuloaga continued to present his artistic enterprise by drawing on the masculine rhetoric, when he stated that in life, in art and in landscape he longs for "powerful, strong, rough, and even sour" artistic element in order to make his art.<sup>80</sup> The artist was only ever able to find these features in Castilian landscapes – "the only comprehensive landscapes that [his] palette was able to perpetuate." The compelling force, raw power and daring which Zuloaga and his contemporaries ascribed to Castile presumably shaped the character of the men who came in contact with its land and culture, as explored in some of Zuloaga's most famous canvases that are at the center of the next section.

### **Sources of Virility: Masculinity and Landscape in the Art of Zuloaga**

In the essay for the 1998 *Figura y Paisaje del 98* exhibition, Javier Tusell has pointed out that for the Generation of 1898, the landscape, shaped by nature and history, served as a deposit

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<sup>79</sup> "Busco la fuerza del atrevimiento, la franqueza de las ideas, el gritar fuerte y profundo, el sintetizar el alma castellana; el sacrificar muchas cosas para hacer valer *una esencial*." In Azorín, "La Pintura de Zuloaga" *ABC* 2, no. 2480, March 27, 1912, 4-5.

<sup>80</sup> "...y yo añoro y persigo, lo mismo en el paisaje que en todo cuanto se ha de convertir en elemento artístico aprovechable, lo pontente, lo recio, lo áspero y hasta lo agrio. Por eso amo tanto a Castilla, por eso Castilla me ha dado la plentitud de sus deslustramientos y penumbras, sus oposiciones vigorosas de azules, granas y amarillos, y esos grises incomparables de sus lejanías caliginosas, los elementos cardinales de los fondos culminantes y de los únicos paisajes integrals que ha perpetuado mi paleta." In Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, *Los Paisajes de Ignacio Zuloaga* (Pamplona: Diputación Foral de Navarra, 1948): 8-9.

of Spanish national values, and, thus, offered the Spanish people – a historic product of their environment – a blueprint for the regeneration of their country.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the harmonious fusion between man and landscape, as depicted in Zuloaga’s works, was promoted by the Generation of 1898 and their predecessors as a path towards Spain’s national regeneration. However, the connections between landscape, masculinity and national identity that Zuloaga, Unamuno and their contemporaries emphasized were indebted to the ideas of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza or the Free Educational Institute (ILE), led by Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915). This institution founded in 1876 emphasized the central role of Castile in Spanish culture, privileging the Castilian landscape over the other regional ones, by endowing it with strong masculine attributes.<sup>82</sup> In 1886, Giner de los Ríos espoused gendered rhetoric to contrast the presumably feminine and passive landscapes of the northern Spain with what he saw as masculine, austere, and strong panoramas of Castile.<sup>83</sup> Zuloaga, Unamuno and their colleagues similarly valorized the landscapes of Central Spain as expressions of Spain’s strong national character, which now lay dormant. It was a mission of the Spanish artists to awaken the national essence by putting the Spanish people back in contact with their land. This section of the chapter will demonstrate how, through the contact with the harsh Castilian environment, certain men, who were not necessarily Spanish by birth, could absorb and channel the authentic Spanish values, and in doing so restore the nation’s virility.

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<sup>81</sup> Javier Tusell, “La Estética de Fin de Siglo,” in *Figura y Paisaje Ciclo de Conferencias* (Madrid: Fundación Banco Central Hispano, 1998), 20.

<sup>82</sup> ILE (1876-1936) was inspired by positivist belief that all things can be apprehended through scientific methods, and the Kraussist spirit of “Europeanization.” The Institute sought to establish Spanish national identity through the research of folklore, costumes and classic Spanish art, as representative of the authentic Spanish tradition. These systems of knowledge eventually converged on ILE’s emphasis on the importance of landscape as a key to Spanish national Regeneration.

<sup>83</sup> Pena, *Pintura de Paisaje*, 64. See also: Francisco Giner de los Ríos, “Paisaje,” *La Ilustración Artística* 5, no. 219, March 8, 1886, 91-92.

In 1917 Unamuno said that in Zuloaga's paintings "man is everything, but the very landscape itself is a prolongation of man." Unamuno then rhetorically questioned if the Spanish and more specifically the Castilian landscape is, in fact, "a projection of the soul of the people that inhabit it?"<sup>84</sup> The nature of this link between man and *his* landscape observed by Unamuno is at the center of this section. Unamuno emphasized that Zuloaga's masculinity as a Basque man made it possible for the artist to channel the Castilian spirit of the true Spain, allowing the artist to fill his canvases with "men beyond the pale of time and history," and offer Spain "a mirror into the nation's soul."<sup>85</sup> Unamuno naturalized Zuloaga's vision of "Spanish masculinity" by representing it as a timeless construction of Castilian manhood and as a plastic equivalent of his own concept of "intra-historia."

To explain the concept of "intra-historia," Unamuno used a sea metaphor, in which contemporary history was the surface, the ancient past was a sediment, and the "intra-historia" was that which moved between the two; thus, the past is never truly dead, as it always permeates and reinvigorates the present. For this reason, according to Unamuno, instead of attempting to resuscitate the past "buried in books, and papers, and monuments of stone," Spain ought to seek regeneration by tapping into the living, breathing "intra-historia," which is locked within the "pueblo," or the people from the Spanish countryside, and from Castile in particular. Living in close contact with the land, though unconscious of it, the pueblo incarnated its authentic values and ideals. In place of the progressive model of history, Unamuno proposed a view of history, with the eternal, immutable and unchanging tradition as its backbone, where the national

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<sup>84</sup> Unamuno, "La labor," 497.

<sup>85</sup> Unamuno, "La labor," 497.

character of the Spanish people remained frozen in time, where the past lived in the present, waiting to be rediscovered to make the nation whole.<sup>86</sup>

Unamuno's "intra-historia" functions as a queer temporality, where the distinction between the past, the present, and the future are eroded entirely, and the "eternal Castilian tradition" is asexually and cyclically reproduced through close contact with the landscape. In evoking the eternal tradition that tied man to the land, Zuloaga's canvases evoked timeless, but ultimately unreproducible, archaic constructions of masculinity. By positioning Castile as the ultimate physical context of national virility, Zuloaga's art suggested that Spanish masculinity, as such could be embodied by the Spanish and the foreigners alike.

### ***Gregorio el Botero: the Spanish Caliban and the Triumph of the Un-Culture***

More so than any of his other works, Zuloaga's Velázquez-inspired paintings of the dwarf Gregorio el Botero were seen as encapsulating the Spanish masculine virtues embraced by the Generation of 1898. Zuloaga's model, Gregorio de las Heras Herranz (1861-1909) was a Segovian maker of wine sacks or *botas* (hence, *el botero*), who posed for the artist on at least three separate occasions.<sup>87</sup> The artist famously depicted him in the 1907 *Gregorio el Botero* [Fig. 10], against the background of the city of Ávila, and in the 1908 *The Dwarf Gregorio in Sepúlveda* [Fig. 11], where he steps aside to reveal the city of the title. With his portraits of Gregorio, Zuloaga simultaneously elevated Castile with its masculine virtues and embedded his art within the artistic tradition of the Golden Age, positioning himself as an artistic heir to

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<sup>86</sup> Miguel Unamuno, *En Torno al Casticismo* [1895] (Madrid: Alianza, 1986): 34-35.

<sup>87</sup> In addition to the two paintings discussed in this dissertation, Zuloaga gave Santiago Rusiñol a sketch of Gregorio as a present in 1909. See: footnote 3 in Gómez de Caso Estrada, *Correspondencia de Ignacio Zuloaga*, 246.



Velázquez. The attributes that signaled, for Zuloaga's critics, Gregorio's monstrosity, deformity and animalism, also tied him to the Castilian soil, transforming these seemingly negative traits into character strengths for Gregorio and for Spain. Gregorio's primitive masculinity went hand in hand with the supposedly Spanish masculine virtues of perseverance, nobility and the heroic refusal to surrender to the European civilization. I argue that Gregorio, interpreted as a monstrous, barbaric, animalistic symbol of Spanish "un-culture" is, in fact, a queer, liminal figure, who resides outside of time and history as part of Unamuno's intra-historia and is evocative of Spain's resistance to modernity.<sup>88</sup>

Zuloaga's paintings of Gregorio linked the artist to the tradition of Golden Age Spain, emblemized by Velázquez and to the Castilian mythology espoused by Zuloaga and his friends. The representation of the dwarves in Spanish art was part of the European courtly tradition, as the dwarves often appeared as part of the royal entourage, especially in seventeenth-century paintings. There was a long history of representation of dwarfs in royal presence at the court of Asturias. Dwarves at the court had a unique position as the only members of the royal entourage, who were able to express their opinions freely, thus giving them the status of visual emblems of the truth in art. In painting, dwarves were often represented next to animals to make their stature appear even smaller and to enhance their perceived monstrosity. Moreover, the court viewed dwarves as ideal companions for royal children, because of their diminutive stature and

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<sup>88</sup> Along with other references to Gregorio's animalistic characteristics, critics, including Juan de la Encina and José Ortega y Gasset had suggested that human being bears very little distinction from the animal in Zuloaga's paintings of Gregorio. This chapter will specifically focus on their criticism. More specifically, José Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero*," *El Imparcial* 45, no. 16033, October 20, 1911, 1; José Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero II*," *El Imparcial* 45, no. 16058, November 10, 1911, 3; and Juan de la Encina, *El Arte de Ignacio Zuloaga* (Paris: Hermanos Garnier, 1917).

intelligence. Royal children's familiarity with dwarves from an early age determined their continued presence and importance in the life of the palace.<sup>89</sup>

It was in the art of Velázquez in particular, created during the time that was perceived by Zuloaga and his contemporaries as the time of artistic triumph during at the time of Spanish decadence, that dwarves became artistic subjects, endowed with psychological complexity and treated as individuals. Velázquez famously painted a remarkable series of portraits, depicting the dwarves at the Spanish court – the first instance of depiction of the dwarves as main subjects, without the royal presence – in addition to including the dwarf Maria Balboa in the foreground of the iconic *Las Meninas*. While the majority of Velázquez's portraits of the dwarves, like that of *Francisco Lezcano* [Fig. 12] used either the interior or very minimal landscape as background to frame his models. In contrast, Castilian landscape became a prominent feature in Zuloaga's portraits of Gregorio, leading to Ortega y Gasset's critical interpretation of Gregorio as a primitive being reflective of Castile and Spain's national soul, as well as an emblem of the national triumph of "unculture" over the European civilization.<sup>90</sup>

Zuloaga's paintings of Gregorio, alongside his earlier works, such as *The Dwarf Don Pedro* (1894) and *The Dwarf Doña Mercedes* (1899), connected the artist with the Golden-Age and the art of Velázquez.<sup>91</sup> The paintings of Gregorio followed the Velázquez in both the representation of the character as the main subject of the painting and in portraying him within the context of Castilian landscape, however the role of landscape in the art of Zuloaga was greatly expanded. Gregorio's union with the earth of this mythological Castile –the values encoded in the landscape transposed onto a man - converted him into the symbol of the

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<sup>89</sup> Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, "Monstruos, Enanos y Bufones," in *Monstruos, Enanos y Bufones en la Corte de los Austurias*, ed. Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, 11-12 (Madrid: Amigos del Museo del Prado, 1986).

<sup>90</sup> Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero II*," 3.

<sup>91</sup> *The Dwarf Don Pedro (El Enano Don Pedro)* is Zuloaga's earliest known representation of the dwarf model.

“Generation of 1898,” as will be demonstrated shortly. Even within the context of Spanish artistic tradition, Ortega y Gasset’s and his colleagues’ choice of Gregorio as an emblem of Spanish masculinity, is surprising. And yet, within the context of the Disaster of 1898, the imaging of Spanish manhood in grotesque terms through the bodies of those traditionally labeled monstrous became more accepted.<sup>92</sup> Several critics, including José Rodao, José Ortega y Gasset and Juan de la Encina focused on what they perceived as Gregorio’s repulsive physical appearance that hid his inner beauty, as well as the supposed lack of differentiation between his animal and human characteristics. To further engage with the critical responses to Zuloaga’s works, as well as their implications for Spanish masculinity, I will focus on the formal analysis of *Gregorio el Botero* and *Gregorio in Sepúlveda* and analyze the primitivizing and animalistic rhetoric that Zuloaga’s critics applied to his subject.

Zuloaga’s *Gregorio el Botero* of 1907 portrays the titular character, holding up the two amorphous wineskins that suggest Gregorio’s trade over his right shoulder. Gregorio’s limbs are short, which is a characterizing feature of achondroplasia or “short limb dwarfism,” while his bulbous nose and scleritis in his right eye are his most prominent features. At the turn of the century, these medical conditions would have been viewed as congenital health issues, indicative of degeneration. And yet, post Darwinian interest in simian and other animal imagery simultaneously evoked the fears of the bestial in humans, but also signified the potential for reinvigoration at the turn of the twentieth century that could be called upon to revitalize the

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<sup>92</sup> The imaging of Gregorio el Botero and cultural representations of dwarfism in Silver-Age Spain would greatly benefit from the scholarly approaches in the Disability Studies, which are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this dissertation, which is going in a different direction.

nation.<sup>93</sup> Thus, despite his “monstrous” characteristics, Gregorio could be positioned as a much-needed source of national vitality and virility.

With a ceramic wine jug in his left hand, he stands against the backdrop of the dramatic sky over the historic cityscape of Ávila. With the exception of the vivid red spots of the jug, the painting is composed almost entirely of earth tones that harmoniously integrates the figure of the dwarf into his Castilian surroundings. Covered in wineskins that closely replicate his shape and stature, Gregorio occupies the majority of the composition, leaving only a sliver of the townscape visible on the left side of the image. As Gregorio directly faces the audience, his stubble-covered face and his overall disheveled appearance are brought into clear focus. Even as the contemporary art historians see “the decadence of his person” revealed in his “physical defects” and in “the abandon of his unbuttoned shirt and trousers,” Zuloaga’s contemporaries interpreted this painting and its artistic manner through the lens of vitality.<sup>94</sup> Enumerating Gregorio’s physical features, Zuloaga’s biographer and art critic Juan de la Encina referred to the protagonist as “a Caliban of the Spanish desert,” “a monster with all his instincts at the surface,” while noting with admiration “the dynamism of [the painting’s] contour lines and [its] mass.” As he remarked upon Zuloaga’s formal similarities to Michelangelo, Encina also suggested that while Michelangelo elevates his viewers to the spiritual realm, Zuloaga arrests them with his grim vision of a landscape “where a man bares very little distinction from the animal.”<sup>95</sup>

The animalistic qualities of the dwarf were highlighted in the most important critical analysis of this piece, an essay by José Ortega y Gasset that links it to the masculine enterprise of

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<sup>93</sup> Oscar E. Vázquez, *The End Again: Degeneration and Visual Culture of Modern Spain* (University Park (PA): Pennsylvania State Press, 2017), 70.

<sup>94</sup> Sofía Barrón, “El amor por el paisaje en la obra de Ignacio Zuloaga,” in *Pigmalión o el Amor por lo Creado*, ed. Facundo Tomás and Isabel Justo (Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial, 2005), 47.

<sup>95</sup> Encina, *El Arte de Ignacio Zuloaga*, n.p.

the Generation of 1898. Ortega y Gasset's two-part article, published in consecutive issues of the Madrid-based liberal newspaper *El Imparcial*, Ortega y Gasset effectively linked the artist, his subject, and the landscape in the background to the notions of indomitable Spanish masculinity.<sup>96</sup> According to the author, Zuloaga's image erases the distinction between the animal and the man by portraying the subject as part human and part beast. The figure is entirely fused with the land and now channels its values. The author meditates on Gregorio's "deformed figure with a horrible face," describing the dwarf in primitive, monstrous and excessively masculine terms. Specifically, he alludes to his animalistic nature by fixating on the lack of care with which his semi-opened shirt – a sign of civilization – is tucked into his trousers to reveal "the enormous muscles of the anthropoid," – that is, a higher ape that is not quite a man. To Ortega y Gasset, the two swollen wineskins that Gregorio is holding up, which "preserve the organic forms of the animal that inhabited them," only work to "affirm a not-so-remote kinship with the monster man who embraces them as two familiars."<sup>97</sup> This man and his masculinity can only be explained through his relationship to the land. Moreover, he explains Gregorio's masculinity by linking him to the Castilian land that bred him: "The earth that surrounds you, your mother, shakes as you cultivate it, and it becomes coarse, and raw, and becomes, like you, made up of fierce muscles." His very existence on this land is a kind of triumphantly masculine act, as he had to overcome the harsh, dry environment itself to live, but also in that act, transformed that very environment to fit his own character.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero*," 1 and "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero II*," 3.

<sup>97</sup> Ortega y Gasset, *La estética de El Enano Gregorio el Botero*," 1.

<sup>98</sup> "The La tierra en torno, tu madre, sacude como tú el cultivo, y se vuelve áspera y cruda y cabría, como tú, haz de músculos bravos." In Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero*," 1.

According to Ortega y Gasset, the features of Castile in Zuloaga's painting as "a desolate terrain, without trees, hard, rugged, frigid," with a suggestion of "the barbaric, grim, and energetic city" are also the fundamental features of the authentic Spanish manhood.<sup>99</sup> To Ortega y Gasset, the apparent brutality of Gregorio and his surroundings serves as a visual manifestation of Spain's heroic spirit of resistance to and negation of the European values of progress. In this sense, Ortega y Gasset opposes Salaverría's argument that the representation of Spain as resistant to European progress emasculates the nation. Instead, Ortega y Gasset proclaims that the heroic spirit of resistance is the defining feature of the Spanish race that ought to be an object of pride. The philosopher wrote, "[The Spaniards and the Europeans] agree about the following: the Spanish race has refused to realize the same series of social, moral, and intellectual transformations that we call Modern Age."<sup>100</sup> In fact, for him the entire history of Spain could be summarized as a long history of resistance to modern culture. Curiously, one of the late nineteenth-century definitions of degeneration was, precisely, the inability to assimilate with a larger social sector – the same argument that was waged against the *Gitano* populations in Spain.<sup>101</sup>

"To be a man is to perpetually surpass oneself," according to Ortega, and, if that is the case, Gregorio is a "man who stands tall on the path of perfection." In this context, Gregorio "the divine, immortal dwarf, barbarous *animálcula* [sic] [a microscopic animal]" serves as an embodiment of "the perseverance of the people beyond culture: [he] represent[s] the will of the unculture."<sup>102</sup> Thus, instead of maligning his country as his critics have argued, Ortega y Gasset argues that Zuloaga "wanted to praise the race, whose specific virtues are the elemental energy,

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<sup>99</sup> Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero*," 1.

<sup>100</sup> Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero*," 1.

<sup>101</sup> See: Vázquez, *The End Again*, 141.

<sup>102</sup> Ortega y Gasset, "La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero II*," 3.

pre-civilized impetus, [a race] that followed the ancient tradition of Art, which reflects what in a man is irreducible from nature and the element” and has done so to produce “the sublime dwarf, the Spanish satyr” that is Gregorio el Botero.<sup>103</sup> By referring to Gregorio as the Spanish satyr, Ortega y Gasset connoted the barbarism and hyper-virility associated with satyrs in the classical mythology, but in later chapters we shall see that the satyr was also a stand-in for a homosexual at the turn of the twentieth century. Having discussed the critical construction of *Gregorio el Botero* through the rhetoric of barbaric and animalistic masculinity in relation to man and landscape, I will now turn to how the themes of Castilian masculinity, Castilian landscape and tradition intertwine in *Gregorio in Sepúlveda*.

In *Gregorio in Sepúlveda* (1908) the protagonist poses before the audience, dressed in pilgrim fashion, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and cape over a white half-opened shirt trousers, and holding a walking stick. Gregorio steps aside to reveal the city of Sepúlveda to the viewer. Enrique Lafuente Ferrari noted that the original title of *Gregorio in Sepúlveda* (*Gregorio en Sepúlveda*) was *Castilla la Vieja* or “Old Castile”; Zuloaga renamed it once he painted over the two characters previously featured alongside Gregorio to give a more prominent role to the landscape.<sup>104</sup> Unlike the composition of *Gregorio el Botero* that incorporates only a few man-made structures of Ávila, this painting expands the role of the landscape. By visually tilting the terrain upward, flattening it and using a stacked-up composition in the background, Zuloaga succeeds in integrating more architectural, historical, and biological features of the town into the image. Among the many landmarks of Sepúlveda the artist chose to include are El Salvador Church at the top of the hill – the first Romanesque church in the Segovia region, San Bartolomé Church located on the hill on the right-hand side, Barrio de San Esteban on the middle hill, and

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<sup>103</sup> Ortega y Gasset, “La estética de *El Enano Gregorio el Botero II*,” 3.

<sup>104</sup> Lafuente Ferrari, *Los Paisajes*, 448.

Puerta del Río – the main entrance to the town of the Muslim Origin. In addition to the exiting features of the town, the artist chose to paint a bullring towards the bottom of the image near the valley of the river Duratón – an architectural element that was never present in Sepúlveda. Gregorio, painted with large Velázquez-inspired blocks of paint in several shades of brown stands out from the lighter background of the blues, greys and greens, yet remains connected to it through the rectangular, vertical brushwork in his shirt that mimics the shapes of the buildings in the background.

Gregorio's pose, with his one hand grasping the cape and the other clasping a walking stick compositionally evokes Velázquez's 1635-1636 portrait of *Prince Baltasar Carlos in Hunting Dress* [Fig. 13] that presents the young prince holding his rifle in a similar way. Both subjects, executed in a similar palette of browns, step aside to reveal the two historically important Castilian landmarks: the blue Guadarrama mountain range in case of the young prince and Sepúlveda in Gregorio's case. However, instead of looking out at the viewer like the prince, Gregorio seems uninterested in his audience and absorbed completely into the landscape that surrounds him.

In a 1908 letter to his friend, the journalist and writer José Rodao, Zuloaga proclaimed his enthusiasm for Segovia “this incomparable land, where one lives surrounded by healthy, pure and great art,” which he saw in contrast to a Parisian art scene “[that was] petty, without character, sickly, and above all has no homeland.”<sup>105</sup> During the first decade of the twentieth century, Zuloaga painted many works in Sepúlveda, including *Women of Sepúlveda* [Fig. 14] in 1909, and, most notably, *The Dwarf Gregorio in Sepúlveda* a year earlier. This later image became inextricably linked to the Castilian visual vocabulary of the Generation of 1898.

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<sup>105</sup> Letter from Ignacio Zuloaga to José Rodao (February 28, 1908), cited in Jesús de Arozamena, *Ignacio Zuloaga: El Pintor, el Hombre* (Bilbao: Sociedad Guipuzcoana de Ediciones y Publicaciones, 1970), 117.



Echoing the rhetoric of Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset and others concerning Zuloaga's representations of Spain as atemporal and endowed with heroic masculine virtues, Lafuente Ferrari saw Zuloaga's Sepúlveda as expressive of "Spanish, Castilian, austere, harsh character, asleep in a bend of History (sic) and as if resting from the heroic enterprises: a people [that is] capable of inspiring Unamuno or Azorín to evoke a Spain not of the past, but eternal, which dreams of absolute objectives for the human enterprise and maintains the existence of the tragic sentiment in the living flesh."<sup>106</sup> Lafuente Ferrari's assessment of Zuloaga's Castilian landscape as revelatory of the Spanish character, austere, and heroic, but also eternal and harboring national dreams in a way that evokes Unamuno's idea of *intrahistoria*, points to a reading of Castile as a queer temporality that would further be explored in the next section of this chapter.

In his obituary for Gregorio, the journalist and writer José Rodao exalted Gregorio as a tragic, primitive and noble being composed of dramatic contrasts, much like the Castile itself, whose physical ugliness did not reflect the inner beauty of his soul:

Gregoriete [sic], who inspired terror in children, with his flattened and broken nose, his bulky lips and his eyes of an inexplicable squint, but of an intense look, [had an appearance that] did not correspond to his generous soul, which contained the innocence of a child and arrogance of a man, against the background of bitterness, caused by the sad realization that he had to pass through this world being the target of the eyes of all and even an object of mockery for many... There was within this repugnant and monstrous envelope, an impressionable heart, open to many noble passions and this new Quasimodo in his misfortune, refused to exploit his figure.<sup>107</sup>

Considering Rodao's adherence to Zuloaga's Castilian ideals and familiarity with the ideas of many of his friends, the journalist's description of Gregorio could be interpreted as a

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<sup>106</sup> Lafuente Ferrari, *Los paisajes*, 450.

<sup>107</sup> "Gregoriete, que inspiraba terror a los chiquillos, con su nariz achatada y partida, sus labios abultados y sus ojos de un estrabismo inexplicable, pero de un mirar intenso, no era el que correspondía a su alma generosa, que guardaba candores de niño y altiveces de hombre, sobre un fondo de amargura, engendrado por el triste convencimiento de que había de pasar por este mundo siendo el blanco de las miradas de todos y aún de las burlas de muchos. ... Había dentro de aquella envoltura repugnante y monstruosa un corazón impresionable y abierto a las más nobles pasiones, y resignado ese nuevo Quasimodo con su desgracia, se negaba a hacer explotaciones de su figura." Cited from an obituary in Arozamena, *Ignacio Zuloaga*, 117.

metaphor for Spain itself in the wake of the disaster of 1898. Within this metaphor Gregorio, the new Quasimodo, embodies the “repugnant and monstrous” exterior of Spain, a nation that is now the object of cruel mockery from the rest of Europe. It is Spain, which is emasculated by its loss of the colonies, whose inner nobility is being overlooked in Rodao’s metaphor. Nevertheless, beneath the monstrous exterior, the nation has a generous soul, impressionable heart, the arrogance of a man and the innocence of child.

### **“The Son Made Mortal Flesh:” Zuloaga and Catholic Masculinity**

As demonstrated by the reception of Zuloaga’s paintings of Gregorio as a product and manifestation of his Castilian environment and its masculine virtues, Zuloaga’s Spanish contemporaries read the artist’s works through a nationalistic lens with an emphasis on gender. The choice of the dwarf Gregorio as a model coupled with Zuloaga’s painting style evoked the great tradition of Spanish Golden-Age painting and Velázquez in particular, even as the paintings sought to create the image of an atemporal Castile, where the past, the present and the future are one. In similar fashion, Zuloaga’s religious subjects, such as the iconic 1911 *Bleeding Christ* [Fig. 15] and the 1912 *Cardinal* [Fig. 16] drew on the aesthetic of El Greco to distill the essence of Spanish mysticism through the sterile bodies of its practitioners. The historian Mircea Eliade presented the concept of “eternal return” as the notion that either by imitating the exemplary acts of a god or a mythical hero, or by retelling their narratives, men are able to outside of the “profane” linear time and magically re-enter “the Great Time, the sacred time” which is cyclical.<sup>108</sup> In tandem with Unamuno’s intra-historia, where the past permeates the present, the

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<sup>108</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries; The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities* (New York: Harper, 1961): 23.

idea of “eternal return” is particularly useful for the interpretation and significance of Zuloaga’s religious-themed paintings.<sup>109</sup>

Since the late fifteenth century, Catholicism has been instrumental to forging a sense of a unified Spanish identity that went beyond regional affiliations. However, by the nineteenth century, the clerical institutions and some Catholic practices, most notably flagellation, came under fire from the liberal factions in Spain and in Europe, where they were labeled outdated and barbaric. Following the Disaster of 1898, anticlerical sentiment regained political force as many Spanish intellectuals, republicans, and radicals united in placing the blame for the decline of the Spanish nation and the country’s poor reputation in Europe on the Church.<sup>110</sup>

Zuloaga’s supporters read his religious paintings as anticlerical condemnations of Spanish Catholicism and the disproportionate role that its practices still played in early twentieth-century Spain. By choosing to represent outdated religious subjects and practices in Spain, Zuloaga’s works engaged with the notion of regression by taking up archaic Catholic practices as his subject, but also by presenting his subjects in atemporal Castilian settings that erased the distinction between the past and the present. His critics picked up on the regressive aspects of his work to either condemn it as unpatriotic, as did Salaverría, or to praise it as a social critique, as did Francés, Unamuno and Ramón Jaén among others. Moreover, by furthering the notion of the eternal Spain that echoes Unamuno’s *intrahistoria*, Zuloaga’s painting positioned Castile as a kind of queer temporality, one that was circular, existed in mythic time and, above

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<sup>109</sup> The philosophical concept of “eternal return” or “eternal recurrence,” as related to the philosophy of predeterminism, had a much broader cultural significance in the late nineteenth-century European thought. It was central to the writings of Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). The German philosopher and his ideas were especially influential among the Spanish writers, affiliated with the “Generation of 1898.” For more on information on the reception of Nietzsche in Spain see, Paul Ilie, “Nietzsche in Spain: 1890-1910,” *PMLA* 79, no. 1 (March 1964): 80-96.

<sup>110</sup> See: Carlos Serrano, “1900 o la difícil modernidad,” in *1900 en España*, ed. Serge Salaün and Carlos Serrano, 193-205 (Madrid: Espasa Universidad, 1991).

all, was ultimately non-reproductive. And yet, even though Zuloaga's imaging of Castilian landscape and its values was linked to pain and austerity, his images also incited visual pleasure through the voluptuous eroticism the male bodies embedded in timeless landscape. As Elizabeth Freeman had pointed out, pleasure, and, tactile pleasure in particular, allows present-day subjects to embody and sensorially experience the past and is one of queer time's primary modes of disrupting the hegemony of capitalism and modernity.<sup>111</sup>

The 1911 painting *The Bleeding Christ* depicts a scene featuring a priest and five members of a religious fraternity gathered around the life-like effigy of the bleeding Christ adorned with a female wig and a crown of thorns against the backdrop of the Castilian town of Ávila. Christ's sculpted, wax-like figure is modelled in grisaille and executed in chiaroscuro. The bluish grey hues used to paint his body match the color palette of Ávila. Moreover, the geometric shapes used in the background are repeated in Jesus's musculature, while the horizontal line of the cross acts to underscore the horizon line and, in so doing, brings the town of Ávila, depicted using an elevated, flattened viewpoint, into the viewer's focus. With the exception of the red-cloaked fraternity member on the left side of Christ, the attire of the rest of the gaunt, El-Greco inspired figures in the painting is composed of subdued black, grey and green hues in a way that ties them to the medieval spirit of Zuloaga's city of Ávila.

Zuloaga's models in the painting wear the historical clothing of their order and exhibit different attitudes towards the strikingly nude, but for the loincloth, figure of the Savior at the center of the composition. The effigy exudes macabre eroticism with its voluptuously curved body, whose nudity stands in dramatic contrast to the elaborate costumes of the townsmen. Jesus's waxy, shiny, with clearly defined musculature, emphasized especially in the outstretched

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<sup>111</sup> Freeman, *Time Binds*, 19.

arms and elegantly bent legs, is exposed to the gaze of the members of the fraternal order and to that of the viewer, while his downward-bent face and chest remain obscured by the exceedingly long, dark hair of the female wig. The polished surface of Christ's eroticized body invites touch, even as it betrays the signs of decay, which are evident in his sallow, bluish-grey skin and dark dried-up blood streaming down his leg. The surface characteristics of the Christ force viewers of this painting to question whether the protagonists are experiencing a religious vision of the crucifixion, or whether they are worshipping a life-sized polychromed statue. Zuloaga's image creates an illusion that Christ is crucified over the city of Ávila, as the horizontal bar of the cross perfectly matches the horizon line of the town. In this way, the effigy of the Savior serves as a literal embodiment of the town and its Catholic values. The monumental size of Zuloaga's history painting (248 x 302 cm) brings together Christian and Castilian mythology and intensifies the drama at its center, inviting the viewer to step outside of time and to partake in the mythical time of Castile and its inhabitants.

The members of the order exhibit different attitudes towards the subject of their worship; on the left side of the painting a man in a black cassock, who is reading tilts his head away, as he reads from a book; his neighbor in a grey cloak kneels and weeps; a man in the red cape leans on the tall liturgical candle and bows his head with eyes closed, lost in thought. On the left side of the composition, a balding man clutches another, somewhat phallic liturgical candle with fanatical glee as he fixedly stares down at the effigy and grins; the man behind him similarly looks down, but his facial expression is obscured by the mask. Finally, in the Renaissance tradition of Albertian "historia," the man in the grey cape directly faces the audience with a somber, indecipherable look on his face, to invite them to engage with the scene, but in what way? Is the viewer expected to participate in the Catholic rites and be pious or is he being

offered the pleasurable, yet macabre experience of contemplating and, possibly, touching the exquisite timeless corpse of the Savior?

When the painting was first exhibited at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts Salon in Paris in 1912, it was enthusiastically received by many, including a progressive, French art critic, Guillaume Apollinaire, who praised the modernity of Zuloaga's canvases, pointed out the El Greco influence in Zuloaga's figures, and drew the reader's attention to the female wig worn by the Christ effigy. Apollinaire concluded that the Zuloaga's painting was, in fact, an accurate representation of the mystical and sensual religion that proliferates in Spain, where "they continue to hold the processions of flagellants, and where the joy of pain still dominates."<sup>112</sup> Thus, Apollinaire furthered the interpretation of Zuloaga's art in terms feared by Zuloaga's critics – that is as an accurate and embarrassing representation of the country as exotic, barbaric, and archaic.

In contrast to Apollinaire's reading of Zuloaga's painting as a mystical and sensual evocation of a very real Spanish religious practice, Zuloaga's Spanish critics and supporters viewed the Basque artist's Catholic subjects as a form of social critique leveled against Spanish Catholic practices, focused on the cult of pain. According to José Francés, Catholicism as presented on Zuloaga's iconic canvases *The Bleeding Christ* and *The Cardinal* is a "frightening religion," where the worshippers and the object of their worship are equally unnerving. Francés likened Zuloaga's Catholic subjects to his depictions of bullfighters, in the sense that both subjects were, in fact, strongly worded critiques of the contemporary Spanish society with its misplaced values. In his view, echoed by Unamuno and many others, the Spanish social ills were

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<sup>112</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, "Avant le Vernissage de la Nationale. Visite officielle du president de la republique – coup d'oeil d'ensemble," *L'Intransigeant* 32, num. 11595 (13 April 1912), n.p.

brought on by the culture that fixates with equal intensity on religion and bullfighting.<sup>113</sup> In his discussion of *The Bleeding Christ*, Francés underscored “the terrible and disturbing aspect of that bloody Christ surrounded by the ascetic and sickly figures,” pointing out the insalubrious effects of the religion on Spanish population. The kind of Catholicism that is portrayed on Zuloaga’s canvases reflects the religious beliefs of many contemporary Spaniards, who, as a result of their archaic attitudes, might as well be “the spirits from the other centuries.”<sup>114</sup> Echoing Unamuno’s sentiment that Zuloaga characters are the inhabitants of the eternal Spain, who are “men beyond the pale of time and history,” Francés pictures Zuloaga’s religious tableaux as portraying a regressive spaces, marked by perverse, outdated religious attitudes that blend sadomasochistic pleasures with the cult of death.

According to Francés, Zuloaga’s *Cardinal* reveals the problematic nature of Spanish Catholicism and the models of stoic and celibate masculinity that come with it. Referencing El Greco’s famous *Cardinal Niño de Guevara* [Fig. 17] of 1596-1601, Zuloaga portrays his elderly, nameless, eternal *Cardinal* in vivid red robes with markedly peasant features with a young priest attired in customary black cassock at his side. These two figures are set against the theatrical background of Sepúlveda. Zuloaga enhances the stage-like effects of the composition through the use of patterned carpet, a prop-covered table and a flower-ornamented curtain drawn to reveal the rocky cityscape. Whereas El Greco’s aging cardinal occupies the whole space of the painting and appears to be fully engaged with the viewer as he stares out of the canvas intently, Zuloaga’s subject looks older and gazes off into the distance, seemingly unaware of what is going on around him. Nevertheless, Francés describes him as a formidable man and a contrast to the young priest:

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<sup>113</sup> The final chapter of this dissertation will explore Francés’s position on bullfighting in greater detail.

<sup>114</sup> Silvio Lago, “España en el Salón de París,” *La Esfera* 1, num. 31 (1 August 1914), n.p.

This figure of the strong, lean cardinal, with the sumptuous cloth of his habit and the medals of his high dignity [stands] in harsh contrast with his rough face of a warrior or peasant, [and] has no spiritual relationship with the other [figure] of the young priest, humbly dressed in black, his face made pale and his body wasted by fasting and studying.<sup>115</sup>

Even though the cardinal is elderly, Francés speaks of him as strong and masculine, in contrast to the young man. His dark figure, with a lowered gaze, appears in the rightmost part of the painting, almost as an afterthought, as part of the surroundings. In contrast to the cardinal, the young man appears sickly – his skin is grey – and effeminate, dressed in black cassock that completely obscures his body. While the pompously attired cardinal is all body, the young man offers complete contrast to him, as he lacks the material form. As Francés has pointed out, the young priest is “humbly dressed,” lacking the physical form because all of his time has been given to fasting and spiritual education.

In 1918, the Spanish-born Professor of Spanish at the University of California Berkley Ramón Jaén published an article on Zuloaga in the Madrid-based liberal journal *La Lectura*, where he offered a compelling analysis of Zuloaga’s art as a social critique, including the discussion of the complex attitude towards Christianity in Spain through the lens of *The Bleeding Christ*.<sup>116</sup> In line with Zuloaga’s supporters, such as Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset, Jaén asserted that Zuloaga’s representation of Spain was rooted in Castile, “where the Spanish race was forged,” and “painted with courage.” He further characterized it as a social critique that evokes the “legitimate tradition of the [Spanish] land,” represented by Goya – an artist similarly derided by his people for telling the truth about their homeland.<sup>117</sup> Jaén singled out two themes in

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<sup>115</sup> “Esta figura del cardenal recio, enjuto, en áspero contraste del rostro rudo de guerrillero ó campesino, con las suntuosas telas de su hábito y las preseas de su alta dignidad, no tiene la menor relación espiritual con la otra del sacerdote joven, humildemente vestido de negro, empalidecido el rostro y ahilado el cuerpo por los ayunos y el estudio.” in Lago, “España,” n.p.

<sup>116</sup> Ramón Jaén, “Zuloaga en los Estados Unidos,” *La Lectura* 18, no. 209 (May 1918): 321-330.

<sup>117</sup> Jaén, “Zuloaga,” 323-324.



Zuloaga's work: his portrayal of Spanish countryfolk as "the highest expression of Spanish aristocracy," and his depiction of a "morbidly exalted religious feeling." Citing the words of Pierre de Bourdeille, the abbé de Brantôme, Jaén characterizes Zuloaga's peasants as "princes," "so strong they are and with such distinguished arrogance these soldiers march."<sup>118</sup> Jaén finds both of these themes at the heart of *The Bleeding Christ*.<sup>119</sup> In the cruel scene of "the tragedy of Golgotha" Zuloaga's captures "all of the Christianity for a Spaniard."<sup>120</sup> The blood-soaked Christ at the heart of the scene is not the "Omnipotent God," instead he is the "Son made of mortal flesh," "wounded by human brutality"; he is placed exactly at the level of men, whose sins he must bear.<sup>121</sup> In turn, the Spanish men must also bend their heads in penitence and live their lives "under the weight of their tremendous crime" to appease their God, whom they revere more for his humanity than for his divinity, "for having lived and suffered among them."<sup>122</sup> Jaén argues that this painting reflects Spain's enslavement to death and encapsulates the uniquely "Spanish paradox" of some obscure "future good in exchange for denying ourselves in the present."<sup>123</sup>

### **"But, Yes, You Are a Spaniard!:" Maurice Barrès and the Virile Powers of Castile**

The critical reception of the paintings of the dwarf Gregorio, *The Bleeding Christ* and *The Cardinal* established the connection between the model of home-grown Castilian masculinity, associated with Zuloaga, and the land that nourished these subjects of the painting, as well as the

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<sup>118</sup> Jaén, "Zuloaga," 324.

<sup>119</sup> Ramón Jaén refers to this painting by its alternative title *La Hermandad de Cristo crucificado*. For the sake of consistency, I will continue referencing this painting as *Cristo de la Sangre* or *Christ of Blood*, that is under the title that is listed in the collection of Museo de Reina Sofía that houses this painting.

<sup>120</sup> Jaén, "Zuloaga," 325.

<sup>121</sup> Jaén, "Zuloaga," 325.

<sup>122</sup> Jaén, "Zuloaga," 325.

<sup>123</sup> Jaén, "Zuloaga," 325.

Spanish men. In turn, Zuloaga's *Portrait of Maurice Barrès* (1913) [Fig. 18] reveals the transformative powers of the Castilian environment as a repository of national values, capable of bestowing the mystical Spanish masculinity even upon foreigners. Zuloaga endows the landscape of Central Spain with virile powers to impregnate the mind of men who come in prolonged contact with it, men that include El Greco, Barrès and himself, compelling them to channel its values. Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) was a French novelist, journalist and politician, as well as a noted hispanophile, who travelled to Spain several times between 1892 and 1905.<sup>124</sup> Zuloaga, whose love of El Greco the writer shared, accompanied Barrès on his final trip to Toledo in 1905 and claimed to have inspired Barrès's fascination with the Cretan painter. In 1912, Barrès published *Greco, or the Secret of Toledo* (*Greco, ou le Secret de Tolède*) and sent a copy to Zuloaga, accompanied with the inscription: "The biography of the forefather to the grandson, Ignacio Zuloaga, his friend. M.B."<sup>125</sup> With this inscription, Barrès furthered the narrative of patrilineal transmission of cultural heritage from father (El Greco) to grandson (Zuloaga). In Zuloaga's own words, it is upon the reception of this book that he "suddenly decided to paint his portrait in front of Toledo, whose secret he had told."<sup>126</sup>

Zuloaga and Barrès's idol, the Greek painter originally named Domenikos

Theotocopoulos, moved from Italy to Spain at the age of 35, where he reached his artistic

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<sup>124</sup> Barrès was one of the leading promoters of ethnic nationalism in during the Third Republic (1870-1940) and assumed the Anti-Dreyfusard stance during the Dreyfus Affair. Barrès's antisemitic views and fears of miscegenation, nevertheless, did not interfere with the writer's hispanophilia, in spite of Spain's complicated history with race. See: Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). Curiously, Barrès' writings on Toledo were spurned by many Toledo-born intellectuals, notably by Manuel Castaños Montijano. In 1924, on the year of the writer's death, Castaños Montijano argued that Barrès offended Toledo and its inhabitants with his book on Greco by saying that he saw the traits of the "Semitic" race alive and well among the present-day inhabitants of the city. For more information see: José Pedro Muñoz Herrera, "Toledo o el Greco. Reconocimiento y Efusión del Escenario." *Archivo Secreto* 3 (2006): 88-108.

<sup>125</sup>"La biographie de l'aieul au petit fils, Ignacio Zuloaga, son ami. M.B." Cited in Muñoz Herrera, "Toledo o el Greco," 91.

<sup>126</sup> Cited in Muñoz Herrera, "Toledo o el Greco," 91.

pinnacle as El Greco as a result of his exposure to the Castilian landscape and its values.<sup>127</sup>

According to Zuloaga and his like-minded contemporaries, El Greco's prolonged encounter with the Toledan landscape allowed the sensitive outsider to absorb and fully articulate Spanish national genius on his canvases. In his 1908 biography of the Cretan painter, Manuel Bartolomé Cossío wrote that the "impressionable and penetrating spirit" of El Greco succeeded "almost spontaneously, as if he had been born here, to eternalize on his canvases the sky, the landscape, the people and the legends of Castile, all of it with the perennial poetic aftertaste of his Greco-Italian origin and education."<sup>128</sup> In his writing, Cossío had suggested that El Greco's status as an outsider enabled him to visualize Toledo through the perspective unavailable to a Castilian artist.

In similar fashion, Barrès's ability to articulate the eternal values of Toledo and Castile from the outsider perspective in his own work was a result of his communion with the landscape. Moreover, Barrès experienced Toledo both directly and through the art of El Greco, making it possible for the French writer to articulate Spain's masculine essence, at least according to Zuloaga and his like-minded Spanish contemporaries. In his 1912 book, Barrès himself furthered the narrative of transformation via contact with the environment, writing that, "The stones [of Toledo] continued saying the same things [to me] that El Greco had heard," and that the words that he heard were the same ones that El Greco transformed into "paintings [now housed] in the dilapidated chapels."<sup>129</sup> Moreover, throughout the book, the French author emphasized the masculine virtues of Toledo championed by Unamuno, Zuloaga and the others as the city that is "harsh," "austere," "made of stone," where "Everything manifests an implacable

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<sup>127</sup> The name "El Greco" is a Spanish-Italian hybrid. Whereas the article "el" come from Spanish, "Greco" is an Italian word for the Spanish "griego."

<sup>128</sup> Manuel Bartolomé Cossío, *El Greco* 1 (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1908), 199.

<sup>129</sup> Maurice Barrès, *Greco, ou le Secret de Tolède* (Paris: Émile Paul Eds., 1912), 68.

will [sic] to be beauty.”<sup>130</sup> Barrès’s use of the term “will” on many occasions links his rhetoric to that of Zuloaga and his friends, who saw the will to exist in the harsh and austere environment as the defining feature of Castilian land and its people.

In fact, Zuloaga’s *Portrait of Maurice Barrès* is both as a visual representation of the “secret” communicated to the author by Toledo, as well as a fantasy of the eternal Spanish masculinity, transposed onto the landscape and onto the model. The 1913 full-length portrait depicts Barrès, holding his own book, as he dramatically steps off to the right side of the painting to reveal the El-Greco inspired view of Toledo. Attired in somber black, Barrès reveals his aquiline profile to the viewer, as he gazes off into the distance, to pause from the reading of his own yellow-covered book, which he gracefully holds his right hand, while clasping his brown hat and gloves in the other. Leaning on the dark grey rocks, Barrès’s figure appears to be a part of that rock formation, as both are made of the same hard substance, yet physically separated from the landscape of Toledo, which is a product of Barrès’s imagination. The cityscape includes the landmark features of the town, such as the bridge of San Martín over the river Tajo and the Puerta de Bisagra, or a city gate of Toledo, set under the stormy blue, serpentine skies – elements evocative of El Greco’s 1599-1600 *View of Toledo* [Fig. 19] and 1608 *View and Plan of Toledo* [Fig. 20]. In contrast to the darker colors used to represent the subject and the rocks in the foreground, the architectural and natural features of the town are painted with a lighter color palette of browns, yellows and greens. Unlike Gregorio, who becomes an integral part of the Castilian landscape through the use of color palette and brushstroke that ties him to the cityscape, the figure of the author, executed in brilliant shades of black, stands apart from Toledo in contrast to the pale earth tones used in the rest of the painting . The use of the black and white

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<sup>130</sup> Barrès, *Greco*, 72.

color scheme to represent Barrès's elongated body in combination with the background, endows Zuloaga's subject with the air of a sixteenth-century Spanish nobleman.

Indeed, Zuloaga's portrait of the author encapsulates many of the key masculine virtues of the Generation of 1898 intellectual: austere, dressed in the somber attire evocative of the Golden Age, his material existence relinquished in favor of a more spiritual one, he is lost in the contemplation of the landscape. Moreover, in the landscape in the painting is an intellectual construction, one that is a product of Barrès's mind, but also one that simultaneously produces Barrès. Zuloaga himself ensured that his subject in the portrait – despite his nationality – be presented as an exemplar of Spanish masculinity. In an anecdote recounted to Alberto Insúa, the Spanish translator of Barrès's book, the artist mentioned seeing his model pose for the portrait, “with that profile, that nose so energetically drawn, that black tuft [of hair], that fierce look,” and exclaiming to him, “But, yes, you are a Spaniard!” to the great enchantment of his Frenchman.<sup>131</sup> The subsequent critical responses to the portrait drew on the rhetoric of Spanishness, masculinity and nationalism. In his 1924 article, written on the year of Barrès's death, José Francés called the portrait “static, yet turbulent and passionate,” characterizing it using military metaphors as a “duel between the city and the man.”<sup>132</sup> In his description of the work, Francés had deployed the language of struggle between man and his environment, that is, the masculine rhetoric that defined the language of the artists and writers affiliated with the Generation of 1898 in relation to Castile and to Zuloaga that became commonplace by the 1920s.

Writing as “Silvio Lago” a decade earlier about the same portrait of Barrès, Francés considered it to be a prodigious image of the city of Toledo and called Zuloaga “Toledo's

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<sup>131</sup> José Francés, “Mauricio Barrès, el Greco y España,” *La Voz* 5, no. 1240, June 14, 1924), 2.

<sup>132</sup> Francés, “Mauricio Barrès,” 2.

greatest interpreter in all of the contemporary painting.”<sup>133</sup> Thus, he furthered the narrative of the outsider – Zuloaga, the Basque, living in France – as capable of channeling authentic Castilian values in his work. While Zuloaga’s portrait of Barrès (which was really a portrait of Toledo) was an homage to Spain’s glorious past, it was also a work of art that offered the Spanish people a path towards the regeneration of their race: “It is the love of Spain’s glorious past; [it is] the warning cry of the priceless artistic treasures that our Old [sic] cities keep; it is the path toward the new inspiration of melancholies and nostalgias, and at the same time [a path that will] awaken the dormant energies of the race.”<sup>134</sup>

Zuloaga’s *Portrait of Maurice Barrès* made a claim that Zuloaga, Barrès, and El Greco – all foreigners – were the sensitive foreign souls capable of hearing, interpreting and representing the masculine virtues of Castile in their art. Moreover, in order to regain the lost national virility, Zuloaga’s artistic solution was to seek out the eternal Castilian tradition, Unamuno’s intra-historia, embedded in the land, and much like Barrès of the portrait to become one with the rock formations of Castile to embody its austere, masculine values.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined a hegemonic model of masculinity that was grounded in Castilian, Catholic values of austerity and monogamous heterosexuality and promoted through the writings of the intellectuals associated with the Generation of 1898. The writers and critics, including Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Francés, and Maeztu among others, framed and interpreted Zuloaga and his works within the context of this model; moreover, they situated the artist in the forefront

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<sup>133</sup> Lago, “España,” n.p.

<sup>134</sup> Lago, “España,” n.p.

of the Regenerationist project as uniquely capable of resurrecting national values with his art, and continuing the patriarchal lineage of the great Spanish artists, from El Greco, to Velázquez and to Goya. Both critics and supporters represented Zuloaga in hyper-masculine terms as a man and the artist, by emphasizing his prodigious built, mental and physical health, strong moral values, and Basque roots. Zuloaga's Basque ancestry was particularly significant to his supporters because it qualified the artist to communicate Castilian values to the public, since, as Unamuno had put it, the present-day Basques incarnated the Castilian people of the seventeenth century. For this reason, Basque artists, including Zuloaga, Regoyos, and other representatives of "Black Spain," were the ones that would bring the nation out of the spiritual and gender crisis by offering a model of masculinity that could be followed in the wake of the disaster of 1898. Moreover, within the context of the Zuloaga question, the visions of Black and White Spain – one dark, austere, traditional, eternal and represented by Zuloaga, and the other sunny, frivolous, instantaneous portrayed by Sorolla and associated with the values of European modernity – were gendered constructions. Whereas the "cerebral" Black Spain of Zuloaga was masculine and intellectual, Sorolla's merry beach scenes were "all eyes." Even though, as Unamuno had remarked there was not "one Spain," but multiple Spains, within the discourse of the Generation of 1898, the binary between the two Spains had been reinforced. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the analyses and reception of Zuloaga's Castilian portraits, his own hypermasculine narratives of Castile could effectively be read as queer. Zuloaga's imaging of the dwarf Gregorio, staged against the Castilian backgrounds, became interpreted as representations of a man-beast, an instinctual and monstrous figure with regenerative potential for the emasculated nation. In turn, Zuloaga's Catholic models of masculinity, pictured in the *Cardinal* and *The Bleeding Christ*, were ultimately seen as sterile and charged with homoerotic potential. Finally, Zuloaga's

*Portrait of Maurice Barrès* revealed the impact of Castilian landscape on the formation of Spanish character, suggesting that the virile powers of the land are so strong that even a foreigner may be compelled to channel its values and assume its masculinity.

The next chapter explores the alternative constructions of time, history and masculinity within the artistic production of artists from the Spanish peripheries, whose works were read by the critics within the context of Symbolism. The next chapter explores queer desire for history, as it has been expressed by the artists that fall outside of the 1898 canon, seeking an affective contact between the marginalized masculinities of the past and present, and in so doing creating new visions of Spanish masculinity by forming queer communities across time. I argue that Zuloaga's contemporaries explored queer temporalities, where they reimagined Spanish history and Spanish masculinity through the lens of their respective regions – without the unified Spanish landscape – in contrast to the way that the Generation of 98 viewed their mission in art, marked by desire to homogenize.



**FIGURES**



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**



Figure 7



**Figure 8**



**Figure 9**





**Figure 10**



Figure 11



**Figure 12**

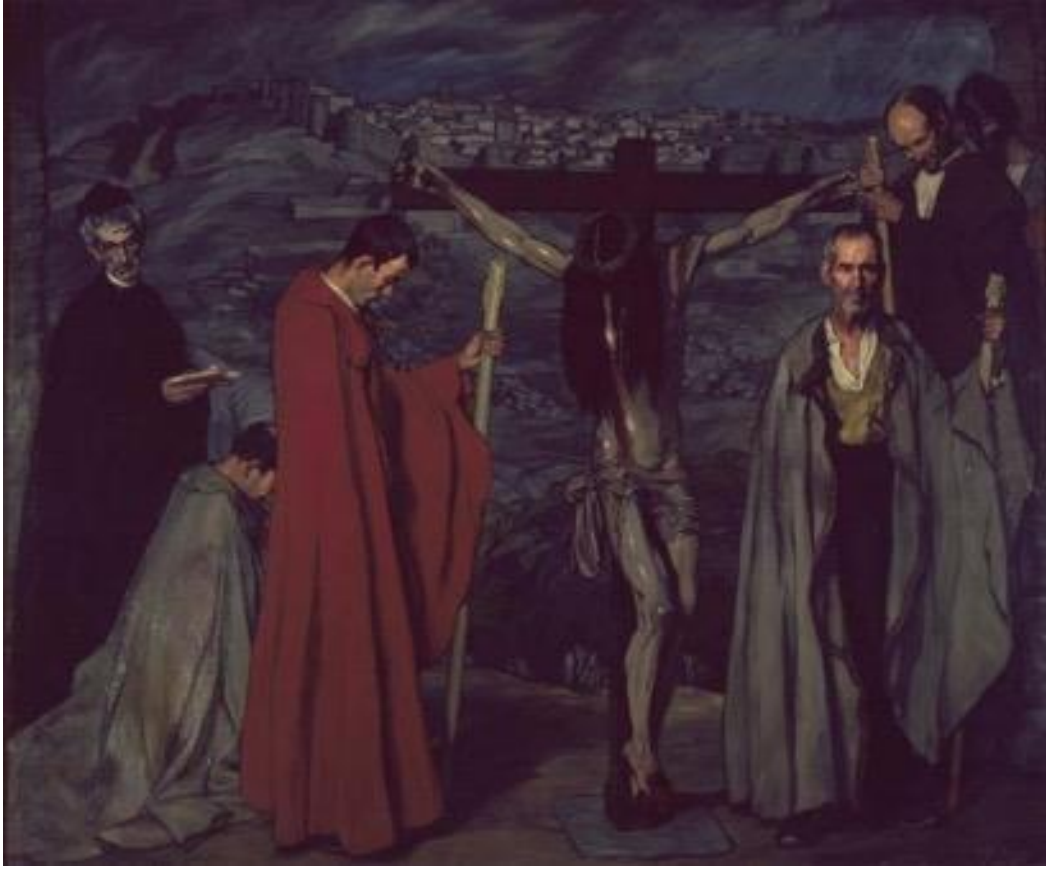




Figure 13



Figure 14



**Figure 15**





**Figure 16**



**Figure 17**



Figure 18



**Figure 19**





Figure 20



## CHAPTER II

### INVERTED SYMBOLISM: THE AESTHETICS OF ANDROGYNY AND TEMPORAL DRAG IN THE ART OF BUJADOS, MORCILLO, AND NÉSTOR

*“If Satan was the ideal of virile beauty for the first Romantics until 1880, then the hermaphrodite became the ideal for the decadent Romantics.”* <sup>135</sup>

#### **Introduction**

The preceding chapter outlined the visual and rhetorical strategies that Zuloaga and his early twentieth-century critics employed in order to create a coherent national narrative. They did so by representing Zuloaga as a Castilian paradigm of the hypermasculine artist and heir to the Spanish painters of the Golden Age, who was uniquely capable of regenerating Spain by tapping into the sources of national virility, deposited in the landscapes of Central Spain. To establish a unified masculine narrative for the nation, Zuloaga and his colleagues turned to Castile as the source of Spanish culture, ultimately overlooking other regional artistic cultures and new visual languages at work in Spain. This chapter explores the work of regional Symbolists as a response to the Castile-centric masculine aesthetic of the Generation of 1898. Moreover, it delves into the historical reception of symbolism in Spain as an effeminate, diseased and ultimately foreign aesthetic that acted in opposition to the “authentic,” masculine Spanish values embodied in realist art. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the eclectic and multifaceted nature of Spanish symbolism and sets aside any attempts to represent it as a coherent artistic movement. Through the examination of the visual representations of androgyny by the artists from the geographic margins of the Spanish artistic establishment, including the Canary Islands, Andalusia and

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<sup>135</sup> “Si Satanás fue hasta 1880 la belleza viril del primer romanticismo, el hermaphrodita lo será del romanticismo decadente.” In Pedro Juan Almeida Cabrera, *Azul: Pintura Simbolista de la España Atlántica Galicia-Canarias (1880-1939)* (Gran Canaria: Casa Museo de Tomás Morales, 2012), 179.

Galicia, this chapter will reveal how these artists' work disturbed the rigid definitions of gender and the notions of a unified Spanish sexual identity.

This chapter explores the artistic representation of androgynous, adolescent male bodies in the works of Néstor Martín-Fernández de la Torre or Néstor (Canary Islands), Gabriel Morcillo y Raya (Andalusia) and Manuel Bujados (Galicia) through the lens of “temporal drag.” In doing so, it sheds light on the ways in which the Spanish provinces often functioned as queer spaces. Elizabeth Freeman coined the term “temporal drag” in reference to gender-bending performance art that is also a performance of anachrony, with all the associations that the word “drag” has with retrogression, delay and “the visceral pull of the past on the supposedly revolutionary present.”<sup>136</sup> Temporal drag works by registering the co-presence of several historically contingent moments and collective pleasures on the very surface of certain bodies, thus connecting queer performativity to disavowed, unrecognized or political and (in this particular case) regional histories. The anachronism of temporal drag can “unsituate the viewers from the present tense they think they know and illuminate or even ignite possible futures in light of powerful historical moments.”<sup>137</sup>

Freeman's notions of “temporal drag” as motivated by the queer longing on the part of artists, writers and performers for a relationship between a present historical subject and a past historical moment is at the core of the regional symbolists' artistic production examined in this chapter. This chapter engages with the art of Bujados, Néstor, and Morcillo as queer performance of trans-historical identification that is motivated by the desire to inhabit an alternative history. These artists constructed queer temporalities through a pastiche of artistic

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<sup>136</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 62.

<sup>137</sup> Freeman, *Time Binds*, 62, 61.

languages drawn from multiple historical sources that included the Renaissance, Baroque and the Pre-Raphaelites. They combined these historical languages with the present-day artistic practices, as well as their own oneiric and historic spaces – anchored in anachrony and androgyny.<sup>138</sup>

The concept of androgyny, or hermaphroditism as an intersex state that represents the union of the opposites, has classical roots in the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, recounted in the Book 4 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>139</sup> Scholars have underscored the prevalence of androgynous subjects in the artistic production of European Symbolists and characterized it as a manifestation of their desire for the abolition of sexual difference, as well as a stand-in for the creative force. This chapter argues that androgynous bodies played an essential part in these artists' production and enabled them to represent Spanish masculinity as a sexually ambiguous category. The three artists in question manifest different strategies of temporal drag and of queering spaces. While Bujados emphasizes encounters with androgyny in the oneiric, atemporal spaces of the psyche, Néstor explores the fertile artistic possibilities of androgyny through its ostentatious display on canvas and with his own dandy persona. In contrast, Morcillo's sensualized portrayals of androgyny, set in scenes suggestive of Medieval Andalusia, establish a new historicized form of Spanish masculinity.

Bujados, whose artistic personality self-consciously mirrored that of the British decadent illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, was consistently read as foreign, decadent and perversely sexual in the Spanish press. His fantastical images of androgynous beings were a pastiche of the visual idioms from eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and frequently set androgynous figures in

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<sup>138</sup> See J.B. Bullen, "Burne-Jones and the Aesthetic Body," *Preraphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* (New York: Claredon Press, 1997), 149-216.

<sup>139</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 90-93.

dreamscapes which, I argue, functioned as queer atemporal, yet historically rich and sexually ambivalent, composite spaces – a world apart from the nationalistic ideals of manhood. In contrast to Bujados, both Néstor and Morcillo evoked adolescence, androgyny and sensuality in a regional context to express alternative national narratives. Néstor’s heroic male nudes, endowed with the statuesque, Michelangelo-inspired physique and reenacting the unity of the primordial androgyny, were immersed in the symbolist, Baroque, yet unmistakably Canarian settings. In contrast, Morcillo’s images, steeped in references to the Spanish School of Painting and the symbolist cult of the androgynous, staged the fantasy of medieval *convivencia*, or peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Christians and Jews in the Muslim Spain, as a sensual encounter with the semi-nude adolescent male bodies of Granada locals. By blending Spanish visual idiom and foreign artistic traditions, Morcillo was able to promote his own vision of Spanish national history to great critical acclaim.

The artistic practices of these regional Spanish symbolists, which stage historical narratives with androgynous bodies that remain embedded in both the past and the present, can be productively studied as performances of “temporal drag.” By alluding to grand historical narratives and local histories, regional symbolists remade the bodies of their models into allegories for the types of masculinity that diverged from the Castilian master narrative that emphasized the heterosexual, virile ideal. Furthermore, these regional artists contributed to the reinvention of the provinces as queer spaces, marked by flexible definitions of sexuality and gender, thus problematizing the dominant narrative of a unified Spanish national history. Thus, it is within the queer spaces of the provinces, that the narratives that differed from the official histories were formed and then disseminated, often using the symbolist idiom and under the auspices of the state.

The title of this chapter references *Sexual Inversion*, the title of the book published by an influential British sexologist Henry Havelock Ellis together with John Addington Symonds in 1897, while also suggesting that Spanish symbolism lends itself to a kind of “inversion.”<sup>140</sup> As Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García have demonstrated, “inversion” was primarily a category that denoted gender deviance, specifically psychic hermaphroditism, rather than sexual behaviors until 1915, and only acquired connotations of sexual deviance between 1915 and 1939. According to Foucault, the late nineteenth-century understanding of sexual inversion was tied to androgyny because during that time homosexuality “when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy [was seen] as a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul.”<sup>141</sup> Spanish critics of *modernismo* and symbolism viewed the androgynous practices of the artists and writers in light of sexual inversion. They perceived the modernists’ interest in fashion and especially foreign fashion trends, desire for luxury goods, as well as fascination with ornament as expressions of their deviant sexuality.<sup>142</sup> As the art historian Christopher Reed has argued, Oscar Wilde’s 1895 trial effectively linked aestheticism and symbolism to the pathological identity of “homosexuality” in the European imagination, converting these aesthetic practices as well as Wilde’s own dandy persona into the very look of inversion.<sup>143</sup> The symbolist penchant for allegorical and metaphorical narratives was already linked with pathology. In works of Bujados, Néstor and Morcillo, it was expressed through the highly aestheticized bodies of sexually ambiguous youths, in ways that alluded to the homoerotic Western European artistic tradition and invited the public to participate in the pleasures of queer looking.

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<sup>140</sup> The book caused a scandal when it was first published in London in 1897. It was translated into Spanish in 1913 and was very influential among Spanish sexologists, including Gregorio Marañón (1887-1960).

<sup>141</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43.

<sup>142</sup> Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Los invisibles*, 96, 69.

<sup>143</sup> Reed, *Art and Homosexuality*, 97.

Symbolists systematically problematized and often inverted the binaries between male/female and past/present. Through the materiality of paint and surface, the sinuous quality of the line, the attention to anatomy, and the brilliant use of color in their art, symbolist artists prompted the viewer to have an erotic, sensual experience of the past in the present. The artists' predilection for androgynous and/or sexually ambiguous adolescent form countered the visual practices of Zuloaga and other promoters of Castilian masculinity. In place of virile peasants, military heroes, intellectuals and patriarchs, who ensured the reproduction of the state, Spanish symbolists produced images of ephebes, androgynes and sexual unions that inverted or fell outside of the heterosexual complementarity of the bodies. Moreover, the self-aware theatricality of their art, its self-reflexive performativity called fixed qualities of gender into question. Judith Butler has observed that cultural abilities to ascribe gender and act accordingly fails when one is no longer sure whether the body encountered is that of a man or a woman. When seemingly fixed binary categories come into question, the very reality of gender is put into crisis, thus denaturalizing that knowledge base as such.<sup>144</sup> Through the use of androgyny and anachrony, Spanish regional symbolists destabilized early twentieth-century gender binaries and opened up new opportunities to envision the future where different sexualities are possible and even desirable.

The English Pre-Raphaelites, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Simeon Solomon made a strong impact on the Spanish symbolists. Both Rossetti and Burne-Jones portrayed androgynous figures, male and female, to represent the union between opposing spiritual forms. And yet, for Solomon, androgyny served also as reinforcement of homosexual

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<sup>144</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xxiii.

desire.<sup>145</sup> In Spain *preraphaelismo* in art and literature, as José-Carlos Mainer points out, functioned as “an aesthetic of deliberate anachronism.”<sup>146</sup> By this he means that Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, which Mainer explores predominantly through the literary production of Rubén Darío, idealized the Middle Ages, and were ultimately steeped in anti-capitalist ideology. Moreover, the exaltation of anachronism through the figure of the sexually ambiguous youth allowed Spanish artists, affiliated with symbolism to queer the Spanish national past and broadcast their vision to a nation-wide audience.

### **Symbolism in Spain**

Symbolism, decadentism, Pre-Raphaelism, renaissantism, mystical idealism, neo-mysticism, ideism, *Modernismo*, decorative painting, and literary painting are only a handful of terms that contemporary critics used, often interchangeably, or in a contradictory fashion in an attempt to articulate the core of the new artistic tendencies that emerged in Spanish art between the 1880s and 1920s. Given the complex nature of Spanish symbolism and the wide variety of definitions it elicited, how do we begin to give meaning and shape to such an ambiguous term? Symbolist art came to embody an aesthetic and moral crisis at the turn of the century, one aspect of which was the failure of traditional models of masculinity. The late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century press frequently referred to artists, works and aesthetics aligned with symbolism as

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<sup>145</sup> See: Colin Cruise et al. *Love Revealed: Simeon Solomon and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Merrell, 2006). For the exploration of questions of masculinity in the artistic and literary production of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood see also: Herbert L. Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Amelia Yeates (ed), *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities: Constructions of Masculinity in Art and Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014).

<sup>146</sup> José-Carlos Mainer, *La Edad de Plata (1902-1931) Ensayo de Interpretación de un Proceso Cultural* (Barcelona: Ediciones Asenet, S.A., 1975), 56.

“decorative,” rather than “symbolist,” a term that was rarely used in relation to Spanish artists. Even when “decorative” and “decorativism” were not used pejoratively, these terms were charged with the negative connotations of artificiality, delicacy, femininity and foreignness.

Before delving into the reception of symbolism in Spain and its impact on the understanding of the provinces as queer spaces, a brief overview of the scholarship on symbolism in Europe and in Spain is necessary. During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries symbolist attitudes included the opposition to industrial society, positivism and naturalism. According to Norbert Wolf, drawing from Aurier’s definition of symbolism, it was never a style in the strict sense of the word, but rather an “open” intellectual position, which deployed various stylistic means that were deemed best suited to clothing the intended symbolic message in visual form.<sup>147</sup>

Since the mid 1990s, European symbolism had been a topic of great international interest, as demonstrated by the proliferation of exhibitions on the subject, such as *Les Paradis Perdus, L’Europe Symboliste* (Montreal, 1995), *Pintura Simbolista en España* (Madrid, 1997) and *Dreams of Nature, Symbolism from van Gogh to Kandinsky* (Amsterdam, 2009) – to name only a few. And yet, symbolist exhibition catalogues outside of Spain made little to no mention of Spanish symbolists, with the exception of a few artists – Santiago Rusiñol, Joan Brull and Néstor. For instance, *Paradis Perdus*, an exhibition that sought to offer a broad view of European symbolism with multiple works from French, Norwegian, Polish and Belgian artists, only lists a single contribution from Spain – Rusiñol’s *Morphine Addict*.<sup>148</sup> Part of the reason for the neglect of the Spanish symbolism in the international scholarship is its lack of coherence as

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<sup>147</sup> Norbert Wolf, *Symbolism* (London: Taschen, 2009), 8. See also the original article by G. – Albert Aurier, “Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin,” *Mercure de France* 2, no. 15 (March 1891): 155-165.

<sup>148</sup> Pierre Théberge et al., *Paradis Perdus: L’Europe Symboliste* (Montreal: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1995), 177 Rusiñol.



an artistic movement and its arrival to the peninsula at the moment when the movement became overshadowed by other artistic currents in the rest of Europe.

There are many exhibition catalogues and monographs centered on the individual Spanish symbolists, including Néstor, Miguel de Viladrich, and especially Julio Romero de Torres.<sup>149</sup> And yet, only a few scholars, notably Caparrós Masegosa, Calvo Serraller and Pedro Almeida Cabrera, have concentrated on the investigation of symbolist tendencies within Spanish visual culture at the turn of the century. In 1999, Caparrós Masegosa argued that the scholarly neglect of Spanish symbolism was a result of its late arrival to Spain, where polemics regarding the movement occurred between the early 1900 and late 1920, that is, much later than in the rest of Europe. Another contributing factor was that the symbolist currents never crystalized into a full-blown movement in Spain and were instead cultivated by individual artists.<sup>150</sup> In the introductory essay to an exhibition catalogue on Spanish symbolism, Francisco Calvo Serraller points out that the idealist (symbolist) current that flourished in Spanish painting between 1910 and 1930 was a mixture of idealism, naturalism, regenerationism, nationalism and regionalism, and significantly outlasted other European symbolist movements in France, Belgium and Germany. Struggling to define Spanish symbolism, or “simbolismo-idealism” as he calls it, the author points out that “that which characterized Spanish idealism-symbolism was its imprecise definition, or, if you will, its eclecticism.”<sup>151</sup> French and Belgian artists published many

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<sup>149</sup> Among some of the more notable monographs on these artists are: Saro Alemán Fernández, *El Pintor Néstor Martín Fernández de la Torre (1887-1938)* (Las Palmas: Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1991); Concha Lomba Serrano and Chus Tudelilla, *Viladrich: Primitiu i Perdurable* (Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Fraga, 2007); Alberto Gil and Jenny Dodman, *Julio Romero de Torres: Entre el Mito y la Tradición* (Malaga: Museo Carmen Thyssen, 2013).

<sup>150</sup> Lola Caparrós Masegosa, *Prerrafaelismo, Simbolismo y Decadentismo en la Pintura Española de Fin de Siglo* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1999), 22.

<sup>151</sup> “[...] lo que caracterizó al idealismo-simbolismo español fue su imprecisa definición, o, si se quiere, su eclecticismo.” In Francisco Calvo Serraller, “El Simbolismo y Su Influencia en la Pintura Española del Fin de Siglo [1890-1930],” in *Pintura Simbolista en España [1890-1930]*, ed. Francisco Calvo Serraller, 30 (Madrid: Fundación Cultural MAPFRE VIDA, 1997).

symbolist manifestos and treatises and, in doing so, lent a more holistic appearance to the artistic movement. In contrast, Spanish critics and artists used the definitions of symbolism in a much less unified and often inconsistent manner that referenced a wide variety of styles and stylistic elements. Instead, the formal traits that the critics attributed to symbolism were incorporated more broadly and liberally into the vanguard artistic practices, such as *modernismo*.

The idea of Spanish symbolism as an eclectic mix of tendencies, rather than a unified artistic movement, is central to contemporary scholarship on the subject. Jaime Brihuega contends that even though symbolism was significant to the visual production of several Spanish artists, such as Rogelio de Egusquiza, Julio Romero de Torres, Néstor and Miguel de Viladrich, it was merely one of many visual ingredients that Spanish artists drew upon along with other modern artistic languages, including kitsch.<sup>152</sup>

Spanish symbolism belonged at once to the avant-garde and the academy and incorporated aspects of vanguard artistic practices and conservative elements and narratives taken from history painting alike. According to Luís Antonio de Villena, symbolism was a characteristic of nineteenth-century culture as a whole, “98, *modernismo*, Pre-Raphaelism, Parnassism, Art Nouveau, Impressionism...are merely vectors, *items*, portions – more or less productive or significant – of the great crisis, which is more easily understood by naming it (in the realm of Western culture) *The Symbolist Age*.”<sup>153</sup> Villena’s definition of symbolism presents it as being more than a movement, but rather as a marker of crisis in Western cultural values – a

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<sup>152</sup> Jaime Brihuega, “Oslores entre las Ondas. Cartografía del simbolismo en España,” in *Viladrich: Primitivo y perdurable – Primitiu i perdurable*, ed. Concha Lomba Serrano and Chus Tudelilla (Castell de Fraga, Fraga: Ibercaja, 2007), 53.

<sup>153</sup> “Noventayochó, modernismo, prerrafaelismo, parnasianismo, *art nouveau*, impresionismo...solo son vectores, *items*, parcelas – más o menos fructíferas o significativas – de una gran crisis, que es más entendible nombrándola (en el ámbito de la cultura occidental) *Edad Simbolista*.” In Luís Antonio de Villena, *Los Androginos del Lenguaje: Escritos sobre Literatura y Arte del Simbolismo* (Madrid: Valdemar, 2001), 186.

pervasive, yet ineffable element in the artistic practices in Spain of the period. I will add that this crisis also involved challenges to the traditional gender identities and representations.

Spanish art historical scholarship often examines symbolist theory, generally of French and Belgian origin, separately from the practice of the Spanish symbolist artists. Calvo Serraller and Caparrós Masegosa both claimed that Spanish symbolism was heavily indebted to French symbolist and Pre-Raphaelite art theory, without elaborating on how or when symbolist theory was translated and disseminated in Spain. In the introduction to *Symbolist Painting in Spain*, Calvo Serraller introduces separate sections for “theory of symbolist painting” and its various manifestations in Spain, such as “Valle-Inclán y the social circle of the New Café de Levante” without connecting the two.<sup>154</sup> Likewise, in Caparrós Masegosa’s, *Pre-Raphaelism, Symbolism and Decadentism in Spanish painting at the Turn of the Century* - the most comprehensive study of Spanish writings on symbolism in the pictorial arts to date – the author separates French artistic theory from its practical implementation in Spanish artistic practice and criticism.<sup>155</sup>

The roots of Spanish symbolism, at once domestic and international, need to be examined more closely, as they might explain the anxiety of contemporary critics with regard to symbolist tendencies in the Spanish visual arts. The emergence of symbolist tendencies in Spain was partially prompted by the visual and theoretical production of French and Belgian symbolists, including Felicien Rops; Gustave Moreau and Sâr Pelâdan’s metaphysical and symbolist salons of Rose + Croix; Richard Wagner’s ideas of the total work of art; the graphic production and personality of Aubrey Beardsley; and the images produced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, especially those of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Burne-Jones. However, it was also greatly

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<sup>154</sup> Francisco Calvo Serraller, “El Simbolismo y Su Influencia en la Pintura Española del Fin de Siglo [1890-1930],” in *Pintura Simbolista en España [1890-1930]*, ed. Calvo Serraller, 17-59 (Madrid: MAPFRE, 1997).

<sup>155</sup> Caparrós Masegosa, *Prerrafaelismo*, 33.

impacted by the Spanish *modernismo* and the rediscovery of the seventeenth-century painter El Greco.

For many decades, art historians represented Catalonia as both the cradle and the epicenter of Spanish symbolism at the expense of other autonomous communities, such as Galicia and Aragón, which had important representatives of their own. In the late nineteenth century, Catalan Modernistes, spearheaded by Santiago Rusiñol and Ramón Casas, transmitted symbolist writings and ideas to the Spanish public, thus shaping the theoretical and aesthetic character of Spanish symbolism, which they articulated through the visual languages of art nouveau. In the 1893 Modernist Festival, the second in the series of five organized by Rusiñol at Sitges, Joan Maragall's and Rusiñol's theoretical writings on symbolism were presented and Jean Moreás's 1886 *Symbolist Manifesto* first introduced to the Spanish public. The third Modernist Festival was dedicated to El Greco, whose artistic production was championed by Rusiñol and Zuloaga. These festivals publicized European symbolist art, theater and music, contributing to the dissemination of symbolist ideas in Spain.

Art historical scholarship continually emphasized Catalan *modernisme* as a regional variant of European Modernism, elevating it over the symbolist tendencies of the artists from other Spanish provinces. This is evidenced by Calvo Serraller's exhibition catalogue for the first major exhibition of Spanish symbolist art, the 1997 *Symbolist Painting in Spain (1890-1930)*. The exhibition underscores the role of Catalan artists led by *modernistes* Casas and Rusiñol, but at the exclusion of other important provincial artists, such as the Galician symbolists Xesús Corredoyra and Manuel Bujados, as well as Aragonese Mariano Barbasán from the exhibition. However, Alberto Castán Chocarro (2009) has demonstrated that "the role of symbolism in the development of Spanish regionalism, exemplified by the art of Romero de Torres and Viladrich,

was so fundamental as to make the clear-cut distinction between regionalism and symbolism in Spain practically impossible.<sup>156</sup> Regionalism played an important role in shaping the flavor of Spanish symbolism. In 2012, Canarian art historian Pedro Juan Almeida Cabrera stressed the importance of recuperating the role played by the Spanish provinces in the rise and development of symbolism, arguing for the existence of a “Blue Spain” alongside White and Black Spain, one that was aligned with the Atlantic symbolist art from Galicia and the Canary Islands.<sup>157</sup> Almeida Cabrera’s call for the recognition of symbolist tendencies in the Spanish provinces stands out as part of a larger project to recuperate symbolist tendencies in turn-of-the-century Spain. This chapter participates in this recent trend, by seeking to explore new constructions of gender and masculinity in the works of the Spanish symbolists that were previously left out of the scholarly dialogue.

### **The Reception of Symbolism in Spain**

A long-standing tradition that pitted realism and idealism against each other as early as the late fifteenth century paved way for the reception of symbolism in Spain in the late nineteenth century.<sup>158</sup> Spanish detractors of symbolism, or “decorative painting” contrasted the movement with naturalism, which they described as the authentic aesthetic of the Spanish School. The “Spanish School” was a nineteenth-century intellectual construction that was meant to valorize Spanish artists from the seventeenth century, including Velázquez, Ribera, Zurbarán and El

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<sup>156</sup> Alberto Castán Chocarro, “Modernismo y simbolismo como soluciones plásticas de la pintura regionalista,” in *Actas del XII Coloquio de Arte Aragonés. El arte del siglo XX*, ed. Cristina Giménez Navarro, 291 (Zaragoza, Institución «Fernando el Católico», Departamento de Historia del Arte de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2009).

<sup>157</sup> Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 24.

<sup>158</sup> See Javier Barón, “La Recepción del Naturalismo y el Impresionismo en la Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando a través de los Discursos de Ingreso de sus Miembros,” in *VII Jornadas de Arte. Historiografía del arte español en los siglos XIX y XX* (Madrid: CSIC, 1995), 283-297.

Greco in the final decades of the century. The very category of “Spanish School” as an embodiment of national values put pressure on Spanish artists to be a part of the established tradition of realism, started by Velázquez and extending to Goya. In 1898, one of the leading Spanish art critics, Rodrigo Soriano, described authentic Spanish painting as “serious and dry” and as grounded in the “tradition of truth, of frankness and of beautiful naturalism, maintained with few interruptions from Velázquez until Goya, and then broken.”<sup>159</sup> It was a concept that was steeped in rhetoric that exalted the masculine virtues of “lo castizo,” as part of a nationalist project in all forms of Spanish culture.<sup>160</sup>

Symbolism posed a threat to this authentic Spanish tradition in the view of many turn-of-the-century art critics. The triad of disease, femininity and foreignness haunted the discussions of Spanish symbolism. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the movement and its practitioners were consistently aligned with foreign values, and were described using the rhetoric of illness and effeminacy, so much so that some critics openly denied and marginalized symbolism’s impact on Spanish art. Certain prominent early twentieth-century intellectuals, including the prolific art historian and painter Aureliano Beruete, minimized the impact of symbolism that he deemed foreign to Spanish artistic tradition, arguing that “As far as Spain is concerned, this (Neoidealist) trend has not manifested itself. We do not believe that the temperament of Spanish artists of all the realist tradition in all of its branches, could produce works of a character so different from its tradition and its history.”<sup>161</sup> Beruete’s positioning of

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<sup>159</sup> “[...] tradición de verdad, de franqueza y de hermoso naturalismo, mantenida con raras interrupciones desde Velázquez á Goya, y rota luego.” Rodrigo Soriano, “Exposición del Círculo,” *La Época* 50, no. 17244, June 8, 1898, 1.

<sup>160</sup> See: Javier Portús, *El Concepto de Pintura Española: Historia de un Problema* (Madrid: Verbum Editorial, 2012).

<sup>161</sup> “[...] en lo que respecta a España, esta tendencia (Neoidealista) no se ha dejado sentir como manifestación. No creemos que el temperamento de los artistas españoles, de tradición realista en todas sus ramas, sea a propósito para producir obras de un carácter tan diferente a su tradición y a su historia.” In Aureliano Beruete, *Historia de la Pintura Española del Siglo XIX* (Madrid: Ruiz Hermanos, 1926), 147.

symbolism as alien to Spanish tradition was part of the rhetoric of anti-symbolist critics, who characterized the movement as sickly and effeminate in order to promote realism as a distinct national style, endowed with masculine virtues, and free of all gender ambiguity.

Identification of symbolism with femininity occurred as early as 1891. In one of the first critical appraisals of symbolism in Spain, a prominent art critic, Rafael Balsa de la Vega, described the new manner of painting as foreign, ambiguously gendered, sterile and servile in the following terms:

Strange ideas, the strangest evolutions yet, inconceivable delusions, absurd theories, schools formed under the impulse of a neurotic genius, vibrant today, mute tomorrow...here is a style that, at the end of the nineteenth century, puts itself to the examination of modern art critics...While the anti-aesthetic school of imitators, guided by false and sterile aberrations of human spirit, tends towards the negation of the archetype of beauty of form, which the Greeks devised from the study of man, and diminishes the creative power of inspiration to the level of vulgarity, mystical art, praised and glorified by its apostles of the turn of the century, also destroys the style, will take us straight to the insane asylums.<sup>162</sup>

In his impassioned critique of symbolism, Balsa de la Vega represents it as an absurd anti-aesthetic, which negates the concept of classical beauty and debases the creative powers of inspiration with vulgarity. Moreover, he subtly undermines the virile character of Spanish symbolism by characterizing its followers as mentally unstable and unpredictable, led by a neurotic genius and inconsistency: vibrant today – mute tomorrow. Above all, Balsa de la Vega disparaged symbolism as unnatural, servile (based on imitation of foreign models and not nature)

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<sup>162</sup> “Extrañas ideas, evoluciones más extrañas todavía, descarriamientos no concebibles, teorías absurdas, escuelas formadas al impulso de un genio neurótico, hoy vibrante, mañana mudo, ...he aquí la forma con que, al finalizar el siglo XIX, se presenta al examen de la crítica el arte moderno...Si la antiestética escuela de los servilistas, guiada por la más falsa y estéril de las aberraciones del espíritu humano, tiende á la negación del arquetipo de la belleza de la forma, que del estudio del hombre hicieron los griegos, y cercena hasta poner el nivel de la vulgaridad la potencia creadora de la inspiración, el arte místico, ensalzado y glorificado por sus apóstoles de fin de siglo, dando al traste también con la forma, nos llevará á dar de cabeza en los manicomios.” In Rafael Balsa de la Vega, “El Arte y los Neomísticos,” *Ilustración Artística* 10, no. 492, June 1, 1891, 340.

and ultimately guided by false and sterile aberrations of human spirit, applying the vocabulary of degeneration to Spanish symbolism.

A Catalan artist and art historian Rafael Benet, contemporary with the Spanish symbolists, claimed in his account of Spanish and European symbolism that the entire movement was steeped in mental, physical and moral sickness, and implicitly marked by queer sexuality. Benet perceived “something rotten [that] exists in symbolism of our time, tied to dandyism of Wilde and of Whistler,” something that was marked by “attitudes of aristocratic insincerity,” “rotten dandyism” and a “neurotic patheticism.” Benet claimed that the young Picasso’s Blue Period, which sprung out of the artist’s involvement with Barcelona-based symbolists, was nourished by “a climate of tuberculosis and the narcotic kingdom,” resulting in “the symbolism of Pain.” In this toxic, disease-ridden environment Picasso allowed himself to be “seduced” by symbolism, a choice of words that portrays symbolism in masculine terms as the seducer, while representing the vulnerable artist as a woman who allowed it to lead her astray.<sup>163</sup>

In 1930, the artist and art critic Gabriel García Maroto, writing for *La Nueva España* suggested that symbolism led astray many good artists, including the followers of Julio Romero de Torres, whom he disparagingly calls “renacentistas-idealistas-simbolistas,” Maroto highlights José Gutiérrez Solana as the only Spanish painter who managed to save himself from “the symbolist burn” by embracing “aggressive realisms.” In this manner, Maroto presented aggressive realism as an antidote to supposedly submissive symbolism. Solana “Solana does not follow [anything/anyone] but his own strictly artistic ambitions, and his paintings, devoid of ornamentation, which adorns them, reveal their pure structure, their noble matter, their essential,

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<sup>163</sup> Rafael Benet, *Historia de la Pintura Moderna: Simbolismo* (Barcelona: Omega, 1953), 13, 17.



incorruptible background, which the picturesque robes [of symbolism] were not able to undo.”<sup>164</sup> The carefully chosen language of this passage echoes Rodrigo Soriano’s 1898 article, in describing Solana’s realism through the rhetoric of manly virtues as “aggressive,” “noble,” “incorruptible” and following the path of nature. In contrast to the artists concerned with naturalist art, symbolist painters are ultimately doomed to failure because their work is artificial – it is all about “ornamentation,” “d cor” and the concealment of the noble forms of nature with picturesque garments. In describing “decorative” and “ornamental” nature of symbolism in negative terms, Maroto engages with one of the six traits of symbolism that Aurier employs positively in his definition of the movement published as “Symbolism in Painting” in *Mercure de France* in 1891.

Despite the critics’ frequent [mis]representation of symbolism and naturalism as two irreconcilable artistic tendencies, one foreign and the other native, the dichotomy was largely an artificial construction, since many artists, including Solana, borrowed liberally from both. Nevertheless, critical understanding of symbolism as effeminate, unmanly and ambiguous was further shaped by the symbolists’ predilection for androgynous and otherwise ambiguously sexed subjects.

### **Symbolism and Androgyny**

Androgyny permeated the European visual and literary culture at the turn of the twentieth century and was prominently featured in symbolist art. According to Christopher Reed, avant-

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<sup>164</sup> “[...] no sigue, en ignorancia de  l, sino ambiciones de naturaleza estrictamente plastica, y sus pinturas, desprovistas de la *ornamentaci n* que las *decora*, ense nar n su estructuraci n pura, su materia noble, su fondo esencial, insobornable, que no han podido deshacer las pintorescas vestiduras.” In Gabriel Garc a Maroto, *La Nueva Espa a 1930. Resumen de la Vida Art stica Espa ola Desde 1927 Hasta Hoy* (Madrid: Ediciones Biblos, 1930), 51.

garde artists, including Gauguin and the symbolists, represented androgynous bodies in order to criticize rigidly defined gender roles in Europe. In this way, they vilified the rigid definition of homosexuality as a product of European corruption and opposed it to the more fluid, ambiguous sexuality of “non-western” cultures. Middle-class, male, heterosexual artists claimed a place in the avant-garde by hinting at the knowledge of androgyny and homosexuality.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, androgyny drew the attention of the audiences and critics, many of whom perceived it as a threatening return to an original, undifferentiated human state.<sup>166</sup> Such a condition could simultaneously imply two rather contradictory states, that of regression into a primordial brutality and that of a pure Christian soul before the original sin, also identified with the state of primordial unity discussed by Plato.

The symbolists generally viewed androgyny in positive terms, as ever-present manifestation of the desire for the abolition of sexual differences that embraced the return to the primordial state of being. According to Francette Pacteau, the fantasy of androgyny is motivated by the need for the “abolition of sexual difference as a resolution to narcissistic desire for completeness and self-sufficiency,” a desire that can only be fulfilled by combining the key attributes of opposing genders in a single body. Furthermore, within this androgynous fantasy, a subject annihilates itself: “In this double movement of pleasure and destruction, the fantasy allies itself with the ‘death drive,’ the regressive tendency towards the restoration of a less differentiated, less organized, ultimately inorganic state.”<sup>167</sup> Art historian Estrella de Diego has argued that artists’ fascination with androgynes and sexually ambivalent adolescents during the

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<sup>165</sup> Reed, *Art and Homosexuality*, 79. For a study of Gauguin’s uses of androgyny see also: Stephen F. Eisenman, *Gauguin’s Skirt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997).

<sup>166</sup> Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 138.

<sup>167</sup> Francette Pacteau, “The Impossible Reference: Representations of the Androgyne,” in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan, 70 (London and New York: Methuen, 1986).

second half of the nineteenth century was motivated by the desire for primordial totality that made eternal youth possible. The representations of androgynes and adolescents in the European symbolist context as atemporal and immortal figures relied on the subjects being the objects of an impossible desire that can never be consummated.<sup>168</sup>

Robert Pincus-Witten and Patricia Mathews have addressed the importance of androgyny in French symbolist art, especially in the work of the artists affiliated with the salons of the Rose + Croix. Pincus-Witten pointed out the importance of the androgynous body to Sâr Josephin Peládan, the founder of the Rose + Croix, noting that Peládan's "obsession" with the androgyne was rooted in religion and was not sexual in nature. The androgyne was Peládan's plastic ideal, "the esthetic expression of the highest metaphysic," which represented "a divine neutral stasis as the least imperfect manifestation of God."<sup>169</sup> In *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* Patricia Mathews argues that homoeroticism was common to many of the symbolist androgynes of Peládan's followers and was meant to distance male sexuality from that of women. In this case, androgyny acted as a sign of creative force within the artist, who engendered both male and female qualities. Thus, the androgyne came to be seen as a benevolent, asexual counterpart to the "femme fatale" and could only exist in the pure, "virgin state," untainted by sexuality. In canonical symbolist works, such as Gustave Moreau's 1865 *Jason* [Fig. 21], male/male desire was effectively displaced into an image of

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<sup>168</sup> Estrella de Diego, *El Androgino Sexuado* (Madrid: Antonio Machado, 1992), 28. This primordial totality was expressed in Aristophanes' myth on the origins of love. According to Aristophanes, original human beings were composed of two halves that existed in male/female, female/female and male/male configurations. To punish the humans, Zeus split them into halves, forcing them to wander eternally in search of their missing half.

<sup>169</sup> Robert Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose + Croix* (New York: Garland, 1976), 44.

ambivalent sexuality, allowing artists to safely represent a forbidden subject by encoding the homoerotic body as seemingly desexualized.<sup>170</sup>

The fashion for androgyny in the second half of the nineteenth century was part of a cultural reaction against ‘masculinity.’ As J.B. Bullen has pointed out, masculinity was represented in a “set of values which privileged the active, the material, and the reasonable at the expense of the non-material, and the intuitive. The denial of the ‘feminine’ in both men and women was felt and expressed by both genders.” In the visual arts, it was expressed in the androgynous figures of Burne-Jones, whose work was often criticized for the perversely masculine features of his female subjects and the unmanly and degenerate features of his male ones.<sup>171</sup>

In Spain, too, the question of gender and sexuality was central to symbolists and their critics. Symbolism in Spain was known under many different names, one of which was *modernismo*, an artistic and literary movement that was consistently feminized and queered by its many critics. According to Alberto Mira, during the first decades of the twentieth century homosexuality became a negative mode of perceiving modernity, a stand-in for modernity that has gone too far. In this context, critics of artistic and literary *modernismo* aligned it with “stylistic feminization” or “afeminamiento estilístico.” In addition to *modernismo*’s already queer reputation, its aestheticist-decadentist currents did, in fact, allow for expression of the homosexual experience in an unprecedented manner.<sup>172</sup>

Almeida Cabrera claimed that, “If Satan was the ideal of virile beauty for the first Romantics until 1880, then the hermaphrodite became the ideal for the decadent Romantics.” In

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<sup>170</sup> Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 112-113, 123.

<sup>171</sup> J.B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body*, 192-194.

<sup>172</sup> Alberto Mira, *De Sodoma a Chueca* 63, 69.

this way, the androgyne came to be a perfect incarnation of the symbolists' ideal of beauty. According to Cabrera, the decadent erotic currents that exalted androgyny developed later in Spain than in other European countries, that is between 1910 and 1930.<sup>173</sup> Spanish graphic artists and painters, including Anotonio Juez, Bujados, Néstor and Morcillo were interested in the androgynous body. These artists alluded the androgyne's classical and Renaissance roots in their work. Nevertheless, their critics and the public tied androgyny to the decadent aesthetic ideal. I argue that the Spanish critics came to perceive the androgyne as the embodiment of decadence due to tension in representation of the androgynous body as marked by asexual purity, but also by primordial brutality and hypersexuality, as evidenced by the reception of Bujados's works.

### **Bujados: Oneiric Dimensions of Androgyny**

The Galician artist Arcadio Manuel Bujados Fernández (1889-1954) was known primarily for his graphic work in the illustrated publications *La Esfera*, *Blanco y Negro*, *Nuevo Mundo*, *El Año Artístico* and *La Tribuna*; however, he also illustrated novels, was a prolific painter, a musician, a poet and a self-styled decadent dandy. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Bujados, provided artwork for *La Esfera* (1914-1931), one of the leading illustrated, culture-focused publications of the era, directed by Francisco Verdugo Landi at the time. By welcoming and promoting graphic arts and the artists, including Bujados, Federico Ribas and K-Hito, *La Esfera* helped lay the ground for the *modernismo* and art deco movements in Spain.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, due to the progressive art criticism of José Francés on pages of *La Esfera*, the publication was remarkably open to the decadent symbolist tendencies of the contemporary

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<sup>173</sup> "Si Satanás fue hasta 1880 la belleza viril del primer romanticismo, el hermaphrodita lo será del romanticismo decadente." In Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 179.

<sup>174</sup> Javier Pérez Rojas, *Art Déco en España* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, S.A., 1990), 67, 75.

Spanish artists, including Hermengildo Angalada Camarasa, Antonio Juez and many others. Despite of the differences between Bujados's work and that of Morcillo and Néstor, all three artists shared an interest in redefining masculinity. Bujados's decadent artistic persona, as well as his artistic production, marked by the predilection for androgynous figures, offer an opportunity to examine the ways in which discussions of symbolism, temporality and deviant sexuality converged in Spanish art criticism and graphic arts.

In contrast to some of the more famous Galician artists of his generation, such as Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao (1886-1950) and Xesús Corredoyra (1889-1939), Bujados's symbolism, evocative of Aubrey Beardsley, Gustave Moreau, as well as the set designs produced by Leon Bakst for *Ballets Russes*, never explicitly expressed any social or regional concerns.<sup>175</sup> Throughout his artistic career, Bujados largely avoided specific references to his native Galicia, creating ambiguous symbolist spaces instead, at the time when symbolism in Spain already acquired connotations of exoticism, queerness and foreignness. Bujados creatively combined different time periods and artistic languages, to create queer, oneiric and atemporal works, such as the 1914 *Spiritual Portrait* [Fig. 22] and 1915 *Beyond Love* [Fig. 23], which were populated by androgynes. In so doing, he unsituated his viewers from the present into the dream worlds, pastiched together from fragments of the past and present artistic idioms and costumes, where genders could blur freely into one another.

As the title of Bujados's 1914 *Spiritual Portrait* indicates, the drawing is a kind of metaphorical, symbolist self-portrait of the artist, whose psyche is split into two ambiguously gendered figures, situated in a highly artificial ornamental space. The artist appears in two guises, as an elegant and exotic androgyne with the heavy sensual features of a Pre-Raphaelite

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<sup>175</sup> Francisco Pablos Holgado, "Manuel Bujados," in *Diccionario de Pintores y Escultores Españoles del Siglo XX*, ed. Mario Antolín Paz, 545-546 (Madrid: Forum Artis, 1994).

model, who is posed like Beardsley's Salomé in *Peacock Skirt* [Fig. 24] and as a large satyr with delicate feminine features stepping on the edge of the other's robe. Like Burne-Jones's ephebes, Bujados's characters are sexually ambiguous: the seemingly feminine figure has markedly masculine features, while the "masculine" satyr wears make up and assumes a markedly feminine pose. The two figures are set against an abstract black background that features an elaborate vignette of a snake devouring a butterfly, possibly alluding to the artist being devoured by his own decadent appetites, in this perverse restaging of an intellectual battle between the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects of his personality. Within the ambiguous dream-like space of this drawing, queer characters are allowed to exist, without needing to conform strictly to one gender or the other, or to belong to any historical era entirely.

Bujados's image was constructed with an eye for anachrony that blended multiple historical periods and references and was read as such by his contemporary critics. In the 1915 article featuring this piece, Silvio Lago (nom de plume of José Francés) described the artist, using mixed metaphors, as a satyr from the Italian Renaissance, and as "a faun...who now drank from civilization, to contemplate the world from his spiritual summits." In addition to classical allusions and the use "languid feminine curves" guided by "ascetically mystical impulse," Francés comments upon the English influence in Bujados's work, "of the pre-Raphaelism, where Burne Jones was eclipsed by Aubrey Beardsley."<sup>176</sup>

The Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic of purposeful anachronism, coupled with ties to the perverse figure of Beardsley and the effeminate quality of the line, situate Bujados as a decadent dandy, an image that his self-portrait plays up, and raises questions about his sexuality. Francés goes

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<sup>176</sup> "Un fauno que hubiese conocido los bellos días del ceritaliano y que ahora ebrio de civilización, contemplarla al mundo desde sus cumbres espirituales." "Como fondo del retrato se encendía una al modo de vidriera prerrafaélica. Pero de un prerrafaelismo en que Burne Jones quedara exlispado por Aubrey Beardsley." In Silvio Lago, "Manuel Bujados," *La Esfera* 94, October 16, 1915, n.p.

further to remark that “At certain times in life, the sexual problem overtakes intelligent men like dragons do to princes in the fairy tales. There is more of the cerebral than of the experience in the[se] sickeningly obscene pages.”<sup>177</sup> Thus Francés suggests that the artist’s perversely sexual subjects were conjured up from his fantasy, rather than based in personal sexual experience.

And yet, Francés’s passage also hints at Bujados’s homosexuality, which he perceives as peaking through the *Spiritual Portrait*. The artist’s contemporaries would have viewed the figure of the satyr, especially in conjunction with that of the androgyne, as references to the artist’s homosexuality. Seven years earlier, in 1907, the artist and sculptor Ismael Smith, a queer dandy of Catalan Modernisme, exhibited a self-portrait sculpture, *Nano* [Fig. 25], with a small figure of a satyr (now removed) deposited between the subject’s legs. While the sculpture itself was seemingly inoffensive, the figure of a satyr instantly became the focal point of critical objection because the satyr at the turn of the century was read not only as a reference to the Dionysiac aspects of the artist’s personality, but also as an allusion to Smith’s own long-suspected homosexuality.<sup>178</sup> The iconographic association between satyrs and homosexuals persisted into the first few decades of the twentieth century. In 1951, the artist Diego de San José visually likened Bujados to the mythological personage by saying that “the clear gray of his eyes [was] like that of Néstor’s fauns.”<sup>179</sup> San José’s suggestion of similarity between Bujados and Néstor’s fauns evokes the connection between the satyr and the homosexual. Bujados published his *Spiritual Portrait* in *La Esfera*, a publication that was open to the expressions of

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<sup>177</sup> “En ciertas épocas de la vida, el problema sexual acomete á los hombres inteligentes como los dragones á los príncipes de los cuentos ensueño. Hay más cerebralidad que experiencia en las páginas enfermizante obscenas.” In Lago, “Manuel Bujados,” n.p.

<sup>178</sup> Josep Casamartina i Parassols, “El dandi,” *Ismael Smith: La Belleza y los Monstruos*, ed. Josep Casamartina i Parassols, 35-38 (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya).

<sup>179</sup> Cited in Enrique Chao Espina, “Manuel Bujados: Un Artista Olvidado,” *Abrente: Publicación de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de Nuestra Señora del Rosario* 7 (Coruña: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, 1975), 33.



decadent symbolism. For that reason, Bujados's image, which so seamlessly blended in with the images of Aubrey Beardsley and Gustave Moreau exalted on the pages of *La Esfera*, did not receive the same amount of negative publicity as had Smith's *Nano*.

Indeterminate surroundings and dreamscapes allowed the artist to create and market ambiguously gendered figures, bringing into circulation new ideas about masculinity that could not be articulated through the naturalist visual idiom. Early twentieth-century leading art critics, including Francés and Francisco Alcantára characterized Bujados's androgynous characters as "perversely" inspired by Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, the Byzantine symbolism of Gustave Moreau, and the orientalizing influence of Aubrey Beardsley.<sup>180</sup> Francés pointed out that Bujados's androgynes simultaneously exist in multiple temporalities, at the intersection of the past, the present and the future and constitute a part of our collective psyche:

His figures stand out from the unreal backgrounds, dressed, bejeweled in a fantastical way, that partakes of all the past centuries. You could not say in what year, already passed, the twin souls of these characters of Manuel Bujados are to be discovered. They are of yesterday and of today and of tomorrow.<sup>181</sup>

As Francés points out here, Bujados's concentration on dreams and androgyny as part of a dreamworld in his work creates a sensation of composite time, where one temporality is placed over the other without obscuring it. His characters have "twin souls" – they are androgynous – and, for that reason, they can exist simultaneously within the spaces of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

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<sup>180</sup> Francisco Alcantára, "Notas de Arte," *El Imparcial* 50, no. 17726, June 23, 1916, 3.

<sup>181</sup> "Sus figuras destacan de fondos irreales, vestidas, enjocidas de un modo fantástico, que participa de todos los siglos pretéritos. No podriais decir en qué año, hundido ya, se encontrarían las almas gemelas de estos personajes de Manuel Bujados. Son de ayer y de hoy y de mañana, porque son nuestros ensueños con humanas corporeidades y magnificados con aquella suntuosidad que quisiéramos todos legar la herencia de nuestros pensamientos [...]." In Lago, "Manuel Bujados," n.p.

Critics consistently remarked upon the fanciful, fantastical nature of Bujados's work, tying it with aristocratic refinement, and in doing so highlighting its queerness. Francés praised Bujados's subjects for their "high sentimental and sensual aristocracy" and for "the subtle, vague atmosphere of a dream [that] envelops the landscapes in which his faery characters move," calling his images "the pages of the poet, poisoned by literature and by civilization."<sup>182</sup> One of the prime examples of the dreamscapes that Francés esteemed so highly is Bujados's *Beyond Love*, a highly ornate scene, featuring a bejeweled kneeling femme fatale offering hearts to an androgynous ephebe. The ephebe, who is a direct descendent of Gustave Moreau's androgynous figures, is surrounded by garishly made-up androgynous angels, with a bearded, phallic, haloed deity overlooking the composition. Set within a fantastical dark space, the angels, the Salomé-like kneeling figure, and the bearded deity in the center draw on Christian iconography. And yet, the grouping of the angels that is at once a Botticelli and the Pre-Raphaelite-inspired rendition of three graces – and the emblem of the Medusa on the ephebe's breastplate evoke classical antiquity. These Christian and pagan narratives are blended together through the prism of androgyny and the language of Moreau and Beardsley to produce uncanny, dreamlike spaces – intimate, yet strange – for *Esfera*'s audiences familiar with foreign, decadent eroticism evoked in Bujados's images.

María Antonia Pérez Rodríguez has suggested a close identification on the part of Bujados with the androgynous and sexless beings that he created. According to Pérez, androgyne would have served as a projection of Bujados's desires and, for that reason, the artist "never presented androgynes as unhappy, disgraced or passive; on the contrary in his work they acquired an active role, displaying their bodies with pride, showing themselves to be masters of

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<sup>182</sup>"Sutil, vagarosa atmósfera de ensueño envuelven ahora los paisajes en que se mueven sus feéricos personajes [...]." In José Francés, "La Vida Artística," *Nuevo Mundo* 23, no. 1168, May 26, 1916, n.p.

their own perversity with nothing innocent about it.”<sup>183</sup> While jubilant, defiant androgynes mark Bujados’s early artistic production in *La Esfera* (1914-1926), the androgynes from his final years in Spain are far more melancholic. Shortly before leaving Spain for South America, Bujados produced an intimate (90 x 60 cm), unfinished painting in watercolor and color pencil, *Adolescent Dream* (c. 1930) [Fig. 26]. In this work, the artist represents a tormented view of androgyny as an impossible ideal, one that cannot be incarnated past childhood and becomes corrupted once sexualized.<sup>184</sup>

*Adolescent dream* portrays an erotic dream of the androgynous adolescent in the right-hand corner, whose sexual ambiguity is emphasized through the prominently protruding breasts and the multi-limbed figure, sexually ambiguous figure standing directly above him. In a reminiscent of El Greco’s *Burial of Count of Orgaz* [Fig. 27], the painting is divided into an earthly and a heavenly sphere. In this way, the painting could be read as a condemnation of hypersexual androgyny and the elevation of asexual androgynous ideal that is free of lust. The nude adolescents in their lower terrestrial realm appear in various pagan guises and are engaged in sexually suggestive activities, while their younger, angelic counterparts in the sky encircle the only female figure in the painting, who resembles the Virgin Mary. Some of the characters depicted in the lower register include Pan, Shiva, a snake charmer and a Medusa, traditionally female, who is reimagined in this image as an ambiguously gendered adolescent with the thick, sensual features of a Rossetti model. Both Pan and Shiva incarnate sexual excess, while Medusa, who is the embodiment of the devil in Christian symbolism, is the monstrous representation of

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<sup>183</sup> “O autor identificase con eles, recréase nestas enfermizas figuras, trevallá os seus corpos cun esmero que o leva a caer no formalismo máis amaneirado. Nunca presenta os andróxinos como infelices, desgraciados ou pasivos; pola contra, na súa obra adquiren un papel moi activo, ensinan con orgullo os seus corpos, mónstranse donos da súa nada inocente perversidade.” In María Antonia Pérez Rodríguez, “Manuel Bujados,” in *Artistas Gallegos Pintores: Rexionalismo II IV*, ed. Carlos del Pulgar Subín, 218 (Vigo: Nova Galicia Edicións, 1999).

<sup>184</sup> The painting is undated and appears to never have been exhibited in public until after the artist’s death

the Other, the image of castration and the dangers of hypersexuality. According to Almeida Cabrera, the lower register depicts the “Dionysian forces of sexuality” overtaking the sleeping adolescent, whereas the three figures closest to him (Shiva, the faun, and the demonic-looking Pan) represent masturbation.<sup>185</sup> The subject of masturbation is central in the preparatory sketch for Pan that the artist executed the same year as the painting [Fig. 28]. María Quiroga Figueroa has suggested, Bujados’s use of the black cobra and the figure of the medusa – both emblems of the devil – identify the participants with the realm of sin.<sup>186</sup>

In contrast to the dark, sexual forces operating below, the upper register represents pure, sublimated love through the use of the Christian iconography of the angels and the virgin, and most notably through the use of the asexual androgyny incarnated by the children. Unlike the figures in the lower register, the melancholic, naturalistically rendered angels look younger and bear no historicizing attributes that would link them with pagan mythology, thus emphasizing their seemingly more innocent state. In contrast to the symbolist exaltation of the androgyne as an asexual ideal in the works of Moreau or the use of the androgyny as an emblem of perversity in case of Beardsley, Bujados’s painting offers a troubled vision of androgyny that is both elevated and debased, a contradiction that the artist left unresolved in this unfinished work. There are no references to suggest that *Adolescent Dream* was ever exhibited during Bujados’s lifetime.

Even though some critics praised the exquisite qualities of line in Bujados’s work and its strange, fantastical narratives, others viewed the “fragility” of his art as an object of anxiety. For

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<sup>185</sup> Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 180-181.

<sup>186</sup> María Quiroga Figueroa, *Exposición: Doce Soños. Os Soños nas Obras de Museo Provincial de Lugo*, Wall text for the exhibition, January 31 – March 31, 2015.

instance, in his overall positive reception of Bujados, the art critic, Francisco Alcantára highlights the following aspects of his art:

Bujados has an exquisite feeling for art, for the artistic reality that History has left us. His works are like daydreams, woven with the colorful refinements and the pomposity of all the decadents of all ages. His canvases exhale plaintive and faint poetry [...] But the viewer would be more satisfied with these works, if the delicious sensations they provoke were not accompanied by the kind of anxiety that its extreme fragility produces.<sup>187</sup>

The adjective “refined” that also indicates decadence was often applied to both symbolists and the dandies during that period and was consistently used to characterize Bujados and his art. It is the mixing of the fragile and the refined that left the critics strangely unsatisfied, even anxious, when confronted with Bujados’s images. Another important critic, Antonio Ballesteros de Martos accused Bujados’s symbolism of artificiality (or excessive refinement) that resulted in an overall lack of humanity, as well as a kind of weakness or spinelessness in his art. Ballesteros complained of the excessive symbolism of Bujados’s art, saying that it was all literature, “all fantasy, artifice, alchemy; but without a nerve, without sensitivity. Pure intellectual abstraction, where there is no palpitation of humanity.”<sup>188</sup> The critics’ issue with Bujados works, namely their literary, fantastical, artificial and abstract character, exacerbated by the representations of an ultra-refined androgyne encapsulates many of the Spanish anxieties concerning symbolism as vague, foreign and unnatural.

By the end of the 1920s, with the rise of the Second Republic, Bujados’s decadent, oneiric imagery was no longer welcome on the pages of *La Esfera* or in any other Spanish

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<sup>187</sup> “Bujados posee un sentimiento exquisito del arte, de la realidad artística que nos ha legado la Historia. Sus obras son como ensoñaciones, tejidas con todos los refinamientos coloristas y las ampulosidades de los refinados de todas las épocas. Una poesía quejumbrosa y desfalleciente exhalan sus cuadritos...Pero el espectador se sentiría más satisfecho ante estas obras si los sensaciones deliciosas que suscitan no fuesen acompañadas por la especie de zozobra que produce su extremada fragilidad,” In Francisco Alcantara, “Notas del Arte,” 3.

<sup>188</sup> “[...] todo literatura...todo fantasía, artificio, alquimia; pero sin nervio, sin sensibilidad. Pura abstracción intelectual, en donde no palpita un halte de humanidad.” In Antonio Ballesteros de Martos, “Notas de Arte: Artistas y Decoradores,” *La Mañana* 10, no. 2998, March 9, 1918, 8.

publication, when its homoeroticism became suspect. Bujados's last solo exhibition in Spain took place in 1927 and received very little mention in the press, with the exception of one customarily favorable review in *La Esfera*.<sup>189</sup> A few years after the closing of his exhibition, Bujados, unable to market his work, left Spain in 1934 to settle in Buenos Aires, where he lived out the rest of his life in 1954. He never visited Spain again.<sup>190</sup>

Bujados's work as a prolific illustrator for some of the key early twentieth-century Spanish publications played an important role in the dissemination of symbolist-inspired imagery in Spain, contributing to reconsiderations of established norms of masculinity. Ambiguous dream spaces that brought together multiple time periods and styles functioned as queer temporalities, where narratives that were banned from many other forms of culture were able to function freely. The emphasis on the oneiric allowed the artist to create images guided by a kind of a dream-logic, where androgyny and same-sex desire become possible because it could be (and often was) read as a symbol, a stand-in for something other than itself, a possibility of being homosexual as a legitimate form of being.

### **Néstor: Androgyny as a Creative Force**

While Bujados immersed his viewers in dreamscapes, where the morality of the androgyne and homosexuality could safely be explained away, his contemporary Néstor Martín-Fernández de la Torre (1887-1938), better known as Néstor, openly embraced androgyny as a new masculine category in the regional context of his native Canary Islands. Néstor's artistic career and personality offer an opportunity to examine the ways in which discourses on sexual inversion, modernism and symbolist aesthetics functioned in early twentieth-century art

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<sup>189</sup> Anonymous, "El Fino Arte Alegórico de Manuel Bujados," *La Esfera* 14, no. 706, July 16, 1927, 16-17.

<sup>190</sup> Pérez Rodríguez, "Manuel Bujados," 211.

criticism. Néstor cultivated a self-image of an exotic dandy in his personal appearance, in his artistic production and in the ostentatious display of his own work. Néstor's career unfolded during the decades that followed Wilde's 1894 trial, when being a dandy in Europe and in Spain implied being a sexual invert. In addition to publicly casting himself as a dandy with all of its accompanying associations, Néstor's art also evoked the symbolist cult of the androgyne, where the ambiguously sexed beings, located simultaneously in the past and in the present incarnated fertile, new possibilities of gender through the temporal drag, staged in the regional space of the Canary Islands.

According to the art historian and Néstor scholar Saro Alemán, Néstor was the most significant among the very few active Canarian painters of the era who moved in Spanish and international modernist and symbolist circles.<sup>191</sup> Even so, Néstor's artistic production was based liberally in other movements and styles that included Baroque, modernismo, novecentismo and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Villena has pointed out that out of the three most significant Spanish symbolist artists (the other two being Anglada-Camarasa and Romero de Torres), Néstor's art remains the least studied.<sup>192</sup> Part of the reason why the artist's work has been neglected outside of the Canary Islands is the artist's homosexuality, the perception of his style as foreign and his subjects as Canarian rather than Castilian. Néstor's artistic production relocated the mythical point of Spanish origin from Castile to the Canary Islands and the garden of Hesperides, where the artist and his subjects could freely embody androgyny, as the original state of Spanish masculinity that predated the unification of Castile.

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<sup>191</sup> Saro Alemán, *El Pintor Néstor*, 9.

<sup>192</sup> Luis Antonio de Villena, "Visiones Decadentes en la Pintura "Fin de Siglo" Española," in *Simbolismo en Europa: Néstor en las Hespérides*, ed. Ana Vázquez Praga, 142 (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 1990).

In a 1924 overview of Néstor's artistic career, José Francés represented the artist as a queer figure in contemporary Spanish painting by emphasizing Néstor's ornate and exotic mode of self-representation, the decorative quality of his works and the overly opulent, pompous ways in which he chose to display them. For Francés, Néstor's art from the very beginning was marked by "baroquizing thought and sensibility" and opposed to the "austere, rough tradition of Spanish painting."<sup>193</sup> Moreover, as he suggests in his description of Néstor's viewing public, Néstor's audience too was composed of queer characters – snobs, aristocrats, and educated art dealers with a penchant for the archaic.

Néstor frequently participated in the decoration and set designs for ballet productions, including Manuel de Falla's *El Amor Brujo* (*Love, the Magician*) that was staged at Madrid's Lara Theater on April 15, 1915. His personal and artistic stylistic choices were greatly influenced by the gender-bending aesthetic of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*.<sup>194</sup> The popularity of *Ballets Russes* and the gender-bending performances of its leading dancer Vaslav Nijinsky contributed to the popularization of the androgynous and symbolist imagery in Spain at the turn of the century.<sup>195</sup> Art critics frequently remarked on Néstor's carefully cultivated exoticism that extended from his art to his persona. The French designer, essayist and Néstor's contemporary André Barre described the artist and his clothing styles as those of a decadent dandy:

He always arrives dressed in the latest fashion and his dresses are of the harmonious line that draws his profile and adheres to his body like a jersey [...] he shows, with ostentation, his fingers covered in rings with multicolored stones, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds of magical virtues [...] The decadent walks with languid gestures; he is tired because dreaming is tiring, and leaves behind a long trail of perfumes.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> José Francés, "Néstor y Sus Estrofas Atlánticas," *La Esfera* 10, no. 537, April 19, 1924, n.p.

<sup>194</sup> See, Lynn Garafola, "Sexual Iconography of the Ballets Russes," *Ballet Review* 28, num. 3 (Fall 2000), 71-77.

<sup>195</sup> For more information on the history of reception of *Ballets Russes* in Spain, see Yvan Nommick and Antonio Álvarez Cañibano, *Los Ballets Russes de Diaghilev y España* (Granada: Fundación Archivo Manuel de Falla, 2000); David Kopelson, *The Queer Afterlife of Vaslav Nijinsky* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 1997).

<sup>196</sup> "Va siempre a la última moda y sus vestidos son de una línea armoniosa que dibuja su perfil y se ciñe al cuerpo como un maillot...muestra, con ostentación, sus dedos cubiertos de sortijas con piedras multicolores, rubíes, zafiros,



Both the man and his work were described with adjectives such as “ambiguous” and “strange,” and identified as distinctly un-Spanish. In his extensive, laudatory writing on Néstor, Francés relied on gendered language to establish a binary between Néstor’s manner and personality and that of his contemporary, Ignacio Zuloaga. Zuloaga was portrayed as a tall, muscular, square-shaped Basque peasant, an honest and virile artist, who “fathered” the new generation of Spanish landscape painters, including López Mezquita, Manuel Benedito and José María Rodríguez Acosta.<sup>197</sup> In contrast to Zuloaga’s robustness and virility as an artist and a man, Francés highlights the strangeness of Néstor’s features, his race, his mode of dress and his speech. He described the artist’s figure as being “a little exotic” and “candidly provincial,” “with his face of a creole” and a body that was decorated with “strange jewelry.” By characterizing Néstor in this way, Francés casts Néstor a culturally and sexually ambiguous other. Unlike Zuloaga, Néstor had no heirs to his “unique manner.” The painter of “the ephebes with sensual, fleshy lips, of strong fauns with little mouths of exasperated sexuality that laugh at the conventional lies of a sickly supercivilization,” Néstor was at once “voluptuous and romantic, corrupt – corrupting rather – and naïve when it came to his subjects and models.”<sup>198</sup> Thus, Francés presents the Canarian artist as an exotic, provincial, and perverse figure, with no disciples, whose work is ultimately un-Spanish.<sup>199</sup>

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esmeraldas, diamantes con virtudes mágicas...El decadente pasea con gestos lánguidos; esta cansando porque el sueño fatiga, y deja tras de sí un largo rastro de perfumes.” Cited in Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 132.

<sup>197</sup> José Francés, *El pintor de la raza: Ignacio Zuloaga. Conferencia. May 22, 1917* (Madrid: R. Velasco, Imp. Marqués de Santa Ana, 1917), 6.

<sup>198</sup> Francés, “Néstor y Sus Estrofas Atlánticas,” n.p.

<sup>199</sup> Ramón Pérez Ayala, who was another important art critic and was associated with Generation of 1898, characterized Néstor’s work as marked by foreign influences and not as part of the Spanish School. He considered Néstor “Muy antiguo y muy moderno, con Veronés, el fuerte, y con Leonardo, ambiguo y cosmopolita, con los nipones, con Lucas, con Von Stuck, con Beardsley, con la historia universal de la pintura.” In Ramón Pérez de Ayala, “Sobre Néstor,” in *Ramón Pérez de Ayala y las Artes Plásticas: Escritos Sobre Arte de Ramón Pérez de Ayala*, ed. Florencio Frieria Suárez and José Tomás Cañas Jiménez, 122 (Granada: Fundación Rodríguez Acosta, 1991).

According to Bernardino de Pantorba's assessment of Néstor's art, Canarian painter belonged to the lineage of "the decorators," also known as "symbolists" or the artists "who worship the lie." In contrast to the realists, whom Pantorba viewed as the nerve of the Spanish painting, "the decorators" were a uniquely un-Spanish artistic breed: "they do not paint what they see, but what they dream, they do not copy; they invent, they do not enslave themselves to the natural; they go over it with the magnificent golden wings of fantasy." Despite this seemingly enthusiastic description of the decorators, Pantorba views them as superficial because, unlike the authentically Spanish artists, decorators do not touch the heart – they delight the eyes. In fact, in his seemingly glowing review of Néstor and his work, which, as he argues, cannot be judged by the realist criteria, Pantorba suggests that it is precisely the length to which Néstor is willing to go to display his art that makes his paintings appealing to other superficial beings. Pantorba writes,

Undoubtedly, the paintings gain much by the studied ostentation with which the artist exhibits them. Néstor resorts to everything: magnificent moldings, black velvet backgrounds, "favorable" lighting; whatever may make the intrinsic value of the painting stand out. A method that dazzles the bourgeoisie a little and puts numerous "oh's" and "ah's" into the mouths of the elegant imbeciles who do not appreciate the delicacy, but for the dish on which it is served.<sup>200</sup>

Thus, Pantorba ascribes sexual deviance to both the artist and his bourgeois audience, a deviance that is underscored by the skillful use of artifice on part of the artists in order to conceal the lack of substance to the delight of the "elegant imbeciles."

In 1909, Néstor painted *Prince Nestor's Wedding*, also known as *Epitalamio* [Fig. 29] for the 1910 International Exhibition in Brussels. The second title of the painting *Epitalamio*

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<sup>200</sup> "Es indudable que hace ganar mucho a los cuadros la estudiada ostentación con que el autor los exhibe. Néstor recurre a todo: molduras magníficas, fondos de terciopelo negro, luces "favorables"; cuanto pueda resaltar el valor intrínseco de la pintura. Procedimiento que deslumbar un poco a los burgueses y pone numerosos ¡¡oh!!, ¡¡ah!! En las bocas de esos elegantes imbéciles que no aprecian el manjar sino por el plato con que se les sirve." In Bernardino de Pantorba, "Artistas Españoles: Néstor," *Gaceta de Bellas Artes* 14, no. 239, May 1, 1924, 2-5.

references the ancient Roman nuptial song, while also alluding to the 1897 *Epitalamio*, a collection of decadent stories written by the artist's friend and modernist writer Ramón Valle-Inclán.<sup>201</sup> The Spanish arts commission prevented the painting from representing Spain in Brussels under the pretext that the near life-sized work was too large. In reality, the Catalan artists deemed the painting inappropriate for the exhibition because of its “Uranist sensibilities,” Uranism being another term used along with “inversion” to denote homosexuality. Joan Sacs writing for *El Poble Catalá* (1910), noted the artist's ability to transmit color, as well as his proficiency in painting and drawing, but concluded by saying that his painting has “puerile refinement” and “delinquent eroticism,” associated with the “invasion of modern French style” and is ill-suited to the incipient Catalan civilization.<sup>202</sup> And yet, the polemic surrounding the rejection of *Epitalamio* resulted in such great interest in the painting that it led to the work's display at the “Sala de Honor” (Room of Honor) in the Spanish Pavilion at the Brussels International Exhibition.

Steeped in the visual language of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the artistic language which influenced Néstor during his 1904-1906 sojourn in London, *Epitalamio* is notable for the androgynous characteristics of its subject[s]. In the image, the artist himself appears in two guises, at once as the dandy-like figure of the Prince clothed in fantastical Italian-Renaissance inspired black garb, and as his elegantly dressed “bride” surrounded by a group of bare-bottomed angelic children.<sup>203</sup> Further, he understood the ephebes in the foreground as signifying the passage of time, where the present is suggested by the smiling androgynous youth looking directly at the viewer, while the past is evoked by the ephebe whose back is turned and finally

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<sup>201</sup> Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 130.

<sup>202</sup> Joan Sacs, “La Pintura de Nestor,” *El Poble Catala*, March 30, 1910, 1.

<sup>203</sup> Almeida Cabrera argued that the portrait of the bride in the image is based on Néstor's sister Josefa, whose features were “very masculine” in Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 135.

the future is embodied by the ephebe whose head is completely obscured by the fruit.<sup>204</sup> *Prince Néstor's Wedding* marked a turning point in the artist's career by laying the foundations for his new pictorial language. According to Pedro Luis Rosales Pedrero, the painting was "a manual of an aesthete," a self-portrait where the Prince stylizes his own figure until it finally becomes that which he wants it to be.<sup>205</sup>

In *Epitalamio*, Néstor's subjects enact temporal drag through the performance of androgynous masculinity that is activated via a pastiche of multiple cultural levels, all of which are linked together by sexual ambiguity. While the black color of the prince's garb would have signified an initiate in occult science to the members of Rose+Croix – Néstor was affiliated with Peladán's during his sojourn in Paris – it was also inspired by Oscar Wilde's aesthete velvet dress from his 1882 photograph [Fig. 30] and draws on several other anachronisms from different ages.<sup>206</sup> Further, the representations of androgynes in this painting evoke the values of alchemy, promoted by Rose+Croix's leader Peladán, where the androgyne was a symbol of the unity of the opposites, gendered as male and female, that fuse in marriage and give rise to the noble, innocent soul, which in alchemic terms results in gold, the purest of all metals, and represents man's primordial union with God.<sup>207</sup>

Staged in a fantastical, Arcadian setting the image alludes to both the Italian Renaissance and classical civilization. By representing the psyche of the artist as split into male and female, surrounded by ephebes carrying fruit in reference to fertility, Néstor portrays the artist as an androgyne capable of both artistic production and queer reproduction. However, such a fertile

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<sup>204</sup> Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 135.

<sup>205</sup> Pedro Luis Rosales Pedrero, "Néstor Simbolista, Modernista, Atlántico y Esteta," in *La Tierra Exaltada: Néstor y Canarias* (Barcelona: Fundación "la Caixa," 2002), 16

<sup>206</sup> Almeida Cabrera, *Azul*, 132, 179.

<sup>207</sup> Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García, *Hermaphroditism, Medical Science and Sexual Identity in Spain, 1850-1960* (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 2009), 62.

union of the opposites is only made possible because Néstor's sexually ambiguous beings, much like Bujados's androgynes, inhabit the atemporal dream space of the artist's psyche, where the past and the present intersect one another.

Néstor further explored the idea of androgyny as a return to original unity in the regional setting of the Canary Islands in a series of paintings titled *Poema de la Tierra* (1934-1938). The *Poema de la Tierra* series was composed of six finished oil paintings is now housed in Museo Néstor in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and was as part of a larger unrealized series, *Poem of the Elements*.<sup>208</sup> Néstor's series constitutes a symbolist project par excellence that unifies poetry and painting with a metaphysical narrative. The images depict erotically charged, androgynous couples set against the vegetation of the Canary Islands. The exuberance and abundance of plant life in the paintings, such as *Poem of the Earth/Dragon Tree* [Fig. 31] and *Poem of the Earth/Cactus* [Fig. 32] imply fertility, whereas the inclusion of same-sex and/or androgynous couples suggests that the scenes could serve as a reenactment of the primordial moment of creation. In *Cactus* especially, the staging of the kiss between the two subjects creates a mirror-like doubling of the couple, seemingly recreating the happy primordial androgynes from Plato, prior to their tragic split into two sexes. The vegetation surrounding the couple, namely the cactus in the right-hand corner visually rhymes with the calves of the central figure that are painted with straight lines and rely on a palette of pale green shades, contributing to the sense of human and plant life blending harmoniously together. As Saro Alemán has pointed out, the setting for this piece is the Garden of Hesperides, which in Néstor's paintings becomes conflated

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<sup>208</sup> According to Alemán, Néstor initially intended to have 8 paintings for this series to match his other pictorial poem, *Poem of the Sea*, but did not live long enough to complete it. Alemán considers Néstor's 1914 *Satyr in the Valley of Hesperides* as a precursor to the series, but not a part of the actual *Poem of the Earth* series. In Alemán, *El pintor Néstor*, 53.

with the Canary Islands through the use of distinct types of flora native to the island.<sup>209</sup> Given the sexual ambiguity or at times male gender of both figures in the image, the paintings suggest a fertile, homosexual encounter in the primal spaces of the Canary Islands.

By relocating his visions of androgynous paradise, wrapped in symbolist idiom to the Canary Islands, in Néstor stressed the Canarian origins of his painting and decentered the Castilian masculine paradigm. Starting with *Epitalamio* in the early 1900s all the way through the *Poem of the Earth* of his final years, Néstor fashioned his art and his persona into an image of androgynous masculinity that was at once new and grounded in anachronism. Néstor's images embodied the temporal drag by activating a pastiche of various cultural layers within the spaces of the Canary Islands, a region that had previously been excluded from the Spanish canon of representation. In this way, Néstor's art worked to unsettle the official paradigm of rigid, austere, Castilian manhood and connect the new possibilities of gender to the real spaces of the provinces.

### **Morcillo: Androgyny in Medieval Drag**

The art of Gabriel Morcillo y Raya (1887-1973), one of General Franco's favorite painters, whose name has now fallen into obscurity, demonstrates how the queer imaging of Spanish masculinity circulated openly in the state-sanctioned venues to great critical acclaim. Morcillo painted many portraits of the General and other public figures of his era; however the themes that brought him acclaim as the "painter of the Moors" centered on large-scale depictions of sexually ambiguous adolescent boys dressed in fanciful, "oriental" garb. Given the homoerotic connotations of these works, it is surprising that General Franco favored them so

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<sup>209</sup> Alemán, *El pintor Néstor*, 55.

highly as to gift one such “Moorish painting” to Eva Perón during her official visit to Spain shortly after the end of the Civil War, an act that suggests a national pride in the painter’s works.<sup>210</sup> State support for sexually ambiguous representations of masculinity is significant because it suggests that even at the highest state levels the narratives of Castilian masculine virtue did not go unchallenged.

While the spectators today would likely read Morcillo’s compositions as manifestations of generalized orientalism bordering on kitsch, Morcillo’s original audiences understood them to be imaginative representations of Spain’s Arabic past. Through the gesture of “dressing up” young men from Granada as unspecified Arabic types and setting them against Grenadine backgrounds, Morcillo represented Spain’s Andalusian past as a kind of queer utopia. The skillful blending of styles and sensuous application of paint allowed Morcillo to imagine Medieval Andalusia (al-Andalus) as a type of queer *convivencia*, or peaceful coexistence of Arab, Jewish and Christian communities in Muslim Spain between seventh and fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of peaceful coexistence implied in Morcillo’s canvases was fraught with tension during the historical moment that followed Spain’s victory in the conflict between the colonial power, Spain, and the Berber tribes of the Rif Region of Morocco, known as the Rif Wars (1920-1927). In the wake of the conflict, the Spanish state promoted the rhetoric of “blood brotherhood” between the Spanish and the Moroccans through the mutually shared heritage of Al-Andalus.<sup>211</sup> And yet, the real terms of truce, hinted at in Morcillo’s queer fantasies, implied subjugation and emasculation of the Arabic culture by the Spanish state.

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<sup>210</sup> Luis Hernández del Pozo, “Gabriel Morcillo, Pintor de Cámara del Generalísimo,” *Semanario Nacional Independiente* 10.300, no. 301 (August 18-September 14, 1999), 26.

<sup>211</sup> Martín-Marquez, *Disorientations*, 57.

While the enthusiastic reception of Morcillo's works could certainly be attributed to the artist's adherence to the discourse on "blood brotherhood," his critical fortune was also tied to the Andalusian painter's claim to Spanish artistic tradition. Moreover, the legitimation of his works and himself as an heir to the virile "Spanish manner" of Velázquez made it possible for him to secure state sponsorship. The artist's brilliantly colored compositions were executed using an impasto technique that involved layering thick patches of paint one over the other and often featured sensual young men from the Granada neighborhoods of Sacromonte and Albaycín, dressed in orientalized clothing and set against spatially ambiguous landscapes. In the words of Eduardo Dizy Caso writing on the Spanish orientalist school, Morcillo's paintings "express, on the one hand, a great nostalgia for the lost paradise [Nasrid-dynasty Granada] and, on the other, the effort to win an impossible victory over the passage of time in his Granada."<sup>212</sup> Morcillo managed such an "impossible victory over the passage of time in *his* Granada" by staging a direct contact between his present-day audience and the imagined past historical moment through carefully rendered detail, as well as the use of ambiguous spaces, evocation of the senses and emphasis on the materiality of the paint.

Morcillo's obsessive interest in Granada – past, present and imagined – was a consistent feature of his work. Richard Cleminson and Francisco García Vázquez have made a persuasive argument for the existence of a well-established homosexual subculture in the early twentieth-century Granada that was part of a lively intellectual and artistic community based around a group of friends that included Federico García Lorca (Morcillo's close personal friend), Manuel de Falla and the poet and translator from Arabic Manuel Angeles Ortíz, responsible for some of

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<sup>212</sup> "Les tableaux de Morcillo expriment aussi, d'une part, une grande nostalgie du paradis perdu et, de l'autre, l'effort de remporter une impossible victoire sur le passage du temps dans sa Grenade." In Eduardo Dizy Caso, *Les Orientalistes de l'École Espagnole* (Paris: ACR Édition Internationale, 1997): 184.



the first translations of homoerotic Andalusian poetry.<sup>213</sup> These intellectuals were concerned with Andalusia's cultural heritage and promoted it in their own works. Within this context, Morcillo developed his own artistic personality that exalted medieval Andalusia, Granada and *convivencia* through the depiction of various cultures and artistic traditions mapped over one another. An important art critic Gil Fiol, a contemporary of Morcillo's, pronounces a common opinion of the artist's imagery when he says that is inspired by the heroic myth and "the whole of Granada, whose orientalism endures in the imagination of artists who know how to feel the past with the decorative brilliance of Damascus or Baghdad."<sup>214</sup>

And yet, Morcillo complicated the orientalist effects of his images by suggesting gender fluidity and sexual ambiguity in his subjects that were read within the context of Spain's Andalusian past. In his 1919 *Carmencilla* [Fig. 33] and later in 1927-1929 *Allegory to Bacchus* [Fig. 34], Morcillo dresses his androgynous-looking adolescent male models in gender fluid clothing as Moors and in case of *Carmencilla* as a gypsy, but without having them fully relinquish their contemporary identity as citizens of Granada.<sup>215</sup> In doing so, Morcillo's subjects reenact temporal drag by posing as their own historical ancestors in the present. Furthermore, his representations of young male bodies served as a foil against which the established binaries of heterosexual nationalism could be contrasted, and they complicated the traditional masculinity of the national body. The playwright Edgar Neville wrote in 1922 that Morcillo "has a predilection for adolescent male figures; for a man before he becomes one, before failing."<sup>216</sup> This curious

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<sup>213</sup> Cleminson and Vázquez, *Los Invisibles*, 230.

<sup>214</sup> "Granada entera, cuyo orientalismo perdura en la imaginación de los artistas que saben sentir pasado con la brillantez decorativa de Damasco o Bagdad." In Gil Fiol, "Gabriel Morcillo, el Pintor que Quiere Saber," *Estampa, Revista Gráfica y Literaria de la Actualidad Española y Mundial*, March 6, 1928, n.p.

<sup>215</sup> This painting is also sometimes referred to as *Carmela* and identified by contemporary art critics as drawn from a female model. For example of both, see Ángel Vegue y Goldoni, "El Secreto de Granada," *El Imparcial* 56, no. 19732, April 30, 1922, n.p.

<sup>216</sup> "[...] tiene predilección por las figuras de adolescentes; por el hombre antes de serlo, antes de fracasar." In Edgar Neville, "El Pintor Morcillo," *La Época* 3, no. 81, May 13, 1922, n.p.

description insinuates that Morcillo's figures are not just physically, but spiritually idealized men, as they have not yet had an encounter with disappointment, thus offering an alternative path for the Spanish masculinity in the post-1898 world.

The theatricality of Morcillo's composition in *Allegory to Bacchus* accentuates the sitters' identities through the use of costumes, props and lighting; the interactive nature of the staging is further enhanced by the generalized titles that the artists assigns them, which are inspired by the classical tradition. *Allegory to Bacchus* treats a popular classical theme, previously explored by Caravaggio and Velázquez. The two young men at the center and left in Morcillo's work provocatively meet the viewer's gaze, while the youth in a green turban, whose ornate dress, delicate features and dramatic pose draw on the conventions of female representation, has his arm around the central figure. The flatness of the backdrop, enhanced by the green-turbaned figure's sleeve that is shadowed against the middle-ground wall and the sculptural effect on the models' faces, contribute to the overall theatricality of the painting. Gender ambiguity of the central figure, theatricality of the composition and self-awareness of the protagonists point to the constructed nature of the image, as they remain disguised within the realist tradition. Thus, Morcillo calls attention to the ambiguity of gender and sexuality of his subjects, even as he subverts the possibility of any "truthful" queer encounter, through the theatricality and the premise of a staged setting, where his models pretend to act.

The use of historicized, sexually ambiguous characters in Morcillo's paintings troubled the virile historic constructions of Spanish masculinity as heterosexual and imbued with Catholic values, decentering Zuloaga's Castilian aesthetic and relocating Unamuno's *intrahistoria* to Andalusia. The artist was able to do so publicly by offering the images that were wrapped in the symbolist metaphor, as well as the visual idiom of the Spanish School. The adolescent bodies on

his canvases evoke the blend of Italian Classical tradition and the symbolist cult of androgyny, as practiced by turn-of-the-century photographers, including Holland Day and Wilhelm von Gloeden.<sup>217</sup> However, they were also inspired by the gender-bending performances of *Ballets Russes*. Even though Morcillo participated in the “foreign” Symbolist trends, marked as “queer,” his critics still perceived the artist as part of the Spanish School of painting, spearheaded by Velázquez. By visually alluding to the traditional Spanish manner and symbolist allegory, the artist staged utopian fantasies of medieval Andalusian *convivencia* as marked by sexual and cultural fluidity.

Present-day Spanish art historians and other scholars, including Lola Caparrós Masegosa, Francisco Calvo Seraller and Luís Antonio de Villena, describe Morcillo as a Symbolist. According to Caparrós Masegosa, Morcillo’s orientalist fantasies rely primarily on sexually ambiguous male protagonists in a way that evokes the symbolist cult of the androgynous.<sup>218</sup> According to Villena, Morcillo comes from a long line of the “damned” Symbolist painters that includes Burne-Jones, Beardsley, Gustave Moreau and Arnold Böcklin.<sup>219</sup> This is a curious characterization of Morcillo’s work, given its apparent lack of stylistic similarity with the artists listed above, not to mention its overall popularity and general acceptance.

Villena names the artist’s affiliation with symbolism as a primary reason for his neglect in contemporary scholarship. Being a symbolist positioned the artist on the losing side of the

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<sup>217</sup> For more information on homoeroticism in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century photography, see: Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art, and Homosexual Fantasy* (London: Routledge, 1993); Bryan E. Burns, “Classicizing Bodies in the Male Photographic Tradition,” in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, ed. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, 440-451 (Oxford, UK: Blackwell-Wiley, 2007); Georgia Alù, “Pan, the Saint and the Peasant: Southern Bodies Imag(in)ed at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” *Mediterranean Studies* 14 (2005): 203-224.

<sup>218</sup> Caparrós Masegosa, *Prerrafaelismo*, 125.

<sup>219</sup> Villena, *Vuelo*, 20

artistic battle, one that was won by the Impressionists – that is, painters whose critics aligned their modes of representation with materiality and empiricism. By the 1920s when Morcillo was becoming established as an artist, symbolists were no longer seen as progressive in Spain.<sup>220</sup> For that reason, popular and commercially successful Spanish artists with symbolist tendencies, who were not perceived as part of the avant-garde, including Néstor, Camarasa, Romero de Torres and Morcillo, sought economic refuge in portraiture and the arts sponsored by the state.

Morcillo's contemporaries made allusions to Morcillo being a "literary painter" (one of the expressions for a symbolist), but also a realist embodying the values of the Spanish School. The art critic Gil Fillool proposed to view Morcillo's work as marked by both the realism of Spanish impressionism, aligned with Velázquez and later with Zuloaga, and by the idealist tendency that synthesizes all previous artistic movements that served as precursors to impressionism.<sup>221</sup> Luis de Galinsoga describes Morcillo's art as "peregrino realismo" or "pilgrim realism." Galinsoga's choice of words positioned Morcillo as a symbolist by aligning the musicality of Morcillo's painting with the compositions of the Russian Romantic composer Aleksandr Borodin, whose 1887 opera *Prince Igor* was famously featured by *Ballets Russes* between 1909 and 1929.<sup>222</sup> By tying Morcillo's symbolism with the Spanish artistic tradition, Spanish art critics were able to discuss his art without pathologizing him, as was the case with Néstor and Bujados.

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<sup>220</sup> Villena, "Vuelo, Mundo y Transgresión de Gabriel Morcillo," in *Androginos del Lenguaje, Escritos sobre Literatura y Arte del Simbolismo* (Madrid: Valdemar, 2001), 394.

<sup>221</sup> Fillool, "Gabriel Morcillo," n.p.

<sup>222</sup> "El artista no se abandonó a los hados de la casualidad para crear; todo lo concibe con emoción reflexiva, muchas veces con dolorida emoción. Todo está previsto y todo está destinado para que coadyeve a la musicalidad del conjunto. La técnica de Morcillo – siendo como es de tan viva sensibilidad su arte – es una técnica intelectual, o, si el término parece demasiado frío, literaria... Así logra Morcillo el prodigio de la forma en sus composiciones pictóricas, que semejan sinfonías de Borodin... En sus cuadros, en los que siempre son temas las figuras de hombres, no puede cogerse el pintor a los cómodos arbitrarios que ofrece el manejo de líneas y escorzos (foreshortenings) femeninos." In Luis de Galinsoga, "Un peregrino realismo en la obra pictórica de Gabriel Morcillo," *ABC*, July 7, 1927, n.p.

The performative nature of Morcillo's images was closely aligned with the symbolist aesthetics of the *Ballets Russes*. Diaghilev's troupe performed in Spain between 1916 and 1918. Nijinsky's sexually ambiguous characters in *Scheherezade* (1909) and *Afternoon of a Faun* (1912), appeared before the public adorned with jewelry, coated in gold paint and dressed in exotic costumes, as an incarnation of androgyny, exoticism and, for many, perversity.<sup>223</sup> The *Ballets Russes*, conceived as a kind of *gesamtkunstwerk* or "total work of art," relied on wide on collaborations with artists, including the Spanish painters Picasso and Néstor. Spanish critics and graphic artists picked up on the androgynous aspects of Nijinsky's look. For example, in Fresno's caricature of the dancer as faun in *Afternoon of a Faun* [Fig. 35], the famous Spanish humorist portrayed Nijinsky in the guise of a queer mythological creature. In his drawing, Fresno played up the angularity of the artist's facial features, his neck, and clavicles, while further accentuating Nijinsky's waist and endowing him with breasts. The queer aesthetics of the *Ballets Russes* and Nijinsky, in particular, inspired Morcillo, who relied on opulent, highly ornamental clothing and pastoral-like settings to play up the sexual ambiguity of his subjects.

Like the gender-bending, orientalist performances of Nijinsky, Morcillo's characters perform Andalusian drag through the pastiche of cultural references, while winking at their audience, who is in on their ruse. In the painting *Ephebes, Fruits, and Pots* [Fig. 36] that was displayed at the 1928 Venice Biennale [Fig. 37], the artist invites his viewers to partake in the sensorial experience of "Arabic" Spain, while revealing his knowledge of the Spanish School to the critics.<sup>224</sup> The painting's pyramid-shaped composition features three young men in a pastoral

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<sup>223</sup> Some of the performances included *Dances of Prince Igor* (May 30, 1916, Madrid) and a private presentation of *Scheherazade* at the Court of the Lions at the Alhambra on May 20, 1918.

<sup>224</sup> Morcillo's works were displayed in the same room with the mythological paintings of symbolist painter and fashion designer Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo (1871-1949), the son of a famous orientalist painter Mariano Fortuny y Marsal (1838-1874).

setting, dressed in eclectic regional garb with Arabic (the fanciful turbans of the character on the right and in the middle), Hebrew (the kippah-inspired hat of the character on the left) and classical (the classicizing robe of the boy holding a pot) elements. Morcillo heightens the sensuality of the models through his vivid, gem-like use of color, the impasto technique, the models' gazes that interact with the viewer, their inviting gestures and the use of an almost sculptural chiaroscuro in their faces. The youths' glistening skin is painted with the same sensual brushwork as the shimmering surfaces of the objects. The juxtaposition of the figures with the elements of a still life, such as fruit, pots and jewelry, executed with equal attention to detail, dehumanizes the human participants into objects for the viewer's consumption.

The fanciful "drag" of the artist's subjects alludes to the classicizing homoerotic images produced by the early twentieth-century foreign photographers, including German Wilhelm von Gloeden [Fig. 38], whose book of prints appeared in Morcillo's personal library, and American symbolist Fred Holland Day [Fig. 39].<sup>225</sup> And yet, the subject matter of *Ephebes* and its application of chiaroscuro alludes to Velázquez's *The Feast of Bacchus* and makes the stylistic references to the old master's *Waterseller of Seville* [Fig. 40], with the accent on the polished surface of the pot and its prominent placement in the center of the composition, visually quoting the *Waterseller* in this manner. In fact, critics frequently compared Morcillo to Velázquez, as well as other Golden Age Spanish painters. By tying him to the Spanish School in this manner, they downplayed the foreign, symbolist currents in his work and situated him as an heir to the authentic "Spanish tradition." In paintings such as *Ephebes, Fruits, and Pots*, and *Slaves* [Fig.

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<sup>225</sup> According to the private collectors of Gabriel Morcillo's art, Juan Manuel Seguro Bueno and Francisco Jiménez Rodríguez, Morcillo owned a book of von Gloeden's photography and greatly admired the photographer. Interview conducted, July 15, 2015. For more information on classical and Mediterranean themes in homosexual photography at the turn of the twentieth century see: Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean*; Bryan E. Burns, "Classicizing Bodies in the Male Photographic Tradition," in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, ed. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, 440-451 (Oxford, UK: Blackwell-Wiley, 2007).

41], the artist blurs the lines between classicism and theatricality, while managing a tension between the specificity of sitters and generalization of allegory. In a much earlier 1916 article on the artist, the art critic Cerezeda brought together two of the key strands in the contemporary Spanish understanding of Morcillo. First and foremost, “Morcillo is from [of] Granada” – formed and shaped by his surroundings, he incessantly recreates Granada of past and present in his work. Secondly, Morcillo “has a genuinely Spanish palette,” as a spiritual heir to Velázquez, who somehow managed to escape the clutches of modernismo.”<sup>226</sup>

By simultaneously drawing on Velázquez, an artist who offered a guarantee of “*españolismo* (Spanishness) and good painting” as his model, and emphasizing local Andalusian landscapes and histories, Morcillo offered alternative constructions of Spanish history.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, by playing with the seventeenth-century painting convention of balance between naturalism and symbolism, the artist staged a homoerotic encounter between contemporary Spain and its own Arabic past. Ties to Velázquez and his manner, frequently emphasized by the critics, helped downplay the foreign influences and situate Morcillo as the heir to the “Spanish tradition.” Sensuality of Morcillo’s figures and the allusions to the Spanish past through clothing and setting of his protagonists as well as the stylistic references to the Spanish School, invite the viewer to partake in the sensorial experience of Spain’s Islamic past as queer.

Morcillo visually situated his art within both the symbolist and “Spanish” artistic traditions, and, thus, was able to enjoy the state patronage, while exhibiting his eccentric, orientalist subjects that suggested a more intimate relationship between Spain and its own

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<sup>226</sup> “Morcillo es de Granada,” “tiene paleta genuamente española,” In Cerezeda, “G. Morcillo,” *El Correo Español* (June 1916): n.p.

<sup>227</sup> Julián Gallego argued that at the turn of the twentieth century, drawing on the visual vocabulary of Velázquez allowed Spanish artists to present themselves as heirs to authentic Spanish painting. In Julián Gallego, “López Mezquita en la Pintura de Su Tiempo,” in *López Mezquita*, ed. Caja General de Ahorros y Monte de Piedad de Granada, 18 (Madrid: Museo Municipal, 1985).

Islamic past than the “blood brotherhood” rhetoric had suggested. In the 1934 *Slaves* – a painting that was presented at the 1942 exhibition of contemporary Spanish art in Berlin – the artist offers a subversive vision of Spanish masculinity, simultaneously inviting the viewers participation. His composition features three strikingly pale Spanish youths, presented as Arab in a sadomasochistic fantasy, located in an orientalized and ahistorical space of a bathhouse as suggested by the still life with the seashells in the foreground. The models are virtually nude, except for the turbans, jewelry and the drapery, which is placed strategically over their genitals. They are posing as prisoners, as suggested by the rope around the neck of the central figure, the shackles of the figure on the right and their overall nudity. The sexual ambiguity of the subjects is enhanced by the theatrical composition, that is the dramatic poses, lighting and the props used by the subjects in this painting. The still life with seashells implies, much like the fruit in *Ephebes*, that the figures are placed into the same category as objects, while also evoking classical art motifs.

The shackled figure’s pose bears a strong resemblance to the Venus of Modesty in the classical tradition, but also to Hiram Powers’ neoclassical 1841-1843 *The Greek Slave* [Fig. 42], which is based on a Venus type and depicts the subject in shackles that make the woman appear even more docile. Given this context, *Slaves* inverts the classical motif of a subjugated female subject, to now orientalized, male figure. Furthermore, the Arabic script on the plaque in the right-hand corner, which translates as “a youth,” is significant because it identifies the figures as male, but also infantilizes them by suggesting that they are not fully-grown men, but adolescents. Moreover, it plays with the conventions of the depiction of slaves in Spanish orientalist painting, such as Antonio Fabrés y Costa’s 1900 *A Thief* [Fig. 43]. The prominently displayed plaque in Fabrés’s painting states “my death is my punishment,” whereas the plaque in Morcillo’s image



simply describes the subjects as “youths,” presumably as slaves for sale. The sensuality and submissiveness of the youths or epebes invites the viewer to partake in the voyeuristic pleasures afforded by the adolescent male bodies. In situating his self-aware male models, one of whom is boldly returning the viewer’s gaze, as objects on display, Morcillo distinguishes himself from other orientalist painters by having the past actively and sensually engage the viewer. Unlike his Spanish orientalist predecessors, such as José Villegas Cordero, who often painted passive, semi-nude, Moroccan male figures, Morcillo’s *Slaves* engage the viewer directly. His characters break the third wall and invite participation in what, at least in *Slaves*, must be understood as a fantasy of bondage, domination and exploitation. The youths are set in an ambiguous space, posed for an erotic effect, and are not meant to look like they are engaged in a “real” activity – they are active participants in our fantasy, and they interact with us.

*Slaves* demonstrates the interactive qualities of Morcillo’s art that blur the distinctions between the real and the fantastical, past and present, exploitation and agency and demonstrate a seemingly ambivalent attitude towards Spain’s relationship to its own Arabic ancestry. However, as suggested by the painting’s participation in the state-sponsored exhibition of Spanish contemporary art and Franco’s continued patronage of the artist, homoeroticism and political ambivalence notwithstanding, homoerotic references were sublimated in the reception of his art was an object of national pride.

Morcillo secured state patronage and enthusiastic reception throughout his artistic career by finding a loophole through which to openly exhibit and market homoerotic imagery that was markedly different from the ideals of virile, heteronormative, Castilian manhood. And yet, by leaving out references to a social, historical or political context that might tell us something about the models, other than that they represent the cultural difference of “being Arab,”

Morcillo's work facilitates the projection of certain racial and sexual fantasies about the "difference" that Arab masculinity is assumed to embody at the crucial point of Hispano-Moroccan relations in the aftermath of the Rif Wars.

In his analysis of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black men, Kobena Mercer argued that a large part the visual appeal of Mapplethorpe's images stems from their racial fetishism. The racial fetishism that "eroticizes the visible aspects of racial difference, such as skin color, but also lubricates the ideological reproduction of 'colonial fantasy' where the white male subject is positioned at the center of representation by a desire for mastery, power, and control over the racialized and inferiorized black Other" can also be attributed to Morcillo.<sup>228</sup> Cultural, if not outright racial fetishism in the Andalusian artist's paintings constitutes an important factor in the visual pleasures that his compositions afford the viewer and become further complicated by the difference in class between the artist's own comfortable middle-class lifestyle and the poverty of his models.<sup>229</sup> In fact, Morcillo art has been neglected in contemporary scholarship due to its apparent alignment with European orientalist ideologies. The cultural historian Joseph Boone believed *Slaves* to be "an example of Western colonialist fantasy disguised as anthropological study."<sup>230</sup>

I suggest that a closer analysis of Morcillo's artistic production reveals a more complex, conflicted attitude towards Spain's Arabic identity. A fraught relationship between Spain, its Arabic past and its contemporary involvement in Morocco was at the center of the artistic production of many Spanish symbolists, including the Catalan artist Miguel de Viladrich, who

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<sup>228</sup> Kobena Mercer, "Just Looking for Trouble: Robert Mapplethorpe and Fantasies of Race," *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and Pornography Debate*, ed. Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh, 98-99 (London: Virago Press, 1992).

<sup>229</sup> According to the private collector of Gabriel Morcillo's art Francisco Jiménez Rodríguez, the artist's daughter, Isabel Morcillo, the artist's preferred models were poor young men from Granada, employed as bellboys, chauffeurs and waiters.

<sup>230</sup> Boone misinterpreted the painting, which he saw on the German postcard, as an anonymous photograph. Joseph A. Boone, "Vacation Cruises; or the Homoerotics of Orientalism," *PMLA* 110, no. 1 (January 1995), 91

claimed blood affinity with the Moroccans.<sup>231</sup> In 1924, Morcillo wrote an editorial, entitled “How to make an Hispano-African Exhibition,” where he urged his Spanish contemporaries to “restore a happy oriental spirit amongst ourselves” by reclaiming historically close ideological and phenomenological ties between Spain and Africa. Moreover, the artist suggested that the oriental spirit that was at the very root of the Spanish nation was alive and well in the contemporary Spain, led by Granada.<sup>232</sup> The increased self-orientalization of Andalusia, and Granada in particular, taken up by Andalusian intellectuals intertwined with the Spanish imperial agenda in Morocco. In *Disorientations*, Susan Martín Marquez has persuasively argued that the “rediscovery” of the Andalusian past, which coincided with the rise of “scientific racism” in Europe, was closely related to Spain’s newly emerged imperial agenda in the African continent and brought into focus the related crises in masculine identities, made manifest in the proliferation of images of androgynous beings and effeminate men.<sup>233</sup> In this context, Morcillo’s images made allusions to Spain’s Arabic past through the metaphoric language of European symbolism and that of the Spanish canon represented by Velázquez. Doing so, allowed Morcillo to secure both critical acclaim and state patronage while reimagining Spanish masculinity and colonial enterprises in queer terms.

By altering the origin point of Spanish history and retelling the narrative from a queer perspective, Morcillo’s images participated in the production of the counter-narrative of masculinity, much like the works of other Spanish symbolists, including Bujados and Néstor. Through the performance of temporal drag enacted by his subjects and inspired by the aesthetics

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<sup>231</sup> In the 1934 interview, Viladrich exalted the virtues of the Moors in Tetuán and their spiritual affinity with Andalusians. In Juan G. Olmedilla, “Viladrich, el primitivo” Catalán, en Tierra de Moros,” *Crónica* 6, no. 266, December 16, 1934, n.p.

<sup>232</sup> Gabriel Morcillo, “¿Como debe hacerse la Exposición Hispano-Africana?” *El Defensor de Granada*, September 7, 1924, n.p.

<sup>233</sup> Susan Martín-Márquez, *Disorientations*, 161.

of the *Ballet Russes*, turn-of-the-century gender-bending performances, European symbolism and the Spanish School, Morcillo imagery broke the third wall between Spain's Andalusian past and his contemporary audience, allowing an ongoing dialogue between the past and the present.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates that since the inception of symbolism in Spain, its critics approached it with suspicion and endowed it with the negative qualities of the feminine, the foreign, the sickly, the artificial, and the decorative in opposition to naturalism. In their critical appraisal of the symbolist tendencies, they identified the movement with foreign aesthetic ideals, derived from the British Pre-Raphaelites and the French Rose + Croix. Symbolism was by no means a marginal phenomenon, as demonstrated by the prolific artistic production of Néstor, Morcillo and Bujados at the state and local government level and wide distribution via illustrated periodicals, such as *La Esfera*. Moreover, Spanish symbolism in the peripheries was concerned with the construction of alternative historical narratives, where new types of masculine ideals began to emerge.

The artists presented in this chapter queered the national narrative on masculinity by drawing on the strategies of symbolism to introduce new masculine scripts in their art. Bujados engaged with artistic visions of androgyny as a modern form of masculinity within the oneiric spaces of the psyche in works that were mass-distributed through publications like *La Esfera*. In turn, Néstor explored androgyny as a productive and creative force through his painting, as well as through his own dandy persona. Finally, Morcillo, whose art was particularly favored by General Franco, engaged with the notion of androgyny to create the vision of the Medieval Andalusia as queer utopia in the wake of Spain's colonial conflict in Morocco. While symbolism

offered a way for the artists to queer the past and construct new ways of seeing masculinity through androgyny, something similar was happening in the erotic culture of the period, with the advent of drag performance (*transformismo*) in the early twentieth-century Spain. The subject of new forms of masculinity, as seen through the erotic-novel illustration and imaging of *transformismo* is at the focus of the next chapter.

**FIGURES**



**Figure 21**



"RETRATO ESPIRITUAL"

Figure 22

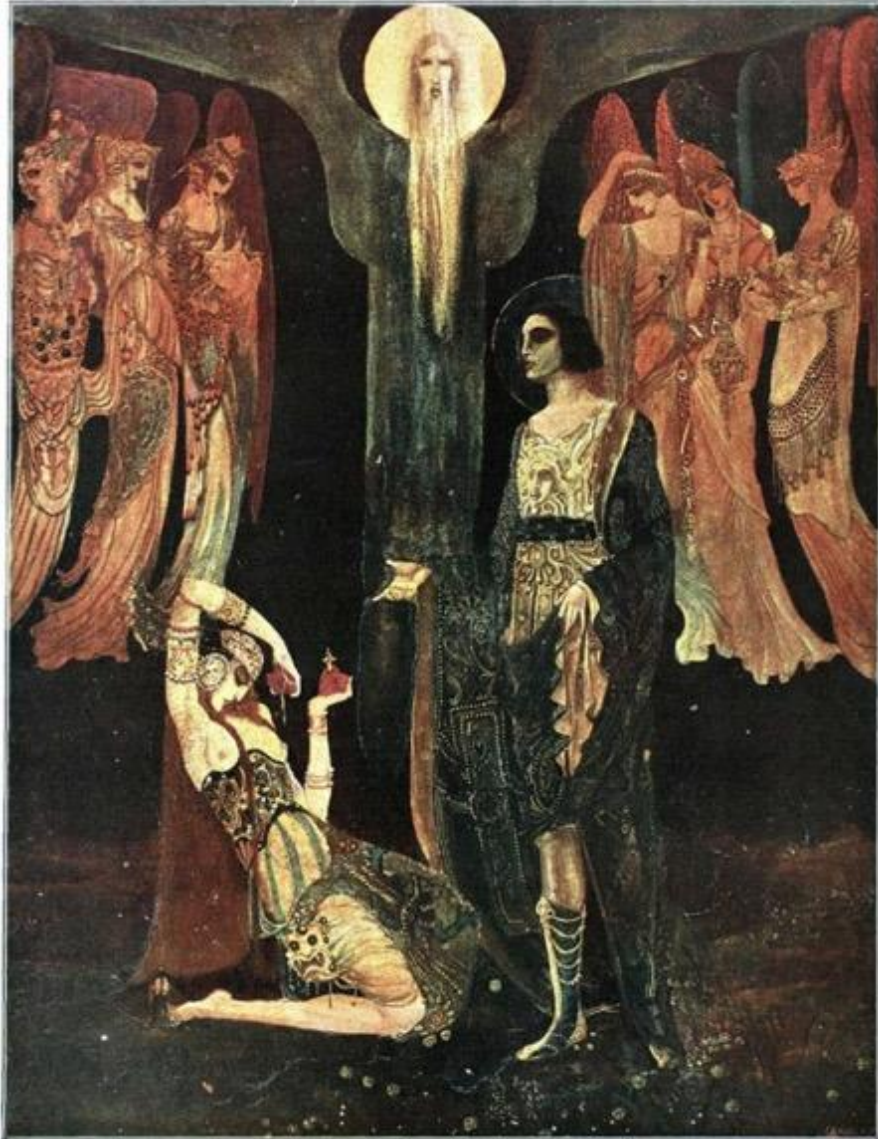


Figure 23





Figure 24



**Figure 25**



Figure 26





Figure 27



**Figure 28**

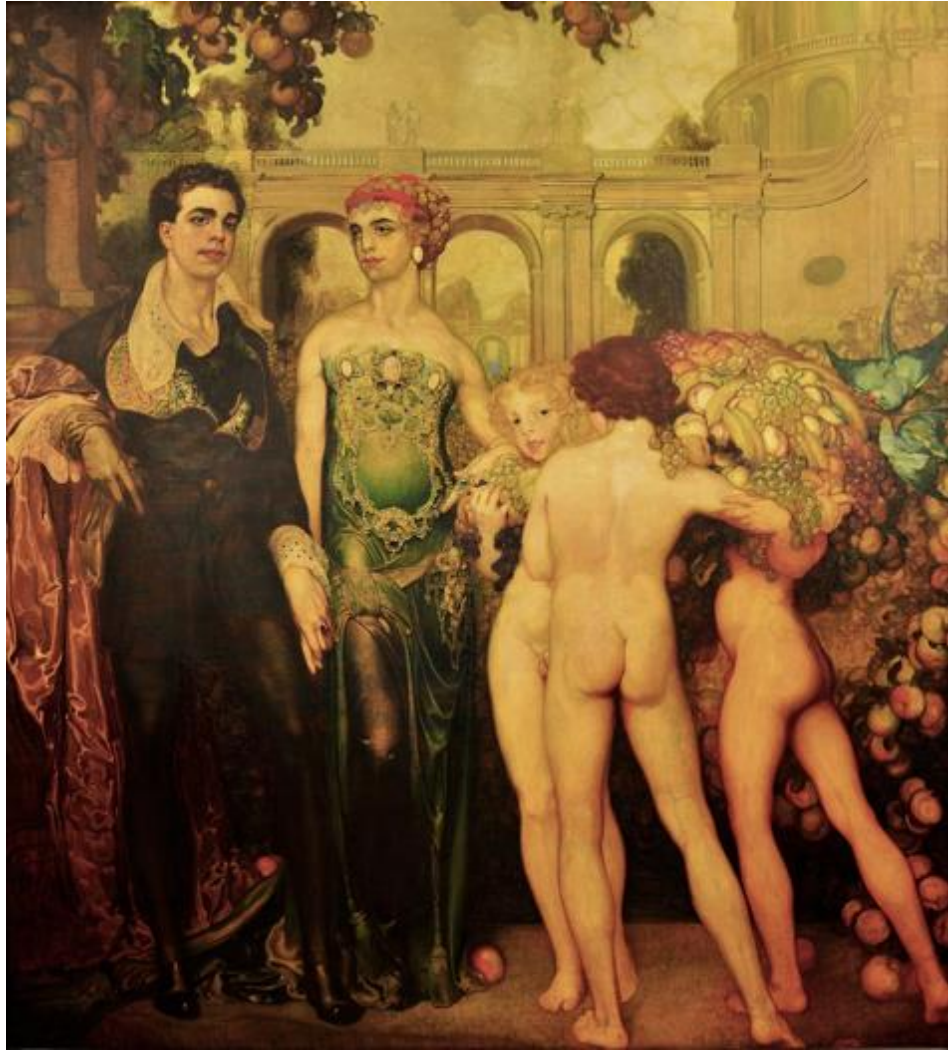
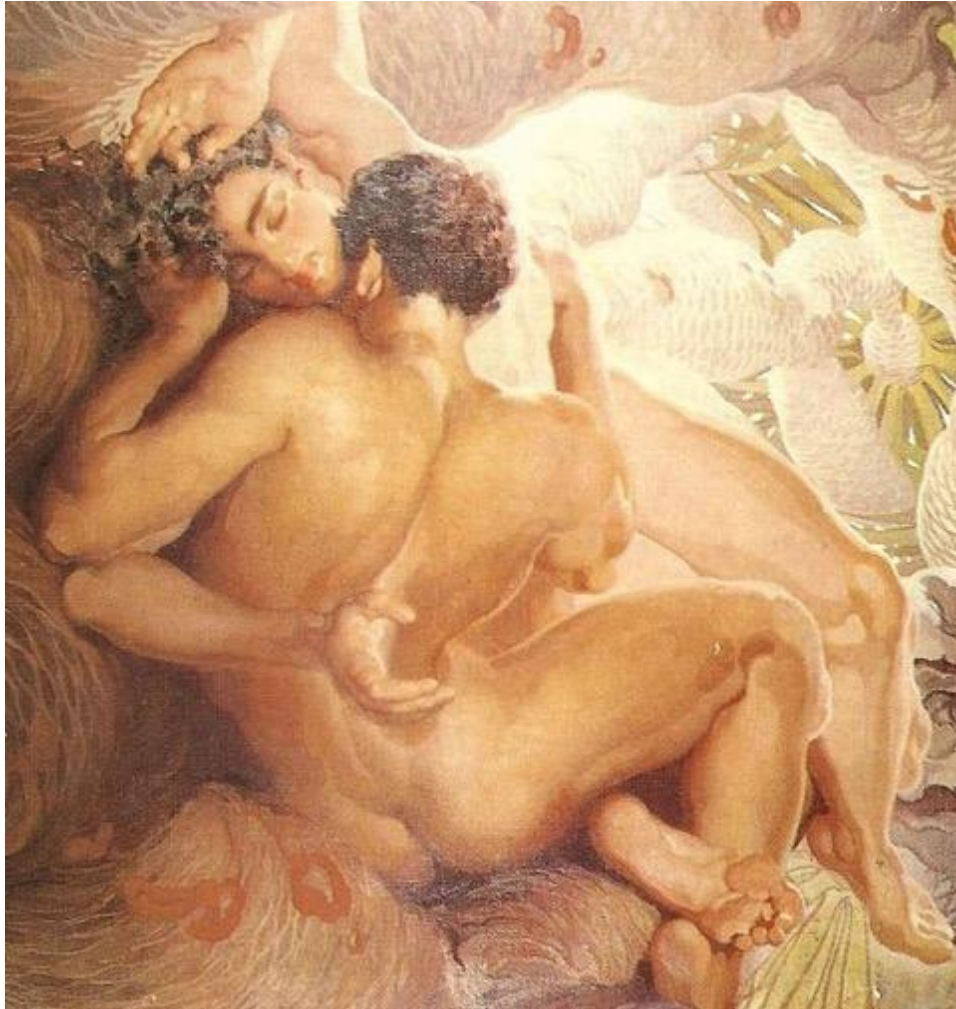


Figure 29



Figure 30





**Figure 31**





**Figure 32**



Figure 33

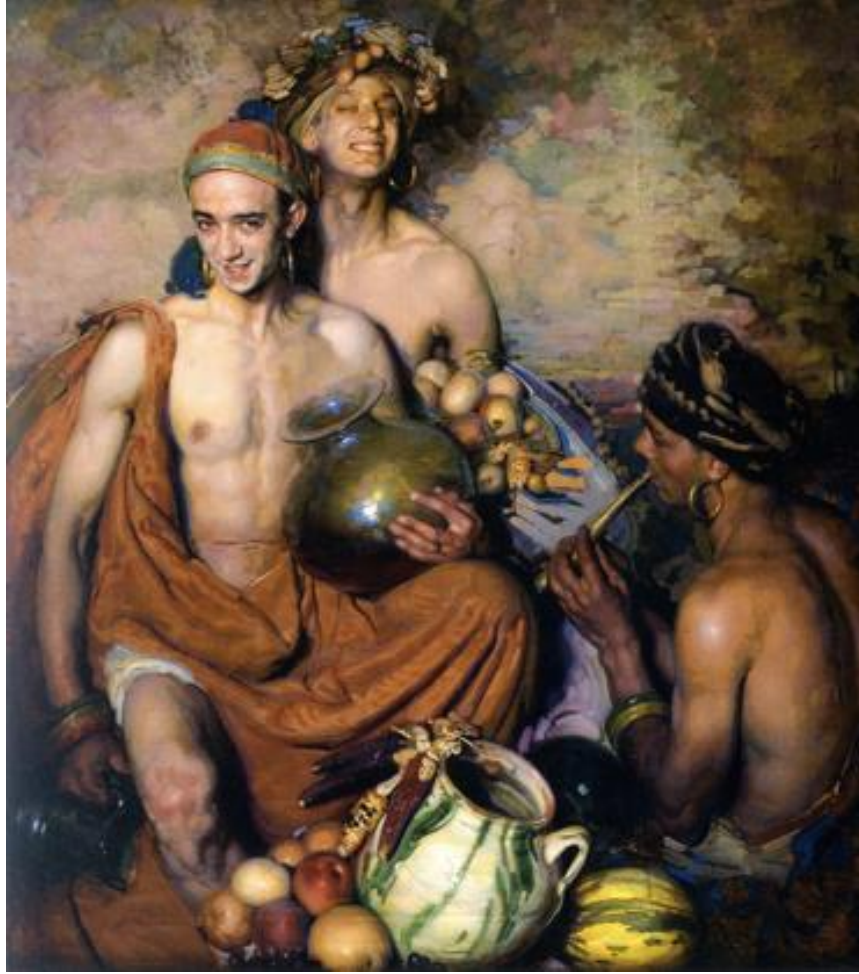




Figure 34



Figure 35



**Figure 36**



**Figure 37**



**Figure 38**



**Figure 39**

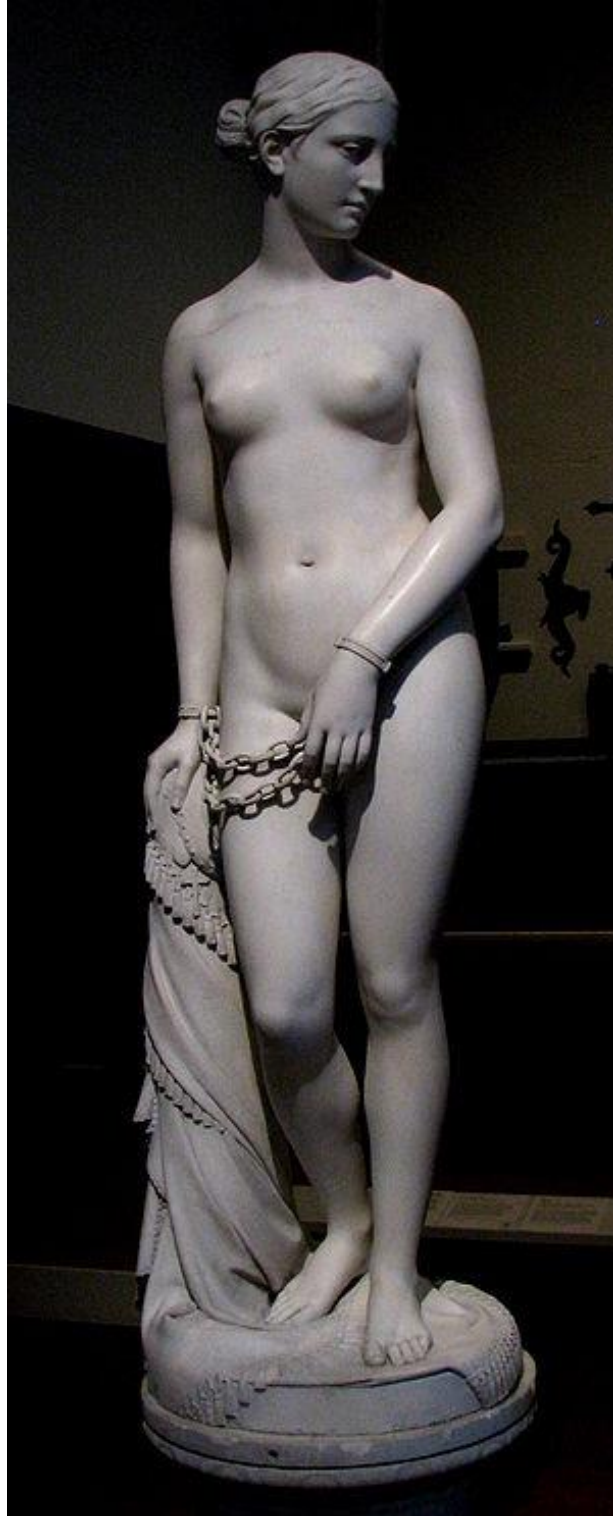




**Figure 40**



Figure 41



**Figure 42**



**Figure 43**

**CHAPTER III**  
**“THE POWER TO TRANSFORM:”**  
**FRIVOLOUS ARTS AND THE VISUAL CULTURE OF DRAG**

“Art has no sex, my friend.”<sup>234</sup>

**Introduction**

In 1928, the graphic artist known only as “J.A.” produced a drawing, titled *Logogriph* [Fig. 44] for a popular illustrated erotic magazine, *Muchas Gracias*, based in Madrid. J.A.’s image and its captions explore the sexual ambiguity of modern life. The composition features an androgynously dressed young woman in a state of reverie in the foreground. Her black hair is styled in a daringly short and highly fashionable Eton crop, popularized by Josephine Baker – with the cigarette in one hand and her left stocking and garter carelessly exposed – she is gently caressing the inner part of her thigh, gazing dreamily off to the side. Meanwhile, in the background, we observe a made-up and extravagantly dressed blond young man, with a beauty mark placed prominently on his chin, gracefully holding a cigarette in his ring-covered fingers. The two are engaged in a dialogue and the captions at the bottom of the page playfully invite the viewer to match the phrases to each of the speakers in the drawing: “I like women who are very womanly; Well, I like men who are very manly.”

The image and the caption assume that the audience would be composed of cosmopolitan, modern-day, Spanish readers that would have been exposed to the diversity of sexual practices through popular erotic culture of the period. This culture would have included cheaply produced erotic novels, graphic illustrations, fashion plates, and *espectáculos transformistas*, or drag shows that featured performers like Egmont de Bries and were increasingly popular in the 1920s Spain. Egmont de Bries was the stage name of Asensio Marsal

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<sup>234</sup> “El arte no tiene sexo, amigo mio.” Egmont de Bries in an interview to José Albuérne, in José Albuérne, “El Arte no Tiene Sexo,” *Cine Mundial* 10, no. 1, January 1, 1925, 52.

Martínez (1897- c.1953), one of Spain's most celebrated *transformistas* or *imitadores de estrellas* (imitators of the stars) as drag performers were called in Spain of his time. De Bries proudly displayed themselves as a talented performer and a skilled designer and epitomized uniquely modern artistic values.<sup>235</sup> Their performances were embedded in the lively *transformismo* culture of early twentieth-century Spain, which, in turn, participated in the much larger social and cultural impulse of re-evaluating gender roles. Along with the Spanish symbolist artists, such as Néstor, Bujados and Morcillo, *transformistas* explored gender as a performative category, using the androgynous ideal as a counterweight to the official images of manhood as austere, heterosexual, Catholic and Castilian.

A reader/viewer of *Muchas Gracias* would have been aware of *transformista* shows and probably well versed in the sexually transgressive imagery of the 1920s. For that reason, the reader would not have been taken aback by the same-sex attraction and gender ambiguity that J.A.'s drawing portrays. The editor of *Muchas Gracias*, the indefatigable Artemio Precioso, founded the short, illustrated erotic novel collection *La Novela de Hoy*, which played an important role in introducing the Spanish public to modern attitudes towards gender and sexuality. This erotic novel collection, along with several others, such as *Los Contemporáneos*, featured illustrated, gender-bending narratives, some of which were inspired by real-life *transformistas* like de Bries. Ephemeral materials including graphic illustration, performer postcards, and the illustrated erotic novel were embedded in the two intersecting cultures of the erotic and the frivolous arts and helped to disseminate new constructions of gender as a performative category in the early twentieth-century Spain.

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<sup>235</sup> In this chapter, I will refer to the drag performers with the pronoun "they," except when using quotations from the other authors, for all the reasons outlined in the introduction and to move away from the binary notion of gender.



This chapter explores the representation and significance of *transformismo* as an art of gender transformation in relation to discourses surrounding sexual inversion, masculinity and the frivolous arts, or arts that were deemed ephemeral and lacking in moral purpose. Moreover, it examines the significance of backwardness and modernity in the representations of *transformismo*, cross-dressing and sexual inversion in the Spanish visual culture of the erotic and the frivolous. I will draw from Butler's definition of drag as a practice that exposes the constructed nature of gender to explore the early twentieth-century reception of *transformismo* in the illustrated erotic novel and the frivolous arts, along with its potential to transform the contemporary understanding of gender and masculinity, as well as their limits. In order to analyze the tensions that arise through the interplay of the images and the text, I will use Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. I will do so by focusing on the ways in which the voices of the writer, the illustrator and the individual characters in the novel enter into the dialogue with each other and with the reader in order to express conflicting perspectives on masculinity.<sup>236</sup>

Nerea Aresti has argued that during the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), the Spanish national project came to be identified most fully with the model of noble homegrown, heteronormative masculinity, and yet it is during that time that the visual culture of *transformismo* was at its height. Primo de Rivera's regime focused on virility and procreation as key to national regeneration and relied on the suppression of sexual excesses, especially non-heterosexual relations, effeminacy and other forms of dissident masculinities, in the defense of

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<sup>236</sup> Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as a distinctive feature of the novel as a genre. Heteroglossia or plurality of voices enters the novel through authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, etc. These elements permit a multiplicity of social voices to enter in dialogue with one another. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 263.

public morality. Rebellious subjects who did not perform their masculinity adequately were expelled from the national project.<sup>237</sup>

Nevertheless, these dissident masculinities flourished in 1920s Spain in music halls, cabarets and other performance venues alongside the official culture of virile national masculinity fostered by Primo de Rivera's regime. These widely popular venues offered "all kinds of erotic waywardness," not just homosexuality, to their eager public.<sup>238</sup> I employ the turn-of-the-twentieth-century Spanish term "transformismo" instead of its present-day equivalent "drag show" to highlight the transformative power of these acts that enabled the early twentieth-century Spanish public to imagine gender as performance. More specifically, this chapter centers on the representations of *transformismo* and sexual inversion, as homosexuality was understood in the medical discourses during that period, in three contemporary illustrated erotic novels. I examine: *Hes and Shes or Shes and Hes* (1916) written by Carmen de Burgos and illustrated by José "Pepito" Zamora; *The Pain of Not Being a Man* (1924) written by José María Carretero ("El Caballero Audaz") and illustrated by Roberto Martínez Baldrich; and *The Fool* (1925) written by Álvaro Retana and illustrated by Guillén.<sup>239</sup>

In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Judith Butler argues that performativity, understood as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names," informs the ways in which the regulatory norms of "sex" constitute the materiality of bodies and materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative.<sup>240</sup> It is the cultural legibility of sex that qualifies a body for life within

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<sup>237</sup> Nerea Aresti, "Masculinidad y Nación en la España de los Años 1920 y 1930," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 42, no. 2 (2012): 63.

<sup>238</sup> Cleminson, *Los Invisibles*, 249.

<sup>239</sup> Carmen de Burgos, *Ellas y Ellos o Ellos y Ellas*, *Los Contemporáneos* 388, June 1, 1916, n.p.; "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre* (Madrid: La Novela de Hoy 3, no. 86, 1924); Álvaro Retana, *El Tonto* (Madrid: La Novela de Hoy 4, no. 158, 1925).

<sup>240</sup> Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 2-4.



the domain of cultural intelligibility. According to Butler, drag exposes the cultural construction of gender in the following manner:

Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself.”<sup>241</sup>

Thus, drag performance is an art form that deconstructs cultural gender norms, and yet it is also a practice that is deeply embedded in the notion of regression. According to Heather Love, in modern Europe allegations of inferiority against sexual and gender deviants, as well as women, colonized peoples, the nonwhite, the disabled and other stigmatized groups, all of which served as foil to European modernity were grounded in accusations of backwardness.<sup>242</sup> In this sense, when a male subject “assumes” a female personality or disguise, it is read as a regression to an earlier stage of human development and the setting aside of modernity. In contrast, for a woman to take on a masculine role is to assume a superior gender model and to become an image of modernity gone too far. Love argues that camp, which by the 1920s became a prominent feature of drag culture is ultimately “a backward art” that is characterized by the “tender concern for outmoded elements of popular culture and its refusal to get over childhood pleasures and traumas.” In that sense, “turning backward” constitutes a central myth of queer culture and queer existence as such, one that is grounded in the idea of loss and refusal to forget it.

The concepts of drag performance as a deconstruction of cultural gender norms, coupled with the notion of sexual inversion as regression, were embedded in the visual practices of *transformismo* and its representation in the early twentieth-century visual culture of Spain. To

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<sup>241</sup> Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” in *Inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss, 21 (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>242</sup> Love, *Feeling Backward*, 6-7.

begin, I will discuss the genealogy of the terms: sexual inversion, *transformismo*, sicalipsis and the frivolous arts and their history in Spain to suggest the ways in which these concepts informed the reception of *transformistas*. I will then offer a reading of the illustrated novels and their representation of sexual inverts and *transformistas* to illuminate the new possibilities for gender in the early twentieth-century Spain.

### **Sexual Inversion**

The terms “transformismo”<sup>243</sup> and “sexual inversion” became closely entwined during the early twentieth century, as the notion of the homosexual as a sexual invert with a soul that does not properly correspond to the gender of its body became widespread. While “transformismo” was primarily associated with biology and early theories of evolution, “sexual inversion” had medical and psychiatric roots. According to Jeffrey Weeks, the widespread adoption of neologisms such as “homosexuality” and “inversion” in the West marked a crucial change of focus in the sciences from the stigmatization of a homosexual act to the stigmatization of a state of mind.<sup>244</sup> The term “sexual inversion” gained traction in Europe during the late nineteenth century following the publication of Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886. In his book, the Austro-German psychiatrist states that the lesbian had a “masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom.”<sup>245</sup> Sexual inversion became a commonly used term in Europe and in Spain as a result of the publication of the British sex pioneer Havelock Ellis’s and John Addington Symonds’s study

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<sup>243</sup> “Transformism” or “transformismo” in Spanish was a commonly used term in Spain, but not in the other parts of Europe, during the early twentieth century to refer to performances that were accompanied by rapid changes of clothing.

<sup>244</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991), 15-17.

<sup>245</sup> Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, trans. F. J. Rebman (New York: Rebman, 1906), 411.

*Sexual Inversion* in 1897. Ellis defined “congenital sexual inversion” as a “sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional abnormality towards persons of the same sex.”<sup>246</sup> The distribution of Ellis’s theories of sexual inversion were popularized in Spain as a result of the complete translation of his works into Spanish in 1913.<sup>247</sup>

According to Richard Cleminson, the “Mediterranean model” of homosexuality prior to the emergence of the notion of sexual inversion was predicated on the active/passive divide embodied by the figures of the *marica* (effeminate fairy) and the *maricón* (active “homosexual”), rather than on sexual identities based on sex preferences.<sup>248</sup> To some degree the *marica* corresponded to and coexisted with the notion of a sexual “invert,” who was “believed to have inverted the roles of the sexes in terms of comportment, dress and voice.”<sup>249</sup> An invert was a person whose body and soul were out of sync with the cultural assumptions of gender, and the term did not initially focused on the invert’s sexual practices. The penalty for homosexuality disappeared from the Spanish penal code in 1848 and remained absent from its 1850, 1860 and 1870 versions, however, other laws, related to “escándalo público” or public scandal were used to prosecute same-sex relations.<sup>250</sup> As Richard Cleminson has pointed out, the fact that so few cases were brought to court against homosexuals during the first few decades of the twentieth century, and the judges’ dismissal of those that were, established the perception of homosexuality as an “aristocratic vice” that was identified with the cosmopolitan Spanish elite.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion* (London: Wilson and Macmillan, 1897), 1.

<sup>247</sup> Richard Cleminson and Efigenio Amezúa, “Spain: The Political and Social Context of Sex Reform in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories*, ed. Franz Eder, Leslie A. Hall, and Gert Hekma, 183 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>248</sup> Cleminson, *Los Invisibles*, 9.

<sup>249</sup> Cleminson, *Los Invisibles*, 10-11.

<sup>250</sup> Francisco Vázquez García, “El Discurso Médico y la Invención Homosexual (España 1840-1915),” *Asclepio* 53, no. 2 (2001): 143-161.

<sup>251</sup> Cleminson, *Los Invisibles*, 250.

In their 1901 study of Madrid's criminal underbelly, Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós and José María Llanas Aguilaniedo argued that "in every man there is a tendency or disposition to homosexual love, in the manner in which in all exist the somatic vestiges of the opposite sex."<sup>252</sup> According to Quirós's and Aguilaniedo's taxonomy of sexual inverts, or the so-called "pure inverts" (*invertidos puros*) is defined by the perversion of instinct that leads a man to desire the adoption of a female role not only sexually, but also in their daily lives.<sup>253</sup> In their view, pure sexual inverts manifest a proclivity for cross-dressing: "They like to dress and adorn themselves like women of the class to which they pertain, and many seek to be skilled in female labors and tasks."<sup>254</sup> Their embrace of feminine behaviors extends to feminine patterns of consumption. For instance, in one of their case studies, Quirós and Aguilaniedo discuss La Perejilera, a cross-dressing male prostitute, as a rare example of a pure invert, who sat aside the money he made only to spend it on "fantastical female dresses."<sup>255</sup> According to Quirós's and Aguilaniedo's study, pure inverts from birth exist, the inverts through vice are more common and far more dangerous to the public.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, Dr. Gregorio Marañón argued for the existence of innumerable intermediate types that exist between perfect male and female specimens, whose virility and femininity appears in many different configurations and sometimes assumes intersexual, undifferentiated and otherwise ambiguous forms – a cross-dresser being one of the potential manifestations.<sup>256</sup> Marañón represented sexual inversion as an intermediate stage in human progress to argue that "the sexuality of the inverts does not resemble

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<sup>252</sup> Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós and José María Llanas Aguilaniedo, *La Mala Vida en Madrid: Estudio Psico-Sociológico con Dibujos y Fotograbados del Natural* (Madrid: B. Rodríguez Serra, Editor, 1901), 275.

<sup>253</sup> Quirós and Aguilaniedo also refer to sexual inverts as "uranistas" throughout the study.

<sup>254</sup> Quirós and Aguilaniedo, *La Mala Vida*, 280-281.

<sup>255</sup> Quirós and Aguilaniedo, *La Mala Vida*, 275.

<sup>256</sup> Gregorio Marañón, *Tres Ensayos sobre la Vida Sexual* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Nueva Época, 1932), 125.

female sexuality...as much as it resembles infantile sexuality, with its polymorphic tendency and indeterminacy of the object, well described by Freud.”<sup>257</sup>

In contrast to Marañón, other medical authorities viewed sexual inversion and indeterminacy as an object of great anxiety. Dr. César Juarros argued that the “rising number of intermediate sexual types,” or more specifically “women with male psychology and men with a female soul” was a troubling new development in Spain, facilitated by the increasing popularity of sports. According to Juarros, it was in the interest of the Spanish people to prevent the formation of “beings with ill determined sexuality.”<sup>258</sup> Emerging theories of sexual inversion linked cross-dressing and androgynous fashion with homosexuality and contributed to the medical view of *transformismo* as a dangerous modern tendency to adopt female sexual roles afflicting the new generation of Spanish men. Even though the medical professionals viewed the inversion of gender roles and practices, reflected in *transformismo*, as outright dangerous, drag performance flourished as a popular form of entertainment in Spain during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

### ***Transformismo and Transformistas***

Unlike the medical concept of “sexual inversion,” the terms “transformismo” and “transformista” carried strictly biological connotations well into the second decade of the twentieth century.

Although “transformismo” was commonly used to describe the spectacles where artists rapidly changed their costumes and characters – both male and female – late nineteenth-century

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<sup>257</sup> Gregorio Marañón, *Los Estados Intersexuales en la Especie Humana* (Madrid: Javier Morata, Editor, 1929), 141.

<sup>258</sup> Dr. César Juarros, “Higiene Deportiva: Los Deportes y la Diferencia Sexual,” *Aire Libre: Revista Semanal Deportiva* 2, no. 5, January 15, 1924, n.p.

dictionaries of the Spanish language only listed one significance of the term as “a biological doctrine according to which animal and plant species transform into other species due to adaptation to the environment or by some other circumstances.”<sup>259</sup> Likewise, the dictionary use of “transformista” continued to refer exclusively to a follower of the aforementioned biological doctrine up until 1925, when it acquired an additional meaning as “an actor or a clown who very rapidly changes his/her clothes and types that he/she represents.”<sup>260</sup> Motivated by the impulse to represent Spain as a country marked by rigid gender distinctions and the absence of deviant sexuality, state-funded, Spanish-language dictionaries avoided all mention of gender-bending practices and overlooked the equally common use of the term “transformismo,” which referred to drag performances in the flourishing drag scene of the 1920s. Because the ephemeral art of *transformismo* did not leave an official record, our knowledge of the phenomenon and its cultural history in Spain remains limited and comes directly from those involved in this popular, yet invisible culture.

Álvaro Retana (1890-1970), who is the key source of information on Spanish erotic culture, popular theater and *transformismo*, traced the origins of the latter in Spain to the performances by the Italian quick-change artist Leopoldo Fregoli (1867-1936), who came to Spain in 1897.<sup>261</sup> Fregoli performed in the guises of over a hundred different characters, some of which were female. His fame was so great, that in 1927, the French psychiatrists Paul Courbon and G. Fail named a rare mental condition after the performer, the “Fregoli delusion,” which manifests itself in the individual’s belief that different people around him/her are actually a

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<sup>259</sup> Delfin Dondú y Puignau (ed), *Novísimo Diccionario Enciclopédico de la Lengua Castellana 4* (Barcelona: Espasa y Compañía, Editores, 1889-1899), 721.

<sup>260</sup> “Actor o payaso que hace mutaciones rapidísimas en sus trajes y en los tipos que representa,” in Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (Madrid: Talleres “Calpe,” 1925), 1190.

<sup>261</sup> A quick-change act is a type of a performance in which an entertainer (often a magician) takes seconds to change from one costume into another in front of the audience.

single individual in disguise a “Fregoli delusion.”<sup>262</sup> Following in Fregoli’s footsteps, another performer, the Frenchman Monsieur Bertin popularized the female impersonation of contemporary female cabaret singers. Their repertoire included successful imitations of international stars, such as the French performer Yvette Guilbert and the Spanish La Bella Otero. In 1906, Bertin made their debut in Spain at the Zarzuela Theater in Madrid and subsequently built a successful career as an “imitator of the stars,” or “imitador de las estrellas” in Spain.<sup>263</sup>

Monsieur Bertin’s success illustrates the increasing popularity and visibility of *transformismo* in early twentieth-century Spain, particularly in large urban centers like Madrid and Barcelona. However, Retana remarked bitterly that, even though Spanish attitudes towards foreign *transformistas* like Fregoli and Bertin were overwhelmingly positive, they did not extend to Spanish performers since that which was widely accepted among foreigners was not tolerated in Spanish men.<sup>264</sup> In her study on the popular erotic culture of the period, Maite Zubiaurre argued that the popularity of transvestite shows in turn-of-the-century Spain posed a threat to nationalist *castizo* heteronormativity. More specifically, *transformistas* called into question the masculinity of the Spanish male by suggesting that Spanishness itself was a costume that even degenerates could wear. In doing so, these performers supposedly jeopardized the virility of the nation as a whole.<sup>265</sup>

One of the first Spanish *transformistas*, Ernesto Foliers, was successful precisely because *he* was married with children and, for that reason, did not “scandalize” the public with *his* questionable sexuality. As Egmont de Bries’s biographer, Juan Carlos Usó has pointed out, male

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<sup>262</sup> Juan Carlos Usó, *Orgullo Travestido: Egmont de Bries y la Repercusión Social del Transformismo en la España del Primer Tercio del Siglo XX* (Santander: El Desvelo, 2017), 11.

<sup>263</sup> Carlos Fortuny, “Nacimiento, Esplendor y Ocaso de los Imitadores de “Estrellas”,” *ABC Madrid*, July 12, 1968, 24-25.

<sup>264</sup> Fortuny, “Nacimiento, Esplendor y Ocaso,” 24-25.

<sup>265</sup> Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic*, 287-288.

*transformistas* dressed in female clothing performed predominantly, although not exclusively, for the male audience, whose expectations for the male entertainers were similar to the female sicaliptic performers of that era.<sup>266</sup> Foliers's triumph was eclipsed by the rise of Egmont de Bries, a versatile performer who created all of their own costumes, as well as the costumes of other performers and many of the upper-class women in the audience. De Bries mastered the art of transformation so completely that they "became" Pastora Imperio, la Bella Otero, Chelito and all the other female *cupletistas* or cabaret singers that they imitated. In addition to imitating the stars, de Bries was also a renowned *cuplestista*, famous for popular tunes that included *Afternoons at the Ritz (Las tardes de Ritz)*, a *cuplé* that Retana wrote personally for the performer.<sup>267</sup>

In addition to the malleability of gender that could be switched at any moment, the *transformistas'* carefully composed, sexually ambiguous exteriors evoked the intermediate sexless state popularized by Marañón, playing into the notion of backwardness that was attributed to all sexual deviants. Retana's enthusiastic praise for Egmont de Bries's skillful imitation of La Fornarina<sup>268</sup> suggests that a perfect act of *transformismo* is a retrogression on the part of the performer to a past historical moment or gender construct that makes the past live again. Retana eulogizes Egmont de Bries for their unique ability to take on an antiquated, nostalgic model of femininity that is La Fornarina in the following terms:

In his genre, he is unique because up until now no other imitator of the stars has surpassed him in wit and amenity to cause in us a searing sensation that his masculine

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<sup>266</sup> Usó, *Orgullo Travestido*, 16.

<sup>267</sup> For more information on the significance of *cuplé* as a genre for expression of homosexual perspectives in early twentieth-century Spain see: David Pérez, "La Homosexualidad en la Canción Española," *Ogigia: Revista Electrónica de Estudios Hispánicos* 6 (2009): 55-71.

<sup>268</sup> La Fornarina was a stage name of Consuelo Vello Cano (1884-1915), a famous Spanish performer and cupletista, or singer of *cuplés*, which were popular Spanish songs. During her brief life and fifteen-year long career, she achieved great success in Spain and in Europe. Her admirers included the famous playwright, Jacinto Benavente and the brothers Antonio and Manuel Machado. She was recently deceased by the time that Egmont de Bries was staging his imitations of her.



quality disappears to become that of the imitated artist... When Egmont de Bries “does” la Fornarina, it would seem that this ill-fated princess of the *cuplé* is resurrected by a miracle from a Hoffman’s tale<sup>269</sup> to delight us with her winged frivolity and her unmistakable *chic*.<sup>270</sup>

In addition to imitating contemporary and recently deceased *cuplé* stars like La Fornarina, Egmont de Bries created visually striking female archetypes out of eclectic combinations of eighteenth and nineteenth-century fashions and manners. In his monograph on Egmont de Bries, Juan Carlos Usó states that, without “openly declaring himself to be homosexual,” the performer “simply represented his dissident masculinity by dressing as a woman and staging a choreography of very feminine gestures.”<sup>271</sup> In doing so, de Bries questioned the prevalent binary system that shaped hegemonic masculinity and normative femininity and defended their right to exercise *transformismo* as a way of being. Therefore, they can be considered one of the first Spaniards to come out of the closet and make a successful career of drag performance.

The reporter José Albuérne, who interviewed de Bries in 1925, remarked on the unassuming figure of this “Spanish caballero,” who, through “his phenomenal art,” could so remarkably transform into an “aristocratic lady,” “a flamenco dancer,” “a Pastora Imperio” or a

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<sup>269</sup> E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822) was a Prussian Romantic writer, famous as the father of Gothic horror. I argue that in referencing Hoffman, Retana gestured towards an outmoded author, but also towards the gothic tradition in literature that is characterized by regression, degradation and sexual ambiguity, as well as the “return of the repressed.”

<sup>270</sup> “En su género es *único*, pues hasta ahora ningún otro imitador de estrellas le ha superado en ingenio y amenidad para causarnos la sombría sensación de que su cualidad masculina desaparece para convertirse en la de la artista imitada... Cuando Egmont de Bries “hace” la Fornarina, diríase que esta malograda princesa del *cuplé* resucita por un milagro de cuento de Hoffman para deleitarnos con su alada frivolidad y su *chic* inconfundible.” In Álvaro Retana, *Los Favoritos de la Fama. Egmont de Bries. Su Vida. Sus Amores. Su Arte. Sus Canciones* (Madrid: Imprensa de R. Caro Raggio, 1921), 3.

<sup>271</sup> “Simplemente representaba su masculinidad disidente vistiéndose de mujer y escenificando una coreografía de gestos muy femenina. Acaso en aquel momento era la forma más artística y creativa – ante la ausencia de unos discursos sexuales transgresivos o transgresores que todavía no se habían producido – de reconocer y exhibir públicamente su homosexualidad. Y no solo cuestionó de este modo el sistema binario prevalente que conformaban la masculinidad hegemónica y la feminidad normativa, sino que además lo hizo recorriendo escenarios de toda España, originando allá donde actuaba contextos de ambigüedad sexual. Y, más aun, defendió públicamente su derecho a ejercer el arte del transformismo como modo de vida. En este sentido, bien podemos considerar que fue uno de los primeros homosexuales españoles en salir del armario, haciendo visible una naturaleza que entonces permanecía en la invisibilidad más absoluta.” In Usó, *Orgullo Travestido*, 112.

“princess full of distinction.”<sup>272</sup> When the reporter asked for the performer’s “real name,” de Bries responded with “What does that matter? The name...is the man. If you don’t find my answer to be pedantic, write it down: I am “me,” call me Edmond (sic) de Bries or Asensio Marsal Martínez.”<sup>273</sup> In this way, the *transformista* bridged the difference between their real-life and stage persona. As he was about to leave the interview, Albuerne noted that the artist’s remarkable “ultra-feminine distinction” was so powerful, that he felt a strong impulse to kiss de Bries’s hand and thus to break the codes of masculine conduct. At the very last moment, the reporter managed to resist the impulse, choosing to “extend his hand in a manly manner” instead. In response to Albuerne’s hesitation, Egmond de Bries’s “melodious voice” informed him, “Art has no sex, my friend.”<sup>274</sup> With this statement, the performer eliminated the gender distinctions, the blurring and the satire of which formed the basis of his career.

Egmont de Bries’s elaborately designed, masterfully executed and tastefully outmoded costumes, as well as their antiquated yet modern feminine aesthetic, as evoked in the 1924 photograph taken in Buenos Aires [Fig. 45], made them famous in Spain and Latin America well into the final years of the 1920s. Many other *transformistas* from his era played with the notion of backwardness, regression and the evocations of the past in their work. For instance, Antonio España quite literally embodied and queered the Spanish past.<sup>275</sup> In the mid 1920s photograph [Fig. 46], the dramatically made-up, bejeweled performer, adorned with large hoop earrings, is

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<sup>272</sup> Albuerne, *El arte no tiene sexo*,” 52.

<sup>273</sup> Albuerne, *El arte no tiene sexo*,” 52.

<sup>274</sup> “¿Mi nombre verdadero? ¿Qué puede importar eso? El nombre es...el hombre. Si no le parece pedantesca mi contestación, anótela: yo soy “yo,” llámame Edmond de Bries o Asensio Marsal Martínez.” In Albuerne, “*El arte no tiene sexo*,” 52.

<sup>275</sup> Unfortunately, due to the lack of documentation, very little information about the lives and even the birth names of the *transformista* performers is available. Photographs of Antonio España (birth name unknown), Wander (birth name unknown) and Egmont de Bries (Marsal) used in this chapter all come from Álvaro Retana’s personal collection, which is in the possession of his son Alfonso de Retana. To this day, Retana remains the unique source of information about *transformismo* and the *transformistas* in Spain.

frozen in an awkward dance pose, while looking out at the viewer. España is dressed in an “Arabic” drag, paired with heels; the eclectic nature of their fantastical costume and jewelry liken them to one of Morcillo’s adolescent characters. The combination of the performer’s oriental garb, reminiscent of Douglas Fairbanks’s costuming in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), with a curiously classicized setting, at once anachronistic and out of character for an “oriental” personage – works well with the *transformista*’s bold look of acknowledgement towards the audience, which suggest that their Arabic persona is a performance. In that sense, Antonio España and Morcillo’s Moors have much in common, as they perform temporal drag that embodies the Spanish past and enacts being “Arab” and being “Andalusian.” Moreover, Antonio España’s costuming, make-up and the backdrop featuring the classicizing setting of Greek columns evoked the surreal and eclectic style of the *Ballets Russes* performances. With these cultural references, the contemporary performer creates a kitschy blend of the two imaginary archaic settings of Arabic Spain and Classical Greece and maps them onto the contemporary *transformismo* show.

In a different manner, performers like Wander<sup>276</sup> toy with the notion of regression to create a kind of sexualized childhood in their performance and self-imagining. In a photograph of Wander taken in the mid 1920s [Fig. 47], the performer appears in the guise of a little girl in a fashionably cropped blond wig that is decorated with a large ribbon. They appear in a short, ruffled skirt, with their legs crossed, while clutching a toy rabbit as they stare seductively off into space, in a manner seemingly incongruent with the innocence of the outfit. Wander’s “childish” costume plays into the identification of cross-dressing with sexual inversion and the notions of regression associated with homosexuality.

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<sup>276</sup>Wander’s given name and dates are unknown.

Whether playing with the early 1920s fascination with Lolita-like figures, Spain's Arabic past or nostalgia for the hyper feminine archetypes of bygone eras, *transformistas* engaged with the notion of backwardness in their performances. Often conflated with sexual inverts, *transformistas* were an object of interest for medical experts, artists, illustrators, and writers, sparking a national conversation about the limits of gender. The public's reception of sexual inverts and cross-dressers was largely informed by the popular medical discourses, but also by the visual representations of transformismo filtered through the notion of "frivolous art" and *sicalipsis*.

### ***Transformismo* and the Queer Possibilities of the "Frivolous Art"**

The early twentieth-century visual culture of *transformismo* was embedded in the erotic culture of *sicalipsis* and the "frivolous arts." "Sicalipsis" was a commercially created neologism, derived from two Greek words, *sykon* or vulva, and *aleiptikos* or sexual stimulation. The term first appeared in print in 1902 in the Madrid-based publication, *El Liberal*, and became commonly used by 1904 to reference erotic novels, postcards and performances.<sup>277</sup> *Sicalipsis* was a visual culture phenomenon that was driven by mass production and distributed on a large scale in magazines, including the eponymous *Sicalíptico* that was started in Barcelona in 1904. As the etymology of the word suggests, *sicalíptic* materials often displayed non-normative and non-reproductive sexualities and the word "sicalíptic" became a synonym for all that was erotic, obscene and/or pornographic. While *sicalipsis* was a market-driven phenomenon, it was also a way of facing and negotiating the challenges of modernity and their accompanying social

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<sup>277</sup> Joan Manuel Soldevilla, *Psicalíptics. Erotisme i Transgressió a les Revistes Il·lustrades del Principi del Segle XX* (Sabadell: Museu d'Art de Sabadell, 2004), 11.

changes. These changes included the emergence of the women's rights movement and new advances in medicine and sexology.<sup>278</sup> Moreover, as Zubiaurre has argued, the erotic culture of *sicalipsis* was one of the very few cultural realms in Spain that openly embraced modernity, both sexual and technological.<sup>279</sup>

Unlike the visual and cinematic pornography that was clandestine but nonetheless available to high-class audiences who could afford it, *sicaliptic* materials were aimed at the bourgeoisie and had to pass official censorship filters in order to get published.<sup>280</sup> Censorship laws were relatively relaxed until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the government of Alfonso XIII (1886-1941) took measures to curtail erotic entertainment. In 1908, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Supreme Court (La Fiscalía del Tribunal Supremo) sent out a notice to its prosecutors with a set of criteria by which to judge the crimes against "morality, good manners, and public decency." The notice required them to pay special attention to "those who, with the exhibition of prints and engravings [...] offend moral or good manners [...] because the exhibition of an indecent figure or realization of an indecorous act is enough [grounds for punishment]." <sup>281</sup> The vague phrasing of the notice that prohibited the display of "indecent figure" or "indecorous acts" made it possible for censorship to further target writers and illustrators. Censorship became especially severe during the military dictatorship of General

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<sup>278</sup> Itziar Rodríguez de Rivera, "Backward Modernity? The Masculine Lesbian in Spanish Sicaliptic Literature," in *Kiosk Literature of Silver Age Spain: Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Zamostny and Susan Larson, 80 (Chicago: University Press, 2017).

<sup>279</sup> Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic*, 296.

<sup>280</sup> According to Soldevil.la, by the early twentieth century, proto-pornography industry that depicted graphic sexual acts was already in place. Cinematic and other kinds of pornography were not officially prohibited by censorship because they never tried, nor wanted come out in the open. However, following the double-moral of the epoch, King Alfonso XIII, as well as some other high-level officials attended private viewing, where pornographic films were projected exclusively for them. See: Soldevil.la, *Psicalíptics*, 18

<sup>281</sup> "[...] los que, con la exhibición de estampas y grabados, [...] ofendieren a la moral o las buenas costumbres [...] porque basta la exhibición de la figura indecente o la realización del acto indecoroso." In Marcelo Martínez-Alcubilla, *Boletín Jurídico-Administrativo. Anuario de Legislación y Jurisprudencia. Apéndice de 1908*. (Madrid: Administración: Arco de Santa María, 1908), 196.

Primo de Rivera. According to the Head of Censorship (1925-1930) Celedonio de la Iglesia, “In its eagerness to cover everything, censorship [...] has also been extended to pornography. And it was not the obscene, the clumsily impudent that went under the red pencil, but the periodicals, even those titled *sicaliptic*, that did not offer the public the blatant signs of lewdness, but were witty, the more or less cheerful or daring [those were the ones that fell under the red pen].”<sup>282</sup> In many ways censorship shaped the visual language of *sicalipsis* by forcing the illustrators to create works that were suggestive and risqué, rather than ones that were openly sexual.

I argue that under this censorship the frivolous arts converged with *sicalipsis* to create an unprecedented visibility of queer figures in Spain. The early twentieth-century *transformistas* were practitioners of the frivolous and *sicaliptic* arts, as well as subjects of *sicaliptic* literature and illustration. “Frivolous art” as an independent artistic category allowed marginalized and queer artists a new, publicly accessible form of expression that was capable of holding its own against academic and Modernist art.

The designation of “frivolous art” emerged in tandem with *sicalipsis* and was applied broadly to all seemingly minor forms of cultural and artistic production, including stage design, fashion, illustration, popular music, vaudeville and many other purely decorative and marginal forms of art and entertainment, deemed lacking in both substance and uplifting moral purpose.<sup>283</sup> Nevertheless, during the early twentieth century, the frivolous arts acquired greater significance as a mode of queer resistance to existing forms of art generated by the academy/the state and the artists affiliated with Modernismo.

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<sup>282</sup> “En su afán de abarcarlo todo, se ha extendido también la censura [...] a la pornografía. Y no era lo obscuro, lo torpemente impúdico lo que caía bajo el lápiz rojo, pues los periódicos, aún los titulados sicalípticos, no dan públicas y descaradas muestras de lubricidad (lewdness), sino lo ingenioso, más o menos alegre o atrevido.” Celedonio de la Iglesia, *La censura por dentro* (Madrid: Editorial Fragua, 1930), 284.

<sup>283</sup> The 1925 edition of *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* defines “frívolo” as “1) Ligerero, veleidoso, insubstancial. 2) Fútil y de poca substancia,” in Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 587.

Álvaro Retana's artistic and literary practices and cultivation of an eternally youthful persona offer insight into the ways in which frivolous art allowed its practitioners a way to articulate and make legible previously unfathomable constructions of manhood. In a book on the lives of the Spanish *vedettes* and *cupletistas* in early twentieth-century Spain, Retana explains that, according to the highest authorities of Castilian language, the word "frívolo" or frivolous designates that which is "light, lacking in importance, capricious." The frivolous arts encompass a multitude of practices, from light-hearted comedies and the exuberant performances of the *vedette* Celia Gámez, to the fanciful hairstyles and the sumptuous fashion plates of the *figurinista* (fashion plate artist), José "Pepito" Zamora (1889-1971).<sup>284</sup> Echoing Baudelaire's definition of modernity as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is eternal and immutable," Retana described "frivolous art" as one of the chief expressions of modernity, as all that is "ephemeral, inconsequential, fickle."<sup>285</sup> That being said, "in many circumstances [frivolous art was] preferable for its attractiveness and its cultivators to the proclaimed pure, uplifting and edifying art."<sup>286</sup>

Retana's writings on the subjects of frivolous art and *transformismo* offered new definitions of art and the artist, providing an alternative to the academic notions of art. Retana himself was one of Spain's most notorious dandies, an erotic novelist, a journalist who performed an act of "literary transvestism"<sup>287</sup> early in his career by writing under the penname of a liberated French woman "Claudina Regnier," fashion designer and writer of *cuplés*, to list only

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<sup>284</sup> Álvaro Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo* (Madrid: Editorial Tesoro, 1964): 9-10.

<sup>285</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* [1863], trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), 13.

<sup>286</sup> "No habrá que esforzarse mucho en establecer que el arte frívolo, conceptuado efímero, intrascendente, veleidoso (sic), es en bastantes circunstancias preferible por su atractivo y mantenedores al proclamado arte puro, elevado y edificante. In Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 10

<sup>287</sup> Alberto Mira referred to Retana's writings in the 1911 issues of *El Heraldo de Madrid* as an act of "travestismo literal" and argued that his literary and artistic production offers some of the first examples of camp tradition in Spain that traces all the way to the filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar. Mira, *De Sodoma a Chueca*, 155.

some of his credentials.<sup>288</sup> Retana cultivated and proudly embraced an image of himself as a “frivolous artist” throughout his career, openly saying that “success accompanied [him] in all his artistic enterprises.”<sup>289</sup> In an interview with his early biographer Julio Cejador, Retana stated, “I am not a transcendental artist, but a frivolous and mundane artist, who seeks to honestly distract the public.”<sup>290</sup> Retana and his circle of friends, which included an openly gay aristocratic decadent novelist Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent, the illustrator-designer José “Pepito” Zamora and Egmont de Bries, set aside the academic notion of a serious and studious artist concerned with pursuing eternal, masculine ideals of beauty, and replaced it with the model of an artist as a dandy and a dabbler. Retana favored the artist concerned with self-ornamentation and the beautification of himself and the others, exalting style over substance, ephemeral over eternal, and the artificial over the natural. Retana embraced the criticism of “frivolous art” as decorative, capricious and, therefore, feminine, incorporating it into his own masculine ideals.

In 1930, Álvaro Retana penned an article under the alias “Carlos Fortuny,” where he suggested that an artist who specializes in the depiction of feminine fashions, one of the arts considered to be “frivolous,” must be “feminine,” but not “effeminate.” The artist’s technical abilities are of minimal importance, whereas his lack of “masculine temperament” is crucial because, “All these combinations of exquisite colors, pretty trifles and flirty details can only be

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<sup>288</sup> See: Pedro Álvarez-Quiñones Sanz, *Dandis, Príncipes de la Elegancia. Un Recorrido por los Ambientes de antaño, de la mano de sus hijos más disingidos y excéntricos* (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 2013). In this fascinating study on the subject of dandies and dandyism, the author includes Retana’s biography (pp. 333-337) among those of several other European dandies, few of whom were Spanish. Curiously, several biographical details that he mentions in Retana’s biography were, in fact, myths that were cultivated either by Retana himself or propagated by one of his infamous biographers, the present-day Spanish dandy Luis Antonio de Villena in *El Ángel de Frivolidad y Su Mascara Oscura: Vida, Literatura y Tiempo de Álvaro Retana* (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 1999).

<sup>289</sup> “En todas mis actividades artísticas siempre me acompañó el éxito.” Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 22.

<sup>290</sup> “No soy un artista transcendental, sino un artista ligero y mundano que intentará distraer honestamente al público,” in Julio Cejador. *Alvaro Retana “El Petronio del Siglo XX”* (Barcelona: Ediciones Biblioteca Films, 1926), 16. In his preface to Retana’s *A Sodoma en Tren Botijo*, Antonio de Hoyos repeats Retana’s statement in his description of the author’s personality, “Pintaba, escribía, hacia música, y todo con cierta gracia arbitraria y sin pretensions de trascendencia.” In Álvaro Retana, *A Sodoma en tren botijo*. Publicación semanal literaria 1, no. 12 (Madrid: Saéz Hermanos, May 21, 1933), 2.



happily crystalized by a feminine artist.” And yet, a feminine artist according to Retana should not be confused with one who is effeminate, that is, one who identifies as female. Retana describes the “feminine artist” as the one who has truly loved and lived among women (much like Retana himself), learning to know their tastes, while still retaining his masculine identity.<sup>291</sup> Since the final decades of the nineteenth century, certain artistic trends, especially the ones aligned with decadence and aestheticism, which included Pre-Raphaelite art and Modernismo were condemned as effeminate in Spain. Critics contrasted the effete, visionary *modernistes* with their symbolist tendencies, discussed in previous chapter, with the “robust” and “masculine” art of the Generation of 1898.<sup>292</sup> Spanish symbolists who cultivated a “feminine” sensibility in more traditional art forms were problematized in contemporary criticism for their gender and sexual ambiguity. Like the symbolists, Retana elevated the femininity of the artist in decorative artistic pursuits that were previously deemed un-masculine, while engaging with the modern art forms outside of the established artistic canon. Thus, Retana’s artistic endeavors are located outside of both the traditional academy and the modernist artistic canon; rather, they exist in the realm of the popular culture.

Retana asserts that the modernity and popular character of the frivolous artists, in fact, bring them closer to the public than the modernists or serious painters. In *Historia del Arte*

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<sup>291</sup> “El dibujante de figurines no ha de ser un técnico ni un temperament varonil. Todas esas combinaciones de colores exquisitos, monadas, fruslerías y detalles coquetos solo pueden ser cristalizadas felizmente por un artista femenino. Fijese bien que digo femenino y no afeminado. Hoy que haber vivido mucho como artista entre mujeres para conocer sus gustos, y amarlas lo suficiente como hombres para saber dónde radican sus atractivos y hacerlos resaltar por medio de la toaleta. Un dibujante deficientísimo, como yo, puede ser un estimable creador de elegancias femeninas. Proque á la modista que ha de confeccionar, lo que le interesa no es la perfección del dibujo, sino la novedad de la línea y la combinación del color.” In Carlos Fortuny, “La Vida Frivola. Cómo se hace un dibujante de elegancias,” *Nuevo Mundo* 37, no. 1902, July 4, 1930, n.p.

<sup>292</sup> Richard A. Cardwell, “Degeneration, Discourse and Differentiation: *Modernismo frente a noventa y ocho* Reconsidered,” in *Critical Essays on the Literatures of Spain and Spanish America*, ed. Luis T. González-Del-Valle and Julio Baena, 33 (Boulder: The Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1991). Cited by Vázquez, *The End Again*, 60.

*Frívolo*, he recounts two stories of high art's failure to satisfy the demands of modern culture and its public. According to Retana, both Ignacio Zuloaga and Pablo Picasso – “one and the other indisputably distinguished painters” – suffered defeat when they were commissioned to create a stage design for the French Opera Comique. They failed to satisfy their clients because they were insufficiently frivolous, or as Retana puts it, they both “lacked the frivolity to produce a pleasant sensation in the spectator. Their figures turned out to be ridiculous, anti-theatrical, indigestible, which would not have happened to the designers, the other Hispanic artists, without the pictorial prestige of Zuloaga and Picasso.”<sup>293</sup> Retana implicitly identified both Picasso and Zuloaga with Spanish masculine virtues, as practitioners of the “high art” of painting (not the decorative arts), yet lacking in “decorative sense and visuality,” a lack that puts them in contrast with José “Pepito” Zamora, an artist, illustrator and fashion designer, whom the singer Lucienne Breval ultimately chose as Zuloaga's replacement, as well as Retana himself. Retana's assessment of the painters' work points to the failure of traditional art to adapt itself to modernity, a modernity that according to Retana and his like-minded contemporaries should also be reflected in more flexible constructions of gender.

Retana and Zamora embody the flexible new models of masculinity in their artistic and personal lives. They worked on fashion illustration, deemed decorative, frivolous and ephemeral, and, for that reason, unmanly. Similarly, they embraced the commercial aspects of artmaking, setting aside all pretense of lofty spiritual aims. Moreover, their explanations of their own artistic practices emphasized autodidactic learning and “dabbling” over academic study.

This becomes particularly notable in the artistic personality of Retana, who built his own

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<sup>293</sup> “[...] uno y otro pintor indiscutiblemente ilustres carecieron de frivolidad para producir una sensación grata a la vista del espectador. Sus figurines resultaban disparatados, antiteatrales, indigestos, lo que no habría ocurrido a actuar de diseñadores otros artistas de la hispanidad sin el prestigio pictórico de Zuloaga y Picasso.” Retana, *Historia del Arte Frívolo*, 17.

personal mythology on being a jack-of-all-art-trades. In a 1926 interview, Retana describes himself as follows:

I don't know music, but in the frivolous genre I have merited the applause of the public. I ignore the fundamental rules of drawing, but my works were featured in the National Exhibition of Fine Arts. I have not studied literature, but publishers laugh at my books, and the public consumes them...I live in art like a wild foal, invading the terrains that please me and without listening to the voices of those who protest my crazy wild-animal ways.<sup>294</sup>

Retana's self-description suggests that one way to be a successful modern artist, one who "merit[s] the applause of the public," is to embrace all artistic practices, to turn away from official artistic and educational institutions and to approach the public directly. One way to do so was through the production of popular erotic novels. The marketability of illustrated erotic novels enabled authors and writers to discuss new models of gender, including *transformismo* and sexual inversion, openly.

### **The Illustrated Erotic Novel**

The rise of literacy among the Spanish in the 1920s expanded and created new stratification in the Spanish literary market. Individually bound books were often too expensive for the working classes; however, both the middle- and the working-class readers were equally attracted to the cheap magazine format of the serialized novel. While the serialized, illustrated novel collections, such as *La Novela Ilustrada* (1884) headed by the famous writer Blasco Ibañez and specializing in the publication of foreign writers that included Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, existed in

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<sup>294</sup> "No sé música; pero en el género frívolo he merecido el aplauso del público. Ignoro las leyes fundamentales del dibujo; pero en la Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes figuran obras mías. No he estudiado literatura; pero mis libros se los rifan los editores, y los agota el público...Vivo en el arte como un potro salvaje, invadiendo los terrenos que me placen y sin hacer caso de las voces de quienes protestan por mis locas carreras de animal indómito." Quoted in Santiago Ibero, *Biografía-interviú* (Madrid: Celebridades de Veriétés 30, 1926), 7.

Spain during the late nineteenth century, such collections did not print Spanish authors. *El Cuento Semanal* (1907) was the first collection to focus on the serialized publication of contemporary Spanish authors in illustrated magazine format.<sup>295</sup> Thus, popular illustrated novel collections, including *Los Contemporáneos*, *La Novela Corta*, *El Libro Popular*, *La Novela Semanal*, *La Novela de Hoy* and *La Novela Mundial* with over a hundred titles each year, came to dominate the Spanish literary market.<sup>296</sup> Issues of popular short novels from *La Novela Corta*, *Los Contemporáneos* and *La Novela de Hoy* cost only 30 cents and had huge print runs of over 400,000 copies.<sup>297</sup> For 11 pesetas, which was the price of approximately three large novels published in book form, a subscriber to *Los Contemporáneos* could have access to two serialized volumes with a total of 500 pages each, along with fifty-two illustrated works.<sup>298</sup>

*Los Contemporáneos*, founded by the writer Eduardo Zamacois (1909-1926), published 898 issues to great public acclaim. Zamacois's collection used the two-column publication style, expensive papier couché and photochrome illustrations integrated within the text and was based on French models, which included magazines such as *Lisez-moi* (1905). *Los Contemporáneos* published Spanish authors that included Carmen de Burgos, who explored the subject of homosexuality and cross-dressing in *Hes and Shes or Shes and Hes* on the pages of the Zamacois's series. Burgos's work represents an important facet of the production of the short novels, namely their focus on eroticism. Like *Hes and Shes*, erotic novels often explored polymorphous sexuality that often deviated from heteronormativity and conventional morals and

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<sup>295</sup> Alberto Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa, "La Colección Literaria *Los Contemporáneos*. Una Primera Aproximación," *Monteagudo* 3, no. 12 (2007): 94.

<sup>296</sup> For more information on the short illustrated novel industry in Spain, see Sebastiana María García Mínguez, "Texto e Imagen: La Ilustración Como Componente Semiótico-Discursivo de la Novela Corta (1900-1936)," (PhD diss., Universidad de Murcia, 2008).

<sup>297</sup> Lily Litvak, *Antología de la Novela Corta Erótica Española de Entreguerras, 1918-1936* (Madrid: Taurus, 1993), 51.

<sup>298</sup> Álvarez-Insúa, "La Colección Literaria," 95.

painted sex as an alluringly European phenomenon that was foreign to Spain.<sup>299</sup> Moreover, Zamacois's collection emphasized a close relationship between the text and the image and relied on high-quality illustrations by the leading artists and caricaturists of the day, including Zamora and Federico Ribas, contributing to the increase in demand for illustration as a genre in Spain.

Artemio Precioso, the editor of an immensely popular erotic novel series entitled *La Novela de Hoy*, attributed the unprecedented success of his novel collection, which published 526 issues in ten years, to: beautiful book covers produced by celebrated graphic artists, such as Rafael de Penagos, Federico Ribas and Vázquez Galleja; good paper; nice illustrations and a prologue composed in the form of an interview with the author. Leading authors of the day published in *La Novela de Hoy*. Precioso paid more than anyone else in the business to both the authors and the illustrators – between 1,000 and 3,000 pesetas and an equal amount to the illustrator. In comparison to other short novel collections, which paid 500 pesetas, this was a fortune.<sup>300</sup> In addition to paying his authors and illustrators lofty sums, Precioso encouraged his writers to explore a wide variety of subjects, no matter how risqué. Precioso's liberal attitude led to the publication of novels on a wide variety of subjects that included *transformismo*, male and female sexual inversion and various forms of gender-bending practices. In this way, the *La Novela de Hoy* series contributed to the mass distribution of the new sexual mores.

The names of the Spanish erotic novelists, such as Felipe Trigo, Retana, José María Carretero (“El Caballero Audaz”) and many others who were greatly popular during their lifetime, fell into obscurity, whereas the writers of the Generation of 1898 became renowned and well-studied in contemporary scholarship. And yet, it was the former not the latter that enjoyed

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<sup>299</sup> Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic*, 16.

<sup>300</sup> Julia María Labador Ben et al. *La Novela de Hoy, la Novela de Noche y el Folletín Divertido: La Labor Editorial de Artemio Precioso* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 17.

greater popularity during their heyday. Trigo's first erotic novel, *The Innocents/Las Ingénuas* (1915), earned the author 100,000 while his yearly income between 1901 and the year of his death in 1916 was 60,000 pesetas, whereas the annual earnings of the university professor and writer José Ortega y Gasset during that same period were no higher than 3,500 pesetas.<sup>301</sup> Erotic novels owed their popularity to their titillating subject matter, the magnetic personalities of their authors (among them, Retana was a superstar), but also to the illustrations that accompanied the text.

In his analysis of the erotic-novel illustration practices in Spain during the interwar period, the art historian Carlos Reyero remarked upon the medium's curiously equivocal character, arguing that such images functioned as:

[...] materials meant to encourage interpretative ambiguity and, more paradoxically, to characterize [such ambiguity]: while in reality, the individual's sexual fetishes are often obsessively unambiguous, the images tended to repeatedly explore the uncertainty, so that the problem that finally arises is much more important than it may seem at first, insofar as it becomes a more important instrument in the definition of gender.<sup>302</sup>

According to Reyero, editors and writers were very much aware of the importance of illustration when it came to sales and, therefore, worked together to select the artist, as well as the scenes to be illustrated. Final illustrations were remarkably anodyne in comparison to the racy sexual scenarios they were meant to illustrate. Moreover, they had a decorative function and were largely subservient to the text, which had to be read in order to give coherence to the narrative.

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<sup>301</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, *Teoría y Mercado de la Novela en España: Del 98 a la República* (Madrid: Gredos, 1982), 82.

<sup>302</sup>[...] materiales destinados a fomentar la ambigüedad interpretativa y, lo que es más paradójico, también a caracterizarla: mientras, en la realidad, los fetiches sexuales de cada uno suelen ser obsesivamente inequívocos, las imágenes tendieron a explorar reiteradamente la incertidumbre, de manera que el problema que termina por plantearse resulta mucho más trascendente de lo que, en principio, pudiera parecer, en la medida que se convierte en instrumento más en la definición del género. In Carlos Reyero, "Equívocos plástico-literarios y caracterizaciones ambiguas en la novela erótica española de entreguerras (1915-1936)," *La Balsa de Medusa* 41-42 (1997): 63-66.

However, as I will demonstrate erotic novel illustrations did not always align with the authorial voice, but at times highlighted the illustrator's own ambitions.

Erotic novels and erotic-novel collections, such as *La Novela de Hoy* did not have a single ideological orientation and often published artists and authors with ambiguous and even conflicting points of view, such as those of "El Caballero Audaz," Baldrich, and Retana. The visual and literary components of *Hes and Shes or Shes and Hes* (1916), *The Pain of Not Being a Man* (1924) and *The Fool* (1925) provide excellent illustrative examples of the function of *transformismo*, sexual inversion and gender-bending as such in the Spanish erotic novel. In *Hes and Shes or Shes and Hes*, Burgos uses a moralizing tone to pathologize sexual inversion and links cross-dressing with the crisis of masculinity. In contrast to the textual representation of sexual inversion in the novel, Zamora's decadent illustrations demonstrate a more ambiguous attitude towards the subject, focusing on androgyny and cross-dressing as modern sexual and visual practices. Like Burgos in her novel, "El Caballero Audaz" paints cross-dressing and *transformismo* in particular as emblematic of masculinity in crisis. The author's male protagonist is painfully aware of the fact that his ability to perform as a woman makes him unintelligible as a "real man" to other Spaniards. Baldrich's illustrations, in contrast to Burgos's and Zamora's conflicting perspectives, work in tandem with the structure of the text to emphasize the split between the *transformista*'s masculine and feminine personae by representing his masculine personality in modern and minimalist terms and his female persona in atavistic terms through use of outdated styles and fashions. In contrast to the two novels described above, Retana's *The Fool* does not represent cross-dressing and sexual inversion as a painful crisis of gender/sexuality that hounds the protagonist. Instead, the author suggests that the sexual illegibility of his protagonist could function as a modern form of masculinity. In

tandem with the text of the novel, Guillén's illustrations play up the androgynous ambiguity of the main character and underscore the femininity of the bisexual narrator and her lesbian teacher. In this manner, Guillén's imagery enhances and highlights the sexual illegibility of Retana's characters and the sexual ambiguity of modern life as such.

All three novels were printed as part of two popular short novel collections: *Los Contemporáneos* and *La Novela de Hoy*. Whereas Burgos's novel emerged in 1916, both *The Fool* and *The Pain of Not Being a Man* were published in the mid 1920s in *La Novela de Hoy* with only a one-year difference in their publication dates. Both dealt with the subject of cross-dressing and the illustrators' works closely match the text, but only Retana's novel was subjected to a legal trial for obscenity. The examination of the three novels and their illustrations side by side will shed new light on the ways in which the early twentieth century visual practices of *transformismo* and their reception informed new constructions and pushed against the limits of masculinity in Spain.

#### Burgos's *Hes and Shes* or *Shes and Hes*: Cross-dressers, Inverts and the Nation in Decline

Carmen de Burgos, who often published under the pseudonym "Columbine" (1867-1932), was one of the first female Spanish journalists, a writer, a translator and a women's rights activist. Burgos's was a prolific novelist of over seventy-five short novels in some of the more renowned kiosk novel collections, including *El Cuento Semanal*, *La Novela Corta*, *La Novela Semanal*, and *Los Contemporáneos*. Michelle M. Sharp recently argued that Burgos's writing was guided by the reformist impulse and relied on melodramatic parables to disseminate the



feminist and humanist truths of Spain's distance from a modernity characterized by gender equality and social justice for women.<sup>303</sup>

In two of her novels, the 1910 *The Poison of Art* (*El Veneno del Arte*) and the 1916 illustrated novel, *Hes and Shes or Shes and Hes* (*Ellos y Ellas o Ellas y Ellos*), Burgos engaged with the subject of Spanish homosexual subculture. In *Hes and Shes*, which was first published in *Los Contemporáneos* and one of the case studies in this chapter, Burgos represented sexual inverts as simultaneously sick and tragic figures. Burgos's novel suggests that behind the façade of a fashionable life of decadence, Spanish sexual inverts suffer from the lack of acceptance from the rest of the society. In order to discover their place in life, they turn to the imitation of foreign models, but "lacking the expertise and knowledge of the foreigners who were well-versed in the refinements that the Spaniards attempted to imitate," they only become more detested and feared by mainstream society.<sup>304</sup>

The action of the novel, organized as a society tale that follows a problematic marriage that concludes with murder, and unfolds in four chapters that are set at the dance at the Hotel Magestic (chapter 1), the house of the aristocratic lesbian Luisa (chapter 2), without the mention of a setting (chapter 3) and ends at a Carnival party (chapter 4). The main characters in the novel are Manuel, his wife Mercedes, his friends Juana and her lover Luisa. Manuel has previously frequented homosexual circles and recently married a provincial woman, Mercedes, whom he loves romantically, but not sexually. Because sex is missing from her marriage, Mercedes leaves Manuel. The unattractive lesbian Juana, whose beautiful lover Luisa has broken up with her,

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<sup>303</sup> Michelle M. Sharp, "Carmen de Burgos: Teaching Women of the Modern Age," in *Kiosk Literature of Silver Age Spain: Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Zamostny and Susan Larson, 314 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>304</sup> Amy Bell, "Deconstructing the "Sleep-Death Equation" and the Misogynistic Marquis: Carmen de Burgos's "Ellas y Ellos ó Ellos y Ellas"," *South Atlantic Review* 71, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 35.

informs Manuel at the carnival that his wife is now romantically involved with Luisa. To defend his honor, Manuel goes out to the balcony and kills Luisa in a fit of jealousy and to the disgust of society.

The Spanish title of the book, *Ellas y Ellos o Ellos y Ellas*, suggests a confusion of gender identities, made manifest in the uncertainty of pronouns that ought to be applied to the members of the “third sex” (sexual inverts), as they blur the boundaries between the *two* sexes. In the course of the novel, homosexuality and lesbianism appear as distinguished by the queer subject’s pathological desire to assume the gender to which he or she “does not belong,” which ultimately results in a superficial imitation. The inverts in *Hes and Shes* emerge as tragic figures because of their pathological identification with the opposite gender, which causes them to imitate “incorrect” models of gender (i.e., men imitating women, women imitating men). In this manner, Burgos portrays homosexuality as an inversion of the sexual instinct that forces its victims to imitate inappropriate gender models, leading to the creation of unnatural beings, paradoxically female in their minds and superficially effeminate in their physical habits and appearances. Cross-dressing in the novel acts as one of the visible manifestations of this unnatural imitation.

Manuel consistently appears in the novel as “a woman dressed as a man” and is characterized as “one of these sad, weak, sickly types, who are physically degenerate.” Juana, an aristocratic lesbian, tells him the following:

You are sick, like me, because I, too want to be a *real* man. Our friends spend their lives imitating women, whom they hate; I envy men, whom I despise. This pain is ours. It is the illness of our generation, this weakness, these irresolute beings who do not know if they are Female or Male... We suffer the mistake of nature that gave us souls of the sex that is different from ours...we are not vicious...we are in pain... fatally in pain...And they laugh at us!<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> “[...] Tú eres un enfermo, como yo, porque yo, yo también quisiera ser hombre *de verdad*. Nuestros amigos se pasan la vida imitando á las mujeres, de las cuales abominan, yo, enviando á los hombres, que desprecio. Este dolor

Juana's speech offers an example of internalized homophobia, which is one of the central attitudes towards sexual inversion in the novel and is closely related to the ostensibly compassionate view of sexual inverts espoused by the leading medical professionals of the day, including Marañón and Juarros. Moreover, Juana shares their vocabulary as well, using pathologizing vocabulary of words and phrases such as "sick," "in pain," and "irresolute," and by referring to homosexuality as "the ill of our generation," much like the medical professionals of her time, who made direct links between modernity and gender confusion. Juana's own "illness" manifests itself in the disjunction between the "soul" and the "body." According to Juana, sexual inverts such as herself are the mistakes of nature and at the center of their internal conflict lies their impossible yearning to be of the gender of which they are not. As a result, all they can do is imitate the desired gender; however, such an imitation is always superficial and situates the invert somewhere in the middle between being male and being female, thus producing "irresolute beings."

Juana's monologue is marked by bitterness, exacerbated by her physical ugliness, which is a stereotypical feature of the lesbian in this period. Juan perceives her inability to be a "real" as the reason behind her inability to keep her female lover Luisa. In contrast to Juana, Manuel reads as feminine in every way, and surprises his acquaintances when he marries Mercedes to satisfy "a strange passion in his weak and feminine temperament."<sup>306</sup> Mercedes leaves him when she learns from her mother of sexual relations that are supposed to occur between a man and his wife and that are missing from her marriage. Manuel's feminine qualities, coupled with his lack

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no es nuestro. Es el mal de esta generación heredera de todas las virtudes que han formado esta degeneración, esta debilidad, estos seres indecisos que no se sabe si son Ellas ó Ellos...Sufrimos una equivocación de la naturaleza que nos dió almas de sexo distinto al nuestro...no somos viciosos...somos doloridos...fatalmente doloridos...¡ Y se rien de nosotros!" In Carmen de Burgos, *Ellas y Ellos*, n.p.

<sup>306</sup> Burgos, *Ellos y Ellas*, n.p.

of virility, cause others to subject him to humiliation, pushing him to prove his “manhood” by killing his ex-wife’s supposed female lover and Juana’s ex-lover Luisa, at the end of the story. In Manuel’s mind, the killing of his wife’s lover imitates the actions of “a hero of Old Spain,” which is representative of traditional Castilian masculine ideals, and thus should help him claim his manhood in the eyes of the public. And yet, the public interprets it instead as an act of “unjustified savagery,” therefore tying the literary character to the notions of degeneration and atavism already associated with queer subjects.<sup>307</sup>

Thus, the crisis of the sexual inverts in the novel comes to a tragic conclusion: Juana is left bitter and alone, while Manuel fails to reclaim both his manhood and his wife. The seemingly formulaic melodramatic plot of this society tale follows a marriage intrigue that culminates in the jealous husband being informed of his wife’s infidelity and murdering her lover. And yet, in Burgos’s tale, the plot comes with a gender-bending twist. It is the husband’s lesbian friend that informs him of his wife’s supposed infidelity with her own former female lover. Moreover, the husband has no sexual claim upon his wife, with whom he has not had, nor has any desire to have sexual relations. Thus, the husband’s attempt to reclaim his masculinity by murdering his wife’s lover is ultimately futile, because the competitor for his wife’s affections is female and, therefore, cannot be legitimately fought. The tragic conclusion of Burgos’s novel, its many plot points and the views expressed by queer characters place moral judgment upon the sexual inverts and represent their “imitation” of the “wrong” gender in pathological terms.

In contrast, Pepito Zamora’s ambiguous illustrations, including the cover of the novel [Fig. 48], which only tangentially follow the narrative and the characters, are marked by the deep sense of ambivalence. José de Zamora (1899-1971), a native of Madrid and better known to his

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<sup>307</sup> Burgos, *Ellos y Ellas*, n.p.

friends as Pepito, was a famous graphic artist, illustrator and clothing designer of his era. He studied under the symbolist painter Eduardo Chicharro and, like other notable illustrators of the early twentieth century – Rafael Penagos, Manuel Bujados and Federico Ribas – became famous through the publication of his drawings in illustrated magazines that included *La Esfera*, *Nuevo Mundo* and *Blanco y Negro*. Zamora’s decadent aesthetic was influenced by art deco and Aubrey Beardsley, but above all by the forms and colors of the *Ballets Russes* and the works of the painter-designer Leon Bakst. In 1919 Zamora met Diaghilev and his troupe in San Sebastián and, following the impresario’s advice, moved to Paris to further his career as a fashion designer. While living in Paris with his partner, known only as José the Greek, Zamora worked at the fashion house of the famous designer Paul Poiret. According to Andrés Peláez and Fernanda Andura, Zamora’s highly stylized, elongated, dream-like female figures participated in the tradition of representation or the “universo tan afrancesado” (the so-frenchified universe) and were read in Spain as such. In 1919, Zamora opened his own successful fashion house on Serrano Street in Madrid, as he continued to create costumes for the leading female performers of the era, including Tórtola Valencia, Concha Piquer and Eva Stachino.<sup>308</sup> Zamora’s artistic ties to France, his prolific career in the fashion industry, as well as his reputation as a sexual invert, made his choice as an illustrator of Burgos’s novella especially curious. By illustrating a work that is centered on the sympathetic representation of sexual inversion that is, nevertheless, tinged with homophobia, Zamora contributed his own voice as a sexually marginalized subject to the cultural representations of dissident masculinities in Spain.

For the cover of *Hes and Shes*, Zamora sketched a composition that features two heavily made-up figures: the one in the foreground is wearing a historicizing dress and carrying flowers;

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<sup>308</sup> Andrés Peláez and Fernanda Andura, “Jose Zamora,” *Aproximación al Arte Frívolo. Tórtola Valencia y José de Zamora*, ed. Andrés Peláez and Fernanda Andura, 58-59 (Consejería de Cultura: Madrid, 1989).

the other, at once masculine and androgynous, is wrapped in a bright red cloak that repeats the color of the flowers. The two figures are staged against a pastoral background that features abstracted clouds, foliage and a prominently placed, semi-nude male statue in the upper-left hand corner. In contrast to previous *Los Contemporáneos* covers, which were generally linked to the overall content of the novel, Zamora's cover does not seem related –Burgos' novel is not a historical one and takes place in early twentieth-century Spain – that is, in the present. Moreover, the characters on the cover do not explicitly refer to the characters in the novel and cannot be easily identified. In a similar fashion, Zamora's illustrations throughout the novel function separately from the text. Zamora's elegantly executed figures were predominantly female – as was his specialty and personal preference as a designer – and were embedded in practices of contemporary fashion design, of which he was a leading practitioner. Visually striking, highly stylized and stripped of narrative elements, Zamora's protagonists appear to have little to nothing to do with the narrative of the novel. The text and illustrations offer differing authorial voices that in dialogue with one another, causing the work as a whole to produce an ambiguous, ambivalent depiction of gender transgression.

In depicting both male and female inverts in an androgynous fashion, Zamora erodes gender distinctions, but he does so in a way that does not convey the message of dangerous moral transgression to the reader. Unlike the illustrations of Baldrich and Guillén that come several years later, Zamora's characters do not appear to illustrate any specific characters or moments in the story. Instead, they convey a generalized sense of sexual ambiguity associated with sexual inversion. In representing the trio of “marimachos” [Fig. 49], “marimachos” being a slang term used for manly women and lesbians in Spain at the time, Zamora's elegant line drawing, executed in black and red portrays women dressed in male attire composed of shirts,

ties, long overcoats, short-cropped hair and (in two cases) hats. The three body types depicted progress from a stouter and curvier *marimacho* figure wearing a skirt to a medium-built and more ambiguous type, to an androgynous female silhouette with a beauty mark underneath their eye, an aesthetic type that Zamora favored in his works. Zamora further plays up the femininity of his figures by prominently featuring a vignette in the shape of heart-shaped leaves that evoke female genitalia. The ornate quality of the line used in the illustrations harks back to the refined and decadent manner of Beardsley that was intimately linked with the notion of perverse sexual ambiguity in Spain, as demonstrated by the reception of Bujados's drawings discussed in previous chapter.

The narrative consistently underscores the inverts' unnatural status by focusing on the male inverts' cross-dressing and other seemingly superficial displays of femininity, which indicate their problematic desire to assume the "wrong" gender role. In addition to presenting the central character as "a woman dressed as a man," the narrative dedicates several pages to the description of a cross-dresser's ball. Zamora's illustration in the center of the page appears to illustrate Burgos's "hes" or "ellos" in line with the narrator's description offered on the preceding pages. Burgos's passage talks about the inverts staging parties, where they reenacted their collective fantasy of engaging in superficial displays of femininity that involve "dressing up in female dresses and tufted hats, painting and perfuming themselves, to use the coquetry of a woman."<sup>309</sup> All male inverts have female pet names and, through their imitation of women in their gestures, mode of dress and sensibility, they succeed in becoming "weaker and more exquisite," thus negating their own masculinities. This contrasts sharply with the female inverts,

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<sup>309</sup> "Ellos...se reunían y celebraban sus fiestas con frecuencia en la casa del vizconde Julio, donde podían dar rienda suelta á su fantasia visitándose trajes femeninos y sombreros empenachados, pintándose y perfumándose, para usar coquetería de mujer." Carmen de Burgos, *Ellos y Ellas*, n.p.

whose imitation of men resulted in the women becoming “more crass, ruder, and more repugnant.”<sup>310</sup> Zamora’s illustration was placed between the passages describing male inverts, who “communicated their femininity to all that they touched, who embellished everything” and “perverted all things, inverting their meaning,” thus forming a bridge between the two.<sup>311</sup> Moreover, it is significant that the text consistently identifies sexual inversion with the notion of the decorative through the male inverts’ proclivity for cross-dressing, their love of design and the embellishment of their homes and their persons. In that way, the narrative represents sexual inverts as artificial and superficial beings, who upend the natural order of things.

Zamora’s images, including the illustration that accompanies the description of male sexual inverts and their customs, presents three sexually ambiguous beings in decorative terms [Fig. 50]. Instead of representing the inverts as awkward creatures out of sync with nature as the text does, Zamora envisions them as three graceful figures – one feminine and smoking a cigarette, the other two androgynous. All of these figures are presented to the viewer in an aesthetically enticing, homogenizing way, and without judgement. The central figure and his companion to the right gaze at each other. They both have short haircuts, exaggerated eye makeup and lip color, but are clothed in male attire, with the notable exception of the distinctly feminine high-heeled shoes. The figure to the right is portrayed with a feminine hairstyle, as well as a dress and overcoat, but she appears to be smoking, thus suggesting that she could represent a female invert. Zamora’s characters look like fashion figurines, which is a genre that Zamora cultivated. According to Retana, his friend Pepito was one of finest figurine artists, “not just in

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<sup>310</sup> “Ellos ponían más espiritualidad que ellas en sus pasiones, parecía que sus espíritus se refinaban más y pore so eran más débiles y más exquisitos; mientras que ellas se hacían en la imitación al hombre más groseras, rudas y repugnantes.” In Burgos, *Ellos y Ellas*, n.p.

<sup>311</sup> “Parecía que comunicaban su feminidad á todo lo que tocaban, qu lo embellecían todo. Si iban al café, mientras los amigos varoniles se cuidaban de beber ó fumar, ellos se entretenían en acadriciar y como perverter todas las cosas invirtiendo su sentido.” In Burgos, *Ellos y Ellas*, n.p.



Spain, but in the world,” superior even to Leon Bakst, and to all the French fashion plate illustrators.<sup>312</sup> Zamora’s use of style associated with high fashion lent itself especially well to the portrayal of androgynous types, popular in fashion of that period, allowing for illustration that were fluid and elegant, but only loosely connected to the narrative.

Burgos and Zamora revolved in the same circles and shared several mutual friends, including Antonio Hoyos y Vinent and Álvaro Retana. Retana was Zamora’s admirer and childhood friend, who sometimes included the artist as a character in his many novels, including *Las Locas del Postín* (*The Queens of Postín*). In an article published the same year as *Hes and Shes*, Burgos championed Zamora’s aesthetic and defended his dance performances against the “unsophisticated” Spanish public. Burgos wrote that the Spanish public’s clericalism and “slavish adherence to instincts” (a cryptic phrase that references the Spanish public’s rejection of Zamora’s gender-ambiguous costumes and styles due to his open homosexuality) were partially to blame for their opposition to Zamora’s artful pantomimes. Like Retana in his discussion of Spanish *transformistas*, Burgos noted that, while foreign artists can and often are praised for similar artistic practices in Spain, Spanish artists are not because of the longstanding association between the decorative arts and femininity. Burgos rebukes the Spanish public for following the model of masculinity, steeped in machismo, stating that: “Masculinity is not brutality.” In this manner, the author suggests that Zamora’s extravagant, ambiguous masculinity was, in fact, the reason for the audience’s rejection of his dance performances in Spain.

According to Burgos, Zamora’s art as a whole, including his dancing, illustration and fashion design, is concerned with “interpreting all of life’s motifs and putting a note of distinction into them, no matter how low they are...in such a way that in this distinction there is

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<sup>312</sup> Fortuny, “La Vida Frivola,” n.p.

monotony; [she] would say that Zamora has a monotony of distinction. This is his most-praiseworthy quality.”<sup>313</sup> Burgos’s praise of Zamora’s “monotony of distinction” sounds strange in English; her use of the word “monotonía” draws on an early-twentieth-century Spanish usage that lauded the uniformity of the tone in a voice, musical composition or an artwork and that did not imply it was boring or lacking in variety. In her discussion of Zamora’s art, Burgos highlights his skill in bestowing uniform distinction upon common subjects, no matter how lowly they might be. This notion of uniformity of distinction is especially applicable to Zamora’s illustrations for *Hes and Shes* that give an air of aristocratic elegance to his figures, but also contribute to the lack of differentiation between male and female figures.

The tension between the textual and visual content in Burgos’s 1916 *Hes and Shes* brings multiple perspectives on gender ambiguity and sexual inversion to the surface and illustrates the plurality of attitudes towards *transformismo* in the early twentieth-century Spain. The complex and often ambiguous take on the nature of masculinity and *transformismo* becomes apparent in *The Pain of Not Being a Man*, a short, 1924 novel written by “El Caballero Audaz” and illustrated by Roberto Martínez Baldrich.

### **“El Caballero Audaz” and *The Pain of Not Being a Man*: The [Il]legibility of Manhood**

José María Carretero Novillo (1887-1951), better known to the Spanish public under his literary pseudonym as “El Caballero Audaz,” or “daring gentleman,” was one of the most successful erotic novelists of his era. In addition to his literary output, Carretero also served as a director of

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<sup>313</sup> “Además el dibuja cosas dramaticas y novelescas, interpretando todos los motivos de la vida y poniendo en ellos, por bajos que sean, una nota de distinción, de tal modo, que sí en la distinción pudiese haber monotonia, diría que Zamora tiene monotonía de distinción. Este es su mayor elogio.” In Carmen de Burgos (Columbine), “Danzas de Arte,” *La Semana* 1, no. 26, November 11, 1916, 10.

*Nuevo Mundo* and editor of the popular illustrated magazine *Mundo Gráfico*, where he interviewed some of the most famous artists, writers and politicians of the era. Nevertheless, his name was forgotten shortly after his death. As “El Caballero Audaz,” the author published his works in many popular short novel collections of the day, including *La Novela Semanal*, *La Novela Corta* and *La Novela de Hoy*. Among some of his most popular *sicaliptic* novels were *The Naked Virgin* (*La Virgen Desnuda*, 1910), *The Well-Paid One* (*La Bien Pagada*, 1920) and *The City of the Open Arms* (*La Ciudad de los Brazos Abiertos*, 1926). Carretero’s literary success as an erotic novelist was such that by the 1930s, his earnings amounted to 100,000 pesetas a year, whereas the established “serious” writers of his time were paid substantially less.<sup>314</sup> As his adopted name suggests, “El Caballero Audaz” crafted his literary persona around the notion of hypersexual, adventurous and heteronormative manhood. Like his personal image, the author’s literary output generally focused on heteronormative sexuality and macho masculinity. For this reason, *The Pain of Not Being a Man* (1924) holds a unique place among his erotic novels, as it examines and exhibits anxiety over the troubled masculinity of a male-to-female cross-dresser.

*The Pain of Not Being a Man* centers on the life of the *transformista* Julio Escobar, working under the stage name of “Ramuncho de Rossi.” Julio impersonates women so convincingly that the public confuses the artist and his persona and assumes that Julio is homosexual. The central conflict of the novel is between Julio trying to prove that in spite of his profession as an imitator of women, he is a “real man” and the public that refuses to accept him as such. Constantly compelled to prove his masculinity, Julio keeps the company of the

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<sup>314</sup> For instance, one of the best-paid authors of the Generation of 1898 Pío Baroja received only 6,000 pesetas a year for his work. See: Antonio Cruz Casado, “‘El Caballero Audaz’ entre el erotismo y la pornografía,” *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 463 (January 1989): 104.

decadent, womanizing aristocrat Count Rayero, only to discover the count in a sexual compromising position with Julio's own lover, Magdalena Brémon. In an attempt to defend his male honor and prove to the public once and for all that he is a man, Julio kills Magdalena and the count. Even then, the public assumes that Julio's actions were motivated by jealousy not over Magdalena, but the count, who is presumed to be his lover. As a result of his failure to perform heterosexual masculinity in the public's view, the *transformista* comes to a realization that by imitating women and disguising his "virile condition," he committed a grave sin. He gained his artistic triumph by deceiving the people into thinking that he was a woman, when he was, in fact, a man, and, in doing so, he transgressed the norms of Nature.<sup>315</sup> The novel concludes with Julio "crying like a child," as he finally understands that his artistic success comes at the high price of "the horrible pain of not being able to be a man."<sup>316</sup>

Zubiaurre has suggested that *The Pain of Not Being a Man* likely offers a fictionalized account of Egmont de Bries's biography, and, as I will argue, the writer and the illustrator effectively collaborated to refashion de Bries's story into a cautionary tale, meant to re-inscribe the limits of masculinity.<sup>317</sup> Like Baldrich's visual depictions of "Ramuncho de Rossi," de Bries crafted female guises that were often constructed from the antiquated elements of female fashions, resulting in outdated hyper-feminine archetypes. In the previously discussed 1924 albumen print dedicated to their mother and signed with their birth name "Asensio," Egmont de Bries appears in an elaborate, lacy dress, wearing a sun hat, a delicate pearl necklace and clutching a lacy parasol, with one foot that coquettishly peeks from under their skirt to rest delicately on a frilly pillow. Egmont de Bries from this print is a paragon of feminine elegance

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<sup>315</sup> "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 61-62.

<sup>316</sup> "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 62.

<sup>317</sup> Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic*, 318.

that is not of the present, so ethereal that *her* feet do not touch the ground, as well as a proud artist-designer presenting their creation. Both Egmont de Bries and “Ramuncho de Rossi” made their artistic debut and subsequent careers in Madrid, but they share other important similarities as well.

Asensio Marsal lost their father early in life and became exposed to fashion before puberty at the “great fashion house, where he quickly stood out for his good taste and hard work.”<sup>318</sup> Like his real life counterpart, Julio lost his father early in life, grew up with a very affectionate mother and “became a man among silks and women” in the fashion studio (his mother’s in Julio’s case), where the boy showed “a rare good taste” and an “extraordinary inclination towards being a fashion designer.”<sup>319</sup> As previously mentioned, Quirós and Aguilaniedo linked interest in fashion and self-ornamentation, as well as talent in “feminine labors and tasks” to sexual inversion, a cultural idea that was well established in 1920s Spain, with the rise of drag performers and openly homosexual fashion artists like Pepito Zamora. Even though Julio is very adamant about his heterosexuality throughout the novel, his dexterity in “feminine labors” caused immediate suspicion among the public that he may be a sexual invert. Both de Bries and “Ramuncho de Rossi” received anonymous letters with amorous and often “indecent” declarations, as well as offers of money from both male and female admirers.<sup>320</sup> And yet, unlike the adamantly heterosexual Julio, who felt equally offended by the homosexual advances and the fascination that women had with his feminine alter ego, Egmont de Bries

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<sup>318</sup> Retana, *Egmont de Bries*, 4.

<sup>319</sup> “El Caballero Audaz,” *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 36.

<sup>320</sup> On the discussion of de Bries’s letters see: Retana, *Egmont de Bries*, 7. For the mention of letters addressed to “Ramuncho de Rossi” see: “El Cabellero Audaz,” *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 19.

shared their private life with another man and openly embraced women's admiration for their art.<sup>321</sup>

"El Caballero Audaz" begins his novel by enticing the reader with the seductive, unambiguously feminine description of the *transformista*, as *she* appears before *her* audience: "On the stage, under the blast of blue light of the spotlight, a female figure, dressed in the pompous white dress of a trianisque marquise, turned ceremoniously, showing her white back, audaciously exposed, to the eager pupils."<sup>322</sup> The narrator highlights the features that make the performer so striking: her slender frame, the marble-like whiteness of her face that contrasts with the darkness of her finely painted black eyes, her powdered wig, and the high-pitched voice with which she sings her picaresque song. Only later in the text do we get a reference to the gender ambiguity of the performer's "adolescent alabaster shoulders," somewhat "muscular arms and large, agile hands" that hint at the gender trouble underneath the superficial display of "coquettish femininity."<sup>323</sup>

The narrative and structure and the illustrations of *The Pain of Not Being a Man* work in tandem to suggest that even though the sexual invert and the *transformista* who performs as a woman in public may not always be one and the same, one could inevitably be mistaken for the other, and subsequently be marked as and become less than a man. Baldrich's illustrations of "Ramuncho de Rossi" often evoke de Bries's fashions, such as the one from the 1924 Buenos Aires albumen print, discussed earlier. The text and image in *The Pain of Not Being a Man* work together to create the reader-viewer's experience of *transformismo* as a transgressive mode of being that is perpetually in-between the masculine and the feminine, ultimately resulting in the

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<sup>321</sup> Usó, *Orgullo Travestido*, 45, 47.

<sup>322</sup> "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser Hombre*, 6-7.

<sup>323</sup> "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 8.

subject's loss of his natural masculinity. In contrast to Zamora, whose illustrations had a very loose relationship to the text of Burgos's novel, Baldrich depicts specific moments in the narrative, accompanied by the lines taken directly from the text by "El Caballero Audaz" and situated underneath the image, thus creating a direct link between the image and the text.

In his first portrayal of Julio Escobar as "Ramuncho de Rossi," Baldrich chooses to present the performer as *she* appears in the first few lines of the novel, dressed in an antiquated fashion with a nineteenth-century silhouette [Fig. 51]. Like all the other illustrations for this novel, the first one is accompanied by the caption taken directly from the text, that reads simply "...a female figure, attired..." In a later representation of "Ramuncho de Rossi" on page 30 [Fig. 52], Baldrich hints at the ambiguity of the character's gender, portraying the performer in a close-up, while wearing a hat – merely suggested by the simplified shape of the downcast shadow – revealing the angular and somewhat masculine contours of his face in combination with his thick feminine lips. And yet, Baldrich's first illustration, in keeping with the textual description, does not reveal or even suggest the subject's masculine identity. In fact, Baldrich's use of light, wispy lines for this figure recalls his treatment of Julio's lover Magdalena Bremón [Fig. 53] when she is first introduced in the novel. The artist evokes her thin, feminine frame with similarly thin, faint lines and in a somewhat antiquated fashion.

Baldrich's drawings play with the formal qualities of line and shape, in order to accentuate the textual split between the protagonist's male and female personae. Whereas "Ramuncho de Rossi" and Magdalena Bremón are first presented to the reader in a sketchy, linear, and outdated manner, Julio Escobar, the man behind the artist is portrayed in stylish, contemporary masculine attire, as he is walking home after his performance [Fig. 54]. Playing up the gender anxiety in the novel, the caption underneath Baldrich's illustration reads "No one

who was passing recognized the *transformista*.” True to this statement, Julio appears dramatically illuminated and unambiguously masculine with his angular features, dressed in a stylish, contemporary suit and a fedora, and set against a minimal background of the city, suggested through the use of geometric, black shapes. Julio Escobar’s solid and thoroughly modern figure contrasts with the outdated silhouette and the indeterminate background of “Ramuncho de Rossi.”

The image of Julio walking down the street reflects both the passerby’s and the protagonist’s perception of himself as unambiguously masculine; however, the *transformista*’s ability to perform his masculinity becomes destabilized as the narrative progresses, as evidenced by the illustrations. As soon as Magdalena learns of Julio’s work as a *transformista* she becomes increasingly fascinated with him, urging him to dance, perform, and have sex with her in the guises of his female characters, which leaves Julio disheartened as he realizes that she no longer sees him as “just a man.”<sup>324</sup> Furthermore, as soon as Magdalena learns of his profession, the gender roles in their relationship become destabilized. Julio’s masculinity comes into question when he becomes the object of Magdalena’s gaze.

Magdalena begins to notice and objectify Julio on the basis of his physical appearance, saying “How well formed you are! [...] Especially your back is wonderful!”<sup>325</sup> Baldrich chooses to illustrate this particular moment in “How well-shaped you are!” [Fig. 55]. Baldrich’s depiction of the encounter between Julio and Magdalena points to the troubling of the gender norms in their relationship. Both figures are close in height, overthrowing the convention of representing a man as substantially taller than a woman, and similarly posed with their backs slightly hunched and their hands placed in their pockets to create a mirroring effect. While Julio

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<sup>324</sup> “El Caballero Audaz,” *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 46.

<sup>325</sup> “El Caballero Audaz,” *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 44.



is sketched out with thin, elegant lines, while Magdalena's figure appears to be more solid. She wears contemporary makeup and a small Catholic cross around her neck, while dressed in a modern suit jacket with finely rendered details in the fabric. Magdalena's jacket stands out most in the image, making her, rather than the novel's male protagonist, act as the most prominent figure in the illustration.

At the end of the novel, Julio realizes his own impotence in the face of public opinion, lamenting that "If they pigeonholed him as an invert, there was no power capable of overturning his bad reputation."<sup>326</sup> He now sees that by "inverting the terms of Nature, appearing as a woman, when he was a man...he imitated, remedied, changed his virile condition into feminine."<sup>327</sup> Going against the natural boundaries of gender resulted in the *transformista's* punishment of forever being misread as "Ramuncho de Rossi," and thus serving as a visual embodiment of the intersexual state, neither male, nor female. Baldrich's final plate illustrates the protagonist in tears [Fig. 56], depicting Julio's solitary frame pressed against prison bars, a prison that is both the real one where he must go for the murders he committed, but also the one where he has been imprisoned by the public that will not allow him to be a man. In the final illustration, Julio's figure – made up of solid blocks of black for his coat, his hair and the prison bars – is hunched and his face is made grotesque and no longer legible as either male or female: in losing the last hope of being read as a man, Julio becomes unreadable. Whereas Baldrich and "El Caballero Audaz" present *transformismo* in tragic terms, as indicative of masculinity in crisis, Álvaro Retana and Guillén draw on the creative possibilities of gender ambiguity as one of the modern ways of performing masculinity.

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<sup>326</sup> "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 61.

<sup>327</sup> "El Caballero Audaz," *La Pena de No Ser un Hombre*, 61-62.

### Retana's *The Fool*: Beyond the Binary Model of Masculinity

Alvaro Retana embarked on his literary career in 1911 with an act of literary gender-bending – that is, by publishing a series of articles in *El Heraldo de Madrid* under the female pseudonym of Claudine Reigner. When the true identity of the author came out, a public scandal swiftly followed, to the delight of the author, who immediately achieved notoriety. While this early scandal caused only public approbation, the publication of his 1925 novel *The Fool* more than a decade later cost Retana five months of his freedom and a thousand-peseta fine. In Retana's own words all of this occurred because of the fury of "the church ladies," who managed to convince the court that Retana and his fellow "merry novelists" were, in fact, "the agents of Satan."<sup>328</sup> Out of all of his erotic novels, many of which present erotic practices that were far more scandalous than lesbianism, this one seemed the most unlikely one to be put to trial. Zubiaurre asserted that *The Fool* frustrated the Primo de Rivera's regime because it was a manifestation of pointless, non-procreative eroticism, a kind of an eternal foreplay that did not lead to heteronormative penetration. Because of this, as she argued, the novel was read as a frontal attack on masculinity and by extension on the Spanish nation, a country whose future regeneration depended on the virility of its male citizens.<sup>329</sup>

Building on Zubiaurre's reading of the controversy surrounding *The Fool*, I argue that the novel was condemned for refusing to confine its gender-deviant character and *his* lover to a tragic fate and, thus, made it possible for the gender ambiguity to be read as a legitimate mode of performing masculinity in the modern world. *Transformismo* performances and daily acts of

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<sup>328</sup> Cejador, *Álvaro Retana*, 23.

<sup>329</sup> Maite Zubiaurre, "Introducción. "El Novelista Más Guapo del Mundo:" Álvaro Retana y la Sicalipsis," in *Las "Locas" de Postín, Los Ambiguos, Lolita Buscadora de Emociones, El Tonto*, ed. Maite Zubiaurre, Audrey Harris and Wendy Kurtz, xxxi. (Doral, FL: Stockcero, 2013).

cross-dressing, as well as erotic novels and their illustrators, enabled the 1920s public to envision gender as a kind of masquerade. Artists and writers like Guillén and Retana borrowed the techniques of *transformismo* to present and legitimate ambiguity as a central element of modern life. Whereas Burgos and Carretero were troubled with the notion of gender as performance and unsettled by the queer practice of cross-dressing even as some of their illustrators were not (Zamora), the alliance of Retana and Guillén exalted gender ambiguity as a liberating modern practice to be embraced.

In *The Fool*, Retana tells the story from the perspective of the courtesan Aurelia, who was “made a fool” in her youth by her own passion when she attempted to make love (read: have heteronormative sexual intercourse) with a young man, who turned out to be a cross-dressed young woman. In addition to the expression “to be made a fool,” Retana’s title refers to the slang term “el tonto,” which in the early twentieth-century Spain signified a “sexual invert.” Burgos, among others, used this term in *Hes and Shes*. In *Hes and Shes*, an older woman dismisses her companion’s remark that her daughter’s dance with a young man would result in courtship by saying that her daughter’s dance partner Juanito Miraflores “is crazy” or “es tonto.”<sup>330</sup> As we learn later in the novel, Juanito is, in fact, a regular participant in homosexual parties.

As a fourteen-year old daughter from a respectable bourgeois family, the future courtesan Aurelia meets and falls in love with the young “cadet” Polín at the house of her lesbian schoolteacher, Julia. Polín and Aurelia begin exchanging love letters and Aurelia soon learns that Polín is kept by an old woman so repulsive and so perverted that he is willing to commit suicide to escape this kind of existence.<sup>331</sup> Aurelia’s jealous school teacher Julia is sexually

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<sup>330</sup> Burgos, *Ellos y Ellas*, n.p.

<sup>331</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 46.

interested in Aurelia and informs her that Polín is not a man, but rather “a girl dressed like a cadet.” Even with this new information, Aurelia remains undeterred in her attraction towards him, either because she does not believe Julia or simply because it does not matter to her one way or the other.<sup>332</sup> When Aurelia and Polín attempt to make love, they cannot “consummate” their relationship because even though Aurelia “sterilely tried on him, attempting all the tricks,” she could not get him to have an erection.<sup>333</sup> Following their failed attempt at lovemaking, Polín confesses to Aurelia that he never had sexual relations with a woman and that his sexual encounters with the “indecent” old woman were limited to Polín laying naked on the couch, as she covers his body with kisses. In an attempt to escape the old woman, Polín dressed in female clothes, in order to conceal his sex, thus suggesting that his true sex is, indeed, male.<sup>334</sup> Polín’s and Aurelia’s affair comes to a halt when Aurelia’s father discovers his daughter’s indiscretions and decides to send her out of the city. Aurelia implores Julia to ask her father for a doctor to perform a virginity examination that would prove conclusively to her father that “nothing passed between Polín and herself.”<sup>335</sup> The novel concludes with Aurelia deciding to go to Madrid, away from her family, thus embarking on the life of a courtesan.

In contrast to the other novels that feature cross-dressing and non-heteronormative protagonists, including *Hes and Shes or Shes and Hes* and *The Pain of Not Being a Man*, Retana’s novel does not condemn the participants in the non-heteronormative sexual encounter to a tragic outcome. While we lack any information about Polín’s fate following the encounter with Aurelia, we learn that Aurelia’s experience with Polín leads her to pursue life of sexuality as a courtesan outside of the bourgeois norms of femininity. Instead of placing male/female in

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<sup>332</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 50.

<sup>333</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 52.

<sup>334</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 53.

<sup>335</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 58.

opposition to one another, Retana's novel presents the viewer with a spectrum of female masculinity and female homosexuality through the figures of the bisexual or sexually confused Aurelia, her feminine yet lesbian French schoolteacher Julia, the ambiguous Polín and the masculine lesbian, who "keeps" him. In Itziar Rodríguez de Rivera's examination of the figure of the masculine lesbian in Spanish *sicaliptic* novels of the 1920s, she argued that the literary depictions of female homosexuality, coded as female masculinity, existed in tension with modernity. The notion of lesbianism as a sexual practice that was out of sync with modernity was implied through the representation of non-normative and non-reproductive sexual practices as backward by way of anatomic reasoning that associated the masculine lesbian with an abnormal and excessive genitality.<sup>336</sup> In Retana's novel, the ambiguously gendered Polín emerged as the very image of modern sexuality.

Retana's novel is remarkable for its time because it neither condemns the cross-dressing character with moralizing epithets, with the exception of playfully calling Polín "wicked," nor attempts to "expose" Polín's "true" gender as being something other than what he presents. Retana's text and Guillén's illustrations collaborate to stage an encounter between the Spanish public and the modern queer subject. Guillén's illustrations work together with the narrative to glamorize Polín's sexual ambiguity as a modern form of gender expression. When the reader is first introduced to Polín, he appears to be about seventeen. Seated in an "oriental manner" on top of the cushion, Polín looks like "a heavily painted cadet of the Infantry," as he elegantly smokes a suggestively long pipe in a way that makes him seem "like an ornamental trinket." He has "very black and crisp hair, the nacreous carnation and eyes the color of red grapes."<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Rodríguez de Rivera, "Backward Modernity," 86.

<sup>337</sup> Polín is described as "un cadete de Infantería muy pintado, que fumaba en una boquilla de media vara, sentado a la oriental sobre un almohadón, como un *bibelot* de tocador, y tenía el pelo negrísimo y crespo, la carnación nacarina y los ojos del color de las uvas tintas." In Retana, *El Tonto*, 27.

Guillén's illustration of the "cadet," who as we later learn only dresses this way for the benefit of the old woman who keeps him because she "has obsession with the uniform" picks up on the sexually ambiguous references in Retana's description.<sup>338</sup> Guillén's full-page portrait of Polín [Fig. 57] concludes the chapter that describes Aurelia's encounter with her future lover. In Guillén's image, Polín's short, black hair and coal-black eyes painted in the Egyptian manner stand out dramatically, as does the cadet uniform, which sensuously clings to Polín's flat-chested torso in a way that accentuates his waist and hips. Polín is smoking with his head turned to the side, allowing the viewer a full view of his delicate profile, as he reclines on the oriental pillows that are decorated with Persian-inspired motifs. Guillén's portrait plays up Polín's androgyny by combining the masculine and the feminine elements of Retana's textual description with the gender ambiguity of the orientalist imagery, tinged with evocations of deviant sexuality. It is Polín's "ambiguous air," which is a defining feature of modern femininity and masculinity, made manifest in the striking combination of makeup and cross-dressing as a cadet, rather than his beauty that makes him so attractive to the female protagonist.<sup>339</sup>

Polín's aestheticized gender ambiguity is visually opposed to the repulsive masculinity of the old woman "with the face of the bulldog" who keeps him. Guillén quite literally puts the reader face to face with the two images of female masculinity in the center of the novel, when he portrays Polín's nameless keeper on one side and Polín on the other [Fig. 58]. The woman, who is consistently described as "old," "repulsive," and having the face of a bulldog is portrayed in this full-body image as a single solid mass, whose grotesque figure is undifferentiated from her surroundings. The wrinkles on her face are further accentuated by the vertical striations in the armchair and clothing. Her attire and a string of pearls around her neck, which is covered in

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<sup>338</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 32.

<sup>339</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 29.

wrinkles, speak to her feminine identity, and yet her body, posed in a manner that curiously evokes Greek statuary, bears clothes that conceal rather than reveal its sexless contours. In contrast to Guillén's rendition of the static old woman, completed using block-like shapes and straight lines, Polín is depicted as engaged in the eroticized act of smoking and his profile is rendered with sinuous lines that draw attention to his feminine features, accentuated with cosmetics.

The two images of the masculine woman evoke Marañón's theories of female homosexuality. According to Marañón female homosexuality was different from that of males because it was located in the intermediate state between adolescence – that is, regression, – and masculinity, which was a “terminal sexual state.” For that reason, there were two types of female inverts, one that is infantile and looks to childhood (Polín's sexualized adolescence), and the other that is superlative and looks to virility (the woman with the face of a bulldog).<sup>340</sup> Retana's Polín straddles the line between these two categories in favor of sexual ambiguity, even as *he* proclaims *his* masculinity with “You do not know that I am all man!”<sup>341</sup> Polín's clothing choices throughout the novel, as a gender ambiguous figure covered in black from head to toe and his cadet attire, that is a costume of a young military trainee, identifies Polín with a very masculine occupation, while highlighting his youthful sexual ambivalence.

Guillén favors the elongated silhouette associated with the 1920s fashion design, combined with a modern choice of clothing and accessories for his feminine characters, Aurelia and Julia. Guillén depicts Polín's sexual ambiguity by representing him either in the masculine

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<sup>340</sup> “La homosexualidad en la mujer presenta una diferencia esencial, derivada de la situación de su sexo, en una zona intermedia entre la adolescencia y la masculinidad. El hombre, en efecto, como “etapa sexual terminal” que es, no puede invertirse más que en el sentido regresivo que hemos indicado. En la mujer cabrán dos tipos de inversión: uno regresivo hacia la infantilidad, y otro superlativo, hacia la virilidad.” In Marañón, *Los Estados Intersexuales*, 153.

<sup>341</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 48.

attire of a cadet (as he is described in the novel the first time that Aurelia sees him) or in gender-ambiguous clothing that conceals his body and hair altogether. The illustration on page 45 [Fig. 59] represents Polín's entrance, described on the opposite page: "Polín arrived enveloped in a cape of black cloth, and his head covered with a beret [that was] also black."<sup>342</sup> In contrast to previous representations of this character as a cadet, in this illustration Polín appears as a completely ambiguous figure – neither male nor female. His identity and sexuality are perfectly concealed beneath the layers of black cloth that make him appear strikingly archaic in style.

When Guillén depicts Polín together with Aurelia [Fig. 60], he makes him appear more masculine through style and size, and, in doing this, his image suggests to the reader that gender is, in fact, relational. Polín may be feminine, "a girl dressed as a cadet," as Julia calls him, but he is a man in relation to Aurelia. Both Aurelia, who is depicted as shorter and smaller than Polín, wearing a slimming, fashionable knee-length dress and Polín, made-up and dressed in a military uniform, appear before the viewer as modern subjects and modern forms of femininity and masculinity.

Guillén's imaging of Polín falls in line with Retana's own self-imaging as a sexually ambiguous adolescent, imaging that, in words of Ana María Díaz Marcos, reflects the author's notion of modern masculinity as "artificial and sophisticated, [one] that does not shy away from coquetry or the use of makeup." According to Díaz Marcos, Retana's novels that represent many different types of dissident masculinities, including effeminate homosexuals, transvestites, machos, epebes, adolescents and other sexually ambiguous characters, ultimately refute the common belief in two male types, the macho and the invert.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, the sexual ambiguity

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<sup>342</sup> Retana, *El Tonto*, 44.

<sup>343</sup> Ana María Díaz Marcos, "Masculinidades Disidentes: el Tercer Sexo en las Novelas de Álvaro Retana," *Prisma Social* 13 (December 13, 2014- May 2015): 14-15.



of Retana's characters disturbs the traditional distinctions between masculine and feminine categories to give way to new representations of the "third sex," which until that point was illegible in the "cultural matrix" of the period.<sup>344</sup> Noël Valis argued Retana's lifestyle and his books provided "an alternative world for some readers, which was doubtless much idealized and even unreal, but no less appealing, especially for closeted gay readers who may have read Retana's celebrity (and his books) as a form of coming out."<sup>345</sup> Within this context, the text and the illustrations of *The Fool* offer the possibilities of performing masculinity that goes against the hegemonic models of Spanish masculinity, to suggest that gender ambiguity, visualized through cross-dressing, is a legitimate way of performing masculinity in the modern world.

## Conclusion

Imaging of drag performance and drag performers in the early twentieth-century Spain was embroiled in the discourses on sexual inversion, masculinity, and the frivolous arts. More specifically, I argue that the visual culture of *transformismo*, embodied in drag performances and erotic-novel illustrations opened up a wide range of possibilities for performing gender, and masculinity in particular, that went beyond the established binary constructions. I engaged with the early twentieth-century reception of *transformismo* in the illustrated erotic novel and the frivolous arts to suggest their potential to transform the contemporary understanding of gender, masculinity, and their limits.

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<sup>344</sup>Díaz Marcos, "Masculinidades disidentes," 13.

<sup>345</sup>Noël Valis, "Celebrity, Sex, and Mass Readership: The Case of Álvaro Retana," in *Kiosk Literature of Silver Age Spain: Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Zamostny and Susan Larson, 140 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Carmen de Burgos, “El Caballero Audaz,” and Álvaro Retana all published erotic novels, focused on cross-dressing characters during the early decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, their works exhibit markedly different attitudes towards sexual inversion and gender ambiguity that are either problematized by their illustrators, as was the case with Burgos and Zamora collaboration, or reinforced, in case of “El Caballero Audaz-Baldrich and Retana-Guillén collaborations. Whereas Burgos’s novel portrayed sexual inverts as sickly, tragic figures, engaged in pitiful, futile imitations of a gender that is not their own, Zamora’s illustrations, which were only loosely based on the narrative, used style associated with high fashion to portray sexual inverts as fluid and elegant androgynous types, worthy of emulation. In the novel by “El Caballero Audaz” and its accompanying illustrations, the *transformista*’s emulation of the opposite gender is condemned both textually and visually. Baldrich envisions the author’s *transformista* protagonist as quite literally the female and the male character through the use of costuming and style, with the feminine character quite literally melting into the male towards the end of the novel, suggesting the tragic lack of resolution for the crisis of masculinity. It is only in the case of collaboration between Retana and Guillén, that the cross-dressing character becomes a model of masculinity that is not in crisis and could be followed.

Erotic novelists, frivolous artists, *transformistas* and symbolists all participated in the construction of new models of Spanish masculinity that went against the hegemonic models of masculinity embodied by Zuloaga in the wake of the national crisis. In contrast to the noble national masculinity championed by the regime of Primo de Rivera, these models allowed for queer possibilities of manhood. As the novelists, illustrators and *transformistas* were shaping the new masculine scripts, other established hegemonic models of Spanish masculinity were being

reimagined and queered in the reevaluation of the figure of the bullfighter, the national hero par excellence and the subject of the next chapter.

## FIGURES

MUCHAS GRACIAS

9

LOGOGRIFO, por J. A.



¿QUIEN DICE LO UNO Y QUIEN LO OTRO?...

—A mi me gustan las mujeres muy mujeres.  
—Pues a mi los hombres muy hombres.

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Figure 44



Figure 45



**Figure 46**

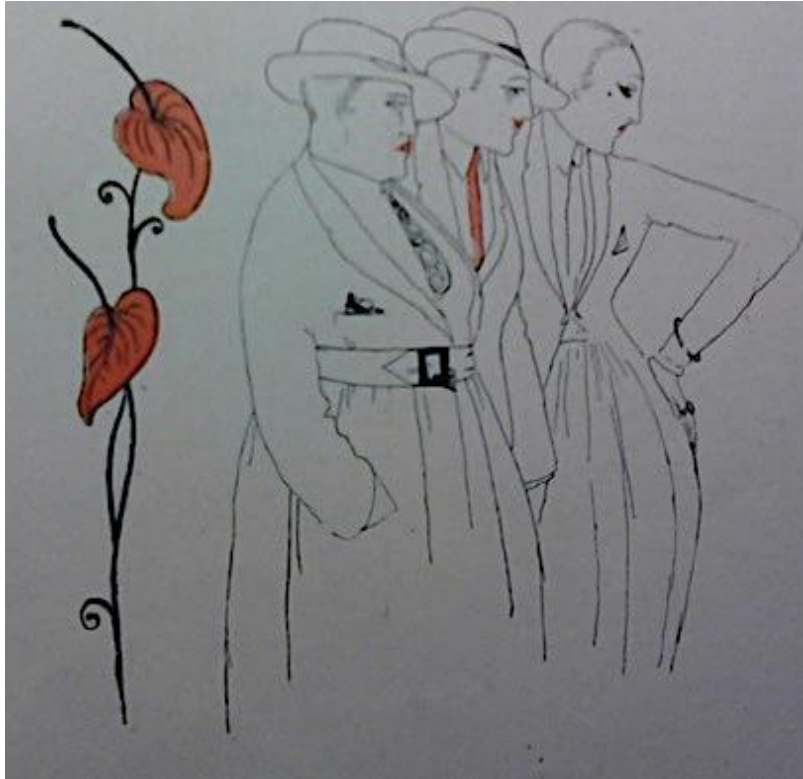


Figure 47



Figure 48





**Figure 49**



**Figure 50**



Figure 51



Figure 52

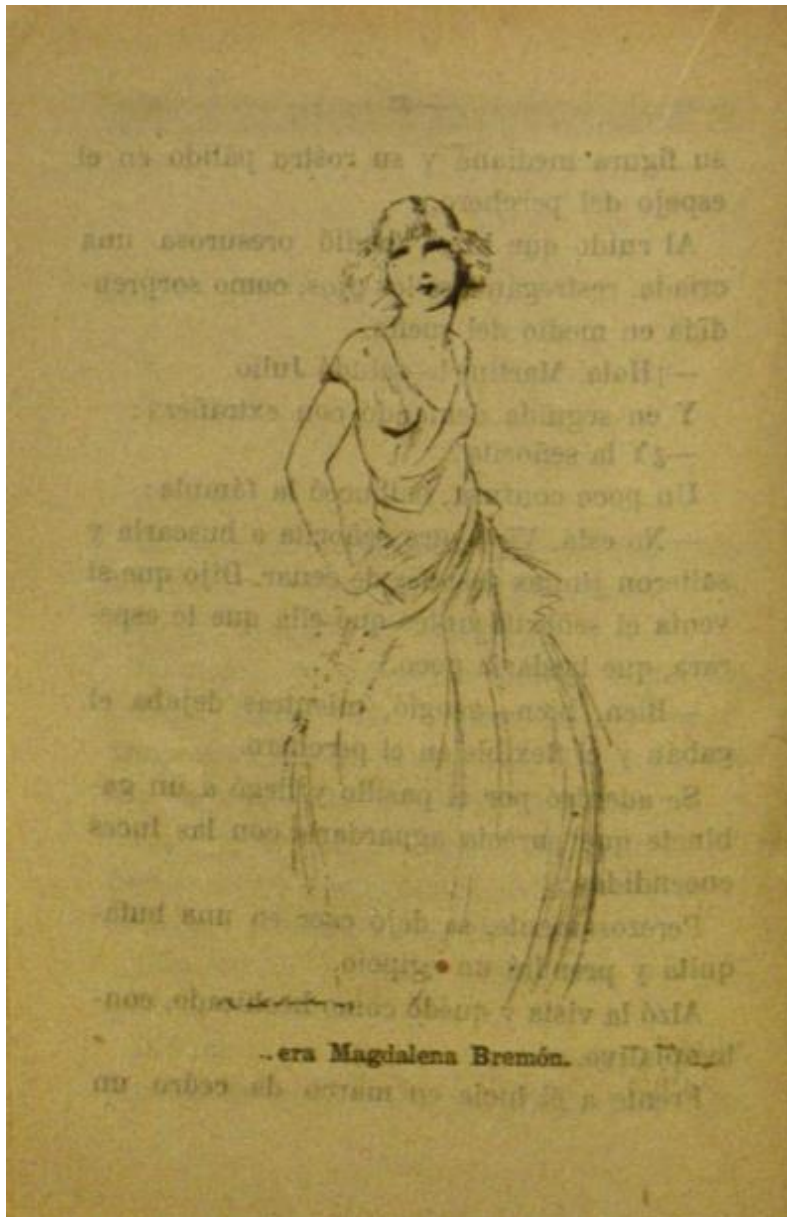


Figure 53

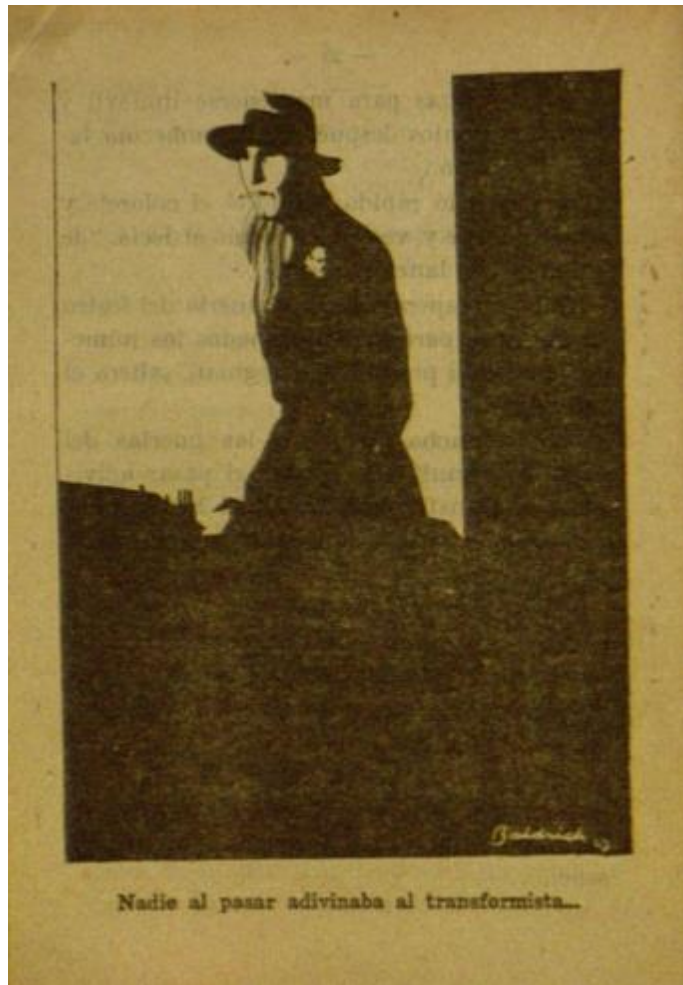
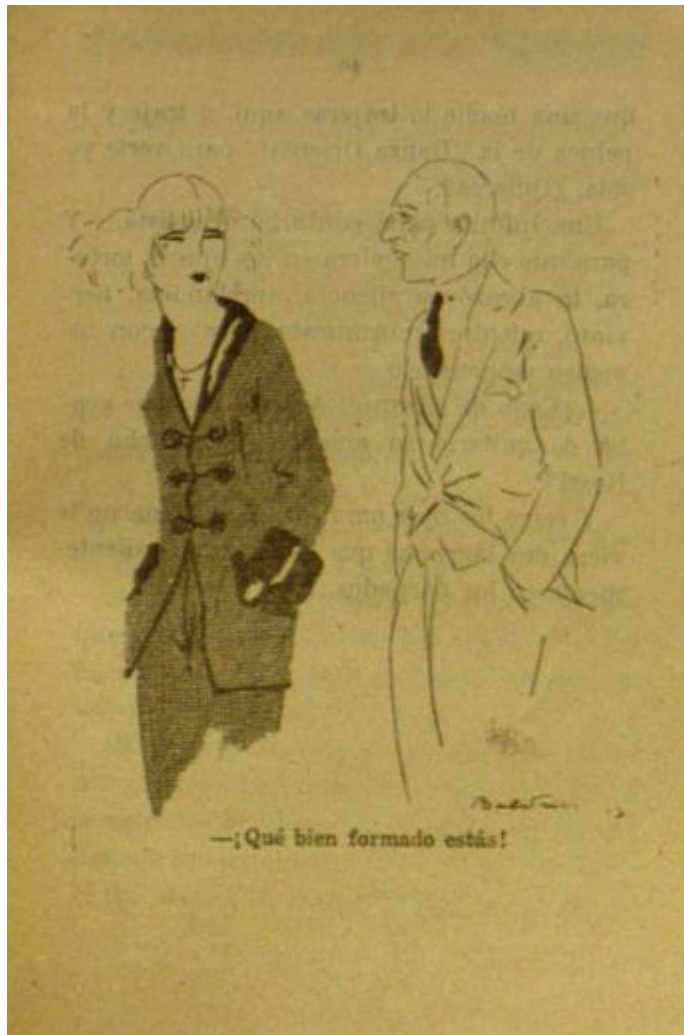
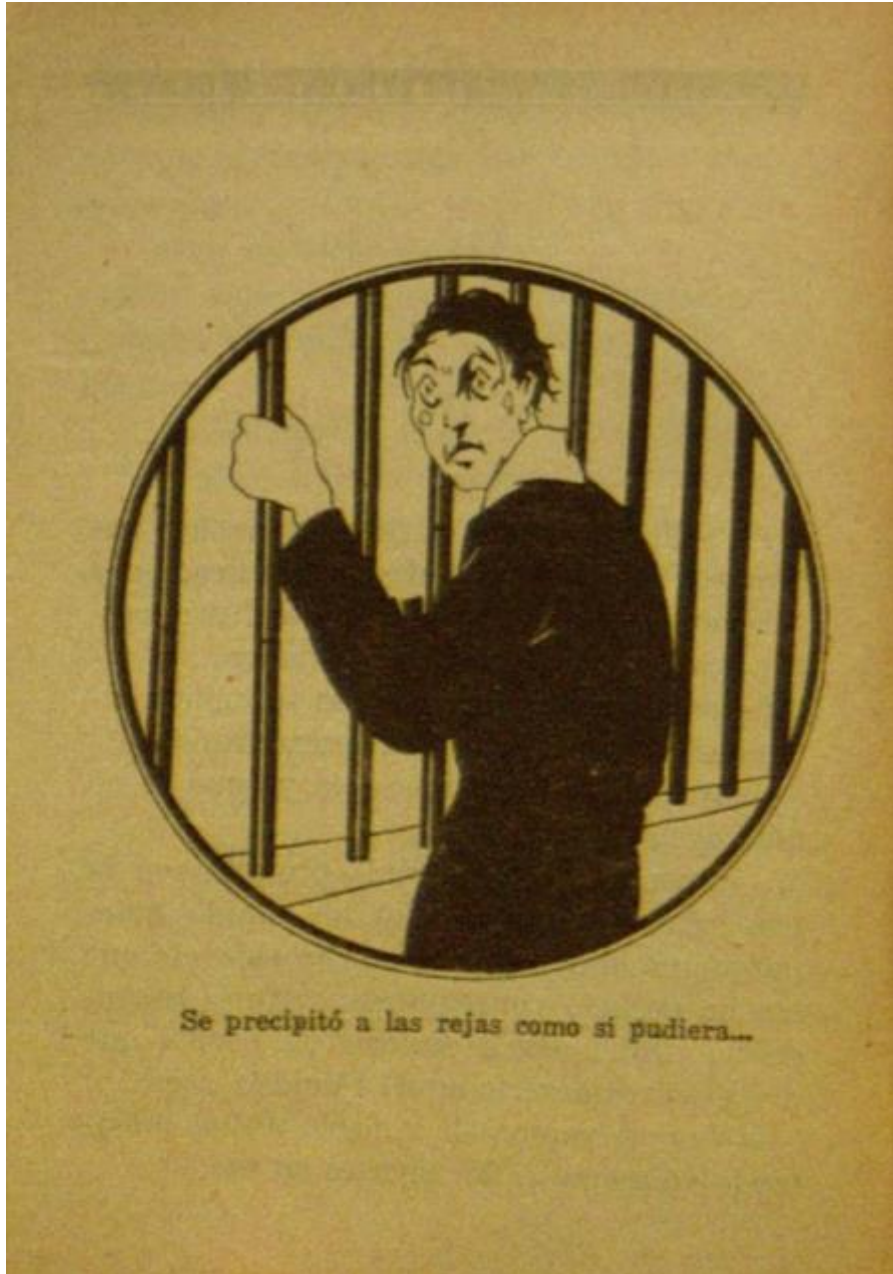


Figure 54



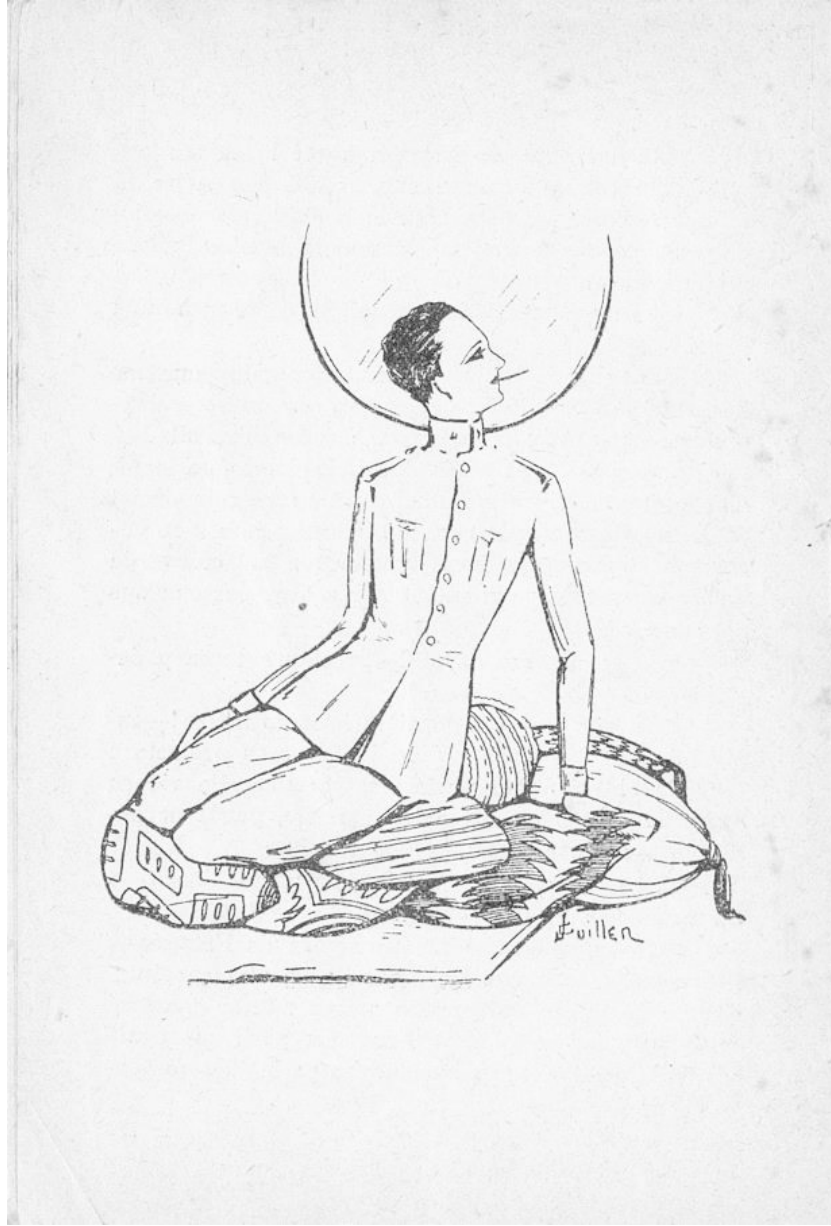


**Figure 55**



**Figure 56**





**Figure 57**

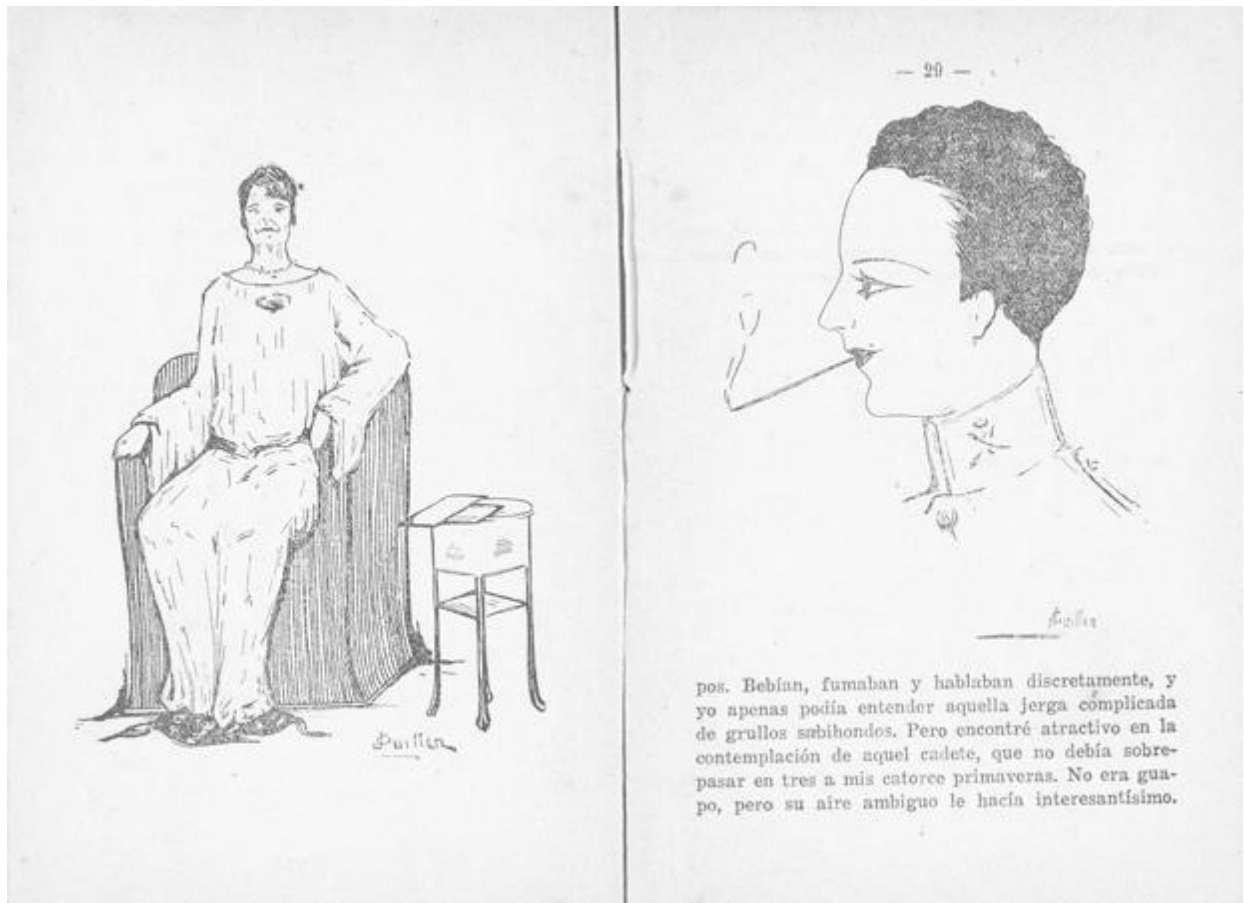
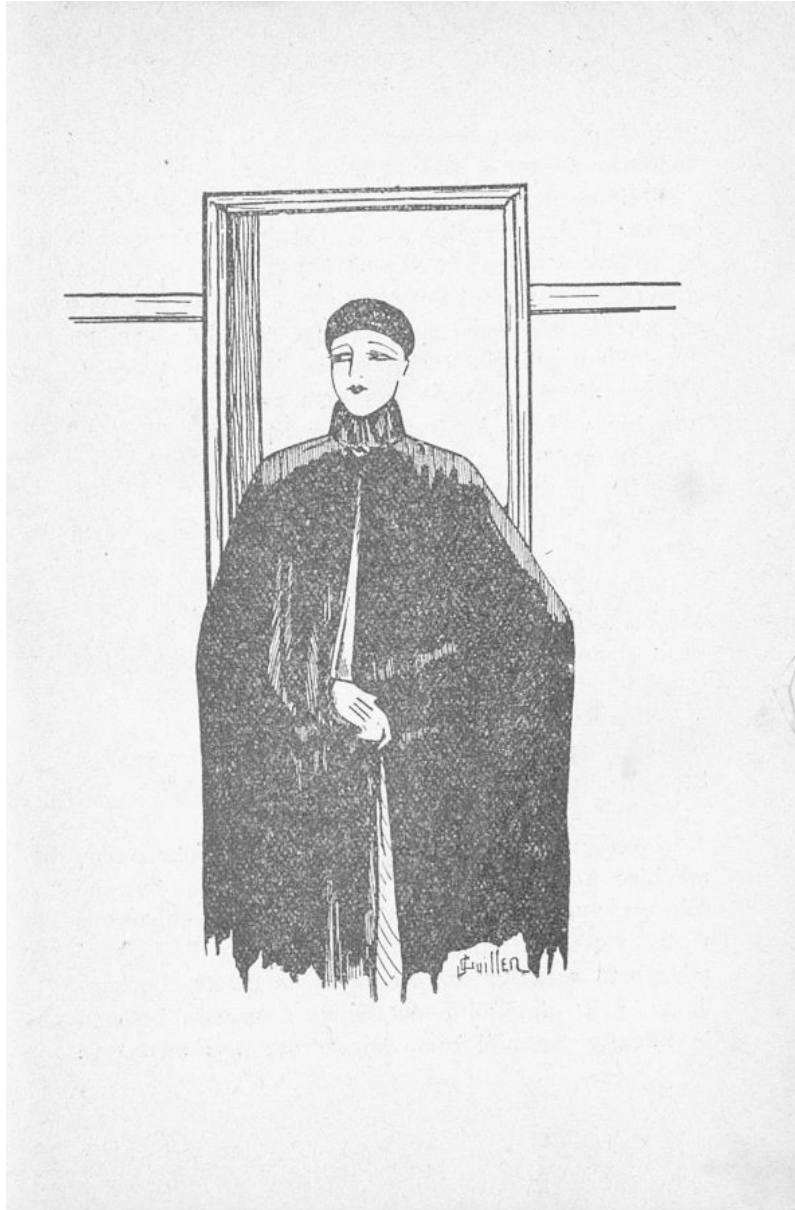
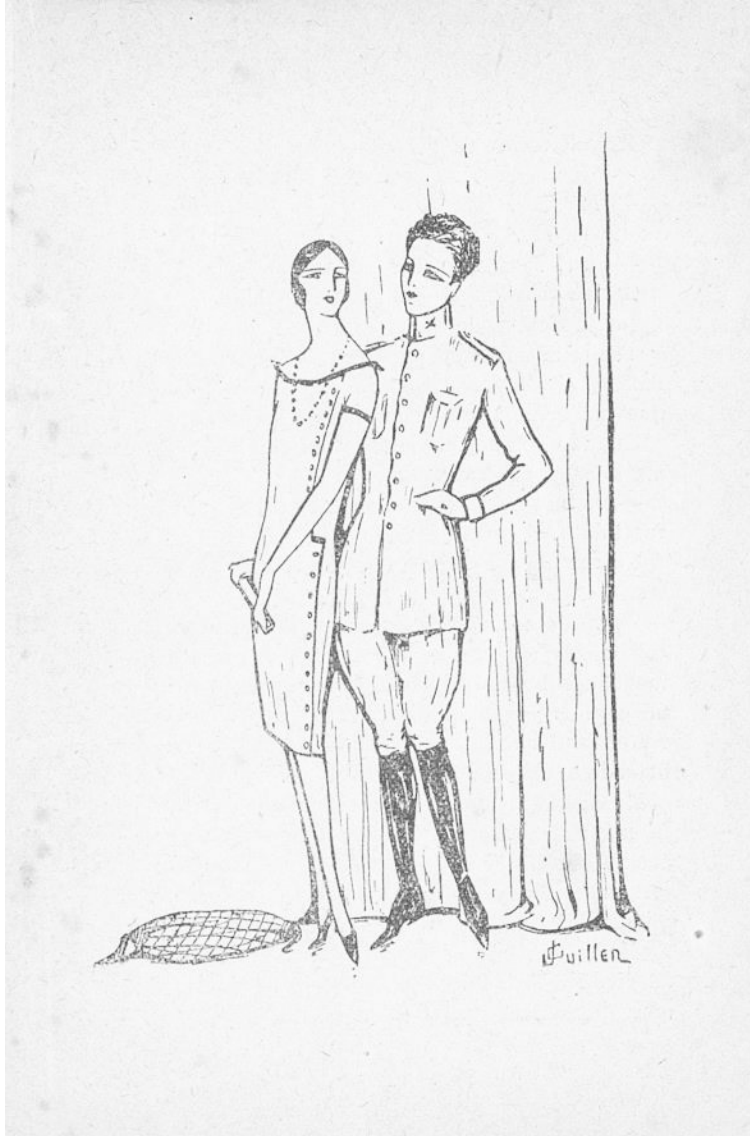


Figure 58



**Figure 59**



**Figure 60**

**CHAPTER IV**  
**IDOLS OF MASCULINITY: THE HEROES AND VICTIMS OF**  
**THE SPANISH *FIESTA NACIONAL***

Such a torero who passes quickly through the bullfighting rings, achieves higher respect than any other bullfighter could dream of, and dies at the age of twenty-five, in full glory, without knowing the sadness of defeat, without noticing the slightest symptom of decline. It can thus be said, that if his life as a bullfighter was exemplary, even more exemplary was his death, which completed the cycle of his bullfighting activity without a failure, with the perfection of a myth.<sup>346</sup>

**Introduction**

In the aftermath of Spain's military defeat in the war of 1898, the bullfighter/torero became a reflection of cultural and national anxieties and the embodiment of heroic Spanish masculinity.<sup>347</sup> In the post-1898 world, the torero motif has loomed large in both the Spanish and European imaginations, transforming in relation to political, social and cultural changes. While previous chapters explored the effects of the crisis of masculinity brought on by "the disaster" of 1898 on landscape, symbolist ideas of androgyny and the popular culture of *transformismo*, this chapter, in turn, focuses on the representations of the bullfighter at the turn of the century. While there were certainly many other masculine archetypes, including but not limited to the soldier-warrior and the boxer, it was the bullfighter who most fully embodied ideals of Spanish manhood. In connection with the failure of the military ideals in the post-1898 world, the perception and representation of bullfighters in art and culture came to reflect the anxieties over the nation.

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<sup>346</sup> "Tal este torero que pasa rápidamente por los ruedos, logra la consideración más elevada que diestro alguno pudo soñar, y muere a los veinticinco años, en plena gloria, sin conocer la tristeza de un fracaso, sin advertir el menor síntoma de decadencia. Puede así decirse que si ejemplar fué su vida torero, mayor ejemplaridad logró su muerte, que complete el ciclo de su actividad taurina sin un fallo, con perfección de mito." In José María Cossío, *Los Toros: Tratado Técnico e Histórico. Tomo III* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1943), 378.

<sup>347</sup> In this chapter, I will be using several different terms to refer to different types of bullfighters: *torero* to refer to the bullfighter on foot and as a general descriptive term for a bullfighters and *picador* to refer to a bullfighter on horseback who uses a lance to attack the bull.

In 1918, Zuloaga's friend and writer, Ramón Pérez de Ayala argued that the birth of the "fiesta de toros" should be traced to the fifteenth century and the "Reconquista era." Thus, it coincides with the birth of Spain as a nation. The author further asserted that, like the Spanish language, its national geography and its people, the sport has become so integral to the Spanish psyche that bullfighting would not cease to be practiced and observed until the nation itself was extinguished.<sup>348</sup> And yet, even though Pérez de Ayala viewed bullfighting as a unique and characteristic feature of the Spanish nation, an opinion he shared with Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset, he also condemned it as a barbaric spectacle and one that impeded his country from embracing modernity and becoming a "civilized nation."<sup>349</sup> The early twentieth century was the Silver Age of bullfighting in Spain, when the figure of the bullfighter entered a vortex in which many seemingly-conflicting values, anxieties, and pictorial modes – the heroic, the decadent, and the archaic – had come together to produce a set of rich and dynamic paradoxes that included constructions of masculinity.

Zuloaga, Vázquez Díaz, Smith and others captured the paradox of the torero's representation as a heroic, outdated and even degenerate model of masculinity, standing between Spain and modernity. Without resolving this paradox, this chapter explores several facets of torero representation and its implications in their works, as well as in other forms of cultural production, including commemorative sculpture and photography in illustrated periodicals of the era. I will begin by summarizing the heroic dimensions of the torero as a popular national icon of male virtue in order to look at various dimensions of the long and unresolved controversy surrounding the torero's masculinity in the Silver Age of bullfighting.

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<sup>348</sup> Ramón Pérez de Ayala, *Política y Toros, Ensayos* (Madrid: Calleja, 1918), 192.

<sup>349</sup> Pérez de Ayala, *Política y Toros*, 10-11.

Prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, the bull was the focus of the bullfight, but by the middle of the nineteenth century attention had begun to shift to the figure of the bullfighter himself, who achieved his apotheosis in the early twentieth century. As Pérez de Ayala has pointed out, the Spanish love of bullfighting in the Silver Age increased so dramatically that the new generation of toreros, including the famed Juan Belmonte (1892-1962) and José Gómez Ortega “Joselito” (1895-1920), participated in an unprecedented number of corridas (approximately 100 corridas per year) in response to the increased public demand for the entertainment.<sup>350</sup> Moreover, as Perez de Ayala has asserted (without providing the figures), the number of bullrings built across Spain during that time could only be rivaled by the number of convents that were established.<sup>351</sup> The early twentieth-century obsession with the sport extended to the audience’s fascination with the bullfighters, including their fashion and their private lives. This unprecedented amount of public attention made the successful early-twentieth century toreros objects of everyday gossip, idols of the public and cultural icons, whose images were printed in journals and newspapers nationwide and whose every move and sexual indiscretion was commented upon.

Early twentieth-century artists, sculptors and photographers embraced the heroic and decadent elements in the image of a bullfighter, an image with a pictorial pedigree that was made prestigious by Goya, then taken up by the Romantic painter Eugenio Lucas and later popularized by Marià Fortuny i Marsal. Earlier representations of bullfighting tended to highlight the spectacle of the sport and favored the representation of the bullfighter as a popular Spanish type.

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<sup>350</sup> The term “corrida” has several meanings, but in this case it refers to a series of bullfights, averaging around six, that are held consecutively. In 1917, Joselito participated in 103 corridas, Belmonte in 97, while another famous torero, Ricardo Torres “Bombita” (1879-1936) fought 60-70 corridas prior to his retirement from the profession in 1913. See: Pérez y Ayala, *Política y Toros*, 183.

<sup>351</sup> Pérez y Ayala, *Política y Toros*, 183.

Building on this tradition, many popular Silver-Age artists and illustrators came to focus on the colorful and heroic qualities of the bullfighter, while others like Ignacio Zuloaga, Daniel Vázquez Díaz and Ismael Smith aligned the representation of the bullfighter with notions of Spanish decadence.

Spanish social and cultural critics, including the aforementioned bullfighting aficionado Pérez Ayala and one of bullfighting's strongest detractors, Eugenio Noel equated the sport with the ostentatious, absurd national display of the outdated masculine virtue, which was inappropriate for a modern, civilized nation. Even though bullfighting traditionally represented the apex of masculine sport in Spain, some critics viewed bullfighters as effeminate for their choice of costume, their codified elegance and for the pageantry that was seen by some onlookers as uncannily suggestive of homosexual styles and practices. Certain cultural critics, writers and psychiatrists, including the medical doctor César Juarros were unsettled by the spectacle of bullfighting because of its supposed invitation to homoeroticism. They viewed the corridas as fostering the Spanish male spectator's fascination with the body of the torero, and thus guiding men's attention away from women and away from established gender roles.<sup>352</sup>

The figure of the bullfighter embodied the move away from the traditional gender roles noted by Juarros, coupled with the cultural anxiety surrounding Spain's inability to enter the modern era due to its attachment to the "barbaric" sport that was reflected in the writings of Pérez de Ayala. In this way, the turn-of-the-century torero had become a liminal figure straddling the thin line between modernity and anachronism. Moreover, by the turn of the twentieth century, a dead bullfighter killed in the prime of life became a common visual and

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<sup>352</sup> Dr. César Juarros, *El Amor en España: Características Masculinas* (Madrid: Editorial Paez, 1927), 36.



literary motif. He had become at once a model of Spanish masculine virtue worthy of emulation, as well as an irreproducible model of masculinity.

As Judith “Jack” Halberstam pointed out, the transmission of inheritance is key in Western cultures, which are guided by reproductive temporality, where time is arranged with reproduction as its main goal. According to Halberstam, the ability to pass on inheritance, which includes “values, wealth, goods, and morals,” from generation to generation is paramount as it “also connects the family to the historical past of the nation, and glances ahead to connect the family to the culture of both familial and national stability.”<sup>353</sup> The cult of the young dead bullfighter interferes with the notion of the biological reproduction of perfect manhood because it promotes a masculine ideal that is ultimately irreproducible since, in order to achieve that heroic ideal, a young bullfighter like Joselito, has to die before he can leave any biological heirs. In that way, the bullfighter’s colleagues may become his spiritual heirs, as Ignacio Sánchez Mejías came to be for Joselito, but they can never fully inherit his heroic virtue.

Bullfighter’s heroic masculinity permeates the commemorative and celebratory photographs of “Joselito,” as well as his posthumous photographs and larger-than-life mausoleum (1924) [Fig. 61] that was built to honor him by one of Spain’s leading state sculptors, Mariano Benlliure y Gil. Joselito, an Andalusian torero of Gitano ancestry, was considered to be invincible, and yet he died tragically and absurdly in the midst of a bullfight, an event that was treated as nothing short of a national tragedy. This section explores the significance of the torero’s death and its treatment in visual culture, as well as the role of the torero as the idol of the people, rather than an aristocratic ideal. Furthermore, I will focus on the torero motif as a stand-in for the Spanish nation and as a tragic, yet decadent, Spanish ideal in the torero-themed

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<sup>353</sup> Halberstam, *In Queer Time and Place*, 5.

paintings of Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz. Both artists were affiliated with the intellectual currents of the Generation of 1898 and emphasized the tragic dimensions of the national sport, entwining the representation of the torero as a national hero with that of the torero as a tragic figure. In contrast, Ismael Smith's bemused etchings often portrayed the gruesome death of the bullfighter and/or his horse in comic terms, underscoring the absurdity of this national pastime and the torero himself as an object of worship. I conclude the chapter with Smith's etchings (1914-1919) that draw on the tradition of Goya's bullfighting prints in the *Tauromaquia* series. My analysis of Smith's etchings draws on Mikhail Bakhtin concept of "grotesque realism" that is based in degradation – that is "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract" and its transference "to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity."<sup>354</sup> In this context, I argue that Smith's works convert the bullfighter into a grotesque figure, and, thus, complicate and queer the traditional representation of the torero as a national icon of masculinity by depicting the bullfight and the bullfighter in perversely erotic terms within the carnivalesque tradition.

### **Bullfighting and Bullfighters: A Brief Visual History**

The term "fiesta nacional" emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century to describe the bullfighting spectacle in Spain, an event which already had an extensive history on the Iberian Peninsula that predated the Roman conquest.<sup>355</sup> The representation of bullfighting has its origins in prehistoric wall-painting; however, its modern visual history can be traced to the reign of

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<sup>354</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968): 19-20.

<sup>355</sup> Fernando Claramunt López, *Toreros de la Generación del 98* (Tutor: Madrid, 1998), 249.

Carlos IV (1788-1808). During that period, the painter and occasional print-maker Antonio Carnicero produced a set of twelve Rococo-style prints on the subject, known as *Collection of the Principal Maneuvers in a Bullfight/Colección de las principales suertes de una corrida de toros* (1787-1790) and another anonymous artist illustrated the 1804 edition of the Pepe-Hillo's *Tauromaquia, or the Art of Fighting Bulls on Horseback and on Foot*.<sup>356</sup> However, bullfighting became entrenched as an artistic subject with the publication of Francisco Goya's 1816 print series, which came to be known in the 1840s as *Tauromaquia*.<sup>357</sup> In contrast to preceding representations of the sport, Goya's bullfighting series, made up of thirty-three technically sophisticated aquatint etchings, not only depicted the bullfight, but also sought to visualize its origins and historical development. Andrew Shultz has argued that the notion of Spanish national identity was fundamental to Goya's series, which portrayed the Moors as central figures in the evolution of the quintessential Spanish pastime.<sup>358</sup> For the context of this chapter, it is significant to note that Goya's etchings positioned the bull, rather than the bullfighter, as a protagonist of the series. For example, even in the emotionally charged scene in the final plate of the series that depicts *The Unfortunate Death of Pepe Illo in the Ring of Madrid* [Fig. 62], Goya prioritizes the bull by positioning him at the center of the composition, making him darker and larger than the fallen matador and, therefore, the focus of the viewer's attention. While Goya also painted portraits of the individual bullfighters, and notably of Pedro Romero, such depictions of bullfighters were scarce prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, when they were taken up by Fortuny. The publication and subsequent success of *Tauromaquia* in 1816

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<sup>356</sup> Josef Delgado Hillo (Pepe-Hillo), *Tauromaquia, o el Arte de Torear á Caballo y á Pie* (Madrid: Vega y Compañía, 1804).

<sup>357</sup> For more information on nineteenth-century bullfighting print collections and posters see: María Dolores Palacios López, *Arte y Toros: Estampa e Ilustración Taurina* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2004).

<sup>358</sup> Andrew Shultz, "Moors and the Bullfight: History and National Identity in Goya's *Tauromaquia*," *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 2 (2008): 195-217.

created a demand for the subject among many artists, including the Romantic painter and Goya's follower Eugenio Lucas Velázquez (1817-1870).<sup>359</sup>

Similar to Goya's etchings, Lucas Velázquez's bullfighting-themed paintings, including his 1862 *Corrida in the Village (the Enclosure)* [Fig. 63], focused on the event and the spectacle of the corrida with its many participants, rather than assigning priority to the figure of the bullfighter. The dynamically sketched, energetic figures of people from different classes, as well as animals, intermingle in the *Corrida in the Village* within a composition that is largely dominated by earth tones, brightly accented with vivid reds, blues, greens and yellows in the figures' clothing. The bull occupies the center of the image, while the picador to the bull's left is poised to strike the animal down with his lance at any moment, as the other two bullfighters behind him, one with a red and the other with a blue cape, attempt to provoke the bull into action. A fallen figure that could either be that of a trampled observer or of a less successful bullfighter lies to the left of the bull, with a bleeding, partially reclined horse behind him and surrounded by a sea of impressionistically rendered spectators that spill out of the buildings and onto the streets. The artist's energetic handling of the brush celebrates the brute force of the bull and the enthusiasm of the crowd. In this image, Lucas Velázquez depicts bullfighting as a popular event that brings the community together without singling out the heroism of an individual torero.

In the work of Fortuny (1838-1874), the figure of the individual bullfighter finally comes into artistic prominence. However, it is important to note that Fortuny never explicitly identified any of his exquisitely dressed and elegantly posed foppish figures of bullfighters by their names

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<sup>359</sup> Ángel González García, "Pintura y toros," in *Arte y Tauromaquia*, ed. Antonio Saura, 199 (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1982).

– they remain types, rather than individuals. For example, in the 1869 goache, titled “Torero” [Fig. 64], Fortuny’s bullfighter, executed in the *preciocista* technique, made out of multiple, vivid specs of color, is posed for maximum aesthetic effect, with his hands on his hips and his head cockily tilted up, while looking away from the viewer. Various iterations of this position would be assumed by Silver-Age bullfighters, including Joselito, and used by artists and photographers in the early twentieth century to signal to torero’s bravura and heroism to the viewer.

While Goya, Lucas and Fortuny were by no means the only artists who explored the bullfighting subject in their art prior to the turn of the twentieth century, their works were especially influential for the early twentieth-century Spanish artists, including Zuloaga, Vázquez Díaz and Smith. Drawing on the visual language of these earlier artists, Silver-Age artists took up the notion of the torero as a national ideal of manhood and imbued the figure of the bullfighter with a new sensibility.

### **“The Perfection of a Myth:” The Bullfighter’s Heroic Death**

On May 16, 1920, José Gómez Ortega “Joselito” was fatally gored by the bull at the age of twenty-five to the horror of the audience at the bullring in Talavera de la Reina, a small Castilian town. Spanish audiences already admired Joselito, but it is in death that this bullfighter and his worship achieved hagiographic proportions. Joselito’s death and its reception encapsulates the ways in which toreros embodied male heroic virtue in the early twentieth century Spain. In the words of Eugenio Noel, Spain converted the young bullfighter into an “idol”: “Joselito has taken possession of the Spain of his time, and that Spain has proclaimed him its representative

figure.”<sup>360</sup> The shock and grief that Joselito’s death had caused in Spain was unprecedented and would not be rivaled until the fatal goring of Manuel Laureano Rodríguez Sánchez “Manolete” in 1947. Posthumous visual tributes to Joselito were steeped in religious iconography and the visual languages of the Baroque and Renaissance, suggesting that of all the Silver-Age masculine archetypes, it is specifically the dead torero who had come to effectively epitomize male virtue. Joselito’s friend and celebrated bullfighting critic José María de Cossío commented on Joselito’s mythological status two decades after his death; “if his [Joselito’s] life as a bullfighter was exemplary, even more exemplary was his death, which completed the cycle of his bullfighting activity without a failure, with the perfection of a myth.”<sup>361</sup>

By the time of his final bullfight in 1920, Joselito – a former child prodigy, who had become a matador at the remarkably young age of thirteen – was at the height of his career. Joselito was the youngest son of the “Gallo” bullfighting dynasty and a younger brother of Rafael “el Gallo.” Zuloaga famously portrayed the Gallo family in the 1904 *Family of the Gypsy Bullfighter* [Fig. 65], featuring Joselito as a child seated on his father’s lap. Joselito’s fame and reputation grew over time, as his image was widely publicized in the most famous illustrated periodicals of the era and especially in bullfighting magazines, including *El Toreo* and *La Lidia*. The first edition of *La Lidia*<sup>362</sup> published on March 28, 1914 reproduced a watercolor painting by the famous taurine illustrator Roberto Domingo with Joselito in the foreground, surrounded by members of his *cuadrilla*, or bullfighter’s team. In its June 16, 1914 edition, *La Lidia* dedicated

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<sup>360</sup> Joselito se había adueñado de la España de su tiempo, y esa España le había proclamado su figura representativa. España había hecho de ese joven un ídolo, despreciando valores espirituales de otras almas jóvenes; que España cargara con su responsabilidad.” In Eugenio Noel, “Las Dos Tumbas de Joselito” [1926], in *Escritos Antitaurinos* (Madrid: Taurus, 1967): 143.

<sup>361</sup> Cossío, *Los Toros*, 378.

<sup>362</sup> *La Lidia* was founded by the painter, engraver and journalist Adolfo Durá Abad (1875-1936) in 1914, with the intent of taking over and continuing the work of the previous illustrated periodical by the same name that was published between 1882 and 1900 and was considered to be a classic publication in taurine journalism.

an entire spread to the young, but illustrious Joselito that included photographs and drawings of the bullfighter in action and with his brother Rafael. One of the images, a photomontage titled *The Great Faena of "Gallito"* [Fig. 66], explicitly links bullfighting with an act of heroism. In this image, Joselito emerges as a confident bullfighter in a standard torero pose, akin to Fortuny's 1869 bullfighter, with one hand positioned on his right hip, wrapped in *muleta*, or a smaller bullfighting cape, the other hand at his side, and his head cocked slightly to the right as he looks out at the viewer. Joselito's body is positioned next to the three photographic vignettes, which document each step of his "heroic feat," that is, his *faena*, or the final act in a bullfight, where the matador displays his artistry with the *muleta* in the face-to-face killing of the bull. The large rectangular caption in the bottom of the collage is explicit about his identity: "the latest portrait of the hero."

In addition to Joselito's representation in heroic terms and despite his youth, the bullfighter's character and style were tinged with the sense of melancholy, likening him to Zuloaga's nameless bullfighter of the 1910 *Victim of the Fiesta* [Fig. 67] and situating him in the "Black Spain" spectrum of the Generation of 1898. Within the tradition of "Black Spain," a bullfighter often embodied melancholic, tragic aspects of Spanish masculinity, even for those authors and artists who embraced and practiced bullfighting as a sport. Decades after his death, Cossío highlighted Joselito's defining features, which were his obsessive dedication to bullfighting and his inexplicable melancholy. According to the critic, "[Joselito] lived only for the bulls, spoke only of the bulls and the bulls consumed all of his development, habits and desires."<sup>363</sup> And yet, he was also "a fundamentally sad creature, without any apparent tragedies, but with a malaise successively fostered by different causes... This melancholy was dressed, but

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<sup>363</sup> "Vive sólo para los toros, habla tan sólo de toros y a los toros supedita todas sus expansiones, costumbres y deseos." In Cossío, *Los Toros*, 377.

not disguised, in cheerfulness, it was a characteristic of his bullfighting style.”<sup>364</sup> Cossío’s emphasis on Joselito’s exclusive and obsessive dedication to his art (without bringing up his affairs with cupletistas) and his melancholic temperament helps paint the bullfighter as a stereotypical artistic genius, as well as a Spanish hero for the “declining” nation.

During the years preceding his death, the public had come to consider Joselito to be invincible and his tragic demise in the bullring was publicly received as nothing short of a national tragedy. The visual reception of Joselito’s death by artists, photographers, and sculptors, rivaled that of an important politician or a monarch in terms of its cultural significance. The visual rhetoric drew on the Baroque, the Neoclassical and Christian traditions to mythologize and even deify the bullfighter. In the iconic, dramatically staged photograph, *Death of Joselito* [Fig. 68], taken by one of the leading photographers of the era, José L. Demaría López “Campúa”, Joselito appears on a deathbed, mourned by José Sánchez Mejías, another important bullfighter. The choice of this image to lead the illustrated reportage on Joselito’s death that was published in one of the best-selling illustrated periodicals of the period, *Mundo Gráfico*, is remarkable because it represents the tragedy of Joselito’s death in terms of male grief of one bullfighter over another.

The caption underneath the photograph reads, “Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, emotionally contemplating the body of his brother-in-law Joselito, a few hours after the death of the great torero.” Even though Mejías, a renowned torero in his own right and Joselito’s close childhood friend, was merely four years older than the deceased, he appears noticeably aged in this photograph. Joselito’s foreshortened face is rendered smooth and almost marble-like in its

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<sup>364</sup> “Joselito fue una criatura fundamentalmente triste, sin tragedias aparentes, pero con un malestar sucesivamente fomentado por causas distintas, que recataba bajo su natural reconcentrado [...] Esta melancolía vestida, que no disfrazada, de alegría era característica de su estilo torero.” Cited in Blanca Ramos Romero, “Joselito el Gallo en el Arte,” *Revista de Estudios Taurinos* 2 (1995): 36.



texture, stripped of imperfections and classicized in a way that obscures his double chin and his other distinctive features, thus rendering him into a perfect specimen of authentic Spanish manhood, which he could not have been as a living *Gitano* bullfighter. In contrast, Mejías looks aged by his grief, with his downturned face and prominent forehead that displays deeply incised vertical lines, as he tenderly cradles the back of his fallen comrade's head with one hand, while supporting his own with the other. Mejías's dramatic pose follows in the iconographic tradition of depicting the artist's melancholia, famously captured in Albrecht Dürer's 1514 engraving, *Melancholia I* [Fig. 69]. Campúa further enhances the emotionally charged, yet markedly artificial setup of the scene through his use of a dynamic Baroque composition of diagonals created by the opposing angles of Joselito's and Mejías's bodies and by staging his subjects against a simple background of wide vertical shapes that draw attention to their faces, which are placed prominently at the very center of the composition.

In addition to the Baroque, Campúa's photograph alludes to several other pictorial traditions of representing mourning over a hero's death, including the Neoclassical motif of the hero's death and the Christian iconographic tradition of *La Pieta*. The Spanish Neoclassical artist José de Madrazo's 1807 painting, *Death of Viriatus, Chief of Lusitanians* [Fig. 70], serves as an illustrative example of the Neoclassical tradition. Most importantly, it portrays the death of a hero, a mythological founder of Spain, Viriathus as an occasion for homosocial bonding, where during a moment of grief, it becomes appropriate for a man to display emotion and come into physical contact with other men. Even though Campúa's image only portrays one mourner, it is still inscribed within the tradition of Neoclassical representations of heroic death. However, the depiction of Mejías's act of mourning, with Joselito's head positioned visually in Mejías's lap as Mejías looks down upon it, recalls the *Pieta* motif, where Mejías occupies the position of the

Virgin Mary cradling the body of Christ, played by Joselito in this image, following the crucifixion. In this way, Campúa's photograph potentially suggests the metamorphosis of the body of the torero in religious terms: Joselito had become deified because, in death, he had become transformed into the very image of the impossible masculine ideal.

While Campúa's photographs idealized and even deified Joselito in death, Mariano Benlliure y Gil's mausoleum dedicated to the dead bullfighter furthered his heroic public image, while troubling the notion of the torero as a national ideal. Shortly after Joselito's death, the Gómez Ortega family, led by Sánchez Mejías, decided to commission a funerary monument from Mariano Benlliure y Gil (1862-1947), a Valencian sculptor affiliated with the academy, known for his public works, and famous for his representations of bullfighting and bullfighters. Initially purchased for the high sum of 175,000 pesetas, the price of Joselito's mausoleum had subsequently been reduced to half of the initial sum.<sup>365</sup> By the second decade of the twentieth century, Benlliure was already a sculptor of great renown, with a reputation not only for local-color, small-scale sculptures, but also for public sculpture dedicated to military heroes, such as the *Monument to General Martínez Campos* (1907) at Madrid's Parque del Retiro [Fig. 71]. Following the revelation of the Mausoleum in 1924 contemporary critic, Antonio Méndez Casal characterized Benlliure as "the most Goya-like of Spanish sculptors." For that reason, according to the author, the sculptor was ideally suited to honor the death of "the great national torero" Joselito, who was a "popular idol" and a "hero," and whose life was extinguished on the bullring at the small-town plaza "as *castiza* as the ones from the time of Goya."<sup>366</sup> For this reason, among others, the choice of Benlliure to commemorate the fallen bullfighter helped to further solidify Joselito's image as a uniquely Spanish hero. Benlliure worked on the mausoleum for four years;

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<sup>365</sup> Carmen Quevedo Pessanha, *Vida Artística de Mariano Benlliure* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1947), 491.

<sup>366</sup> Cited in Pessanha, *Vida Artística*, 489.

however, the sculpture was not installed in place until 1926, when Joselito's final resting place at the San Fernando Cemetery in Seville had been determined.

Much like the selection of the famous sculptor to design the mausoleum, the choice of this specific cemetery to house the body of a Gitano bullfighter is significant because San Fernando Cemetery, built in 1852, at this point housed primarily members of the Sevillian aristocracy, with only a few bullfighters, including the legendary Manuel García Cuesta "El Espatero" (1865-1894), granted the honor of being buried there. Moreover, according to the Sevillian journalist José Muñoz San Román, the specific part of the cemetery where Joselito's body was interred was "reserved for the burial of heroes."<sup>367</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth century, public rituals and ceremonies began to be held for poets and artists that rivaled state and royal funerals in pomp and social significance. One of the most famous occasions for such a display took place in Spain following the death of Marià Fortuny in 1874. As Oscar E. Vázquez has demonstrated, such public honors in death were often used as tools for the construction of political identities that distanced themselves from monarchical and church rites.<sup>368</sup> Moreover, as I will suggest was the case with Joselito's funerals and the mausoleum, the death of the torero became an occasion to celebrate and solidify the bullfighter as a national, democratic, Spanish ideal that moved beyond class affiliations.

In a letter concerning Joselito's mausoleum, published in the national newspaper *El Imparcial* in 1924 following the completion of the mausoleum, Benlliure underscored the importance of his work as service to the Spanish nation by pointing out that he granted free access to Joselito's Mausoleum in his studio to "visitors of whom there were many, of all social

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<sup>367</sup> José Muñoz San Román, "El Mausoleo de Gallito," *Caras y Carretas* (Buenos Aires), no. 1249 (September 9, 1922), n.p.

<sup>368</sup> Vázquez, *The End Again*, 28.

sectors,” thus placing his studio “at the disposal of the public much like a street or a plaza.”<sup>369</sup> Benlliure’s emphasis on his commission as a type of public service underscores the importance of Joselito as a heroic, unifying, national ideal for all social classes. Following the completion of the composition, it was transported to the Fine Arts Pavillion in Seville, to subsequently be installed at the San Fernando Cemetery on May 26, 1926.

In addition to the symbolic importance of the monument for the Spanish public, the monumental scale of the mausoleum, the artist’s choice of materials, iconography and the use of historical references establishes the fallen bullfighter as a heroic figure. Made of Carrara marble and bronze, the *Mausoleum* depicts the funerary procession for the deceased bullfighter, who appears on the catafalque and is the only figure in the composition chiseled out of white marble. Joselito’s body, partially covered with a bullfighting cape, is carried by eighteen bronze, realistically rendered pallbearers, including Joselito’s brother Rafael and his brother-in-law Sanchez Mejías, both of whom would later be buried at the same location, as well as the members of Joselito’s bullfighting team (*cuadrilla*). In addition to these real-life figures, the funerary procession features Andalusian regional types, including children and the *Gitana*, who leads the mournful procession as she holds the statue of the Virgin of Esperanza, the object of the deceased bullfighter’s devotion, in her elegant hands. According to Benlliure, one afternoon after a bullfight in San Sebastián, Joselito had shown the sculptor his Virgin of Esperanza medal with an imprint from the bull and said, “Don Mariano, this has saved my life.”<sup>370</sup>

Critics largely celebrated Benlliure’s work and its Spanishness by likening the artist to Goya, much like Méndez Casal did, and by concentrating on Benlliure as an “enthusiastic

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<sup>369</sup> Mariano Benlliure y Gil, “Una Carta de Benlliure,” *El Imparcial* 58, no. 20362, May 4, 1924, 3.

<sup>370</sup> Cited in Violeta Montoliu, *Mariano Benlliure* (Paterna: Generalitat de Valencia, 1996), 170.

taurophile,” who counted many toreros, including Joselito, among his friends.<sup>371</sup> According to the anonymous writer of *La Época*, “as a Spaniard, as a bullfighting aficionado and a friend of *Joselito* [sic],” the sculptor “felt profoundly, the pain of that tragic afternoon in which the Sevillian bullfighter gave up his life on the arena.... And that pain, which was that of all of his Spanish fans, admirers of the bullfighter, the sculptor reflects in his work, which enshrines the reflection of greater transcendence than that of any other mausoleum [built] to honor the deceased.”<sup>372</sup> Thus, it was Benlliure’s Spanishness, reflected in his perceived similarities to Goya and love of bullfighting, that made it possible for him to tap into the profound Spanish pain caused by Joselito’s death and felt sharply by the Spanish people.

However, for other critics who were vehemently opposed to bullfighting, Benlliure’s mausoleum encapsulated everything that was wrong with the cult of the bullfighter at the national level and epitomized Spanish decadence. The novelist, essayist and vocal critic of “flamenquismo” and bullfighting, Eugenio Noel, born Eugenio Muñoz Díaz (1885-1936), argued that the popularity of bullfighting explains how and why the Spain of his time had become so decadent. According to Noel, the amount of money that the nation spent had lavished upon the spectacle and, more specifically, the toreros was the cause of national financial and spiritual ruin. The writer contended that the tragic death of the seemingly invincible torero was the best case against bullfighting in Spain, precisely because this distinguished young man died senselessly at the bullring like a novice bullfighter, only to be deified as a national hero for the insipid crowds. According to Noel, the crowds following the coffin during the procession rivaled “a national funeral, and there were but few [participants in the procession], who were not crying.”<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Anonymous, “Una Obra Maestra de Benlliure: El Mausoleo de “Joselito,”” *La Época* 76, no. 26286, March 27, 1924, n.p.

<sup>372</sup> Anonymous, “Una Obra Maestra,” n.p.

<sup>373</sup> Noel, “Las Dos Tumbas,” 142.

Outraged by the national state of mourning over the death of a bullfighter, Noel had chosen Benlliure's *Mausoleum*, which he characterized as "something unheard of, an absurd deification" that goes out of its way to worship a "great torero" with its "poor Baroque ideation," as the focal point for his rage. In his description of the monument, Noel mentions that, "It consists of an enormous catafalque in an open coffin, carried on the shoulders of eighteen or twenty figures who will "eternally" have to bear the funereal weight, or at least for as long as the merry Andalusian cemetery and the obsolete way of thinking of the people persists."<sup>374</sup> Noel pointed out in his description that the body of the torero is deemed to be so heroic that it requires "eighteen or twenty figures" to lift him up. Moreover, the dead torero's body stands for the weight of tradition of bullfighting that Andalusia, where Joselito comes from, is forced to bear until the bullfighting ceases to be glorified in the region.

Unlike the anonymous writer in *La Época*, who praised Benlliure for his ability to capture the authentically Spanish bereavement over the deceased bullfighter and give it a transcendent quality, Noel sees Benlliure's homage as indicative of the uniquely contemporary Spanish decadence. Noel writes that, "their pain is very much of our time" and yet is also "hardly personal and very much of the crowd." That pain, which is "the pain of a multitude...carrying its hero, that hero who mocked death every feast day to amuse them and to whom it paid not little money to do so...cannot interest, even less so convince, or even move."<sup>375</sup> Noel represents the national grief, as he sees it reflected in Benlliure's *Mausoleum* as something vulgar by linking it to the loss of financial capital on part of the mourners, depriving an act of mourning of its nobility and power to move the spectator. And yet, even as the national sentiments over the death of the bullfighter that are pictured in this "pretentious and rushed monument" are hollow,

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<sup>374</sup> Noel, "Las Dos Tumbas," 145.

<sup>375</sup> Noel, "Las Dos Tumbas," 145.

they nevertheless transmit another, very real kind of pain to the viewer, which is the “immense pain that is for a Spaniard his own Spain.”<sup>376</sup>

Joselito’s illustrious career as a bullfighter, as reflected in both the visual and mass-media publications served to embody national, heroic masculinity, but it was in death that Joselito has been able to fully embody such ideals, at the expense of the erasure of both his Gitano identity and personal failures. And, yet, even as images like Campúa’s photograph sought to idealize and deify Joselito for the masses, Benlliure’s *Mausoleum* that was intended to honor the great bullfighter was taken up by the critics of bullfighting to place the responsibility for the nation’s decadence on the shoulders of the bullfighter as the ideal of Spanish masculinity.

### **The Masculine Crisis of 1898: The Bullfighter as the Icon of Spanish Decadence**

Unamuno, who was famously depreciative of bullfighting, nevertheless admitted to the sport’s national significance. In his 1897 novel, *Paz en la Guerra* (War in Peace), Unamuno’s Don Emeterio responds to his interlocutor’s insinuation of cruelty in bullfighting, by saying, “People need something virile so as not to fall into softness. The people of bread and bulls<sup>377</sup> were the ones who knew how to face Napoleon.”<sup>378</sup> Bullfighting, which Unamuno’s protagonist described as a model of Spanish virility, occupied many artists and writers of 1898. Darío Regoyos,

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<sup>376</sup> Noel, “Las Dos Tumbas,” 146.

<sup>377</sup> The Spanish expression “pan y toros” or “bread and bulls” plays on the Roman phrase, “bread and circuses,” which refers to the idea that the masses would be kept content and docile, if there is sufficient food and entertainment. In 1864, a zarzuela play of the name, with music by Francisco Asenjo Barbieri was first performed at the Zarzuela Theater in Madrid. During the Spanish Enlightenment, the phrase “bread and bulls” was used by the detractors of bullfighting to represent it as a spectacle that appeals to the Spanish people’s basest instincts and keeps the nation in a state of regression. Many intellectuals, now associated with the Generation of 1898, adopted a similarly negative attitude towards the sport, blaming it for the nation’s social, spiritual and economic problems.

<sup>378</sup> “Los pueblos necesitan algo viril para no caer en la molición. El pueblo de pan y toros fué el que supo dar cara á Napoleón.” In Miguel de Unamuno, *Paz en la Guerra* (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fe, 1897), 302.

Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz, among others, took up this subject and the bullfighter as metonymy for Spain and its current political situation. The subject of bullfighting in the early twentieth century was a controversial: it was met with enthusiasm by the aficionados, including Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz, but it was a source of resentment for its many detractors, like Noel and Unamuno. As Guillermo Díaz-Plaja has pointed out, the general attitude towards bullfighting espoused by the intellectuals affiliated with the Generation of 1898 and other liberal intellectuals concerned with national regeneration was that of condemnation. So much so that the liberal newspaper *El Sol* refused to publish bullfighting reviews on its pages and referenced bullfighting events as “the so-called fiesta nacional,” rather than simply “fiesta nacional” as was customary.<sup>379</sup> And yet, as Fernando Claramunt López has argued, the bullfighter had a pedagogic significance for the Regenerationist intellectuals, affiliated with ILE and the Generation of 1898, where he served as “popular hero” and was revered as a model for men to emulate.<sup>380</sup> The fascination with the figure of the bullfighter as both martyr-hero of the *fiesta nacional*, tied him to the Spanish masculine ideal, independent of the individual artists’ sentiments towards the sport. As the criticism of Noel, tangentially related to the intellectual currents of the Generation of 1898, regarding Benlliure’s *Mausoleum* made evident, the figure of the heroic, dead bullfighter became charged with the notions of Spanish decadence. This section focuses on the work of Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz as two artists whose representations of bullfighters were closely aligned with the ideological tendencies of the intellectuals concerned with the national regeneration in the wake of 1898, namely the enthusiasm for and the decadent aspects of bullfighting. While both artists had life-long enthusiasm for the sport and explored the

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<sup>379</sup> Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, *Estructura y Sentido del Novecentismo Estructura y Sentido del Novecentismo Español* (Madrid: Alianza, 1975), 61.

<sup>380</sup> Fernando Claramunt López, *Toreros de la Generación del 98* (Madrid: Tutor, 1998), 9-10.



bullfighter as a national masculine icon, Zuloaga ultimately portrayed him as an antiquated paragon of Spanish manhood, whereas Vázquez Díaz represented him as a possible model for the future of Spanish masculinity.

Zuloaga's 1910 *The Victim of the Fiesta* caused a stir and contributed to the polemical discussions of Black Spain and the accusations of the falseness and backwardness of Zuloaga's vision. Zuloaga painted many bullfighting scenes and had life-long friendships with bullfighters, but he was also a practitioner of the art of tauromaquia, educated at the Manuel Carmona bullfighting school in Seville. His paintings focused on newcomer bullfighters from small provincial towns who performed the torero masculinity in 1906 *Young Village Bullfighters* [Fig. 72] and on the attractive aspects of the career in bullfighting in 1896-1900 *Village Bullfighter* [Fig. 73]. The artist nonetheless engaged with the notion of a bullfighter as a decadent and antiquated figure and was subsequently received by critics as metonymy for Spain in *Victim of the Fiesta* of 1910. Moreover, Zuloaga's works exposed the performative aspects of the bullfighter as a model of masculinity by presenting elaborately dressed, young men striking poses for each other before the bullfight in *Young Village Bullfighters*. He also portrayed the bullfighter as the paragon of Spanish masculinity in *Young Village Bullfighter*, whose virility is established in relation to the two young women fawning over the dashing torero. The bullfighter's actions and gestures are directed towards the woman, as if he is unaware of the audience. In turn, the audience assumes the female role by adopting the admiring perspective of the young women in the painting.

In contrast to this largely positive, if kitschy characterization of the village bullfighters in these two paintings, in *The Victim of the Fiesta*, Zuloaga portrays an aging, exhausted picador, whose horseback figure evokes the melancholy figure of Don Quixote and offers a stark contrast

to the portrayals of young, arrogant, virile bullfighters with a bright future ahead of them.<sup>381</sup> As Zuloaga's critic Ramón Jaén put it, the tragedy of the protagonist of *The Victim of the Fiesta* and that which truly makes Zuloaga's picador a victim, "sick of the soul and of the body" is "not having died in [a battle]."<sup>382</sup> Forced to traverse the sad and mystical terrain of the Castilla la Mancha, an ill-fated bullring behind him, on top of his very own exhausted, blood-stained, and malnourished Rocinante, the solitary picador slouches and purses his lips tightly in resignation. His silhouette is made all the more ominous by the stormy, violent, skies in the background, favored by Zuloaga and evocative of El Greco. As was the case with *Gregorio el Botero* and Zuloaga's other iconic works, Jaén and Zuloaga's other critics quickly saw the image as a manifestation of the uniquely Spanish heroism. According to Jaén, like the effigy of the Savior in *The Bleeding Christ*, Zuloaga's picador was "the son of the [Spanish] people" and both male protagonists were "distinctly Spanish [castizos] in their pain, pessimism and resignation." Furthermore, the critic called Zuloaga's painting "a pious prayer to humility, to that Spanish humility, that resigns itself to the force of heroism, that collects within the soul and only surrenders the flesh to martyrdom."<sup>383</sup> In line with Jaén, many Zuloaga's admirers projected Spanish heroism – a martyrdom of the body, but not of the soul – even into this brutal representation of the picador and the sport. Nevertheless, other critics were more vocal in their rebuke of bullfighting in Spain and its detrimental impact on Spanish masculinity.

In his discussion of Zuloaga and his take on the bullfighting, José Francés argues that the Spanish public misunderstood the Basque painter's attitude towards the *fiesta nacional*,

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<sup>381</sup> Picador, or bullfighter on horseback armed with a lance, who performs in the first and the third stage of the bullfight. Prior to the late nineteenth century, picador was at the center of the bullfighting spectacle, but by the early twentieth century picadors became overshadowed by the bullfighters on foot.

<sup>382</sup> Jaén, "Zuloaga en los Estados Unidos," 328.

<sup>383</sup> "El cuadro es al mismo tiempo una piadosa oración a la humildad, a esa humildad española que se resigna a fuerza del heroísmo, se recoge en el alma y entrega al martirio sólo la carne." In Jaén, "Zuloaga en los Estados Unidos," 328.

mistaking what was really a critique for a shallow celebration of the bullfighter as a hero. Frances's perspective on Zuloaga's art was colored by his own perception of bullfighting as "villainous and antipatriotic," an attitude that was closely aligned with that of Noel, Unamuno and others affiliated with Generation of 1898. Notably, Francés suggested that, "Delving deeper into the problems of national impoverishment, we always discover the taurine leprosy. The bullfights are the culprits of all our material and spiritual ruin."<sup>384</sup> The critic's image of "taurine leprosy" is visually striking and evocative of a medieval image of contagion, which suggests that bullfighting itself is a kind of regression. Furthermore, Francés laments the glorification of the matador, by the spectators "of the barbaric fiesta [who] know that the bullfighter is the Spaniard, who is most admired by men, most popular with women, and who acquires riches faster and that his life is haloed with glory."<sup>385</sup> Francés accused the Spanish public of unpatriotic "idolatrous submission" to the sport and complete disregard of bullfighting's dark side – "the terrible existence of the bullfighters who never triumph."<sup>386</sup> Francés places Zuloaga's taurine paintings within this context, as images that expose the dark side of bullfighting and attack the works of the artists with uncritical attitudes. Much like Goya, Zuloaga's paintings are a protest "of a temperament that is strong, vigorous, and full of love for the most pure aesthetic emotions."<sup>387</sup> Zuloaga's love of bullfighting, his many friendships with bullfighters and, most importantly, his documented participation in bullfighting school under the tutelage of Carmona contradict Francés's assessment of his taurine works. And yet, Francés's enthusiastic reception of

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<sup>384</sup> "Ahondando en todos los serios problemas de empobrecimiento nacional, encontramos siempre la lepra taurina. Las corridas de toros son las culpables de todas nuestras derrotas materiales y espirituales." In José Francés, *El Pintor de la Raza: Ignacio Zuloaga. Conferencia* (Madrid: R. Velasco, Imp. Marqués de Santa Ana, 1917), 8.

<sup>385</sup> "Todos esos aprendices de la fiesta bárbara saben que el torero es el español más admirado por los hombres, más solicitado por las mujeres y que enriquece más pronto y que su vida está aureolada de gloria." In Francés, *El Pintor de la Raza*, 9.

<sup>386</sup> Francés, *El Pintor de la Raza*, 9

<sup>387</sup> Francés, *El Pintor de la Raza*, 10.

Zuloaga's imaging of the *fiesta nacional* is largely representative of the reasons why intellectuals, such as Unamuno and Ayala favored Zuloaga and his taurine paintings.

The Andalusian painter Daniel Vázquez Díaz (1882-1969), whose work incorporated elements of realism and Cubism, was an avid lover of bullfighting. In his youth, Vázquez Díaz, much like Zuloaga, Iturrino and Canals, often frequented the house of Fernando Gómez "el Gallo," Joselito's father, and befriended many other toreros.<sup>388</sup> He gained success in Paris, where he lived between 1906 and 1918. His folkloric, traditionally Spanish subjects included mantilla-clad women and, above all, bullfighters. Later he was also praised for his portraits of key figures and intellectuals of the Spanish Silver Age, including Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset and others associated with the Generation of 1898. During the Spanish Civil War, Vázquez Díaz combined his interests in bullfighting, bullfighters and the masculine ideals of the Generation of 1898 in his creation of the 1936-1938 painting *The Bullfighting Teams of Frascuelo, Lagartijo and Mazzantini*, also known as *The Bullfighters of 98* [Fig. 74]. Vázquez Díaz's subjects were popular, while his visual language incorporated elements of the avant-garde, especially Cubism, and *casticista* tradition.<sup>389</sup> When the artist returned to Spain in 1918 during the last year of the World War I, his work became embroiled in the polemic surrounding the artist's "afrancesamiento," or the supposedly foreign nature of his work, inspired by French artistic models, in a manner similar to the Zuloaga Question.

The artist's supporters noted the uniquely Spanish features of his work and identified his art with patriotic labor that would benefit his homeland. According to José María Salaverría, writing for the 1910 exhibition of the artist, Vázquez Díaz was above all an Andalusian artist

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<sup>388</sup> Ramos Romero, "Joselito el Gallo en el Arte," 28.

<sup>389</sup> María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco, "Vázquez Díaz y Su Tiempo," in *Vázquez Díaz en las Colecciones MAPFRE*, ed. Eugenio Carmona, María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco, and Genoveva Tusell Gacia, 44 (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2006).

whose Southern origins were revealed in his “hot and nervous art,” despite his French and Spanish artistic education. Moreover, the greatness of Vázquez Díaz’s art resided in “the union of southernism (meridionalismo) with a bit of the depth of the North (Castilian tradition of painting) [...] to form complete art.”<sup>390</sup> According to Salaverría, Andalusian artists on their own succumb to “the unconscious impulse of their race, they tend to grant exclusive importance to that which is external; they love color and light and the bright feature of the present, and they exclude all depth as unnecessary.”<sup>391</sup> In addition to bringing together the artistic practices from the south and north of Spain, Vázquez Díaz had also given his audiences “a definitive vision of the *fiesta de los toros*; it is here [in the now-lost painting *Spoliarium*],<sup>392</sup> that the entire tragedy of Spain is condensed.”<sup>393</sup> While Salaverría, much like Unamuno and Azorín, spoke favorably of Vázquez Díaz’s art and its quintessential Spanishness, other critics were less favorable.

In contrast to Salaverría’s praise of Vázquez Díaz’s Spanishness, other critics adopted a more hostile attitude towards the artist. In 1918, Antonio Ballesteros de Martos, an art critic opposed to Symbolism and the avant-garde as a whole, accused Vázquez Díaz of being a “foreigner,”<sup>394</sup> a “friend of the snobs and of affectation” and of catering to the foreign public

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<sup>390</sup> “Los pintores meridionales cuando se abandonan al impulso inconsciente de su raza, propenden á concederle á lo externo una importancia exclusiva; aman el color, la luz, el rasgo brillante de momento presente, y toda profundida excluyen por innecesaria.” In José María Salaverría, “El Pintor Daniel Vázquez Díaz,” in *Exposición de Quelques Oeuvres du Peintre Daniel Vázquez Díaz*, ed. José María Salaverría (San Sebastián: Salón de “El Pueblo Vasco,” 1910), n.p.

<sup>391</sup> Salaverría, “El Pintor,” n.p.

<sup>392</sup> *Spoliarium* is Vázquez Díaz’s painting, now lost, portraying the bloody aftermath of a bullfight.

<sup>393</sup> Salaverría, “El Pintor,” n.p.

<sup>394</sup> Ballesteros de Martos and others used the terms “extranjero” and “afrancesado” to criticize Vázquez Díaz work for its innovative stylistic features, associated with French avant-garde and supposedly far removed from the Spanish public. However, other critics applied the term “afrancesado” in a more positive manner, characterizing Vázquez Díaz’s painting as free from Spanish clichés and unburdened by tradition, while still aware of it. According to an important art critic Gabriel García Maroto, “Daniel Vázquez Díaz es un español afrancesado, es decir, es un español injerto en europeo, libre, por tanto de la grave influencia de nuestras tradiciones estéticas – de las cuales es conocedor y estimador, pero no esclavo – y puede ofrecer, y ofrece, al acervo común, algo que es moderno y eterno.” In Asociación de Artistas Vascos, *Catálogo de Exposición de Vázquez Díaz en el Majestic-Hall* (Madrid: Asociación de Artistas Vascos, 1920), n.p. Cited in Angel Benito, *Vázquez Díaz: Vida y Pintura* (Madrid: Patronato Nacional de Museos, 1971), 134 and 137.

with his “French art...so false, so full of superficial anxieties, [an art that is] a child of sick brains and of morbid souls.”<sup>395</sup> In this manner, Ballesteros de Martos accusations of falseness, sickness and foreignness recall the rhetoric that the critic himself, along with many others, used to deride Spanish symbolist artists. Moreover, Ballesteros de Martos singled out Vázquez Díaz’s bullfighting-themed works as especially detrimental to Spain’s international reputation because they “continue the tauromachic legend with features of a terrible caricature and of horror” and they do so to great commercial acclaim abroad. Thus, the critic represented Vázquez Díaz as a promoter false values, under the guise of Spanishness, by spreading the vision of the “horrific” bullfighting spectacle as a defining feature of the Spanish nation.

Vázquez Díaz’s bullfighting-themed paintings pertained to the eighteenth-century artistic tradition that included the anonymous engravings of toreros, as well as torero portraits by Goya. Between 1908 and 1918, Vázquez Díaz painted the bullfighting triptych *Blood and the Arena* (*Sangre y Arena*), which borrows its title from Vicente Blasco Ibañez’s eponymous 1908 bullfighting-themed novel.<sup>396</sup> The triptych consisted of *Those Who Are Going to Die* (*Los que van a morir*), *Expoliarium* and *Bullfighters Waving* (*Toreros saludando*) [Fig. 75] – the last painting on the left is the only surviving panel of the triptych. Around the time of *Blood and the Arena*, Vázquez Díaz also painted *Dead Bullfighter* (*Torero Muerto*) in 1912 [Fig. 76],<sup>397</sup> which was part of his first submission to the National Exhibition of Fine Arts that took place in Madrid in 1915 and *The Idols* (*Los ídolos*) [Fig. 77] painted in 1914, but only shown publicly in Spain in

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<sup>395</sup> Antonio Ballesteros de Martos, “Actualidad Artística,” *Cervantes: Revista Hispano-Americana* (June 1918):145-148.

<sup>396</sup> Vicente Blasco Ibañez, *Sangre y Arena* (Valencia: F. Sempere y compañía, 1908).

<sup>397</sup> The artist exhibited this painting under other titles, including *Death of a Torero* (*Muerte del Torero*) and *Pain* (*Death of a Torero*) (*Dolor: Muerte del Torero*) during his lifetime.

1920 at the National Fine Arts Exhibition. Both paintings glorify the bullfighter as a desirable masculine ideal, while simultaneously insinuating that such an ideal is, in fact, decadent.

*Dead Bullfighter* won the artist his first (third-class) medal at the National Fine Arts Exhibition. For the 1915 exhibition Vázquez Díaz's changed the original title of this painting to *Pain (Death of a Torero)*, thus focusing the attention of the audience on the emotional impact of torero's death on his community in a way that foreshadowed the national impact of Joselito's death in Spain less than a decade later. The canvas was executed in a history-painting format with life-sized figures, and, as Blanca Ramos Romero has suggested, it relied on a compositional scheme, which Benlliure would adopt less than a decade later for his own design of Joselito's mausoleum.<sup>398</sup>

The painting portrays the dead torero, partially covered with a green and gold bullfighting cape, positioned on a makeshift bed in the lower-left hand corner of the composition, with the man's grieving widow at his feet and a crowd of male mourners and a priest behind him and on his right-hand side. The corpse is presented without any marks of violence that would indicate his cause of death – an ill-fated encounter with the bull. The solemn, yet dramatic nature of the scene is enhanced by the mourners' black garments and the widow's vivid red dress, as well as the curtain in the upper-right hand corner, which frames the artist's native city of Nerva in the background. At first glimpse, the figure of the dead torero, painted in bold patches of local color, evokes the French avant-garde tradition, as represented by Edouard Manet and his 1864 *Dead Bullfighter*, an artist who, in turn, borrows from Velázquez. In fact, the artist painted this work with the French market in mind, while spending the summer in Nerva during his residence in Paris. However, the painting also arguably evokes the notion of “Black Spain” and “the

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<sup>398</sup> Ramos Romero, “Joselito el Gallo,” 33.

ideology of the so-called Generation of 1898, which has turned its gaze to that which was most idiosyncratically Spanish with a spirit [that was] between the critical and the hopeful: a regenerationist spirit.”<sup>399</sup>

Vázquez Díaz’s blended in the elements of history painting with the realism of Manet and Velázquez, as well as the religious iconography of the Spanish Golden-Age, to position the dead torero as a stand-in for the heroic masculine virtue. The mourners, who respond to the event in a wide variety of ways are theatrically arranged in a manner evocative of El Greco’s noblemen in the *The Burial of Count of Orgaz*. Much like El Greco’s noblemen, the mourners flatly occupy the space behind the bullfighter, while elegantly gesturing towards his body, without obstructing the audience’s view of the painting’s subject. The mourners’ gestures in Vázquez Díaz’s composition are exaggerated, much like those of the participants in El Greco’s *Burial*, which is especially evident in the figure of the young man looking up with his hand at his throat in the left hand of the composition, as well as in the figure of a man, dressed in a brown suit who reaches towards the body with a prayer-like gesture. Reminiscent of El Greco, Vázquez Díaz includes a male figure who meets the viewer’s gaze directly, while he is in the process of removing his hat in gesture of respect, positioning the painting’s observer as witness to an important historical event, evoking the burial of a saint and foreshadowing Joselito’s death. Moreover, the faces and features of the mourners are not aristocratic, as they appear in El Greco’s painting, but are instead those of the workers and the townsfolk, making the scene an emotional moment of communal gathering in the village. The heroic dimensions of the canvas, measuring 219 x 274 cm (approximately 7.18 x 8.99 ft) further enhance the importance of the scene, converting a

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<sup>399</sup> María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco, “Seis pinturas de Vázquez Díaz,” in *Vázquez Díaz en las Colecciones MAPFRE* ed. Eugenio Carmona, María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco, and Genoveva Tusell Gacia, 20-21 (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2006).



common occurrence, the bullfighter's death, into an event of historical significance. Alberto Villar Movellán has pointed out that, compositionally, the painting borrows from another large-scale scene of a bullfighter on his deathbed, *Death of the Maestro* [Fig. 78], painted by the Sevillian artist José Villegas Cordero (1844-1921).<sup>400</sup> Both paintings glorify the act of mourning over the bullfighter's death, while drawing on Madrazo's *Death of Viriatus*, thus further heroicizing and mythologizing the narrative of the dead bullfighter as a national hero.

While the *Dead Bullfighter* brought success to the artist, it is with his next painting, which did not win him the honors at the National Exhibition of 1920, that the artist came to represent the bullfighter as a decadent, effeminate ideal of masculinity for a feminized nation. *The Idols*, a painting that is now in the collection of Tokyo Art Museum, depicts young bullfighters in various attitudes positioned against a flat gray backdrop, evocative of the backdrops that Golden Age Spanish artists, including Velázquez and Francisco Zurbáran used in their portraits of philosophers and saints. The aestheticized characters are presented from several different angles and dressed in *trajes de luces*, or the elaborately embroidered "light suits" used by bullfighters. The torero in green and gold traje de luces which draws attention to his genitals with its tightness, at the center of the composition leisurely assumes a customary bullfighting pose with a left hand on his hip and a coquettish smile on his lips as he seductively faces the viewer. The more muscular bullfighter to his left also faces the viewer, but with a less playful attitude. The two figures are surrounded by other bullfighters, depicted in profile or from the back, who appear to be engaged in conversations with one another or riding horses with their lances in hand.

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<sup>400</sup> Alberto Villar Movellán, "Andalucía: Periferia en la Tradición," in *Centro y Periferia en la Modernización de la Pintura Española (1880-1918)*, ed. Carmen Pena López, 231 (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1993).

Silvio Lago (José Francés) published a sarcastic review of the painting at the National Fine Arts Exhibition in *La Esfera* under the title, “Toreritos...,” or “Little Bullfighters.” The critic stated that by exhibiting a work dealing with such a subject in Spain, “the country of *torería* (bullfighting),” the artist always pushes at the limits of vulgarity and risks being misconstrued. This, according to Francés, was especially the case this year, when “Spain [had been] shaken by its national widowhood” in the wake of Joselito’s untimely death.<sup>401</sup> “Spain, the widow” of Francés’s review had a look at Vázquez Díaz’s painting and found it to be “ridiculous, false and even heretical.”<sup>402</sup> The Spanish public thought that the bullfighting subjects should be treated with respect, in the manner of bullfighting posters, but instead, like Zuloaga of *Young Village Bullfighters*, the artist chose to make them the object of his satire. The art critic ascribed to the painting “the eloquence of the degenerative cult that corrodes our race without the necessity to show blood.”<sup>403</sup> Francés underscores the degenerate masculinity of Vázquez Díaz’s bullfighters through the use of exclusively diminutive terms – they are “toreritos” and not “toreros,” they assume “posturitas” and not “postures.” Francés singles out the smiling bullfighter at the center as the object of “universal veneration” and feminized masculinity:

This is the linchpin of the painting: the child, the adolescent who smiles amidst his fallen cape, [which is] like the tail of [a dress of] a great lady or the veils of a priestess, to offer himself to universal veneration. The idol conscious of his influence over people, in love with himself because he knows that he can make the public fall in love with him, with his beautiful face and beautiful courage; fragile, brittle, effeminate, and yet capable of blaspheming like a man and roaring like a beast at the center of the bullrings.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Silvio Lago, “Toreritos...,” *La Esfera* 7, no. 340, July 10, 1920, n.p.

<sup>402</sup> “Con estos mismos ojos enrojecidos de llorar; con esa misma palpitación de entrañas y ese fervor de flamenquería en el cerebro, la España viuda se colocaba delante del cuadro de Vázquez Díaz y le encontraba irrisorio, falso é inluso herético.” In Lago, “Toreritos...,” n.p.

<sup>403</sup> “Tiene toda la elocuencia del culto degenerativo que corroe nuestra raza sin necesidad de mostrar sangre, caballos despanzurrados y toreros lividos que se llevan la mano al vientre bajo una lumbrada solar y un clamor de muchedumbres ávidas de peligro y ahitas de cobardes pensamiento homicidas.” In Lago, “Toreritos...,” n.p.

<sup>404</sup> “Este es el eje del cuadro: un niño, un adolescente que sonrío entre su capote caído, como la cola de una gran dama ó los velos de una sacerdotisa, para ofrecerse a la veneración universal. El ídolo consciente de su influjo sobre la gente, enamorado de sí mismo á fuerza de saberse enamorado de los públicos, guapito de rostro y guapazo de

Francés's criticism crystalizes the charges of decadence, degeneration, barbarism and effeminacy brought up against the bullfighter as the national hero by many voices of the Generation of 1898 before and after Joselito's death. The critic begins his essay with references to Spain as a "widow," thus feminizing the nation, while in this paragraph he accuses the nation of worshipping a false icon of masculinity. He does so by singling out "the child, the adolescent" as the centerpiece of the painting. By rereferring to the bullfighter in these infantile terms, the critic underscores his lack of masculinity. Francés highlights the torero's effeminacy and even calls it out explicitly as such in his description by relying on feminine metaphors to characterize the bullfighter, namely "a great lady" and a "priestess" offering herself up for "universal veneration." The critic admonishes the public, accusing it of blasphemy, for worshipping an effeminate bullfighter as its masculine ideal. By representing the bullfighters as decadent, in contrast to the images of living bullfighters like Joselito as national heroes, Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz produced images that were read by critics as emasculating the nation and, thus, calling its future into question.

### **Ismael Smith: The Torero, the Queer and the Absurd**

Many early twentieth-century critics argued that the industrialization of the art of bullfighting and the rise of professional bullfighters, featuring matadors who adopted dandy modes of dress and self-representation, led to the devaluation of the very essence of the sport and feminization

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coraje; frágil, quebradizo, afeminado y, sin embargo capaz de blasfemar como un hombre y rugir como una fiera en medio de las plazas." In Lago, "Toreros...", n.p.

of the bullfighting spectacle.<sup>405</sup> José Ignacio Álvarez-García has shown, that in times of crisis like the Spanish-American war, the public sought to reclaim bravery and courage through the spectacle of bullfighting. And yet, the same bullfighter increasingly became more ostentatious and dandy-like in his mode of dress, rivaling the aristocracy in his refinement, elegance and conspicuous consumption.<sup>406</sup> The focus on the consumerism and superficial aesthetics of the matador by some of the critics of the sport contributed to the notion of the bullfighter as a false idol of Spanish masculinity. While artists, including Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz, at times highlighted and satirized the dandy-like qualities of the bullfighters, they nevertheless underscored the nobility of the torero and his art. In contrast, the Catalan artist Ismael Smith adopted a far more irreverent attitude towards the bullfighter. In Smith's etchings, the highly eroticized death of a bullfighter has no aura of nobility and becomes, instead, the epitome of man's failure to conquer the beast. While in his many etchings, executed predominantly in 1919, Smith adopts Goya's method and some of his compositional solutions from *Tauromaquia*, the Catalan artist's etchings eliminate the historical aspects of bullfighting and eroticize the encounter between the bull, the horse and the bullfighter in a distinctively modern and decadent manner, devoid of heroism.

Ismael Smith Marí (1886-1972) was a cosmopolitan and openly homosexual artist, who lived and worked in Paris and New York and whose friends included fellow artists Néstor, Mariano Andreu and Zuloaga. Even though Smith had a long life, he abandoned all artistic practice by 1931, while still in his forties, and finished the remainder of his days at a psychiatric hospital in New York. Writing about Ismael Smith in 1919, Francés pointed out the multifaceted

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<sup>405</sup> José Ignacio Álvarez-García, "Masculinidad como Espectáculo: Modernidad y Consumismo en España (1898-1931)," (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 2008), 29, 117.

<sup>406</sup> Álvarez-García, "Masculinidad como Espectáculo," 124.

and ultimately foreign nature of Smith and his art in relation to Spain, when he wrote, “His Jewish name, his Saxon surname, his *afrancesado* appearance and his unmistakably Catalan accent, when he speaks Castilian Spanish, already assure the cosmopolitanism of his art and of his ideas, [and] the multiform diversity that characterizes it.”<sup>407</sup> Critics tied Smith’s decadent art and personality to foreign spiritual and artistic values, including ambivalent sexuality, positioning him in ways that were similar to Néstor and Bujados, that is, the artists affiliated with symbolist, decadent, and homoerotic currents. Smith’s work was multifaceted – he was a sculptor, an illustrator and painter, while his belle epoch subjects included various fashionable and decadent types, which incorporated elements of Spanish exotica that included bullfighting and bullfighters. Enrique García-Herraiz and Carmina Borbonet i Sant noted that in his bullfighting-themed works that Smith “was always interested in the bull and the horse more so than in the bullfighters.”<sup>408</sup>

While Smith produced several paintings and sketches on the subject between 1907 and 1908, his fascination with bullfighting and bullfighters really developed between 1914 and 1919 during his stay in Paris and New York, where toreros were stereotyped as stand-ins for all Spanish men. Smith introduced the first set of bullfighting-themed works at the Salon of 1914, including *Flirting. Good Fall* [Fig. 79] and his friend and fellow Catalan artist, Mariano Andreu painted *Portrait of Ismael Smith Dressed in Torero Costume* [Fig. 80] that same year. In this image, Smith appears in ornate torero drag, with a rose in his mouth and both his hands posed provocatively on his hips. Smith’s hand-on-hip pose evokes the heroic images of bullfighters

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<sup>407</sup>“Su nombre hebreo, su apellido sajón, su aspecto afrancesado y su acento, inconfundiblemente catalán, cuando hablo castellano, ya prometen el cosmopolitismo de su arte y de sus ideas, la diversidad multiforme que le caracteriza.” In Silvio Lago, “Artistas Contemporáneos: Ismael Smith,” in *La Esfera* 6, no. 262, January 4, 1919, n.p.

<sup>408</sup> Enrique García-Herraiz and Carmina Borbonet i Sant, *Ismael Smith Grabador Español del Modernismo* (Barcelona: Biblioteca de Catalunya, 1989), 16.

like Joselito, such as the one in *La Lidia* that came out the same year as Andreu's portrait of the Catalan artist. And yet, his subject's cheerful and flirtatious demeanor, the frivolous flower in his mouth and the overall ornamental character of the piece is more reminiscent of Vázquez Díaz's *Idols*. In this manner, Andreu's painting shares in Smith's own irreverent attitude towards bullfighting, playing off the recognizable and picturesque attributes of the bullfighter archetype, while brushing aside his heroic connotations. The artist playfully reimagines the Spanish masculine values, which he incarnates in the figure of the bullfighter through the queer body of an *afrancesado* artist. Thus, like de Bries and other transformista performers of his era, who adopted and reworked archaic feminine archetypes, Andreu's portrait of his friend as a bullfighter invites the viewers to reimagine the bullfighter as a queer figure.

Smith's own bullfighting-themed etchings often ridicule the torero/picador and strip him of dignity by portraying him as a sexually ambiguous dandy or old, incapable of defeating the bull. In doing so, his etchings bear the stylistic attributes of what Bakhtin refers to as "the grotesque style," stylistically marked by "exaggeration, hyperbolism, and excessiveness."<sup>409</sup> Moreover, in contrast to his own serious-minded contemporaries, Smith's characters exist in "carnival time," where all hierarchal precedence, privileges and norms are suspended and reversed – the bull emerges as the triumphant hero of the *fiesta nacional*; in turn, the bullfighter is the one being conquered. In the majority of Smith's etchings on the subject, the picador is either being gored, overthrown by the bull, or trapped underneath his horse as it is being attacked by the bull.

Josep Casamartina i Parassols remarked upon Smith's fixation on violence and the technical proficiency in his bullfighting etchings, and his approach to the subject that never

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<sup>409</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 303.

betrays the artist's own attitude as either that of admiration or condemnation towards the sport.<sup>410</sup> And yet, as the close examination of Smith's bullfighting etchings in this chapter will reveal, Smith's works subvert the masculine ideals that are embodied in the bullfighter as a cultural icon. The erotic iconography, often relying on ménage-a-trois scenarios, featuring the bullfighter, the bull and the horse, and even the titles of Smith's sexually suggestive etchings that include *Flirting. Good Fall*, *Hormigón* [Fig. 81] and *Funny Mistress* [Fig. 82], underscore the artist's take on bullfighting as an erotic spectacle.<sup>411</sup> In this way, he makes the bullfighter's masculinity, already subjected to insinuations of homoeroticism as a result of the bullfighter's dandy wardrobe, become even more suspect as a result of his emasculating failure to conquer the beast. Indeed, Smith's etchings accentuate the brutality and virility of the bull, and they do so at the expense of the virility of the bullfighter.

For example, in one of the color renditions of *Hormigón*,<sup>412</sup> an etching named for the bull featured in the composition, Smith relies on the strategic use of color and a disorienting composition to represent the bullfighter as an absurd, queer character.<sup>413</sup> Even the title of the etching suggests that the bull, rather than the foppishly dressed picador at the center of the composition, is the real subject. Sandwiched awkwardly between the bull and the horse, the bullfighter's awkwardly contorted body looks as if it is on its way to slide down the neck of the wounded horse, even as he aims his lance at the bull, blindly and in vain. Meanwhile, the bull's

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<sup>410</sup> Josep Casamartina i Parassols, "Intermezzo: Goyescas o el Majo Olvidado," *Ismael Smith: Belleza y los Monstruos*, ed. Josep Casamartina i Parassols, 182 (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 2017).

<sup>411</sup> Smith often gave Spanish-, Catalan-, and even English-language titles to his etchings. For instance, *Flirting. Good Fall* and *Re-attacking* had titles in English, while *Pase de Muleta* – all three executed in 1914 – was titled in Spanish. Presumably in an attempt to appeal to the U.S.-based market, Ismael Smith assigned predominantly English-language titles to the many of his bullfighting-themed etchings produced in New York in 1919, including what is possibly his most famous series of etchings – *Funny Mistress*.

<sup>412</sup> Ismael Smith created multiple modified versions of his many etchings on the subject of bullfighting, some were done in black in white, while others were color etchings.

<sup>413</sup> Enrique Gacía-Herraiz pointed out that the etching's title uses the name of the bull in, García-Herraiz, *Ismael Smith Grabador*, 17.

horns drip with the blood of the picador's horse, whose groin area the beast's horns have pierced with little effort.

The use of garish, artificial color in this gruesome scene is concentrated predominantly on the figure of the picador. Both animals are finished in sepia and shaded with the thin diagonal lines that are reminiscent of the style of Goya's animals in *Tauromaquia*. In contrast, the picador's figure is comprised of solid blocks of color and his flesh-colored face is marked with red streaks, indicative of blood. His *traje de luces* is of a striking pink hue and is embroidered with bright blue patterns, while his bright teal tie stands out against the white of his shirt. His pants are bright yellow and, for that reason, blend in with his saddle, making the legs and the saddle difficult to distinguish from one another, which contributes to an overall sense of chaos in the composition. The garishly bright use of color draws the viewer's attention to the male figure. Moreover, the use of yellow intensifies the comical effect of the image by exaggerating the picador's bottom, making it appear more voluptuous. The artist further directs the viewer's gaze towards the picador's buttocks, emphasizing them with his tight clothing, and with the way in which he holds the lance above his leg at the level of a saddle, and, thus, creates an illusion of a "third leg." Other than the extravagant bursts of color in the picador's clothing, color is used sparingly throughout the composition. For instance, Smith applies red on the horns of the bull and to the streams of blood that drip to the ground, in addition to rendering parts of the bridle in bright pink and blue. Unlike Hormigón, who penetrates the horse and is winning the fight, the picador appears to be failing at his task.

Smith's other etchings including the multiple iterations of *Flirting. Good Fall* and *Funny Mistress* similarly position the bullfighter as an object of mockery, who fails to adequately perform his masculinity. The composition of *Flirting. Good Fall* depicts a picador, who is



trapped underneath his horse as it is being gored by the bull; likewise, the picador of the *Funny Mistress* is falling over the bull, from his horse and straight to his death. The bullfighters in both of these etchings are immaculately and elegantly dressed in dandy-like fashion, with their masculine attributes obscured, helpless before the bull. In *Funny Mistress*, in particular, the fall acquires a particularly humiliating significance, as the falling bullfighter's gaze is confronted with the bull's genitalia. In contrast to the two hapless matadors, the bulls in *Homigón* and the *Funny Mistress* prominently display their genitals and, in that manner their virility, as they violently attack the horses. Thus, the artist emphasizes the brute masculinity of the bull, as he downplays that of the bullfighter, who is now reduced to a decorative element in the composition.

Even in Smith's more conventional etchings of the bullfighter, such as the *Pass with a Muleta* [Fig. 83], the artist represents the matador in the guise of a dandy. In *Pass with a Muleta*, both the bull and the bullfighter, who assumes a winning stance with the implements of his trade, occupy equal space, framed by an adoring crowd. And yet, the bullfighter emerges as a sexually ambiguous and decadent figure; his pose is elegant and arrogant, while his face is an impeccable white mask, with heavily made-up eyes and painted lips. In contrast, both *Flirting. Good Fall* and *Re-Attacking* [Fig. 84] eliminate the audience entirely to focus on a dramatic point in the encounter between the bullfighter, the horse and the bull, which culminates with the failure of the man.

There are multiple renditions of *Flirting. Good Fall*, in black and white and in color, but one of the most beautiful compositions is a 33.2 x 40.2 cm drypoint and gouache on paper. The etching portrays a bull charging at the fallen horse and piercing its entrails that flow out of the animal. The fallen picador is trapped under his screaming horse, while clutching at his now-

useless spear, as he looks nervously off to the side. Smith emphasizes the moment of contact between the bull's horns and the horse's belly through the decorative use of primary colors throughout this composition. The figure of the bullfighter in this scene is almost incidental, it is pushed off to the sidelines of the composition, away from the focus of the scene, which is the gory point of encounter between the bull's horns and the exquisitely painted entrails of the horse that are gushing out of the wound. The picador dressed in blue *traje de luces* and contrasting yellow tights – his clothing remains spotless – looks off to the side, away from the violence, crushed by his own horse.

Similarly, the 33.7 x 26 cm etching, *Re-attacking*, presents the elderly picador losing his battle, as he struggles to keep his balance, while grasping on to his spear, on top of his almost-upright-standing horse that is wincing in pain (or in perverse pleasure), as its entrails are being penetrated by the bull. Executed in black and white, the image uses line, rather than color to guide the viewer's eye. The two animals – the charging bull with prominently displayed testicles and the screaming horse that almost wraps its front legs around its neck - appear to be the focus in this piece, as the ineffective bullfighter stares wistfully into space. The viewer's attention is specifically guided towards the fatal wound in the horse's belly, where the bull's horns encounter the horse's intestines at the center of the image, towards the right side of the composition. The lines created by the bull's right horn and the horse's protruding intestines can be read as erect penis and testicles, giving the violent encounter between the two animals a sexually suggestive tone. Directly above the bull's head, the reins of the horse that the picador is grasping form a shape that lends itself to being read as a vaginal opening. Thus, whereas, the bull is, yet again, endowed with virility, as he violently penetrates the horse, while the bullfighter emerges emasculated from this fight.

Smith's etchings are reminiscent of Goya's *Tauromaquia* in terms of how they position the bull rather than the bullfighter/picador in the center of the composition. Unlike Goya, whose works historicized bullfighting through the use of costumes and spectators, Smith eliminates the audience altogether, along with other superfluous elements that would draw attention away from the encounter between the bull, the horse, and the bullfighter. Moreover, as is the case with *Hormigón*, *Funny Mistress* and *Flirting. Good Fall*, the picador appears to be a mere casualty in the encounter between the bull and the horse and not the traditional hero. Unlike Vázquez Díaz and the photographers for the bullfighting magazines, Smith leaves little to no guidance for the way that his viewers are expected to respond to the spectacle. Instead, he seems to be making visual dirty jokes that invert the glorified image of the bullfighter, transforming the bullring into a carnivalesque spectacle.

## **Conclusion**

Following the Spanish defeat in the war of 1898, the bullfighter had come to compete with the military hero for the honors of being the national masculine ideal. By the end of the nineteenth century, bullfighting had had a long cultural tradition in Spain and enjoyed unprecedented popularity among the public and the elite, as well as being the defining feature of Spain. Nevertheless, ever since the Enlightenment, many Spanish intellectuals espoused the view that the barbarism and brutality of the *fiesta nacional* made it impossible for Spain to enter European modernity. This view had been inherited by the intellectuals associated with the Generation of 1898. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the cult of the dead bullfighter, exemplified by the elaborate burial, press coverage and honors bestowed upon Joselito in 1920, had reached

epic proportions. Many artists, including Zuloaga and Vázquez Díaz focused on the representation of bullfighters in their works, including famous real-life characters from the era, including Belmonte, Frascuelo, Lagartijo and Joselito. However, critics linked their images to the perception of Spanish decline, contributing to the transformation of the torero into an icon of Spanish decadence. More specifically, images of the dead torero, as in Vázquez Díaz's 1913 painting, suggested that the bullfighter was a liminal figure, anachronistic and modern, who had to martyr himself by dying at the bullring, in order for Spain to enter modernity. Ismael Smith was one of the artists who took up the exploration of the anachronism and modernity of the bullfighter, as well as the masculine values for which he stood. By picturing the bullfighter and the act of bullfighting in erotically charged terms, Smith's works alongside the art of Zuloaga, Vázquez Díaz and others revealed the underpinnings of the ambivalent nature of the Spanish masculine ideal.

**FIGURES**



**Figure 61**



Figure 62



**Figure 63**





**Figure 64**





Figure 65





**Figure 67**

LA MUERTE DE JOSELITO



Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, contemplando emocionado el cadáver de su cuñado Joselito, pocas horas después de ocurrido el fatídico accidente del gran torero

Figure 68



Figure 69





**Figure 70**



**Figure 71.**



**Figure 72**





**Figure 73**



**Figure 74**



**Figure 75**



**Figure 76**



**Figure 77**





**Figure 78**



Figure 79



**Figure 80**





Figure 81



Figure 82



Figure 83



Figure 84

## CONCLUSION

During the Spanish Civil War, Ignacio Zuloaga sided with the Nationalist faction, supporting the leadership of General Franco, whose portrait he painted in 1940, along with many others that depicted key figures of the fascist regime. The artist's international fame, his emphasis on the Castilian tradition and the stylistic rejection of the visual languages associated with the avant-garde, led to the appreciation of the painter and his art within fascist circles. Franco favored Zuloaga and often made gifts of his painting to the foreign dignitaries. In 1939, the General presented Adolph Hitler with three paintings by Zuloaga; the Basque artist's works were subsequently featured in the 1942 exhibition of Spanish art in Berlin, along with the paintings of Gabriel Morcillo, the Andalusian painter with a markedly different take on Spanish history and masculinity.<sup>414</sup> After Zuloaga's death in 1945, the Francoist government honored the artists in several ways: through the posthumous exhibitions of his art, by naming several streets in his honor, and by issuing a 500-peseta banknote with the Basque painter's likeness on one side and the depiction of Toledo on the obverse side of the bill.

The banknote perfectly encapsulates the Castilian masculine paradigm of the Generation of 1898, which Zuloaga embodied, as well as its unifying national mission that sought to erase regional narratives in favor of a single nationalist aesthetic. The artist's self-portrait on the front of the banknote was painted three years prior to his death and depicts the mature, but still strong and broad-shouldered Zuloaga in his customary Basque beret, boldly looking out at the viewer. The obverse side captures the view of Toledo, taken directly from the background to Zuloaga's *Portrait of Maurice Barrès*, discussed earlier. In this way, the banknote at once proclaims the Basque masculinity of the artist, as well as the Castilian values that defined his persona and

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<sup>414</sup> Javier Novo González, "Ignacio Zuloaga y su Utilización por el Franquismo," *Ondare: Cuadernos de Artes Plásticas y Monumentales* 25 (2005): 239.

formed the basis of his art. It is remarkable that the banknote identifies the national masculine paradigm with Castile by drawing on Zuloaga's portrait of a foreigner – a portrait that by now had entered the Spanish canon, much like the art of El Greco, Zuloaga's own, Greek-born, artistic forefather and the epitome of Spanish manhood.

Francoist government promoted the Castile-centric vision of Spain. In turn, Franco-era censorship suppressed those forms of visual production and entertainment that were labeled immoral and frivolous. Drag performers in particular fell victims to the 1936 National Uprising (*Alzamiento Nacional*), when the Francoist faction criminalized all forms of cross-dressing, as a precursor to the Franco dictatorship which attempted to obliterate all reminders of dissident masculinities in Spanish culture of the Silver Age. Nevertheless, unable to perform in drag, Spanish transformistas still found a way to subvert gender expectations. According to Retana, many male transformistas, whose signature performances were based around the imitation of female *cupletistas*, continued to perform that same repertoire, but dressed in male attire.<sup>415</sup>

Throughout this dissertation we have seen how the different fantasies of masculinity and gender were constructed and negotiated across the visual culture of Silver-Age Spain. This dissertation approached the art of the canonical Spanish artists, like Zuloaga, alongside the visual practices of *transformistas*, erotic novel illustrators, and underexamined artists and cultural figures, including Retana, Zamora, Bujados, Néstor, Morcillo, Smith and others. By engaging with their works through the lens of critical queer and gender studies, this dissertation revealed previously unexplored visual terrains and broadened the understanding of the function and significance of the discourses on gender and sexuality in modern Spanish visual culture. Placing these previously ignored visual practices and productions in dialogue with one another allows us

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<sup>415</sup> Retana, *Historia de Arte Frívolo*, 138.

to see just how diversely sexuality was constructed in the Silver-Age Spain. In fact, one of the goals of this dissertation has been to reveal the centrality of visual culture to the construction and emergence of queer subjects in Spain on their own terms. Furthermore, by incorporating regional narratives and contributions to the representations of Spain's national and sexual identity, this dissertation sought to decenter the image of a unified Spain, to present a glimpse of many Spanish masculine scripts that helped shape the nation in the early twentieth-century Spain.

While this dissertation engaged with the formation of new masculine scripts in Spanish visual culture, it left out several important ones that should be examined further. For instance, the model of military masculinity in the wake of the War of 1898 that the figure of the bullfighter largely replaced would be a fascinating object of study. More specifically, many notable artists, including Isidre Nonell and Ramón Casas engaged with representation of mentally and physically wounded Veterans of the Spanish-American War. The study of their images and their impact on the formation of Spanish national identity within the context of the Disability, Critical Queer and Gender Studies would be invaluable. Ultimately, this dissertation revealed an ostensible need for the reexamination of the very notion of "manhood" and the varied nature of masculinities at play in Silver-Age Spain, as well as the key role that the visual culture had in their construction and dissemination.

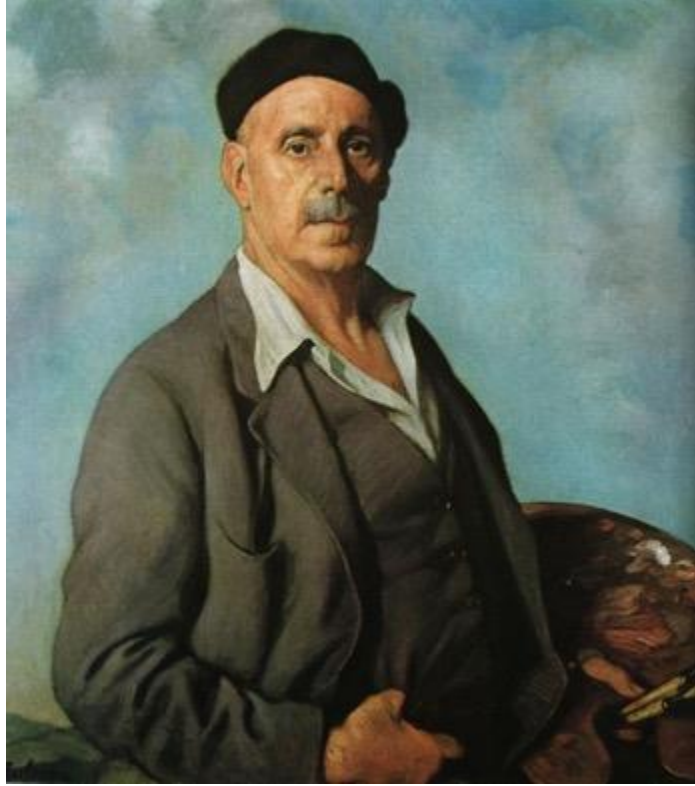


FIGURES



Figure 85





**Figure 86**

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