

MISERY, ALIENATION AND “THE DELINQUENT GYPSY”
IN THE ART OF ISIDRE NONELL AND HIS SPANISH
CONTEMPORARIES

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

For centuries Roma people, popularly known as “Gypsies,” an ethnic group without a national territory of its own, faced persecution in Europe which contributed to the transient and “delinquent gypsy” myth, used to justify the harsh social measures against the Roma. Fin-de-siècle Spain presents a unique opportunity to trace the very origins of gypsy stereotypes and their function within the much larger context of national debates of identity.

This thesis offers a socio-historical analysis of the contradictory modes of gypsy representation in turn-of-the-century Spanish painting, and within the context of the nineteenth century European fascination with all aspects of the imaginary “gypsy” culture. Further, nineteenth-century criminology, firmly rooted in the discourse of degeneration, turned to the gypsy as the ultimate atavistic agent of destruction. The rich cultural tradition associated with the Spanish gypsy, combined with contemporary social theories of the socially unacceptable nomadic lifestyle of the gypsies, made the *Gitano* one of the iconic subjects of turn-of-the-century Spanish painters, such as Ignacio Zuloaga, Julio Romero de Torres, Hermenegildo Anglada-Camarasa and Isidre Nonell.

This thesis focuses on the works of Isidre Nonell (1872-1911), whose approach to Caló (Spanish Roma) culture, acted in direct opposition to a romanticized *flamenquismo* (that is, influenced by visions of southern Spain’s Andalusian Gitanos) represented by the three aforementioned artists. The emphasis in Nonell’s art was not on the entertainment value of the gypsy, but on the degrading social reality of Caló in his native Barcelona, restricted to poverty-stricken neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city. Whereas the

Andalusian *Gitano* was privileged as “the aristocrat of gypsies” in Europe, finding expression in a variety of visual media, Gitano communities prominent in Barcelona were left out of the narrative because their depiction severely problematized understandings of the city as a seat of progress. In this thesis I argue that Nonell’s career, despite its promising beginnings in Parisian salons and galleries, was marked by continuous failure with a European public because his painting worked to unsettle the established gypsy mythology. By stripping his Caló protagonists of their colorful costumes and depriving them agency in his works, Nonell rejected their traditional roles of entertainers, and instead drew his viewers’ attention to the physical and social state of Caló in Barcelona.

The impact of the visual arts on the formation and, in Nonell’s case, the deconstruction of “the gypsy myth” cannot be fully appreciated without turning to nineteenth-century-criminology, represented by Cesare Lombroso, his Spanish follower Rafael Salillas, and the way they constructed “the delinquent gypsy.” One of Nonell’s critics explicitly connected the artist’s work to Lombroso, claiming that Nonell’s paintings were, in fact, “Lombroso hecho un cuadro.” If, as Homi Bhabha, Sander Gilman and others have shown, the stereotype is assigned a function of normalizing the differences that interfere with the fantasy of racial purity, then Nonell’s paintings functioned as a frustrating disruption in the public’s perception of Caló. This work attempts to restore Nonell’s subjects back to his works, almost exclusively studied as exercises in personal expression, and situating his “gitana paintings” within the context of social art of the period.

To my mother Natalia Dorofeeva and my late father Andrei Lipson, who never ceased to love and support me through all my efforts, and whose overwhelming passion for life, knowledge and art inspired me to reach for the stars.

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Chapter I

Introduction

“The Gypsy Myth” in Europe and Spain

For centuries Roma people, an ethnic group without a national territory of its own, faced persecution in Europe. Even today the place of origin of Roma people, popularly known as “gypsies,” remains subject to debates. The multiple geographies of Roma in Europe contributed to the transient and “delinquent gypsy” myth used to justify the harsh social measures against them.

The European myth of the gypsy’s criminal tendencies, ranging from horse thievery and child theft to murders of passion, took centuries to ferment. It has however in the nineteenth century, that these myths reached their apogee. During the second half of the nineteenth century Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso put forth the idea that all criminals, or delinquents as he referred to them, belonged to a different and altogether inferior human species. Lombroso played one of the key roles in the creation of “the delinquent gypsy” myth, promoting the view of the “gypsies” as a race with a pathological compulsion to commit crime. The delinquent gypsy myth moved into the twenty-first, without fully losing its power. Recently, President Nicolas Sarkozy began the expulsion of Bulgarian and Romanian gypsy camps located in France. Between July and September of 2010 over ten thousand Roma had been forcefully removed from France. But even prior to Sarkozy’s drastic action of 2010, Roma populations in France,

numbering between 400 000 to 600 000, suffered many forms of discrimination, including suspension of their right to vote and inadequate access to housing. And yet, the forced relocation of Roma in France is not a unique case in modern Europe. In fact, several governments in the face of the global economic crisis, began to lean towards populism, xenophobia, and racism.¹ Political controversy surrounding the issue of Roma deportation and legal status is hardly new; indeed, this current “gypsy dilemma” or “the Roma Question”² illustrated by President Sarkozy's 2010 expulsion finds its root in the nineteenth century.

While fascination with “gypsy” emerged in the eighteenth century, fin-de-siècle Spain presents us with a unique opportunity to trace the development of the gypsy stereotype and its function within the much larger context of debates over national identity, for three major reasons. First, ever since the “Reconquest” of Spain, when Christian kingdoms reclaimed Muslim-controlled territories of the Iberian Peninsula, *Gitanos*, as Roma are called in the Iberian Peninsula, constituted an integral part of Spanish society, and yet they forever remained on its margins, adhering to their own ethnic practices, without ever acquiring the privileges associated with Spanish citizenship. Second, when nineteenth-century Europe became fascinated with all the aspects of the imagined “gypsy” culture, ranging from clothing to music, it was the Andalusian gypsy, in particular, that came to be conceptualized as “the aristocrat of gypsies” at the heart of Europe's fantasies. As part of this phenomenon, the Spanish

¹ Laurent El-Ghozi, “Pour mettre fin à la 'question rom', il faut leur ouvrir l'accès au marché du travail,” *le Monde* online www.lemonde.fr (January, 2012), accessed March 1, 2012 http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2011/07/29/laissons-aux-roms-l-acces-au-marche-du-travail-il-n-y-aura-plus-de-question-rom_1554265_823448.html

² “Question Rom” is a name given to Roma-Payo relationship following the Sarkozy dilemma by Laurent El-Ghozi, the president of Fnasat (Fédération nationale des associations solidaires d’action avec les Tsiganes) in El-Ghozi, “Pour mettre fin à la 'question rom’”

Gitano and the associated flamenco culture were constructed and popularized through a wide variety of visual media, including painting, engraving and opera. Thirdly, the popularity of the gypsy culture, and the ever-present social anxiety associated with the presence of Gitanos in Spain, fueled a national debate concerning the origins of flamenco and in which the very national identity of Spain was at stake.

One of the key reasons why Spain offers the best terrain for the study of gypsy stereotypes is the country’s long-standing involvement in the construction of nineteenth-century racially motivated criminology that led up to a “scientific proof” that “gypsies” were predisposed to crime as a result of their refusal to intermix with the other populations on the Peninsula.³ Nineteenth-century Spanish criminology, drawing upon the discourse of degeneration, turned to the gypsy as the ultimate agent of destruction. During the final years of the nineteenth century Angel Ganivet in an 1899 article “Trogloditas” summarized an already-popular opinion shared by his contemporaries, when he proposed to view the Spanish gypsies as a miraculously preserved artifact, the ancient prehistoric people of Spain who never came in contact with modernity. The “delinquent gypsy” myth, rooted in the nineteenth-century-criminology exemplified by Cesare Lombroso, was used by his Spanish colleagues, most notably Rafael Salillas and Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós, to promote the idea of Roma as an atavistic people, whose genetic make-up and excessive racial purity inevitably predisposed them to the life of crime, thus posing great danger to all “healthy” segments of Spanish society.

³ Joshua Goode, “Corrupting a Good Mix: Race and Crime in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Spain,” in *European History Quarterly* 35 (2005): 241-265.

Previous research: Gypsy in Spanish Art

This notion of the gypsy’s criminal nature found its way into a wide variety of fields, but it was literature and the visual arts that became its chief promoters at the turn-of-the-century. In Spanish art, striking representations of the gypsy appear in works by Julio Romero de Torres, who rose to fame as a painter of somber and elegant Andalusian *gitanas* ominously cloaked in darkness. The depiction of Roma women as inherently dark, in their physical appearance, and lascivious in their intentions, disguised as seductive and deadly flamenco dancers, became deeply imbedded in the stylistic and intellectual currents of Modernisme and Noucentisme. The latter term was coined by Eugeni d’Ors in 1906 for the Catalonia-based artistic and literary movement that reacted against the art and ideology of Modernismo. These two movements infused the traditional gypsy mythology with fresh stylistic currents, finding success with the public and critics in Spain and abroad. The gypsy culture as imagined in the works of Spanish vanguard painters, namely Ignacio Zuloaga, Julio Romero de Torres, Hermenegildo Anglada-Camarasa and Isidre Nonell, but also the ones associated with Spanish Academia, such as José María Rodríguez Acosta and José María López Mezquita, had a profound impact on the formation and perpetuation of myths associated with the gypsy discourse in late nineteenth-century Spain and the rest of Europe, emerging once again in the twenty-first-century.

Thus, artists played a crucial role in the construction of the gypsy myth in Spain. The nomadic way of life attributed to the gypsy, *his* social marginalization and perceived freedom, were the qualities that attracted Spanish and European vanguard artists to the gypsy in the first place, leading to the rise of artistic bohemianism in France in the 1840s.

The freedom afforded by the itinerant way of life coupled with the raw and passionate character of the imagined gypsy continuously threatened to undermine the values of the bourgeois society. Further, these qualities were eventually conflated with those of “the bohemian artist.” The “bohemian artist” was essentially a white, male, European construct that emerged slightly earlier, but nevertheless, found its female counterpart in the “gypsified”, frivolous, yet unmistakably bourgeois woman. Indeed, towards the end of the nineteenth century a multitude of portraits depicting attractive young gypsy girls or *payo*⁴ women masquerading as such, emerged on the European art market, as exemplified in the portraits by Ignacio Zuloaga and Julio Romero de Torres. The dual nature of the gypsy stereotype, namely the juxtaposition of the male bohemian/itinerant gypsy artist unrestrained by conventions and his visual counterpart, the bohemian muse, haunts the literature about Roma until this day. For instance, in Bertha Quintana’s and Lois Floyd’s 1972 study *¡Qué gitano! Gypsies of Southern Spain* “the gypsy” is consistently addressed as “he”, and yet the photographic illustrations are predominantly female.⁵

Zuloaga, Romero de Torres and Anglada-Camarasa chose to focus on the local color aspects of gypsy life in Andalusia. One of the iconic subjects, much preferred by the Spanish vanguards was a gypsy woman performing a dance (often flamenco), with the strong emphasis on her dark animalistic sexuality, intimately linked to death. This colorful subject, found its earlier European literary model in Prosper Merimee’s tragic gypsy girl from the 1845 novella *Carmen* and later in Georges Bizet’s 1875 opera under the same title. In Spain this particular mode of representation of the gypsy, and by

⁴ Non-gypsy

⁵ Bertha B Quintana, Lois Gray Floyd, *¡Qué gitano! Gypsies of Southern Spain* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972)

extension Spain itself, came to be known in the arts and literature as *flamenquismo*, as seen in works by Zuloaga and Romero de Torres.

Isidre Nonell’s approach to Gitano culture acted in direct opposition to the accepted representations of *flamenquismo*, which can in part be explained by the artist’s Catalan identity that motivated him to establish ideological differences between Catalonia and Andalusia, both regions famous for housing the largest populations of Gitanos in Spain. Nonell’s *gitanas* were dejected, solitary, silent, immobile and strategically placed in architectural corners and spaces of his canvases. The emphasis in his paintings was clearly not on the entertainment value of the gypsy, but rather on the harsh social conditions of Gitanos in the artist’s native Barcelona.

Nonell’s works on the Gitano subject failed to achieve critical acclaim with the audiences in France and Spain during his own lifetime, and even today scholars express some difficulty in discussing Nonell’s works. For instance, Lou Charnon-Deutsch in her excellent 2004 study *The Spanish Gypsy: the history of a European obsession*,⁶ while addressing the representation of Roma in a broad range of media from scientific to literary and artistic, fails to mention Nonell, in all likelihood because of his unconventional approach to the gypsy subject that rejected *flamenquismo*. Traditionally Nonell’s art was analyzed in strictly formal terms. Previous art historians, with but few exceptions, focused on Nonell’s expressive use of color and composition, suggesting that the personality of the artist made him apathetic to all social issues, except in a purely aesthetic sense or as part of the tongue-in-cheek caricatures produced for the satirical magazine *Papitu*. Some of the major scholars writing about Nonell, most notably Enric

⁶ Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy: the history of a European obsession* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004)

Jardí and Francesc Fontbona, place Nonell at the forefront of Expressionism, but deny any possibility of the embedded social criticism in his paintings.⁷ In his invaluable study on Nonell’s epoque Rafael Benet reads Nonell’s *gitana* paintings as visual anarchy, demonstrating the artist’s defiant attitude towards the contemporary art market in Barcelona, suggesting that the artist consciously painted his *gitanas* “ugly” to scandalize his bourgeois public.⁸

More contemporary catalogues on Nonell, among them *Isidro Nonell: Antologica*, published by Zaragoza Centro de Exposiciones y Congresos (2007) and *Exposició Nonell figures i espais* by Fundació Caixa Girona (2009) hint at the social nature of Nonell’s “gypsy paintings” without ever revealing what makes them “social” and how they might be linked to the physical conditions the Gitanos faced in turn-of-the-century Spain.⁹ In recent scholarship, Glòria Escala i Romeu’s 2010 “Series Nonell” article and María Carmen López Fernández’s 2002 “Aproximación a la mujer marginada: las gitanas de Nonell” begin to approach the topic of Nonell’s involvement with Gitano neighborhoods on the outskirts of Barcelona.¹⁰ I would like to suggest that a socio-historical framework is much needed for the understanding of Nonell’s images of the *gitanas* within the context of his other “miserable” subjects.

⁷ Enric Jardí, *Nonell*. (New York: Tudor Publishing, c1969)

Francesc Fontbona, *Isidre Nonell* (Barcelona: Gent Nostra, 1987)

⁸ Rafael Benet, *Isidro Nonell y su epoca* (Barcelona: Editorial Iberia, S. A., 1947)

⁹ Zaragoza Centro de Exposiciones y Congresos, *Isidro Nonell: Antologica*, ed. Gloria Escala i Romeu (Zaragoza: Zaragoza Centro de Exposiciones y Congresos, 2007)

Fundació Caixa Girona, *Exposició Nonell figures i espais : del 28 de maig al 15 de juliol de 2009*, ed. Gloria Escala i Romeu (Girona : Fundació Caixa Girona, Centre Cultural de Caixa Girona Fontana d'Or, c2009)

¹⁰ Glòria Escala i Romeu, “Series Nonell,” in *Revista de Catalunya* (October-November, 2010), 109-165

María Carmen López Fernández, “Aproximación a la mujer marginada: las gitanas de Nonell,” in *Luchas de genero en la Historia a traves de la imagen: ponencias y comunicaciones* vol. 2., ed. Teresa Sauret Guerrero, Amparo Quiles Faz, (Malaga: Centro de Ediciones de la Diputacion Provincial de Malaga, 2002), 341-360

Juxtaposed with other contemporary Spanish artists associated with Modernisme, Nonell provides important clues to the social perceptions of the gypsy in and outside of Spain. Nonell’s Barcelona was not only one of the most important European artistic centers, but also a growing metropolis, where the social tensions between the bourgeois society and those living on its margins, particularly the demonized Gitanos, were increasingly more difficult to contain. I argue that Nonell’s career, despite its promising beginnings in Paris, was marked by continuous failure to gain favor with the public and critics in Barcelona, precisely because the artist’s painting stepped outside of the established gypsy iconography to dismantle the extant gypsy mythology and expose these already-extant tensions. By stripping his Caló, that is Catalan Gitano, protagonists of their colorful costumes and depriving them of all agency in his works, Nonell refused them their traditional roles of performers. Instead, he brought his viewers’ attention to the physical and socially marginalized state of Caló in Barcelona, whose presence was limited to poverty-stricken communities on the outskirts of the city. Nonell maintained a life-long friendship with Juli Vallmitjana, a former artist, better known today as a dramatist, whose writings on the dismal conditions of Caló in these neighborhoods, may have attributed to Nonell’s representation of Caló in painting.

This thesis endeavors to set aside character statements about Nonell as proof of his intentions, and focuses instead on the artist’s choice of subject, the formal difference of his representations, and their implications. Throughout his career the artist clearly gave preference to socially and politically charged subjects, notably in works such as *Els Cretins de Boí* series (1896) and, following the humiliating defeat of Spain in 1898, *Els Repatriats de Cuba*, portraying the solitary, mentally and physically exhausted

figures of Cuban war veterans returning to Spain. However, whereas *Els Cretins de Boí* series was largely successful in Paris and Barcelona and *Els Repatriats* went somewhat unnoticed by both the critics and the public, Nonell’s gypsy paintings produced a real outrage in Barcelona, especially after the November 1903 individual exhibition Nonell held in Sala Parés. Repulsed by Nonell’s *gitanas* “immersed in a sleep of an alcohol-soaked marmot,” an influential Catalan critic, Raimon Casellas, writing for *La Veu de Catalunya* of 1903, called Nonell’s gypsy paintings “a representation of human bestiality.”¹¹ That same year another critic in *La Publicidad* described Nonell as an artist who had more “negative successes” in Barcelona than any other painter.¹² While Jardí attributes Nonell’s negative reception mainly to his choice of models from “the most degraded members of society,” I argue that it was, more to the point, the very construction and definition of that “degraded society,” as one represented by *gitanas*.¹³ This research will demonstrate how and why Nonell’s vision came to clash with the public perception of Gitanos in Spain.

Methods

While the primary focus of this work is on the visual representation of Gitanos within the context of the turn-of-the-century Spanish painting, a variety of discourses outside of art history, with strong emphasis on criminology and gender, will be used to further support my argument. The myth of “the delinquent gypsy” was simultaneously constructed by and reflected in Spanish painting of the period. As such, representations of gypsies both manifest traces of contemporary racial science and further promoted its

¹¹ Jardí, *Nonell*, 27

¹² Jardí, *Nonell*, 192

¹³ Jardí, *Nonell*, 190

ideas. The impact of the visual arts on the formation, and in Nonell’s case, critique of “the gypsy myth” cannot be fully appreciated without turning to the nineteenth-century-criminology. The gendered representation of the Gitanos is another factor that is essential to the construction of the gypsy by the literary and artistic community in the nineteenth-century Spain, supported by the predominance of female over male imagery.

The literature addressing the representation of the gypsy in nineteenth-century Spain is generally scarce. It can be divided into the three following categories. There are several scholarly works that focus primarily on the gypsy representation in Spanish art at the turn of the century and the most important is Eduardo Quesada Dorador’s essay “Gypsies: Painting and Sculpture in Spain 1870-1940.”¹⁴ In this category I also include exhibition catalogues, monographs and essays, concerning the life and work of Isidre Nonell that discuss his “gypsy paintings,” some of the most significant being Enric Jordi’s *Nonell* (1969), Rafael Benet’s *Nonell y Su Epoca* (1947) and the 2009 *Exposició Nonell figures i espais* catalog published by Fundació Caixa Girona. The second category of literature addresses the representation of the Spanish gypsy in a broader cultural context, including both the literary and the visual, such as Lou Charnon-Deutsch’s 2004 *Spanish Gypsy: History of European Obsession*, Marilyn Brown’s *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: the Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth-Century France* (1985)¹⁵ and Bertha Quintana and Louis Gray Ford’s 1983 anthropological study *Que Gitano! Gypsies of Southern Spain*. While both Quesada Dorador and Deutsch interpret the gypsy imagery in Spanish and European painting, sculpture and print medium, I

¹⁴ Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, *Gitanos. Pinturas y esculturas españolas, 1870-1940* (Madrid: Real Academia de San Fernando; Granada: Centro Cultural La General y Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta, 1995)

¹⁵ Marilyn R Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: the Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth-Century France* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985)

would like to introduce a social dimension to their already-rich cultural analyses that would help determine the limits of nineteenth-century iconography of the other.

Finally, there are the works that include the role of Roma within their studies of the nineteenth-century medical discourses and criminology. Some of the key texts in this category are Michael Aronna’s 1999 *Pueblos Enfermos: the discourse of illness in the turn of the century Spanish and Latin American essay*¹⁶ and Ricardo Campos Marín, José Martínez Pérez, and Rafael Huertas García-Alejo 2000 book *Los ilegales de la naturaleza: medicina y degeneracionismo en la España de la Restauración, 1876-1923*.¹⁷ However, the historical literature on Roma will also be used to further support my argument, most notably Rafael Salillas’ 1898 study *Hampa: El Delincuente español o la antropología picaresca* and Constancio Bernaldo Quirós and José Llanas Aguilaniedo’s 1901 *La mala vida en Madrid*.

While this thesis uses the research of the aforementioned scholars as a starting point, it specifically draws on painting as a historical paradigm, where the Spanish nineteenth-century internal conflicts over cultural and national identity came to the surface. This work will look to the implications of models used to examine other cases of the construction of racial/ethnic difference; namely Orientalism and Race Theory, as applied, for example, to the imagery of the Irish in the nineteenth-century Britain. These two comparative models will allow us to examine and evaluate structures of otherness, underlying the Spanish Vanguard movements at the turn-of-the-century.

¹⁶ Michael Aronna, *Pueblos Enfermos: the discourse of illness in the turn of the century Spanish and Latin American essay* (North Carolina: University North Carolina Press, 1999)

¹⁷ Ricardo Campos Marín, José Martínez Pérez, and Rafael Huertas García-Alejo, *Los ilegales de la naturaleza: medicina y degeneracionismo en la España de la Restauración, 1876-1923* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000)

Since much of the nineteenth-century images of the gypsy relies on and perpetuates the gypsy myth in one form or the other, this study will turn to works on the meaning and function of myths produced by the two leading scholars on the subject, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Their works will serve as a theoretical ground for the nineteenth-century gypsy imagery produced by Nonell and his contemporaries. According to Lévi-Strauss the operative value of the myth resides with its ability to describe a specific pattern as everlasting, thus explaining simultaneously the past, the present and the future.¹⁸ By presenting the gypsies as an ahistorical race that has always been and continues to live outside of the constraints of society artists, writers and criminal anthropologists depoliticized the criticism of social conditions and severe laws that Roma communities were subject to in nineteenth-century Europe. Both Lévi-Strauss and Barthes ultimately consider myth to be a type of speech. Barthes additionally defines it as “depoliticized speech,” where the subject/object of the myth passes from history to nature and thus abolishes the complexity of human acts.¹⁹ Drawing primarily from the two basic sets of gypsy iconography, the erotic and the macabre, allowed the artists to perpetuate the image of the gypsy as an eternal savage, while divorcing it from its proper social content, and thus supporting the dominant bourgeois ideology that perpetually cast the gypsies as “the undeserving poor.”

In addition to Barthes and Lévi-Strauss this work relies on Homi Bhabha’s 1983 essay “The Other Question...” as a model for the critical examination of the colonial “other.” Certainly the case of Roma in Spain, and their representations in art and

¹⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” in *the Journal of American Folklore* 68, issue 270 (October-December 1955), 430

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 143

literature of the nineteenth century functioned as a type of internal colonialism. In “The Other Question...” Bhabha proposes the following lines of argument especially relevant to my research. First and foremost, Bhabha argues that the “colonial stereotype is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation... [that] demands...that we change the object of analysis itself.”²⁰ Bhabha proposes to read the stereotype in Marxist/Freudian terms of fetishism, linked closely to “the myth of historical origination, racial purity and cultural priority”, where the stereotype is assigned a function of normalizing the differences that interfere with the fantasy of racial purity.²¹ For Bhabha the pseudo-scientific, typological and eugenicist “official knowledges” of colonialism come together with “the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin” to produce meaning and power.²² Continuous repetition of the stereotype, which ensures its lasting hold on the social imagination, is richly illustrated by the nineteenth-century explosion of the gypsy culture in visual media, where Nonell’s paintings functioned as a frustrating disruption in the public’s perception of Gitano. The type of socio-historical analysis offered in this work will bring out an elaborate set of contradictory desires linked to the stereotype of the gypsy, at works in science and literature of the nineteenth century, but which were manifest visually in Modernismo and Noucentisme painting.

Terminology

The terminology used to identify any particular Roma group changes depending on the region. For example, the Central and Eastern European Romany are generally referred to as *Roma*, while in Russia, the *Roma* address themselves as *Romale*.

²⁰ Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question,” in *Screen 24* (1983), 22

²¹ Bhabha, “The Other Question,” 26

²² Bhabha, “The Other Question,” 33

Popularly known as *Gitanos* in Spain, Spanish Roma in Catalonia refer to each other, instead, as *Caló* (plural: *Calós*).²³ Both terms *Gitano* (historically used in Spain for all Roma) and *Caló* (used for each other by Catalanian Gitanos) will be appear throughout this paper. The term “gypsy” has been traditionally used and continues to be applied generically to any given Roma population and, as such, it will be used in this paper in lowercase letters when referring to the construct of the Roma People.

²³ David Lagunas Arias, “Modern Gypsies: Gender and kinship among the Calós from Catalonia,” in *Romani Studies* 12, Issue 1 (June 2002). 36-56.

Chapter II

Representing the Spanish Gypsy

Gitanos in Spanish art prior to 1800s

Gypsies began appearing in Spanish and European painting as far back as the late Renaissance, in works of Giorgione, whose internationally renowned 1508 *Tempest* purportedly portrayed a gypsy woman with child.²⁴ Many prolific painters of Spanish Baroque, such as Bartolomé Esteban Murillo with his *Virgin with Child* painted in 1675, popularly known as *La gitana* and José de Ribera, infamous for his preference of the lower-class models featured gypsies in their works.²⁵ Despite gypsies’ presence in painting, especially plentiful in the images working in the picaresque tradition, the scholarship on the group’s portrayal in the arts has been scarce at best. Gypsies together with beggars, soldiers and galley slaves were common characters in picaresque novels, such as Miguel Cervantes’s *Exemplary Novels* (1590-1612) and Francisco de Quevedo’s *The Swindler* (c1590), that were traditionally set in gypsy encampments and taverns. The picaresque genre was adopted by artists as well as writers, among them Frans Hals with *Gypsy Girl* (1628-1630). In this work Hals portrays a girl who pertains to the picaresque milieu, but who may or may not be of Roma origin. In *Den of Soldiers and Pícaros*

²⁴ Quesada Dorador, “Gitanos,” 109

²⁵ Quesada Dorador, “Gitanos,” 109-110

(1715)²⁶ Alessandro Magnasco depicts the marginal sectors of Italian society, including the gypsies, in one den. It is curious to note that even though the emergence of gypsy-as-criminal imagery can be traced as far back as the development of the picaresque novel, fascination with gypsy culture on such global scale surfaced in the nineteenth century. Before examining the place of Gitanos in that century, we should first trace the history of their legal status in Spain

Gitanos in Spanish Legislation: Brief Historical Overview

The majority of accounts of Gitanos in Spain begins in the early fifteenth century, even though myths concerning their origins can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages. For instance, the legend of the gypsies being the descendants of Ham, cursed to wander the world for all eternity to atone for their refusal to shelter the holy family during their flight to Egypt and/or their participation in the death of Christ by making nails for the crucifixion both date to the Early Middle Ages.²⁷ Ever since their emergence in the fifteenth century Roma were valued by estate owners and local aristocracy of the Eastern and Central Europe because of their specialization in trades, such as blacksmithing, tinsmithing, etc that were beyond the control of the medieval guilds.²⁸ Despite the inability to discern precisely when Gitanos migrated to the Iberian peninsula some scholars, among them Amada López de Menezes date the first detailed account of *egiptos* (as Gitanos were known on the Iberian peninsula because of the

²⁶ For more information on Alessandro Magnasco and the relationship between picaresque literature and the visual arts see: Charles Preston McLane, “Alessandro Magnasco and the Painterly Picaresque” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2006)

²⁷ Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy: the history of a European obsession* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 5

²⁸ Jim Mac Laughlin, “European Gypsies and the Historical Geography of Loathing,” in *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 22, issue 1 (1999), 34

fifteenth-century presumption of their Egyptian origin) to the beginning of 1425 when Alfonso V of Aragón permitted a group of wanderers to remain on his territories for a trimester.²⁹ Following “the Re-conquest,” as Susan Martín Márquez asserts in *Disorientations*, the severe depopulation and loss of skill caused by the expulsion of the remaining *moriscos* from Spanish territories by Philip III allowed the Gitanos instead to occupy the social positions left vacant by the Moors.³⁰

On May 24, 1539 Holy Roman emperor Charles V proclaimed galley slavery for Gitanos in his kingdom as a punitive measure, which remained effective until 1748. 1542 marked the year of the reinstatement of the 1512 constitution by order of the emperor in the Catalonia Courts in villa of Monzon, the constitution which proclaimed that all “bohemians” (bomians) were required by law to leave Catalan territories or be subjected to severe punishment, as would be the ones harboring them. Eleven years later the law was reinforced with a new addition to that constitution Book IX, of Title XVIII: “De bomians, vagabundos, y validos mendicants,” with a clause requiring all Gitanos and their families to leave Catalan territories within 3 months of the proclamation, under penalty of losing all of their belongings, and forcing men aged twenty to fifty into galley slavery, and imposing fines on women and younger men.³¹ During the next two centuries the legislation of the Iberian Peninsula, including Asturian, Aragonese and, most notably, Catalan branches continued to suppress the Gitanos, while simultaneously attempting to assimilate them into the mainstream society by issuing edicts forbidding Gitano dress and

²⁹ Amada López de Menezes. “La inmigración gitana en España en el siglo XV.” In *Martínez Ferrando, Arcivero. Miscelánea de estudios dedicados a su memoria* (Madrid: Asociación Nacional de Bibliotecarios, Archiveros y Arqueólogos, 1968), 3.

See also Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 259, note 41

³⁰ Susan Martín-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish colonialism in Africa and the performance of identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 152

³¹ Antonio Gómez Alfaro, *Legislación histórica española dedicada a los gitanos* (Seville: Grafica El Cisne, 2009), 49

language. Further policies separated young children from their Gitano parents to receive the non-Gitano upbringing in the orphanages.

On September 19, 1783, in midst of the Enlightenment, Charles III responded to the increase in criminal activity on the roads and the countryside of Spain by placing the blame on Gitanos and issuing a “Royal Pragmatic Sanction, in virtue of the king, in which the new rules are provided to contain and punish the vagrancy of those known as gypsy or the new Castilians,” from here on referred to as Royal Pragmatic Sanction. According to Royal Pragmatic Sanction those “who call themselves gypsies [gitanos] are not so by origin nor by nature, neither do they stem from some infected race”; however, the sanction went on to argue that they were a group of people united by their intent to live and profit solely by crime.³² The introduction to the document read: “[H]is Majesty does not want to exterminate or annihilate those called ‘the gypsies’ but only to abolish their name and rectify their customs,”³³ thus desiring to complete the successful integration of Gitanos, seen as a criminal sector of the society, into the productive body of the Enlightened state. Upon the proclamation of Royal Pragmatic Sanction all Gitanos were to settle down in a single location and choose an “honest occupation,” even though most professions were strictly forbidden to those formerly suspected of practicing a “gypsy way of life.” By the order of Royal Pragmatic Sanction those “known as gypsies” caught wondering unpopulated areas under the pretext of going to the market or the fair, were to be apprehended and persecuted immediately as criminals.³⁴

³² Original quote: “Aquellos que se llaman y se dicen gitanos, no lo son por origen ni por naturaleza, ni provienen de raiz infecta alguna.” In Alfaro, *Legislación*, 280

³³ “Su Majestad no quiere exterminar o aniquilar a los llamados gitanos, sino suprimir su nombre y rectificar sus costumbres.” In Alfaro, *Legislación*, 279

³⁴ Alfaro, *Legislación*, 281

The nineteenth century did not end the oppression of Gitano communities in Spain, as many gypsy aficionados of the period, including Francisco de Sales Mayo tended to believe. For Sales Mayo in his 1870 *El Gitanismo: Historia, Costumbres y Dialecto de los Gitanos* the restrictions placed on Gitanos during his own time were minor, limited only to the prohibition of traditional modes of dress and “Calé dialect” in public. In return however the members of the group were granted a privilege “to adopt whichever profession suits them best.”³⁵ The Newest Compilation of laws of Spain issued in 1805³⁶ during the government of Ferdinand VII and as Sales Mayo mentions in his 1870 book, has forbidden the use of “gitano” language, dress and name. Two years later the use of the branding stamp for all criminals was abolished, Gitanos remained an exception. The mistrust of the group in the second half of the century is apparent in the 1852 military manual *La Cartilla de la Guardia Civil*, Chapter II, article 45, urging the military personnel to “scrupulously monitor the gitanos, carefully check all their documents, confront their special signs, observe their dress to form an accurate idea of their movements and occupations, studying the purpose of their travels and their objective.”³⁷ The following precautions were deemed necessary because of the persistent belief, “scientifically” validated in works of the Spanish criminal anthropologists, most notably Rafael Salillas and Bernaldo de Quirós to be discussed further in Chapter 4, that gypsies maintained loyalty only to each other, and not to the monarchical nations on whose territories they resided. It was also widely believed that for those reasons, they

³⁵ Francisco de Sales Mayo, *El Gitanismo: Historia, Costumbres y Dialecto de los Gitanos* (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1870), 31

³⁶ Novísima Recopilacion de las leyes de España

³⁷ “se vigilará escrupulosamente a los gitanos, cuidando mucho de reconocer todos los documentos que tengan, confrontar sus señas particulares, observar sus trajes, averiguar su modo de vivir y cuanto conduzca a formar una idea exacta de sus movimientos y ocupaciones, indagando el punto a que se dirigen en sus viajes y el objeto de ellos.” In Alfaro, *Legislación*, 323

would eagerly engage in espionage in times of war for financial gain. The mistrust of the group failed to impede the development of fascination with gypsy fashion and all facets of the gypsy culture in Spain and Europe.

“Gypsy culture” in 19th-century Spain

The European and North American obsession with the “gypsy culture” was a unique and multifaceted phenomenon that encompassed all spheres of cultural life, ranging from the visual arts and music to fiction, travel writing and social sciences. Triggered by northern Europe’s fascination with Orientalism in the late eighteenth century, the passion for all aspects of the imaginary gypsy culture did not fully develop until the second half of the nineteenth century. The romantic Spain was ‘discovered’ by the French as a result of Napoleon’s 1808 invasion and was perceived as a cultural artifact uncontaminated by modernity, finding reflection on pages of writers, including Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée and François-René Chateaubriand, as well as the canvases of Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, Jacques Callot and Eugène Delacroix, culminating with the opening of Louis Philippe’s Musée Espagnol in 1838. In search of Spain’s Moorish heritage tourists from European leisure classes began travelling to Andalusia at the end of the eighteenth century. They left behind a large body of travel literature, which significantly contributed to the creation of “the myth of Andalusia” and endowed that region, and by extension the Spanish identity, with two types of ambiguity that dissolved the difference between Spain and Andalusia and constructed the latter as an Earthly Paradise.³⁸

³⁸ Luís Cifuentes Fernández, “Southern exposure: early tourism and Spanish national identity” in *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 13 (August-December 2007), 136

The symbolic centrality of gypsies in Spain’s collective imaginary contrasted sharply to the group’s marginal status in society, and was partially a result of the gypsies’ embodiment of a radical difference in Spanish culture, manifest as non-white, non-European, non-Christian elements that traditionally applied to many Spaniards – a legacy of the Jewish and Moorish past, exoticized as an outcast and projected safely into the figure of the gypsy.³⁹ According to Marilyn Brown, French Salon painting from 1830s onwards strongly favored ethnographic “local color” depictions of Spanish *gitanos*, rather than the gypsies of France, whose presence was notably on the rise during the second nineteenth century, thus sublimating the potentially rebellious social content through geographic distance.⁴⁰

In Spain the equation of the gypsy with the notion of excessive racial purity was part of a xenophobic nationalist reaction against the perceived threat to “authentic” Spanish culture posed by French high culture of the eighteenth century.⁴¹ Pedro Romero pointed out that when Spanish intellectuals and flamenco aficionados, such as Serafín Estébanez Calderón, wanted to defend Gitano settlements in Spain it was due to their perception as “unassailable fortresses...free of interbreeding with any foreign heresy whatsoever.”⁴² Mid-nineteenth-century Spanish drama, as exemplified by José Sanz Pérez’s comic play *El tío Caniyitas o el Mundo Nuevo de Cádiz* (1843) and Mariano Soriano Fuertes’s comic opera *La fábrica de tabacos de Sevilla* (1850) often turned to the

³⁹ José F. Colmeiro, “Exorcising Exoticism: “Carmen” and the Construction of Oriental Spain,” in *Comparative Literature* 54, issue 2 (Spring 2002), 130

⁴⁰ Marilyn R. Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: The Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth-Century France* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985), 47-48

⁴¹ Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 181

⁴² Pedro G. Romero, “Sun at night: Preparatory Notes for Poetics and Politics among Flamenco and Modern Artists. A Paradoxical Place.” In *La noche española: flamenco, vanguardia y cultura popular, 1865-1936*. (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, c 2008), 71

gypsy as an ultimate tool for ridiculing foreign tourists by focusing on the gypsies’ presumably strong predilection for their own kind.⁴³

In his comic opera Soriano Fuertes specifically satirizes Prosper Mérimée’s ideas about Spain and especially the promiscuity of the gypsy women expressed in his infamous novella *Carmen* published in 1845. That same year, Mérimée wrote to his Spanish friend Manuela Montijo that “in Seville, Cadiz, and Granada, [he] came across...Gypsy women whose virtue did not resist a *duro*,” gently ridiculing the prudishness of the famous British Spanish gypsy scholar of his day George Borrow who suggested that “Gypsy women are very chaste and that a Busno, that is to say a man who is not of their race, can not touch a hair on their head.”⁴⁴ The debates regarding the chastity of the gypsy and especially Gitano women played a very important part in the representation and public perception of Gitanas in works of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century painters. However, these public perceptions also gave way to *flamenquismo* as cliché-ridden flaunting of Gitano-identified activity and dress came to be known in Spain.⁴⁵ Flamenco culture and its primary carrier “the Andalusian gypsy” in art and literature were elevated to the status of a cultural icon, owing much debt to “the popularization of the iconography derived from the cultural milieu of flamenco in modern avant-garde,” where “the poetic space that flamenco artistes [but also the vanguard artists] cultivated is related to the promise of non-commercial aesthetic experience, despite record deals and paid performances.”⁴⁶

⁴³ Deutsch, *Spanish Gypsy*, 181

⁴⁴ Quoted in Xavier Darcos, *Prosper Mérimée* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 96

⁴⁵ Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 181

⁴⁶ Romero, “Sun at night,” 61 and 74

Flamenquismo was exploited by the Spanish and the Europeans alike and found both supporters and detractors in Spain among many writers, artists and politicians. One of the most notorious anti-flamenco campaigns ever launched was led by the late-Romantic bohemian intellectual Eugenio Noel, the author of *Escenas y andanzas de la campaña anti-flamenca* of 1915. In it, Noel saw flamenco/gypsy culture of Andalusia as polluting the Spanish soul and supported Lombroso’s view of the gypsies as “degenerate.” The hostility towards all cultural elements of flamenco origin, including songs, dances, bullfights and even Holy Week, was professed on many occasions by the writers associated with “Generation of ’98,” including Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset. Yet, some of the artists, namely Ignacio Zuloaga and Joaquín Sorolla, also associated with this generation’s climate, frequently embraced *flamenquismo* in their art and achieved fame for their colorful representations of the Andalusian gypsy culture.

“Andalusian Gypsy”

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Andalusia, characterized simultaneously by its proximity to Africa and its ties to Spain’s Arabic past, came to “embody a form of primitive but authentic national identity.”⁴⁷ Placed in binary opposition to Northern Spain, defined by Madrid and Barcelona, this southernmost province was endowed with all the character traits traditionally ascribed to the Orient, namely impetuousness, primitiveness, idleness and femininity, coming to be perceived in the words of the Spanish philosopher and promoter of Castilian culture, José Ortega y

⁴⁷ Cifuentes Fernández, “Southern Exposure,” 133

Gasset as “a unique Occidental people that still remains faithful to the paradisiac ideal of life” and “with a culture most exclusively [their] own.”⁴⁸

According to Susan Martín-Márquez, European Orientalists began portraying the Alhambra as inhabited by the Gypsies, “successors to the Moors...incapable of entry into modernity” during the late eighteenth century, established the perception of Andalusia as the land of the gypsies. This association between the gypsies (they became “colorful stand-ins...for the Moorish royalty and sub-Saharan servants of the earlier time”) and the Orient inevitably contributed to the belief espoused by the Europeans that the decrepit state of the formerly magnificent Alhambra was a result of backwardness and southern sloth of Spaniards.⁴⁹ Southern identity also underwent the exoticization process within Spain, bringing together the gypsy and the Andalusian identities in literary and artistic constructions of Andalusia as a decaying archaic society, plagued by violent crime. According to the British Hispanicist John Brande Trend, writing in 1928 “Andaluz gipsy” [sic] is distinctly different from all other gypsies because Andalusian society and Gitano culture influenced each other through “clandestine unions between gipsy-girls and others.”⁵⁰

Andalusia was frequently compared to Catalonia as its polar opposite in relation to gypsies in the turn-of-the-century Spanish press, since the two provinces shared a common factor: fame for housing the largest numbers of Gitano communities in Spain. Whereas Andalusia was described as “the heart of Spain” full of joy and liberty, its northern counterpart was imagined as the nation’s “head” embodying the notions of

⁴⁸ “el único pueblo de Occidente que permanece fiel a un ideal paradisíaco de la vida” “una cultura más radicalmente suya.” In José Ortega y Gasset, *Teoría de Andalucía y otros ensayos* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1944), 29 and 19

⁴⁹ Márquez, *Disorientations*, 22

⁵⁰ John Brande Trend, *Spain from the South* (London: Darf, 1928), 10

progress and rationalism, as seen in the article of Andalusian-born intellectual Diego Ruiz, writing for the Barcelona-based *Luz* magazine in 1898:

“*Andalusia* is the Spanish land that has preserved the most influence of the Arab race; as brilliant and vigorous as was its past, it is now in degradation. Perhaps as prudence is emblematic of a Catalan, an Andalusian stands out for his originality, this spark emanating directly from the Almighty that shines in the minds of all great people, like the planets reflecting the light of the sun.”

“*Andalucía* es la tierra española que más conserva la influencia de la raza árabe, tan vigorosa y genial há siglos, como degradada en la actualidad. Pues así como es distintivo del catalán la prudencia, el andaluz sobresale por su genialidad, ese chispazo dimanado directamente del Altísimo y que brilla en el cerebro de todo pueblo grande, como en los planetas se agita la luz del sol.”⁵¹

Ruiz’s characterization of Andalusia as a carrier of Arabic traditions and “Nature’s favorite *daughter*,” that despite all of its sweetness and genius has fallen into a state of complete and utter degradation, illustrates the twofold nineteenth-century understanding of Andalusia as a source of authentic Spanish culture, but also as Spain’s most decaying region. In *The Spanish Gypsy* Lou Charnon-Deutsch singles out Andalusia, rather than Catalonia, for its association in the eyes of the foreign travellers with Spanish “excess,” made manifest in dance performances of Andalusian women.⁵² Despite the prominence of Gitano communities in Catalonia, especially in Montjuïc area around Barcelona, frequented by Nonell, the discussion of Gitanos in Catalonia was largely missing from the Catalan Press and moved to Andalusia instead. I would like to suggest that the

⁵¹ Ruiz, Diego. “Cataluña y Andalucía” in *Luz* 6 (January 31, 1898), unpaginated.

⁵² Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 53

absence of Catalan Caló from public discussions in Barcelona was a result of the group’s especially disenfranchised status and its inevitable association with poverty and degradation. That silencing of the group’s economic and social condition was necessary because that condition was seen as sabotaging the vision of social and industrial progress rigorously promoted in Catalonia during the second half of the nineteenth century. This social condition also helps explain the preference and popularity of *flamenquismo* and the “Andalusian Gypsy” in the rest of Spain, where the “Andalusian Gypsy” was assigned the role of the “Other” acting in opposition to industrialized mainstream society.

The dominance of the “Andalusian gypsy” over the Catalan instigated the artists from different regions of Spain to generate multiple images of Andalusian dancers of either the Gitano ethnicity, or merely posed and dressed to look “gypsy.” Ranging from playful rococo-inspired representations of the Catalan artist Mariano Fortuny y Marsal, who nevertheless painted his Caló⁵³ model in *Gypsy dancing in the garden of Granada* (Fig. 1) against the Andalusian setting, to the darkly-sensual depictions of Gitanos in *The Wake* (Fig. 2) of the Andalusian painter José María López Mezquita, *flamenquismo* clearly came to dominate the artistic production of the period.

The last decades of the nineteenth- and the early ones of the twentieth century saw the rise in the exotic representations of nonwhite, non-European women in illustrated publications, such as *Ilustración Artística*, *Ilustración Ibérica* and *Blanco y Negro*. The illustrations in these particular publications often exoticized women, while simultaneously domesticating their difference, as demonstrated by Enríque Estevan’s

⁵³ Gitanos in Catalonia refer to themselves as *Caló*. For more information see: David Lagunas Arias, “Modern Gypsies: Gender and kinship among the Calós from Catalonia” in *Romani Studies* 12, Issue 1 (June 2002). 36-56.

1900 *Carmen Sevillana* (Fig. 3) reproduced in an August 11, 1900 edition of *Blanco y Negro*. Estevan poses his gitana as a flamenco dancer, endowing her with all the flamenco attributes appropriate for a Carmen, such as the flowers in her hair and the red shawl over her shoulders, without including physiognomic racial markers into the woman’s features. The lack of bodily markers or phenotypes suggests that by one simple change of costume she, like Cervantes’s *Preciosa*,⁵⁴ could easily be transformed into the familiar bourgeois lady, thus exorcizing his public’s fear of the woman’s Gitano origins. The interest in the domesticated exoticism of the Andalusian gitana carried into the early twentieth-century Spanish art, as demonstrated by the 1922-1923 painting, *The Gypsy dance on the terrace of Granada* (Fig. 4) produced by Basque artist Ignacio Zuloaga, whose works achieved a controversial status in Spain due to the Spanish perceptions of the artist as pandering to foreigners.

The latter artist’s biographer Enrique Lafuente Ferrari cites the artist’s admiration for Gitanos as follows, “They, the gypsies, are the rich, and we, the civilized, are the poor.”⁵⁵ Zuloaga’s attraction towards the gypsy culture of Andalusia is eloquently expressed in *The Gypsy dance on the terrace of Granada*. Eduardo Quesada Dorador quoted Zuloaga saying that “on this terrace in Granada there is everything that one needs: the liveliest sight of the old cities of Spain, the feeling of the gypsies, passionate and without sentimentality, the beautiful and fiery Spanish girls...”⁵⁶ At first glance

⁵⁴ In Miguel Cervantes’s novel *La Preciosa* the protagonist is a gypsy girl of extraordinary beauty, who turns out to be a lady of noble birth, kidnapped by the gypsies as a child.

⁵⁵ Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, *La Vida y el arte de Ignacio Zuloaga* (San Sebastián: Editora Internacional, 1950), 142

⁵⁶ “En esta terraza de Granada esta todo lo necesario: la intensísima faz de las viejas ciudades de España, el sentimiento apasionado y sin sensiblería de los gitanos, las guapas y ardientes muchachas españolas” in Eduardo Quesada Dorador, “Gitanas. Pinturas y esculturas españolas, 1870-1945” in *Gitanos. Pinturas y esculturas españolas, 1870-1940* (Madrid: Real Academia de San Fernando; Granada: Centro Cultural La General y Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta, 1995), 126

Zuloaga’s unequivocally picturesque portrayal of the Andalusian capital suggests a muddling of racial identities, even though the artist does distinguish between “Spanish girls” and “the gypsies,” seemingly restricting the viewer’s ability to discern between the Gitanas and the *Andaluzas*. Nevertheless, the separation between the two groups is quite pronounced. The Gitano and the Gitanas are represented in the painting as actively engaged with the production of the musical spectacle, both as players (the woman with the tambourine in the front and the man with a guitar in the middle ground) and dancers (the smiling Gitana, wearing white shawl and a black hat, who constitutes the focal point of the image). The payo (non-Gitano) women who also wear the mantillas, on the other hand, are placed on the opposite side from the Gitanos as observers of the spectacle, rather than the participants. The marked difference in the portrayal of the Andalusian and the Gitano women corresponds to the difference in their social roles. As Charnon-Deutsch mentions in her study Andalusian Gitano women were famous throughout Europe and Spain for their dancing, and this predominance of “the dancing gypsy” representations, I believe, contributed to the exoticist European current that produced an image of Spain that was dominated by that which was Gitano-Andaluz.⁵⁷

In 1908 an Andalusian painter José María Rodríguez-Acosta commented on the status of the Andalusian gypsy as Andalusia’s primary cultural export in *Gitanos of Sacromonte* (Fig. 5), a painting which earned the artist a first-place medal at the National Exhibition of the same year. In this masterfully executed work, Gitanos emerge dressed in colorful customary garments, provocatively confronting the viewer, while remaining still in their position as if in preparation for a photograph. For Alberto Villar Movellán

⁵⁷ Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 69

the artist has elevated Gitanos in this work to the level of a symbol.⁵⁸ However, I would like to point out that Gitanos of Sacromonte were a symbol of Granada long before Rodriguez-Acosta ever painted them, and the artist’s original twist on the subject was not to make them symbolic, but rather to reveal their commercialization, as one of Rodriguez-Acosta’s famous critics, Gaya Nuño has suggested.

Gitanos of Sacromonte brought critical acclaim to the artist, earning Acosta high praise in Madrid. Enrique Diez Canedo, one of the leading art critics in Spain, singled out this painting as a paragon of artistic perfection, “an affirmation of mastery,” that symbolizes “culmination of struggles, calculations and indecisions.”⁵⁹ However, one of Acosta’s critics, Gaya Nuño while admiring the artist’s skill noted that Gitanos in this piece fail to adequately perform their “gypsiness,” indicating that they are “Gitanos, yes, but composed too much by the pose, too little gypsy, as if they were waiting for the tourists.”⁶⁰ The discomfort Nuño expresses with the pose assumed by Rodriguez-Acosta’s models reinforces the dominance of Gitano representations via flamenco and other types of dance, influencing the understanding of Gitanos’ primary function as performers.

Flamenco served as a medium by which the Gitano and the Andalusian identities came to be negotiated and Spain understood by the foreign nations, fueling the so-called “Flamenco Wars” or the debates regarding the Andalusian versus Gitano origins of flamenco that took place between 1880s and 1960s between *gitanistas* that argued for

⁵⁸ Alberto Villar Movellán, “Andalucía: Periferia en la Tradición,” in *Centro y periferia en la modernización de la pintura española (1880-1918)* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1991), 227

⁵⁹ In Enrique Diez Canedo, “La Exposición de Bellas Artes IV. Eduardo Chicharro.-Rodríguez Acosta,” in *Diario Universal* (May 20, 1908), 2

⁶⁰ “Gitanos, si pero demasiado compuestos para la *pose*, demasiado poco gitanos, como si estuvieran esperando a los turistas,” In Miguel Ángel Revilla Uceda, *José María Rodríguez-Acosta, 1878-1941* (Granada: Fundación Rodríguez-Acosta), 117

gypsy origins of flamenco and *andalucistas* who insisted on a more generic Andalusian origin of the genre.⁶¹ In an encyclopedic entry for *Self-portraits of Spanish, American, and Lusitanian women* (1885) Blanca de los Ríos juxtaposes the non-gypsy maja, the *authentic* Andalusian folk dancer, and the lascivious Gitana, whom she believes is degrading the dance: “Today as songs and customs are being perverted, dance is being prostituted, nearly forgotten by townsfolk. Instead it is being taken up by Gypsy women...the *maja* has disappeared, and the *cantaora* remains: the former personified the fiesta, the second the orgy; the dance of the *maja* was free and spontaneous, like the flight of birds; that of the *cantaora* is wanton and brokered, like prostitution.” De los Ríos concludes her article by prophesizing a dark future for the Andalusian people: “The bright sun of happiness that shone on this people is sinking forever; on the depressed, dark forehead of the Gypsy woman flicker its last rays, sinister and red, like the last glimmers of the sunset.”⁶²

While de los Ríos saw the decline of flamenco as a result of its abandonment by the Andalusians who invented it, only to be profaned by the gypsies, many *gitanistas* envisioned the gypsy’s role in flamenco as quite the opposite, namely that of the true interpreter of flamenco, symbolizing the purity of the genre, uncontaminated by commercialization. In 1922 Manuel de Falla and Federico García Lorca organized a *Flamenco Deep Song* competition, troubled by what they perceived to be the bastardization of flamenco through its performance in a popular *café cantante* format, or a cabaret-like establishment specializing in Gitanesque music and dance. They understood the performances in these popular cafés to be a debasement of the national art

⁶¹ Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 204

⁶² Blanca de los Ríos Nostrench. “La Gitana,” in *Las mujeres españolas, americanas, y lusitanas pintadas por sí mismas*, ed. Faustina Sáez del Melgar (Barcelona: Editorial Juan Pons, 1885), 607

form. A primary concern for de Falla,⁶³ who together with Lorca was the promoting a distinctly Gitano pedigree for Flamenco. Lorca contributed to the flamenco debates by organizing a 1931 conference entitled *Historical and artistic importance of the primitive Andalusian music called ‘cante jondo,’* while in later prose works Lorca highlighted the contribution of Gitanos to flamenco and occasionally equated flamenco deep song with *canto gitano* (gypsy music). Unfortunately, the ongoing attempts to establish the purity of *cante jondo* and promote the romanticized vision of Andalusia through its identification with a single race served to reinforce racialized thinking,⁶⁴ while camouflaging the unequal relations of power and repressive social structures imposed on actual Gitano communities.

“The Bohemian Artist”

One of the key factors contributing to the promotion of *flamenquismo* in nineteenth-century Europe and Spain was the rise of “artistic bohemianism” in France that inevitably popularized the connection between the artist and the gypsy. The term “bohemian artist” was coined in Paris in the early 1840s, claiming an illustrious descent from Homer through Michelangelo all the way to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, implying an ahistorical figure, embodying transcendental artistic values, unrestrained by the society *he* inhabits.⁶⁵ The concept of “the Bohemian artist” was influenced by the perception of “the Romantic artist” and drew on a similar pool of associations. For instance, in 1831 an

⁶³ In 1922 (the year of the competition) de Falla published an influential text on *cante jondo*, its origins and its influence, entitled *El canto jondo (Canto primitivo andaluz). Sus orígenes. Sus valores musicales. Su influencia en el arte musical europeo.*

⁶⁴ Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 210

⁶⁵ Mary Gluck, “Theorizing the Cultural Roots of the Bohemian Artist,” in *Modernism/Modernity* 7.3 (September 2000), 351

anonymous writer for the August 30 issue of *Figaro* in an article entitled “Jeune-Frances” made fun of all young “Bohemians” for their artistic pretensions and exotic tastes, such as a tendency to “weep at romantic verses, go into convulsions before primitive colors, faint at the sound of free verse, and fall dead before the sight of pure vermillion.”⁶⁶ Initially “bohemian” was a term most often applied to the inhabitants of the Parisian Latin quarter, however as it grew progressively more complex, it came to signify all rebellious young artists who were white, European and opposed to bourgeois values.

The *Universal dictionary* of 1852 defined Bohemia as a place “in the Latin Quarter or on the summits of the faubourg Montmartre...composed of authors who unsuccessfully solicit the production of their first dramas...of painters regularly refused at the annual exhibitions, of musicians reduced to giving private concerts.”⁶⁷ This definition introduced Bohemia as a dwelling of great minds whose greatness has not yet been acknowledged, however as some art historians previously pointed out, the assumption of the identity of a “bohemian artist,” as well as the refusal to exhibit at the Salons was often a conscious decision on part of the artist that led to a sound art investment on part of the artist himself and his bourgeois patron.⁶⁸ According to T.J. Clark, however, in mid- nineteenth-century France, Bohemia also referred to a very real social class as well as a community of struggling artists. Understood to be “a locus of dissent,” this Bohemia included various kinds of the *déclassé* including the students in the Latin quarter, the unemployed, criminals, ragpickers, part of the rebel fighting force

⁶⁶ Cited in Gluck, “Bohemian Artist,” 366

⁶⁷ Cited in Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians*, 8

⁶⁸ Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians*, 6

in June 1848 Revolution and, even, the gypsies, all of which “caricatured” the values of the bourgeoisie.⁶⁹

Thus, French artistic bohemianism that emerged from this milieu was entwined with the Romantic notions of liberty and spontaneity attributed to all “Bohemians.” But the latter term was also applied to Roma in Europe because they carried letters of safe passage from the King of Bohemia when they first entered France in the fourteenth century.⁷⁰ As Marilyn Brown has suggested the myth of artistic bohemianism did not link the artist to the gypsy alone, but also to many other types of “street people,” such as the vagabonds, beggars, ragpickers and street performers, their “common denominator [being] mobility.”⁷¹ In 1913 Guillaume Apollinaire expressed his belief that “all artists are *men* who want to become inhuman.”⁷² This desire to go beyond human nature into the realm of the “primitive,” where freedom is absolute and the emotions are raw turned the artists’ attention to the gypsy as the ultimate reincarnation of the ‘noble savage.’ According to Théophile Gautier, writing in 1840 “[the gypsies’] true profession, essentially, is that of thief,” and for that reason (as well as gypsies’ nomadism) they are able to function outside of the constraints of claustrophobic bourgeois existence.⁷³

In 1850 French painter Gustave Courbet proclaimed: “In our civilized society, I must lead the life of a savage; I must even free myself from governments...I have, therefore, just started out on the great, wandering and independent life of the

⁶⁹ T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 33-34

⁷⁰ Nigel Blake and Francis Francsina, *Modernity and modernism: French painting in the nineteenth century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 50-51

⁷¹ Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians*, 34

⁷² “Tout les artistes sont des hommes qui veulent devenir inhumains.” Cited in Romero, “Sun at night,” 64-65

⁷³ Théophile Gautier, *Voyage en Espagne* (Paris: Charpentier, 1840), 295

gypsy.”⁷⁴ The self-identification of the bohemian artists with the real “Bohemians,” expressed in Courbet’s statement, as an alternative to the hypocrisy of the modern “civilized” world inspired the artists to emulate what they perceived to be the itinerant way of life practiced by the gypsies, as well as to seek out the real-life “Bohemians” to paint, meanwhile obscuring the social, political and historical realities of their Roma subjects by assigning a set of simple stereotypical images to them, such as “the dancing wench,” “the sly horse trader,” “ragamuffin child,” etc.⁷⁵

It was precisely on this set of gypsy stereotypes, which Nonell drew in 1898 prior to his contact with Barcelonan Gitano neighborhoods, in order to produce a series of drawings of *Gitanos vistos pel canto tragich*, to be discussed further in Chapter 3. While Nonell, unlike quintessential “bohemian artists” such as Gauguin, Courbet and to some extent Manet, did not practice the bohemian lifestyle, he, nevertheless, engaged with an image of an artist as a “Bohemian,” when he portrayed his friend and fellow Catalan artist, Joaquim Mir as a Bohemian in the 1901 *Estudi de gitano* (Fig. 6).⁷⁶ In this work Nonell depicts his friend in a pose, which is quite similar to those of his many Gitanas, emphasizing the figure’s face and the self-absorbed attitude, without giving much definition to clothing and the surroundings. The man’s misery and posture in this piece link him to Nonell’s other images of the poor and the downtrodden, going at least as far back as the 1894 *Bust of the Peasant* (produced while the artist was studying with Lluís Graner), a study to be discussed at some length in chapter 3. The recognition of the artist

⁷⁴ Cited in English in Linda Nochlin, “Gustave Courbet’s meeting: A portrait of the artist as a wandering Jew,” in *The Art Bulletin* 49-3, 216

⁷⁵ Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy*, 58

⁷⁶ National Museum of Art of Catalonia (MNAC) identifies this work as portraying Joaquim Mir. See: Museu d’Art de Catalunya, *Isidre Nonell: 1872-1911* (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Modern, MNAC, 2000), 116

as a “Bohemian” depends almost entirely on Mir’s slouched posture, suggestive of alienation and melancholy, the two characteristics that relate “the bohemian artist” to Nonell’s imaginary gypsy.

The myth of the bohemian artist as a lone visionary and a dissident extended from the early nineteenth century into the 1960s, masking the fact that avant-garde and establishment artists alike shared it and participated in its creation, drawing upon “bohemian” iconography for both commercial and personal reasons. Coupled with *flamenguismo*, Bohemianism quickly integrated itself into the nineteenth European culture via its transformation into fashion, but also through the redefinition of bohemianism as a form of deviant, exotic and yet attractive form of behavior.⁷⁷

Max Nordau, dedicated several chapters to “bohemian artists” in *Degeneration* (1892), one of the most influential texts about *mal de siècle* in turn-of-the-century Europe and curiously dedicated to Cesare Lombroso. In the book Nordau specifically chose the examples of British Pre-Raphaelite and French Symbolist movements as a particularly dangerous category of those afflicted with degeneracy; a pathology that was expressed in decadent art and threatened to push the mental and physical retardation onto the healthy members of society, while further agitating and attracting those who were already degenerate. According to Nordau the Symbolists were “a remarkable example of that group-forming tendency which...[is] a peculiarity of ‘degenerates,’” exhibiting all common signs of degeneracy and imbecility, “overwhelming vanity and self-conceit, strong emotionalism, confused disconnected thought, garrulity...and complete incapacity for serious sustained work.”⁷⁸ The traits

⁷⁷ Gluck, “Bohemian Artist,” 366

⁷⁸ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), 101

Nordau ascribes to this group of artists, echoes the point of view assumed towards Gitanos and other Roma by many of the nineteenth-century leading criminal anthropologists, most notably Cesare Lombroso, and gypsy aficionados, including but not limited to the aforementioned Théophile Gautier and John Brande Trend.

The embrace of stereotypes and the artists’ participation in fictional artistic bohemia in nineteenth century Europe, operated to neutralize the threat of miscegenation by avoiding the ambiguities of racial mixing, while fetishizing the racial identity of the “Other.” From mid-nineteenth century onward capitalism rendered rural nomadic lifestyle economically disadvantageous, increasing the presence of Roma in the cities and thus fomenting a sense of anxiety about the stability of whiteness, a fantasy in itself, in Europe. In his article “Painting the other within: Gypsies according to the Bohemian artist in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”⁷⁹ Stewart Dearing convincingly argues that the depiction of the gypsy employed by the “bohemian artists,” among them Gustave Courbet, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Otto Müller, contributed to the construction of the Gypsy as a type of “Other” through which European nationalism and the white self were re-invented, while simultaneously revealing a level of anxiety with regards to this new identity. The artists’ choice of the gypsy as both the model and the subject was determined by the latter’s status as a deviant nomad and a perpetual outsider consciously opposed to all manifestations of bourgeois morality. Dearing’s work problematizes the relationship between the gypsy and “the bohemian artist” by suggesting that the latter abstracted the gypsy identity into a concept “that was a psychological space, rather than an observable, body-centered self,” limiting the space for a gypsy identity divorced from

⁷⁹Stewart Dearing, “Painting the other within: Gypsies according to the Bohemian artist in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” in *Romani Studies* 20-2 (December 2010), 161-201

the theatrical performance of white preconceptions.⁸⁰ Dearing’s intriguing observation on the performative nature of gypsy identity in works of “the bohemian artists” is especially relevant to the flamenco-based representations of gypsy women in Spain, and especially to the dramatic anti-flamenco visions of Gitanas in works of Isidre Nonell. In Nonell’s case, as we shall see, both body and social conditions were brought together to bare upon Gitano identity.

Assumption of the gypsy identity by the “bohemian artists” enabled them project their own cultural values into the figure of the “bohemian” without addressing the social reality behind their purported subjects. Vanguard and academic artists alike drew from the same pool of gypsy representations to produce works that functioned to promote bourgeois ideology, rather than undermine it. In order to properly situate Nonell’s Gitanas in the context of the period, it is essential to review the impact of *flamenquismo* and the artistic bohemianism on the first wave of Catalan Modernisme that shaped Nonell’s artistic generation.

Modernisme and the Gypsy

In 1884 the famed Spanish writer Benito Pérez Galdós singled out Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona and Sevilla as “four centers of great artistic progress.”⁸¹ Whereas aesthetically traditional Madrid attracted artists such as Francisco Pradilla Ortiz through government-funded commissions for grand history painting, Barcelona, whose economic prosperity in the middle of the nineteenth century resulted in “the democratization of

⁸⁰ Dearing, “Painting the other,” 195

⁸¹ “Cuatro centros de gran progreso artístico tenemos, a saber: Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona y Sevilla.” Cited in Movellán, “Andalucía,” 225

artistic life,”⁸² drew artists with vanguard tendencies, culminating in what Francesc Fontbona terms “the postmodernist generation,” though generally referred to as “the second generation of Modernisme” of artists born between 1870s and 1880s Fontbona places among these artists Isidre Nonell, Joaquim Mir, Ricard Canals and Pablo Picasso⁸³ the unifying quality of which Fontbona sees as the uniquely personal nature of their art, making them representative of the kind of Spanish modernity “comparable to the European ones of the first line.”⁸⁴

This second generation of Modernistes had its roots in the last decade of the 1800s when Ramón Casas and Santiago Rusiñol arrived from Paris together with Miquel Utrillo and introduced Modernism into Catalan painting in their grey-tone dominated “postimpresionismo moderado”⁸⁵ influenced by Degas and Whistler. The type of painting promoted by these artists during the many “Festes Modernistes” (Modernist Festivals) organized by Rusiñol in the seaside town of Sitges prompted a significant change in both the technique and the subject matter of many Catalan, and in turn, Spanish Vanguards, establishing two general tendencies in the arts, namely symbolism chiefly represented by Alexandre de Riquer and Joan Brull (the artist whose work was exhibited next to Nonell’s in Sala Parés in 1903, much to dismay of the latter) and realism practiced by Francesc Gimeno and Lluís Graner. Rafael Benet articulated Moderniste painting initiated by Casas and Rusiñol in terms of *l’arte de juste-milieu*, or the type of painting

⁸² Francesc Fontbona, “Cataluña en la Dinámica Centro-Periferia del Arte Español Moderno,” in in *Centro y periferia en la modernización de la pintura española (1880-1918)* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1991), 101

⁸³ See: Francesc Quilez i Corella, “Obra gráfica: dibuixos,” in *El Modernisme a les col·leccions del MNAC* (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, 2009), 96

⁸⁴ Fontbona, “Cataluña,” 103

⁸⁵ Mireia Freixa employs this term in relation to the art of Casas and Rusiñol in “Los Paisajes y los temas en la pintura catalana,” in *Centro y periferia en la modernización de la pintura española (1880-1918)* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1991), 107

situated between the academic and the impressionist without having “the solidity of the former” or “the witticism of vision of the latter.”⁸⁶

The first-wave Modernisme undeniably held appeal for the bourgeois public and often treated social dilemmas in a rather ambiguous manner at best. The life of Parisian bohemia constituted an important subject for Casas, as represented by his 1892 *Madeleine*, a painting representing a young prostitute at a Parisian café (Fig.7) or by Rusiñol’s in *Café dels incoherents* (1890). However, the bohemians presented by these artists, especially Casas, were not the dangerous *déclassé* but the aestheticized, wistful and often sympathetic characters, such as *Madeleine*. Unlike Casas, Rusiñol’s early works engaged with subjects considered “decadent” at the turn of the century, embodied in the dark contorted pose of the 1894 *The Morphine Addict* (Fig.8) and a series of later paintings known collectively as *Gardens of Spain*, produced beginning in the mid to late 1890s, depicting the historic aristocratic Spanish gardens understood by some critics to be symbolic of Spain’s national decline.⁸⁷

In 1897 a group of Catalan Modernistes, led by Santiago Rusiñol urged the young artists to free themselves from *costumbrista*⁸⁸ scenery of Seville and Venice. In his article “Una ‘juerga’ trista” Rusiñol mercilessly satirized Andalusian “juerga flamenca” (flamenco cabaret) and the many clichés associated with it, such as the Romantic ruins of the Alhambra, the melancholy Arab gazing at the moon and, of course, an Andalusia dancer whom the author describes as “a poor unconscious girl surrounded by her female

⁸⁶ Benet, *Nonell y Su Epoca*, 33

⁸⁷ On interpretations of Rusiñol’s *Jardins d’Espanya* see Oscar E. Vázquez, “Beauty Buried in Its Own Cemetery: Santiago Rusiñol’s ‘Jardins d’Espanya’ as Reliquaries of Aristocratic History,” in *Word & Image* 2-1 (1995), 61-76

⁸⁸ A subtype of literary and artistic Romanticism in Spain, which focused on local color aspects, such as clothing and customs, of different populations in Spain, famously represented in literature by Fernán Caballero and in the visual arts by Joaquín Domínguez Bécquer.

friends.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Rusiñol himself was guilty of presenting himself in the guise of the “bohemian artist” portraying these very stereotypical *gitanas*, notably in the 1898 *Gitana del Albaicin* (Fig. 9) in which we see a gitana gazing into the distance from a portico in the medieval Moorish interior in Granada. The second generation of Modernistes, most notably Nonell’s friends Ricard Canals, Juli Vallmitjana and Joaquim Sunyer responded to Rusiñol’s call to freedom from *flamenquismo*, by turning their attentions to Gitano populations of their native Barcelona.

⁸⁹ “¡Quina *juerga*! Fins el quinqué va anar aclucarse, poc á poc, trist y aburrit y miserable de vida, y mitx á las foscas, figureuvs lo que es veyá: la pobre noya desmayada voltada de las amigas, el guitarrista com fantasma inanimada, confos á l'ombra, manejant encare els peus, las copas buydas sobre la taula tacada, las parets grisas allunyadas p'el fum espés dels cigarros, y entre aquella boyrina d'interior ab un cop de llum sobre el vidre, el peixet vermellós volta que volta, seguint son camí infinit á dintre sa capsá d'aygua.” In Santiago Rusiñol, “Una ‘juerga’ trista.” *Luz* 1-1 (November 15, 1897), unpaginated.

Chapter III Nonell’s Gypsies and their *Difference*

Nonell's Barcelona

In the introduction to the first biography of Isidre Nonell, edited by Alexandre Plana, the famous Catalan writer, Eugeni d’Ors produced a striking portrait of the artist as a true son of “the sinister Barcelona:” a city that was at once a toxic mixture of anarchists’ bombs, *petites religions de Paris*, and satanic rites of decadence, all of which found reflection on canvas of the artist, whose brushes “portrayed the face of the devil.”⁹⁰ This demonic vision of Barcelona shared by some of d’Ors’ contemporaries as a “sin city” was tied to the rapid industrialization of that center. By the end of the eighteenth century Barcelona’s population had tripled. In 1848 the first railway line was inaugurated. In 1859 the new city plan, proposed by Ildefons Cerdà, Baron Hausmann’s Barcelonan counterpart, was approved.

Cerdà wrote several influential works on city planning, including *Theory of City Construction* [*Teoría de la Construcción de Ciudades*] (1859) and *Theory of Viability and Urban Reform in Madrid* [*Teoría de la Viabilidad Urbana y Reforma de la Madrid*] (1861). The uniqueness of Cerdà’s approach to the urbanization of Barcelona was in its emphasis on the sanitary conditions in the cities. His street layouts and grid plans sought

⁹⁰ Eugeni d’Ors, “Proleg,” in *Vida d’Isidre Nonell*, ed. Alexandre Plana (Barcelona: Publicaciones de “La Revista”, 1917), 15

to widen the streets to accommodate pedestrians, carriages and urban railway lines, as well as supply large-capacity sewers to prevent frequent floods. Much like Hausmann, Cerdà believed that the problem of congestion was responsible for dangerous social conditions and high levels of crime in metropolitan centers. In spite of Cerdà's reforms areas of the city still manifested signs of poverty and effects of economic inequality. Some of these areas, most notably the shantytowns of Barri de Pekin, would become Nonell's subjects.

Nonell: Formative Years (1883-1896)

The importance of Nonell's formative years in the decade of the late 80s-early 90s has been understated in contemporary scholarship; perhaps because of the artist's preference for impressionistic landscapes associated with that period, a subject that would almost entirely disappear from the artist's later works, giving way to the figure and still life shortly before his death. And yet, Nonell's early years are vital to the understanding of his art. During that time the artist established contact with some of the most prominent artistic and literary personalities of Barcelona, such as the painter Ricard Canals, the literary critic Raimon Casellas and the writer Juli Vallmitjana. He also began to explore the subjects that would occupy a central place in his career. Prior to Nonell's instance in the village of Caldes de Boí northwest of Barcelona, which resulted in a famous series of drawings collectively known as *Cretins de Boí*, he immersed himself in representations of human poverty and degradation, under the influence of works by Lluís Graner. The *Cretins de Boí* series set the precedent for the later *Gitana* paintings. At this stage of his

artistic formation Nonell’s art was shaped by the stylistic currents of Catalan Modernisme, as exemplified by Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol.

Isidre Nonell i Montriol was born on November 30, 1872 into the family of an economically successful middle-class soup-paste factory owner.⁹¹ Initially Isidre was groomed to continue his father’s business, but when the boy’s determination to pursue an artistic career became obvious, the factory passed into the hands of his younger brother Jaume. Some scholars, most notably Rafael Benet, assert that Nonell’s father was strongly opposed to his son’s artistic vocation.⁹² Cristina Mendoza has pointed out, however, that such assertions carry little credibility since throughout his life, preceding the artistic triumph of 1910 shortly before the artist’s death, Nonell’s father supported him financially.⁹³ In primary school, Nonell met his life-long friend, Joaquim Mir, who would later become a renowned painter in his own right. Nonell studied in the Academy of Josep Mirabent, later in Gabriel Martinez Altes’s Academy, and afterwards, beginning in 1893 until 1895 in the Escola de Belles Arts de Barcelona (the School of Fine Arts of Barcelona) under the guidance of Lluís Graner.

Contemporary scholarship has underestimated the role of Lluís Graner as a key figure in Nonell’s artistic formation. Graner’s artistic model was Velázquez, as much in technique as in subject matter. In his youth Graner was a member of the important independent exhibition society Cercle Artístic de Sant Lluc in Barcelona, organized by the artists opposed to Moderniste currents on moral grounds. His social concerns were made manifest in the series of individual and group portraits of “rustic characters with a

⁹¹ Prior to Cristina Mendoza’s 2000 publication it was believed that Nonell was born in 1873, however Mendoza successfully demonstrated that the artist was born a year earlier in Cristina Mendoza, “Isidre Nonell,” in *Isidre Nonell: 1872-1911* (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Modern, MNAC, 2000), 17

⁹² Benet, *Nonell y Su Epoca*, 25-26

⁹³ Mendoza, “Isidre Nonell”, 18

decrepit aspect, distraught and marginal...pertaining to the black and miserable bohemia from the dark and sordid corners of the taverns.”⁹⁴ According to Alexandre Plana, Graner often turned to beggars from the streets,⁹⁵ whom he invited into his studio as models, a common practice for the artists with no means or access to academic models. This was a practice later adopted by Nonell.⁹⁶ The drawing by Nonell, *Bust of the Peasant* (Fig. 10), to the best of my knowledge published here for the first time, most likely produced in the early 1890s at the time of the artist’s apprenticeship with Graner, exhibits his teacher’s influence. The subject of the piece, referred to as “the peasant” in MNAC’s archives, looks poverty-stricken and melancholy due to the man’s position and his tattered clothes, drawn in charcoal with remarkable sensitivity, especially around the area of the face and hands, he evokes the realism of Graner’s peasants and brings to mind Nonell’s later images of the Cuban veterans of 1898.⁹⁷ *Bust de Pages* constitutes one of Nonell’s early experimentations with figurative subject, at the time when most of the artist’s work was dominated by the landscape.

Between 1894 and 1896 Nonell was a member of a group, whose members referred to it as Colla del Safra or the Saffron School, in reference to the yellowish tint ever-present in the paintings of its artists and created landscapes around the town of San Martí between 1893-1896. The artists, who founded the School, among them Joaquim

⁹⁴ “La preocupació social de Graner també es posa de manifest a les abundants sèries de retrats, individuals o en grup de personatges rustics d’aspecte decrepit, malforjat i marginal que malviuen abstrats pul·lulant en una bohèmia negra i misèria per obscurs i sordids racons tavernaris.”

Albert Estrada-Ruiz, “Lluís Graner, pintor de llums i obres” in *Lluís Graner: 1863-1929* (Barcelona: Consell de Cent, 2005), 9

⁹⁵ Alexandre Plana, “Vida d’Isidre Nonell,” *Vida d’Isidre Nonell* (Barcelona: Publicacions de “La Revista”, 1917), 24.

⁹⁶ One of the few monographs on Lluís Graner is: Enric Jardí, *Lluís Graner Arrufi (1863-1929)* (Barcelona: Gráficas Layetana, 1982).

⁹⁷ The original title of the work is unknown, however the descriptive title given to the bust in MNAC is *Bust de Pages* as communicated to me by Francesc Quilez i Corella, the director of MNAC Cabinet of Drawings and Engravings on June 9, 2011.

Mir, Juli Vallmitjana, Ramon Pichot and Ricard Canals, all Nonell’s life-long friends, were discontented with the teachings in the art academy, and therefore chose to travel through the Catalan countryside instead of attending classes to seek out their own subjects to paint, primarily landscapes. As a member of Colla del Safra, Nonell produced a variety of highly impressionistic landscapes, where sometimes a figure or two are included, but always as an element secondary to lighting and atmosphere of the landscape.

Nonell was, undoubtedly, influenced by Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol, as well as the French Impressionists. The artist painted these early landscapes relying primarily on greys and earth tones for color, emphasizing the poetic qualities of the Catalan countryside that would not have been traditionally considered picturesque, such as 1891 *Arenys de Mar* and 1896 *Landscape of Sant Martí de Provençals* (Fig. 11). Raimon Casellas writing about this latter work in *La Vanguardia* of 1898 described the artist’s use of colors as melancholic, “sleepy, sad, pierced through with the dejection of grey hours.”⁹⁸

Aesthetics of Misery: Nonell and the Images of Degradation

When in January 1892 Nonell exhibited *The Patio* (painted in 1890, now lost), in the Sala Parés, a critic reviewing the exhibition, praised highly the young artist’s skill, but reproached him for employing “his very positive talent in painting what was ugly.” He also called Nonell’s vision of the courtyard “grand, even picturesque if you like, but

⁹⁸ Original quote: “Nonell en su ‘Prat de Sant Martí’ aparece soñoliento, triste, penetrado de abatimiento de las horas grises” in Benet, *Nonell y Su Época*, 41

not at all aesthetic.”⁹⁹ Already in this early work Nonell was demonstrating his self-proclaimed desire to capture the sublime aspects of vulgarity. In fact, Nonell was quoted as saying “I want to capture that what vulgarity possesses of the sublime.”¹⁰⁰

In 1896 Nonell traveled to the resort owned by Juli Vallmitjana’s family in Caldes de Boí with his friends Vallmitjana, Canals and, joining them later, Pichot and Josep M. Jorda. There he encountered individuals affected by goiter, or cretinism, which caused physical deformity and mental disabilities (understood then as degeneration), common in certain mountainous regions according to Glòria Escala i Romeu.¹⁰¹ After the trip, Nonell produced a unique series of drawings and prints of the inhabitants of Vall de Boí going through their daily life. These were met with much critical acclaim in Paris, earning Nonell the title of “Goya modernisé.”¹⁰² In these pieces, stylistically influenced by the Japanese prints readily available in Europe at the turn of the century, the human figure for the first time achieved central status in Nonell’s art. Nonell’s interest in Japanese prints is evident in this series in the elegant precision of the line, considerable economy of space and flat application of pigment. As exemplified by 1896-1897 *Cretina de Boí* (Fig. 12), the characters of *Cretins de Boí* series all bare the prominent visual marks of their mental and physical degeneration, especially evident in their deformed faces with protruding foreheads and almost entirely-eliminated chins, and emphasized by their seemingly routine surroundings.

Luís Ruíz de Velasco, writing in “Cretinos de los Pirineos” for the monthly illustrated publication *Barcelona Comica* of 1897, did not perceive these works as

⁹⁹ Enric Jardí, *Nonell*, 38

¹⁰⁰ Benet quoted Nonell saying: “Quiero captar lo que la vulgaridad puede tener de sublime” in Benet, *Nonell y Su Epoca*, 15

¹⁰¹ Glòria Escala i Romeu, “Series Nonell” in *Revista de Catalunya* (October-November 2010), 116

¹⁰² Mendoza, “Isidre Nonell,” 22

caricatures or even as comical, but rather as concrete testaments of human misfortune and call to action. He understood the *Cretins de Boí* as “cruel for their exact truth” and believed they “should serve as a reminder to those who can and ought to lend their spirits to compassion towards these unfortunate people, who have committed no other crime but to be born in the insalubrious valleys, where they were kept locked away by the selfishness of our society.”¹⁰³ Almost a hundred years later in 1969 Enric Jardí saw Nonell’s *Cretins de Boí* as pieces created “with a merciless pessimistic concept of fellow men, as if a man were a being hardly more developed than an animal, who can barely establish the most rudimentary forms of communal life.”¹⁰⁴ This view of Nonell as an artist mercilessly fascinated with an aesthetics of human misery with no real sympathy has slipped into the contemporary discourse on Nonell’s art, as manifest by Jardí’s idea that for Nonell “the aesthetic sense always far outweighed the ethical.”¹⁰⁵ With *Cretins de Boí* series Nonell introduced into his art a subject that was degraded at its core and understood by the public as both physically and mentally degenerate, but the gitana paintings have truly solidified the artist’s understanding as a painter of misery.

Alexandre Plana was the first of Nonell’s biographers to explain the artist’s peculiar choice of gypsies over other poor city folk by suggesting that, first of all Gitanos responded to the “temperament of the colorist painter” and, second, they were the easiest models to find in Barcelona.¹⁰⁶ In 1964 Enric Jardí, elaborated on Plana’s argument when he suggested that Gitano models consented to pose for less money than the non-

¹⁰³ “Cruel por su exacta verdad, debe server de recordatorio a quienes pueden y deben inclinando su espiritu a la compasion hacia estos desgraciados que no tuvieron otro delito que el de nacer en los valles malsanos, donde los encerro el egoismo de nuestra sociedad” Luíz Ruíz de Velasco, “Los Cretinos de los Pirineos” in *Barcelona Comica* 3 (January 1897), 78

¹⁰⁴ Jardí, *Nonell*, 90

¹⁰⁵ Jardí, *Nonell*, 128

¹⁰⁶ Plana, “Vida”, 61

gypsy and professional models,¹⁰⁷ pointing out that in Nonell’s art gypsies and beggars have always served “merely [as] a pretext to work his material in an ample generous way”.¹⁰⁸

Nonell’s purported antipathy for the poor sitters in his painting, summarized in his infamous “I paint and that’s that” (*Jo pinto i prou*), which Rafael Benet considered to be an “impossible aesthetic,” has nevertheless shaped the perception of Nonell in art history as an artist with no social agenda. Benet believed that by serializing his works Nonell has eliminated the subject in favor of “pure painting,” essentially erasing all difference between the characters in his painting.¹⁰⁹ While the emphasis on the process of painting constituted an undeniable element of Nonell’s work, it did not altogether “destroy” its subject. The personal nature of Nonell’s relationship to one of his models is another important factor in understanding his work and his involvement with the plight of Gitanos.

In February of 1897 Nonell came to Paris for the first time together with Canals, where he stayed for a year. In midsummer of that year he exhibited nine drawings in *Els Quatre Gats* in Barcelona and, a few months later showed *Femme et enfants cretins* and *Effet de soleil*, in the Fifth Exposition of Impressionist and Symbolist painters in Galerie de Barc de Boutteville together with Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec, among others. According to Plana,¹¹⁰ Nonell while in Paris became exposed to many literary influences including Balzac, Tourgueneff and Zola. Initially disappointed with the art of Monet, Degas and Manet as his letter to Raimon Casellas of March 3, 1897 explicitly states, by

¹⁰⁷ Jardí, *Nonell*, 124

¹⁰⁸ Jardí, *Nonell*, 194

¹⁰⁹ Benet, *Nonell y Su Epoca*, 89

¹¹⁰ Plana, *Vida*, 71

February of 1898 he changed his mind in their favor, adding Toulouse-Lautrec and Daumier to the list of artists he felt most enthusiastic about, while singling out Monet as “more personal, more modern and more ingenious” than all the rest.¹¹¹

Nonell’s art at the time, however, explored drawing and not painting. Gloria Escala in “Series Nonell” singles out a trend in his many drawings dating to his first (1897-1898) and last (1898-1900) instances in Paris to portray solitary, old women, poor and miserable, “as paradigms of poverty and decrepitude.”¹¹² Another noteworthy trend that emerged in these works was the focus on a single figure, rather than a group, and to downplay its surroundings to produce the sense of alienation integral to his later works. The drawings of old women with their heads down, such as *Old woman asleep on the bench* (Fig. 13), reveal the elements peculiar to his later *Gitanas*. However these sad, miserable old women, sleeping on benches do not yet possess the dark and threatening qualities ascribed to Nonell’s gypsy paintings.

Another significant group of drawings was produced in Barcelona in 1898 between Nonell’s first and second stay in Paris of 1897 and 1900. This group depicts the Veterans of the Spanish-American War, *Els Repatriats de Cuba*. Following the defeat of Spain in the War, the country experienced an influx of veterans, wounded both physically and psychologically, forsaken by their state and unable to find jobs. Many artists of the period, including Lluís Graner and Ramon Casas, turned to these veterans as subjects of their works, depicting them very differently from Nonell. Their works will be discussed in another chapter.

¹¹¹ “Monet es el més personal, el més modern i el més genial de tots” in Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, *Isidre Nonell*, 287 and 289

¹¹² Escala i Romeu, “Series Nonell,” 132

Remembering Cuba (Recordant Cuba), an ink and varnish on cardboard drawing, demonstrates the peculiarity of Nonell’s vision of the veterans of 1898 (Fig.14). The artist isolates the figure as a locus of alienation and misery. Seen from the waist up and close to the picture plane, the man’s spine is curved, as if under pressure; his mouth is slightly opened, as if sighing. The figure of the veteran is dramatically cut off from its surroundings. The veteran does not interact with the background of ships, the sea and the smoke, but, instead, he stares blindly downward towards his feet. When exhibited in *Els Quatre Gats* that same year, *Els Repatriats* went largely unnoticed. According to Ricard Opisso’s comments in the Barcelona-based *Luz* magazine of 1898 his friend’s drawings were of great merit, but doomed tragically never to be viewed because “there is no good bourgeois, who would come close enough to view them.”¹¹³ This is a significant statement, which I will return to in another chapter.

Despite the cold reception of *Els Repatriats* in Barcelona, in 1900 Nonell moved there permanently. The reasons behind this decision remain unclear, however it is likely that it was due in part to the understandable frustration Nonell experienced after the failure of his 1899 Paris exhibit in the gallery of Ambroise Vollard, caused by the inferior placement of his works. Nonell’s relationship with the galleries where he exhibited was often uneasy. According to Rafael Benet, one of the most important historians of Catalan Modernisme, that uneasy relation was one of the reasons why Nonell began painting gypsies, planting these works in protest to the works typically exhibited in the Sala Parés,

¹¹³ “No hay un buen burgues que se acerque a verlos. Y eso que a cualquiera le es agradable, contemplarse un ratito en el espejo.” Quoted in María Carmen López Fernández, “Aproximación a la mujer marginada: las gitanas de Nonell” in *Luchas de genero en la Historia a traves de la imagen: ponencias y comunicaciones* 2, ed. Teresa Sauret Guerrero and Amparo Quiles Faz (Malaga: Centro de Ediciones de la Diputación Provincial de Malaga, 2002), 343

with “the same intention that the terrorists of his time planted bombs in the urinals and at the entrances of the houses of Barcelona.”¹¹⁴

Nonell and the “Gypsy Paintings”

On February 26, 1898 Nonell wrote to Raimon Casellas about submitting twelve drawings (now lost) of *Gypsies seen from the tragic side* (Gitanos vistos pel canto tragich) to the Salon of Champ de Mars.¹¹⁵ The drawings were unified in their traditional take on the gypsy subject. Among others, Nonell featured works, depicting a dead gypsy with the knife in his throat, a couple of gypsy criminals carrying knives in their mouths, with eyes betraying ill intentions, as well as a “mad and hunchbacked gypsy dancing like an evil spirit.”¹¹⁶ The drawings cannot be formally analyzed since they have been lost, however Nonell’s own descriptions of these works in a letter to Casellas borrow heavily from the rhetoric of the macabre associated with turn-of-the-century gypsy stereotypes and suggest that the works conformed to the general public’s opinion of Roma. Remarkably, most of the drawings portray male gitanos that will rarely emerge in Nonell’s subsequent works. Judging by the conceptual discrepancy between these early pieces and his later images of solitary gitanas, the twelve gypsy drawings must have been produced prior to Nonell’s prolonged encounter with real Gitanos in Barcelona, around 1900.

¹¹⁴ Original quote: “Nonell pintaba con la misma intención que los terroristas de su tiempo metían bombas en los urinarios y en las porterías de las casas de Barcelona” in Benet, *Nonell y Su Epoca*, 26

¹¹⁵ Original letter from Isidre Nonell to Raimon Casellas dated February 26, 1898 published in MNAC, *Isidre Nonell*, 290

¹¹⁶ “Un gitano boig y geperut ballant com un mal espirit” from Nonell’s letter to Casellas published in MNAC, *Isidre Nonell*, 290

In Nonell’s biography Rafael Benet mentioned that by 1899 Nonell together with Vallmitjana visited Hostafranchs, the Gitano neighborhood in Montjuic, Barcelona for the second time.¹¹⁷ However both Carmen María López Fernández and Enric Jardí assert that the artist’s first official encounter with Gitano models of Barcelona occurred at the studio of another Catalan painter Joan Osso in 1900.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, upon settling permanently in Barcelona and acquiring a studio on Calle del Comercio in 1900 Gitanos came to singularly dominate Nonell’s artistic production.

The artist’s earliest known painting using gitana model was his 1901 *Gitaneta* (Fig. 15). Stylistically, *Gitaneta* betrays Nonell’s far greater interest in lighting rather than in color. This oil on canvas is composed of various shades of brown, the work depicts a young woman’s face turned slightly upward, her hair and facial features are delicately highlighted with yellow tinted white. The figure painted in thick impasto, with slight smudges around the areas of the face and hair suggestive of the artist’s decision to tilt the head further to the left, stands out from the uniformly painted cream-colored background. Her sensitively painted face, is the focal point of the painting, while her body is merely suggested by the brown shape emerging directly under her chin. This gitana possesses no ethnic attributes: her clothes are plain and drained of any distinct color beyond the earth-tones, she makes no dramatic gesture to acknowledge the presence of her viewer. There are no attributes of the figure here to help the audience identify her as a member of a certain ethnic group. Absorbed into the state of gentle sadness, she arouses the viewer’s sympathy. Sadness and alienation of *Gitaneta* are the two basic features of Nonell’s interpretation of Gitanos. The graceful wistfulness of this early work

¹¹⁷ Benet, *Nonell y Su Epoca*, 48

¹¹⁸ López Fernández, “Aproximación”, 344
Jardí, *Nonell*, 124

will eventually evolve into a much harsher vision of misery characteristic of his later pieces, such as *Dolores* (1902-1903) (Fig. 16) that I argue was Nonell’s embodiment of the poverty-stricken Gitano neighborhoods of Barcelona.

While several publications assert that *Gitaneta* “was the first *gitana* Nonell has painted in this world,” I would like to suggest that this was not the first work in the *Gitana* series.¹¹⁹ In the undated photograph of Nonell’s work, known as *La Gitana*, taken by Francesc Serra in the last years of the century one can observe the emergence of the motif of a desolate, “miserable gitana” (Fig. 17). The image is unique in a sense that it combines two trends in Nonell’s art from two separate periods, the landscape and the figure. Because of this intriguing juxtaposition of the two genres I believe that this painting may be dated to one of Nonell’s visits to Barcelona in 1898 during his stay in Paris.

After *Cretins de Boi* Nonell focused his attention primarily on the solitary figure, however it didn’t become an exclusive subject of his paintings until after 1901. In the oil sketch the broad brushstrokes, suggestive of oil paint, as discerned from the photograph, help construct an urban landscape that overwhelms the woman crouched on the sidewalk with her head buried in her lap. The tall buildings, the very epitome of modernity, and the wide road, a sign of urban reforms implemented by Cerdà in Barcelona, are all painted in a very loose manner, using broad brushstrokes that severely flatten the surface. The figure, however, is painted differently, with a greater degree of care and reliance on smaller and tighter brushwork, introducing into the image details such as light bouncing off of the woman’s shawl and a small still life of plate and spoon practically identical to

¹¹⁹ MNAC cites a buyer of Nonell’s *Gitaneta* as saying “ha comprat la primera gitana qu’en Nonell ha pintat en aquest mon” in MNAC, *Isidre Nonell*, 110

the one in a slightly later work, the 1903-1904 *Rest* (Fig.18).¹²⁰ The sense of alienation in this photographed work is induced through the dramatic difference in scale between the figure and the claustrophobic, converging perspectival lines of the narrow, shadowed street that is pressed between the verticals of buildings on either side.

The work captured on Serra’s photograph merits discussion due to the significant similarities and differences between itself and 1904 *Rest*. The pose of the model, whose shawl may have suggested her Gitano ethnicity to Nonell, is identical to that of a woman in *Rest*, and is one used by Nonell on various other occasions. The painting from Serra’s photograph, however, predates *Rest* by at least three years. In the photographed oil sketch Nonell is still experimenting with the best way of translating misery onto the paper. He constructs alienation through the relationship of the figure to her landscape, whereas in the later *Rest* he focuses on the gitana as an ultimate locus of desolation that requires no further articulation in landscape. The title of the work *Rest* is somewhat misleading because the woman’s gesture is more suggestive of despair, rather than peaceful sleep associated with a siesta.

Nonell in the Barri de Pequin and Somorrostro

In “Aproximación a la mujer marginada: las gitanas de Nonell” María Carmen López Fernández suggests that Nonell’s gitanas were a common sight of the contemporary Spanish landscape; in a way similar to the way Ignacio Zuloaga’s “dwarf” Botero came to embody the streets of Segovia, with the key difference being that Nonell always looked to specific suburbs of Barcelona.¹²¹ Beginning in 1900, to about 1907,

¹²⁰ Original title in Catalan: “*El Repòs*”

¹²¹ López Fernández, “Aproximación”, 356

Nonell changed his artistic focus from drawing to painting. 1900 is also the date when the artist fully established himself in Barcelona, and began to frequent and employ models from the impoverished Gitano neighborhoods of Barri de Pequín, Somorrostro and Hostafranch in Montjuic (though he probably began visiting this later neighborhood in the late 1890s). Even though the majority of the works from that period were paintings, Nonell also produced an intriguing series of drawings of the shacks and their inhabitants in Somorrostro, that Glòria Escala i Romeu proposed to view as the *Barraques Series* (the Shacks Series).¹²²

This neighborhood on the outskirts of Barcelona housed one of the largest populations of Gitanos in Barcelona at the turn of the century. An unpublished 1915 photograph by Joan Vidal i Ventosa, entitled *Shacks of Fishermen at Somorrostro* (Fig. 19) shows the living conditions in the neighborhood as deplorable and extremely dangerous for its inhabitants. The flimsy constructions left the residents exposed to the elements and offered little protection from the outside world. Minorcan writer Marius Verdaguer in *Medio Siglo de la Vida Intima Barcelonesa*, a journal from the first year of the century, summarized the abysmal conditions of the shacks of the Gitano neighborhood of Somorrostro as follows: “The shacks do not have windows. The ceiling made from old petroleum cans, reheats in the sun, and out of the doors exits a foul and tepid breath.”¹²³ The representation of the polluted atmosphere of marginal neighborhoods, such as Somorrostro and Barri de Pequín, was of special interest to Nonell, at least as early as 1901 when he painted in an impressionistic manner *The Beach of Pequín* (Fig. 20). This small 50 X 65cm oil sketch depicts the cloud of dust rising over

¹²² Escala i Romeu, “Series Nonell”, 138

¹²³ “Las barracas no tenían ventanas. El techo de viejas latas de petróleo, se recalentaba al sol, y por las puertas salía un aliento tibio y pestilente” as quoted in Escala i Romeu, “Series Nonell,” 160

a desolate decrepit shack situated at the beach that is more akin to a desert than to a traditional seascape.

It is worth noting that while Nonell’s paintings of gitanas tend to minimize the setting and focus primarily on the figures of Gitano women from Barri de Pequín and Somorrostro, many of his drawings, instead, explore the landscape of Barri de Pekín and diminish the figures. For instance, in the untitled 1908 drawing from *Shacks Series* depicting Somorrostro (Fig. 21), even though the figures are embedded in the landscape, they are not emphasized to the same extent as the shacks. The drawings are very gestural, executed in conte crayon, chalk and watercolor, and similar to each other compositionally. Much like the drawing in this particular series, that represents the shacks seen from a distance and at an eye-level, the other drawings in the series adopt a similar view. In some works the artist chose to include figures among the shacks, however many others instead depict the unpopulated shacks, focusing exclusively on the structures themselves. These works appear to be remarkably unconcerned with the kind of color and technique experimentation that had become characteristic of Nonell’s paintings at the time.

Despite the apparent difference between the *Shacks Series* and the Gitana paintings of the same period, there is, nevertheless, a strong thematic connection between the two. Glória Escala i Romeu’s scholarship on the artist brings out the importance of Nonell’s use of the series in connection with the practice of other Modernist painters, such as Monet with his multiple canvases on a single subject, and Degas with the series of ballet dancers. According to Escala i Romeu, working in the series mode is specific to, and in fact, characteristic of Modernism because it dissolves the subject in favor of

artistic expression much favored by the modernist artists. Thus Escala i Romeu emphasizes Nonell’s interest in the subject of Gitanos and the shacks as far more formal and driven by self-expression, than by personal or socially motivated reasons. I would like to suggest, however, that while working on the series undeniably allowed Nonell to develop his unique painterly style, it also enabled him to address the important social issues of Gitanos in Barcelona. The most common reproach of Nonell’s critics with regards to his work was the sheer volume of “miserable,” “dirty” gitanas exhibited in one room. It is the quantity combined with the mode of execution that triggered the anger, repulsion and contempt of Nonell’s public.

The artist’s first officially known *Gitana* painting of 1901 coincides with the beginning of the *Shacks* series and evokes a very similar idea of desolation. The young woman in the painting is sad, her pose is tortured but still graceful, she is not yet one of the miserable, dirty gitanas Nonell presented only two years later in Sala Parés. With the exception of the two drawings published in the journal *Papitu* in 1902, the drawings of the shacks remained the artist’s private exercise and were not presented to the public during Nonell’s lifetime. The artist worked on paintings and drawings simultaneously, suggesting that he could be developing the ideas from the one medium, while working in the other. Three years after the first painting in the gitana series, his works became darker, the figures no longer wistful and sad, but manifestly miserable.

Dolores (Fig. 16) was one of the key paintings exhibited in Sala Parés in November 1903 and most probably the one Raimond Casellas referred to as the image of “human bestiality.”¹²⁴ The very image of social degradation, *Dolores* has substituted the

¹²⁴ Full quote from Raimon Casellas, writing for *La Veu de Catalunya*, November 12, 1903: “Causan veritable repulsió aquelles mitjas figuras de dona deixades anar damunt d’una cadira de boga, ab el cap

literality of the shacks for a more powerful image of human misery. Dolores’s features were purposefully left rough and unappealing, enveloped in her red shawl, she was strategically placed in an architectural corner by the artist, immersed in what Casellas referred to as “the sleep of an alcohol-soaked marmot.”¹²⁵ Dolores’s placement in the corner and her physical separation from her own people as well as the viewer, literally reflects her position in the society – she is on the margins, a visual manifestation of the neighborhoods stricken by poverty and physically cut off from Barcelona. She is the antithesis of progress that Catalonia prided itself on at the turn of the century.

In comparison to other Gitana paintings Nonell exhibited in Sala Parés in November 1903, *Dolores* is significantly larger than the others, 162 X 131 cm. For instance, three other important works represented in the show *Amparo*, *Two Gitanas* and *Rest*, only measure 50 X 61cm, 136 X 136 and 120.5 X 120.5 cm respectively. However, it was not merely the large size of *Dolores* that prompted Casellas’s choice of the painting as a focal point of his criticism. *Dolores* essentially constitutes a synthesis of all the elements of “true repulsion”¹²⁶ projected into all the other works: she is dark, immobile, her eyes concealed from the viewer, she contaminates him/her with her very presence.

Since 1901 Nonell employed a model named Consuelo. One of the most intriguing representations of Consuelo can be found in Nonell’s 1904 oil study (Fig. 22), portraying Consuelo with her face turned away from the viewer, and yet, made identifiable by the prominent bone structure of her face, as seen in Francesc Serra’s 1904

penjant, l’esquena corvada, els brassos caiguts com sumidas en una són de marmota xopa de alcohol. Es una representació de la bestialitat humana feta més punyent y més sensible, per esser sers femenins els que encarnan semblant degradació” as cited in Mendoza, “Isidre Nonell,” 27

¹²⁵ Mendoza, “Isidre Nonell,” 27

¹²⁶ MNAC, *Isidre Nonell*, 27

photograph of Nonell in his studio with Consuelo and her grandmother (Fig. 23). Her delicately painted nose and the dark line suggesting her mouth and her chin, are framed by the red drapery placed over her shoulders. In comparison to Nonell’s other pieces this portrait does not exhibit the same kind of variety of brushstrokes and thickness of paint. All attention is drawn to Consuelo’s flatly painted face, painted in close-up format suggestive of a certain level of intimacy.

Nonell and Consuelo, according to Nonell’s first biographer, Alexandre Plana, shared a romantic relationship. Carolina Nonell wrote that when Consuelo’s parents found out about the affair between their daughter and a *payo* they forced her to go to Madrid to marry a *Gitano*, but a year later she came back to Nonell in Barcelona to be his model.¹²⁷ Consuelo lived with her grandmother, also one of Nonell’s models, in a decrepit old hut on Calle de Entenza. On November 13, 1905, several months after her return to the city, both Consuelo and her grandmother died under the rubble of their hut as a result of strong winds. In 1907 for The Fifth International Exposition of Art in Barcelona Nonell presented a painting of *Consuelo* (Fig.24). Nonell signed it not only with the year of its execution (1905) as was his habit, but also with the month (November), putting a high price of 2500 pesetas on it.¹²⁸ The high monetary value Nonell placed on the piece coupled with an uncharacteristic mention of the month of Consuelo’s death in the signature hint at an intimate relationship between the artist and his model.

¹²⁷ Carolina Nonell, *Isidro Nonell: Su Vida y Su Obra* (Madrid: Editorial Dossat, 1863), 64

¹²⁸ Price listed in MNAC, *Isidro Nonell*, 154

Nonell’s reception in Barcelona: “Lombroso hecho un cuadro”

In November 13th, 1903 issue of *La Vanguardia* in “Notas de arte” Nonell’s artist friend Ricard Opisso summarized the paintings in Sala Parés as follows, “Lombroso transformed into painting.”¹²⁹ It is curious that Lombroso’s name was mentioned in connection with Nonell’s paintings; it suggests that “Lombroso” no longer referred singularly to the Italian criminologist, but had by that date come to signify the atavism of a nation’s most miserable and downtrodden populations that continually threaten the “healthy” segments of the society. Opisso never elaborated on his judgment, however this short statement underscores anxiety Nonell’s public experienced in the gallery.

Another critic, Juan de Dos, wrote in the November issue of *La Publicidad* of 1903 that “The *Good* bourgeois were indignant and revolted against those cursed canvases because they brought with them the discovery of human miseries.”¹³⁰ Much like Ricard Opisso, Juan de Dos was suggesting that the graphic depiction of misery in Nonell’s pieces was largely responsible for their negative reception. The two terms “misery” and “degradation” were most frequently encountered in the various criticisms of the exhibit. Even Nonell’s early supporter Raimon Casellas saw Nonell’s Gitanas as images of “degradation” and “human bestiality.”

The rhetoric of filth associated with Nonell’s works, prevailed in the descriptions of the 1903 exhibit. For instance, in November 12, 1903 the anonymous author published the following verse in the satirical magazine *¡Cu-Cut!* In regards to Nonell’s Sala Pares exhibit:

“Nonell, quina ensarronada! Nonell, what a sack of garbage

¹²⁹ “Lombroso hecho un cuadro” as cited in López Fernández, “Aproximación”, 353

¹³⁰ López Fernández, “Aproximación”, 352

Nonell, tu no tens adob;	Nonell, you don't have the right kind of fertilizer
Nonell, aquesta vegada	Nonell, this time
Has fet una pastarada	You made a pulpmill
Mes grossa que l'altre cop”	Even greater than the time before

In this verse the author mentions that this individual exhibition was an even greater failure, doubtlessly comparing it to Nonell's previous joint exhibition in January of the same year, where the artist's work was shown next to the paintings of Triadó and the publicly acclaimed painter of nymphs, Joan Brull. The author emphasizes the disgusting aspect of the paintings, likening them as a whole to “a sack of garbage,” possibly suggesting that his models themselves constitute “human garbage.” In several sections of his work Oscar E. Vázquez has shown how the rhetoric of filth and garbage following Mary Douglas and others was strategically employed within and as a characterizing element of degeneracy, to help further marginalize particular sectors of society.¹³¹

Further, in her book on Isidre Nonell (1960), Carolina Nonell quoted the response of Juan Bautista Pares, the owner of Casa Pares, to the November 1903 exhibition years later: “Don't speak of this to me, that [allowing the exhibition] was the greatest folly of my life.”¹³² In an article “Juli Vallmitjana i els Gitanos” Julia Guillamon asserts that the hostility of the critics to Nonell's Sala Parés shows, especially the November 1903 exhibition, was largely responsible for Vallmitjana's decision to publish his first book,

¹³¹ Oscar E. Vázquez, *The End Again. Degeneration and Visual Culture in Modern Spain*, Unpublished manuscript, 2012

¹³² “No m'en parli, es el disbarat mes grand que fet en la meva vida” in Nonell, *Isidro Nonell*, 66

Coses vistes i coses imaginades (1906) under a pseudonym.¹³³ Vallmitjana shared Nonell’s interest in Gitanos and on many occasions accompanied him to Gitano neighborhoods. Much of Vallmitjana’s novels, such as *De la raça que es perd* (1906) and plays, such as *Entre Gitanos* (1911) spoke from his experiences with Gitano communities in Barcelona.

The degradation of Gitanas and the neighborhoods they came from signified a larger dilemma: if Cerdà’s city plans have been implemented, Barcelona modernized and Catalonia successfully entered the age of progress, how then were there still places with this kind of poverty and decrepitude? Why were Gitanos so miserable? According to Lombroso and his followers *they* were the agents of atavism and their very misery was a sign of their contamination. It was precisely the connection of Gitanos with degeneration and filth, and of the reading of Nonell’s style with the rhetoric of illness, degradation and trash, that was partially responsible for the unpopular reviews. As will be shown in the next chapter, it was precisely this difference that separates Nonell from other visual constructions of Gypsies, and allows for greater questions regarding the social aims of Nonell and his art within the histories of Spanish modernism.

¹³³ Julia Guillamon, “Juli Vallmitjana i els Gitanos” in *De la raça que es perd* (Barcelona: Novagrafik, 2005), 10

Chapter IV

Criminology, Degeneration and the Arts at the Turn-of-the-Century Spain

The Criminal and the Gypsy: Lombroso in Spain

Frederich Nietzsche revealed the peculiar preoccupation of his age with pathology in his 1887 *On the Genealogy of Morals*, when he stated that ‘the sick are man’s greatest danger, not the evil, not the beasts of prey. Those who are the failures from the start, downtrodden, crushed – it is they, the weakest, who must undermine life among men, who call into question and poison most dangerously our trust in life, in man, and in ourselves.’¹³⁴

While Nietzsche’s uncharitable view of ‘the weakest’ as a perpetual threat to the society, was too radical for most of his contemporaries to share, it, nevertheless, eloquently summarized the idea of the social evils stemming out of the bodily malfunctions that lay at the core of the concept of ‘degeneration,’ which kept Europe enthralled since the second half of the nineteenth century. In the key turn-of-the-century work on the subject, Max Nordau related the concept of degeneration to man’s ‘stages of existence’ that experienced decline after passing through ‘blooming childhood,’ ‘joyous youth’ and ‘vigorous maturity,’ only to be ‘afflicted in its last decade with all the

¹³⁴ Frederick Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 122

infirmities of mournful senility.’¹³⁵ For Nordau, the very term *fin-de-siècle* carried ominous connotations of ‘imminent perdition and extinction’ of all formerly great European races, for which Nordau coined the term *fin-de-race*. The author likened the mental state of Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century to ‘impotent despair of a sick man, who feels himself dying by inches in the midst of an eternally living nature blooming insolently for ever.’¹³⁶ The rapid industrialization and colonial expansion of Europe in the first half of the century, was followed by the economic crises and the disillusionment with the notions of progress and social Darwinism, as best exemplified by works of Herbert Spencer beginning in the late 1860s. In Spain, the sense of the national decline came to prevail, following the defeat in Spanish-American War of 1898.

Throughout the nineteenth century, prior to the war, when Spain’s failure as an imperial power became evident, Spanish intellectuals began to perceive their country’s decadence as a ‘psychosomatic character illness,’ with all of the features of spiritual and somatic degeneration.¹³⁷ The Degeneration theories, which came to be incorporated into naturalist fiction, chiefly represented in France by Emile Zola, found reflection in works of Benito Pérez Galdós and Emilia Pardo Bazán in Spain. Many literary figures, especially those associated with the so-called Generation of 1898,¹³⁸ sought to craft a new ideology for Spain as one and only solution to its current decrepit state. Among these writers were Lucas Mallada who published *Los males de la patria* in 1890, Miguel

¹³⁵ Nordau, *Degeneration*, 1

¹³⁶ Nordau, *Degeneration*, 2-3

¹³⁷ Michael Aronna, *Pueblos Enfermos: the discourse of illness in the turn of the century Spanish and Latin American essay* (North Carolina: University North Carolina Press, 1999), 34

¹³⁸ A highly contested term coined by the writer José Martínez Ruiz, better known as Azorín, to refer to a group of writers born in the 1870s whose literature has been shaped by moral, political and social crises in Spain following the aftermath of the Disaster of 98. Among some of the key figures of the Generation are Azorín, Antonio Machado, Miguel de Unamuno and Pío Baroja

Unamuno with his 1895 book *En torno al casticismo*, and, finally, Ángel Ganivet and his 1897 *Idearium Español*. These works are remarkable for the degree to which they visualize Spain’s political, economic, spiritual and sexual health as a whole, while viewing each individual’s well-being as dependent on that of the other.

As Ricardo Campos Marín, Jose Martínez and Rafael Huertas demonstrate in *Los Ilegales de la Naturaleza* (2000) the preoccupation with the decadence of civilization was not an altogether novel idea to nineteenth-century-Europe, but dated as far back in literature as the ‘crisis’ of the Roman Empire. And yet, the uniqueness of the turn-of-the-century thought on decadence was the association of the biological process of degeneration with race.¹³⁹ In 1853 Joseph Arthur de Gobineau proposed to view the moral and physiological inferiorities of individuals as a result of the ‘bad mixture’ between the superior Aryan races and the inferior ‘dark races’ in his ‘Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines.’ In 1876 Cesare Lombroso, the founder of Italian School of Positivist Criminology, took Gobineau’s idea one step further in *The Delinquent Man* (1887) when he noted a link between criminality and atavism, suggesting that criminals indicated a decay in the evolution of the national body. Lombroso’s ideas, especially the concept of ‘born criminal’ (criminal nato), revealed to be a product of a particular social milieu and individual temperament by Lombroso’s Italian follower Enrico Ferri, found early acceptance in Spain, especially after *L ’uomo delinquente*’s translation into Spanish in 1887.

Lombrosian thought was first asserted in Spain by José María Escuder, who argued that if left untreated insanity in Spain would become a national pathology,

¹³⁹ Campos Marín, Ricardo, José Martínez Pérez, and Rafael Huertas García-Alejo. *Los ilegales de la naturaleza: medicina y degeneracionismo en la España de la Restauración, 1876-1923* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), 198

afflicting all of the Spanish race. In 1882 Escuder took part in the discussion panel for penal reform in Spain, where he contended successfully for a law, requiring the testimony of three medical experts during a murder trial where defendant’s sanity was under question. In 1887, Rafael Salillas, whom Pio Baroja considered ‘Madrid’s own little Lombroso’ joined the debates around the Penal Code reform.¹⁴⁰ Salillas initially believed all criminals to be ‘potential representatives of an entirely different human type,’ whose physical and psychological characteristics were indicative of their pathologies.¹⁴¹ In his highly influential 1898 book *The Spanish Criminal* Salillas asserted that all criminality in Spain was a result of a ‘bad mixture’, where particular groups especially resistant to mixing were the ones with the highest tendency to commit crime.¹⁴² In 1890s an Austro-German psychiatrist Richard Krafft-Ebing proposed a similar theory to explain ‘the prevalence of insanity among the Jews’, stating that the predominance of endogamous marriages in Jewish community caused degeneracy in subsequent generations.¹⁴³ In *The Spanish Criminal* Salillas turned to the ‘Spanish Gypsies’ as a prime example of criminal tendencies resultant from isolation and the unwillingness to become part of Spanish nation through physical or social mixing on part of Gitanos ‘who love nothing else but [their] independence and wandering life, [do] not fuse, but rather hold on to [their] customs and way of life.’

Salillas saw Gitanos as a group of people that ‘does not constitute a true community, a nation, but rather an aggregate of all the influences acting on it,’ defining

¹⁴⁰ Luís Maristany, *El gabinete del doctor Lombroso: Delincuencia y fin de siglo en España* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1973), 40

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Joshua Goode, “Corrupting a Good Mix: Race and Crime in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Spain”, *European History Quarterly* 35 (2005), 246

¹⁴² Rafael Salillas, *Hampa: El Delincuente español o la antropología picaresca* (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suarez, 1898)

¹⁴³ The case is described in Sander Gilman, *Difference & Pathology; Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race & Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 155

nomadism as a constitutive trait of all Gitanos, but also of all criminals, thus suggesting a curious resemblance between the two groups, relating them one to the other in terms similar to those defined in 1783 ‘Royal Sanction’ put forth during the government of Carlos III.¹⁴⁴ As an outcome of their refusal to integrate, Gitanos, according to Salillas, have become racially distinct and physically different from the Spaniards on whose territories they lived, but whose well-being they consistently threatened. Salillas saw this racial distinction as dangerous, pointing to Gitanos as an ultimate source of Spanish atavism, claiming them to be ‘the product of the most vicious indifference of Spanish society’ in need of the state’s immediate attention.¹⁴⁵

Salillas’s identification of Gitanos as a primary source of crime in Spain built upon Lombroso’s model of ‘the savage’, among whom the author notoriously placed the gypsy and whose traits all ‘criminals’ ultimately bare. For Lombroso the gypsies were not merely predisposed to crime, but were criminally inferior to white races altogether. He summarized their racial characteristics as follows :

‘They are vain, like all delinquents, but they have no fear or shame. Everything they earn they spend for drink and ornament. They may be seen barefoot, but with bright-colored or lace-bedecked clothing ; without stockings, but with yellow shoes. They have the improvidence of the savage and that of the criminal as well....They devour half-putrified carrion. They are given to orgies, love a noise, and make a great outcry in the markets. They murder in cold blood in order to rob, and were formerly suspected of cannibalism....It is to be noted that this race, so

¹⁴⁴ Salillas, *Hampa*, viii

¹⁴⁵ Salillas, *Hampa*, 10-11

low morally and so incapable of cultural and intellectual development, a race that can never carry on any industry, and which in poetry has not got beyond the poorest lyrics, has created in Hungary a marvelous musical art-a new proof of genius that, mixed with atavism, is to be found in the criminal.’¹⁴⁶

In this passage, composed in the format of an ethnographic study, Lombroso lists various stereotypes and prejudices held against ‘gypsies’ by the Europeans of his own era, as well as the author himself. However, following the elaborate explanation of the gypsy’s criminal tendencies, lack of culture and impossibility of intellectual development, Lombroso begrudgingly allows them room for ‘marvelous musical art’ developed by Hungarian gypsies, adding that genius can be present in a criminal mind inflicted with atavism, much like the artistic tendencies coupled with atavism, can and will produce ‘degenerate art’.¹⁴⁷

The same year Salillas’s *Spanish Criminal* saw the light of day, Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós published the first textbook of criminal anthropology in Spain, *Modern Theories of Criminality*. Building upon the notion of the ‘born criminal’ first proposed by Lombroso, Quirós asserted that those who exhibit criminal traits, both behavioral and physical, had followed a different social path, while being already predisposed to criminality because of their racial heritage. For Quirós the racial distribution defined not only the criminal tendencies, but the variations in criminal acts committed. Thus, for instance ‘in the Northwestern provinces of Lugo and Oviedo,

¹⁴⁶ Lombroso, *L’homme criminel*, 55

¹⁴⁷ This notion was put forth in Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (London: W.Scott, 1891) and further developed by Max Nordau to include the artists associated with Symbolist and Pre-Raphaelite Movements, as well as writers, among them Leo Tolstoy, and musicians, including Richard Wagner in *Degeneration* (1892)

where brachycephalic (Eurasian) type prevails, there is a minimum intensity of crimes of blood ; while in the regions mainly inhabited by dolichocephalics (Eurafricans), including the upper plateau of Castile, the lower Ebro, the eastern slope and the elevation of Andalusia, there is a maximum intensity, especially in the second and last places.’¹⁴⁸ The eastern slope and the elevation of Andalusia Quirós associated the most with ‘crimes of blood’, were also the areas historically renowned for the highest concentration of Gitano populations in Spain, Andalusia being the most ‘authentic’ gypsy local, with Catalonia coming in second.

Quirós saw the regional separatism as a racial defect, resulting from either too much racial purity or too little racial mixing, weakening the Spanish nation. Eventually he came to be an advocate for eugenics and sterilization of criminals in Spain. In contrast, his colleague Doctor Salillas, who understood the anarchists to be the ‘unfortunate heirs of atavisms left by intermixture with gypsy populations’ towards the end of his life began promoting the humane treatment of prisoners and improvement of social conditions as best solutions to Spain’s atavism.¹⁴⁹ Theories on criminality and atavism proposed by Salillas, Quirós and Lombroso produced a ‘scientific’ connection between Gitanos and criminals, impacting the understanding of one as related directly to the other, conditioning the representation of Gitanos as criminals in Spanish art, similar to the predominantly dominated by ‘gypsy as an outlaw’ officially acceptable representations in French Salons after 1850s.¹⁵⁰ Whereas the stereotypical digressions of a male gypsy, as explained by Lombroso, were theft and murder in cold blood, a female

¹⁴⁸ Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós, *Modern Theories of Criminality*, trans. Alfonso de Salvio (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1912), 105-106

¹⁴⁹ Goode, “Corrupting a Good Mix,” 256

¹⁵⁰ Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians*, 63

gypsy’s traditional profession as that of a fortune-teller and/or a dancer, likened her to a prostitute.

The Marginal woman: Gitana and the Prostitute

In her article “Aproximación a la mujer marginada: las gitanas de Nonell” María Carmen López Fernández argues that by the late nineteenth century the image of the prostitute, who was the ultimate marginalized woman, transformed itself into that of a perverse and seductive *gitana*, a woman whose racial heritage eliminated all possibility of contaminating the decency of the bourgeois woman, and who could therefore be freely represented with all the characteristics of a prostitute.¹⁵¹ This mode of gypsy representation, not novel altogether at the turn-of-the-century, attracted a wide variety of supporters, including many Catalan Modernistes. And yet, even though conflation of the Gitana and the Prostitute served as a common-place throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Nonell did not participate in the trend, despite the assertions of some authors that many gitanas from Barri de Pekín, who modeled for the artists, in fact, worked as prostitutes. In order to understand how Nonell’s images of the gitanas digressed from traditional gypsy iconography of his time, it is necessary to review how the gypsy and that of the prostitute came to merge in turn-of-the-century art.

Historically Roma women worked as artisans and craftspeople, dancers, musicians, acrobats, fortunetellers and folk-doctors. Kinship structure strictly prohibited the women to engage in relations with *payo* (non-Roma) men according to popular

¹⁵¹ María Carmen López Fernández, “Aproximación a la mujer marginada: las gitanas de Nonell,” in *Luchas de genero en la Historia a traves de la imagen: ponencias y comunicaciones 2*, ed. by Teresa Sauret Guerrero, Amparo Quiles Faz, (Malaga: Centro de Ediciones de la Diputacion Provincial de Malaga, 2002), 346

understanding, nevertheless the artists removed Roma women from ethnic and social contexts to portray them almost exclusively as isolated objects of sexual contemplation. Marilyn Brown points out the inherent contradiction in representations of the female gypsy in nineteenth-century painting, namely, the bohemian muse that personifies the male artist’s creative freedom, and which, for the most part, was denied to the depicted woman.¹⁵²

During Goya’s period of the late 1700s, the Spanish aristocracy, particularly the ladies of the court, found themselves drawn to the image of the *maja*, a woman of lower-class origins distinguished by a particular style of dress and sassy behavior, who towards the end of the century was rapidly assimilating the characteristics of a gypsy, such as clothing and impetuous temperament, creating a lasting confusion of identities. As José Colmeiro accurately pointed out, Spanish elite’s self-identification and imitation of Madrid’s lower classes’ customs in music, clothing, speech and entertainment, considered more Spanish and authentic, was “a nationalist act of resistance against foreign influences” in response to French imperialism following the Napoleonic invasion of 1808.¹⁵³ The confusion between the *maja* and the *gitana* found a reflection in the case of Goya’s notorious *Clothed* (1800-1805) and *Nude Maja* (1797-1800) mentioned in Frédéric Quillet’s 1808 inventory as *Gitanas vestida y desnuda*, as mentioned on the official Museo del Prado website, as of March 14, 2012. In *Nude Maja* Goya portrays a dark-haired woman in a provocative pose, looking out boldly at the spectator. Nudes were scarce during Goya’s period in Spain. The audacious pose and the directness of the gaze of Goya’s *Maja* were only be suitable for a prostitute. Towards the end of the

¹⁵² Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians*, 74.

¹⁵³ Colmeiro, “Exorcising Exoticism,” 130

nineteenth century many painters associated with the Academy and Modernisme galleries alike, began portraying gypsy women in poses similar to those of the prostitutes, despite the fact that the period studies done on Gitanos concurred that virginity before marriage was the required standard placed on gypsy women.¹⁵⁴

Miserable white prostitutes were a common subject of many turn-of-the-century paintings as were gitanas, posed as prostitutes, however the type of prostitution modeled by this latter group was distinctly different from the kind suggested by its white counterparts because it implied gitana-prostitute’s willing participation in and enjoyment of her profession. The provocative gypsy women in Mariano Fortuny y Marsal’s 1872 *Carmen Bastián* (Fig. 25), Ignacio Zuloaga’s 1903 *The Gypsy with Parrot* (Fig. 26) and Julio Romero de Torres’s 1906 *Musa Gitana* (Fig. 27) offered the public an image of a prostitute who enjoys her profession. On the other hand, the white prostitutes on canvas of Antonio Fillol in 1897 *Human Beast* and Gonzalo Bilbao’s 1903 *Slave* were victims of their circumstances, suffering as a result of the career that is unnatural for them. As previously mentioned, Ramón Casas, one of the founding fathers of Catalan Modernisme, presented to the Spanish public a portrait of a strikingly beautiful, yet troubled young woman at a café in 1892 (Fig. 7). He alluded to her occupation in the title, *Madeleine*, a popular euphemistic term for a prostitute, taken from the biblical Magdalene. The woman is peculiarly posed: she is sitting on the edge of her chair, looking from the corner of her eyes, while clenching her left fist. She seems ready to leave at any moment. The glass next to her suggests that she is a paying customer. There is a possibility that she is getting ready to leave with her client, but the awkwardness of her pose suggests the likelihood that she is about to be chased out of the café for her occupation. The luminous

¹⁵⁴ López Fernández, “Aproximación,” 351

colors and graceful features Casas depicted in this work, undoubtedly, enhanced the viewers’ sympathy for the prostitute, whose *fair* features could belong to an *ángel del hogar* or a virtuous middle class woman, rather than a “fallen woman.” Unlike the “savage” countenances looking out of Julio Romero de Torres 1903 *Vividoras del Amor* in a brothel that provoked an uneasy feeling on the part of the exhibition committee that year, Casas’s image of the prostitute was alluring, but touchingly helpless.

In the 1830s, the liberal revolutionary process in Spain initiated a series of reforms including dismantling of the guilds, that together with the rapid urbanization contributed to the increased flow of migration from impoverished countryside into the cities, raising unemployment and mendicancy rates in Spain to unprecedented highs.¹⁵⁵ The majority of women who moved to urban centers in search of employment were either unsuccessful in finding jobs or seduced by or forced into sexual relations with their employers, a situation prevalent especially among house servants, and therefore temporarily and sometimes permanently turned to prostitution as their only lucrative option.¹⁵⁶

In 1893 Lombroso published *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute and the Normal Woman*, a work that popularized the theory that divorced the phenomenon of prostitution from the social conditions embedded in it to view “prostitute” as a member of a separate genus and making her the only true congenital degenerate out of all female criminals, “prostitution being women’s natural form of retrogression.”¹⁵⁷ According to Lombroso

¹⁵⁵ Teresa Fuentes Peris, *Visions of Filth: Deviancy and Social Control in the Novels of Galdós* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 9

¹⁵⁶ Francisco Vázquez García, Andrés Moreno Mengíbar, *Poder y prostitución en Sevilla: siglos XIV al XX*. (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998), 118

¹⁵⁷ Cesare Lombroso. *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 11

and his supporters, a prostitute’s future was predetermined from the moment of her conception. Christian Strohmborg, Lombroso’s German follower summarized the common turn-of-the-century belief about the prostitute as follows: “[The prostitute] fills her ranks from the degenerate females, who are clearly differentiated from the normal woman. Their predisposition can be seen in the gradations from occasional prostitution to moral insanity.”¹⁵⁸ In 1901 two of Spain’s leading criminologists, Constancio Bernaldo Quirós and José María Llanas Aguilaniedo published a study on crime, entitled *The Low Life in Madrid*, where they claimed that “all the authors who studied the women of this occupation [prostitutes] affirm that their typical psychological traits are idleness, leisure, horror of all kinds of methodical and continuous work, and their most complete apathy towards all things.”¹⁵⁹ The characterization of a prostitute provided by Quirós and Aguilaniedo with the emphasis on her predisposition towards sloth, likened the prostitute to a Gitana, whose people’s traditional form of employment was seen as mendicancy, while the Gitana was often understood to be a street performer.

In 1870 an internationally renowned Catalan artist, Mariano Fortuny y Marsal met a fifteen-year old Caló girl by name of Carmen Bastián in Albaicin.¹⁶⁰ Bastián remained part of the artist’s household as well as his model between 1870 and 1872. In 1872 Fortuny produced a revealing portrait of Bastián reclining on an oriental divan, with her skirts lifted up to prominently display her genitalia to the viewer. The model’s pose, her suggestive smile, her flirtatious sideways glance and the tilt of her head all implied her awareness of being watched, and thus the abdication of any possible accidental nature in

¹⁵⁸ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 55

¹⁵⁹ Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós and José María Llanas Aguilaniedo, *La mala vida en Madrid* (Madrid: B. Rodríguez Serra, 1901), 59

¹⁶⁰ Susan Martin Márquez identifies Carmen Bastian, who modeled for this and many other works by Fortuny, as a woman of Catalan Caló origins in Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations*, 152

this scene. The majority of the Academic nudes from this period relied on mythological and Oriental context to justify the nudity of their female subjects. Fortuny, however, rejected these devices in favor of naturalism. While the pose of Bastián, harks back undoubtedly to Goya’s *Maja* and Manet’s *Olympia* painted ten years earlier, it takes an additional step towards naturalism in its graphic depiction of the model’s pubic hair. Fortuny draws his audience’s attention to his model’s racial difference from the viewer by portraying her in this risqué position, barely acceptable for a white prostitute, but suitable for a gitana. According to Susan Martin-Márquez this “modern odalisque” was the site of negotiation and reconciliation of Spanish identity with its “African inheritance” by the most “international” of Catalan artists. Martin-Márquez suggests that Gitanos, were ultimately viewed as “the inheritors of the Moors,” embodying the same orientalist values of impetuosity, rebelliousness and savagery, and for that reason often portrayed in arts and literature using a similar pictorial language.¹⁶¹ The pictorial language Fortuny employed in his depiction of Carmen Bastián was strongly conditioned by the understanding of the model as “gypsy,” thus enabling the artist to portray her in highly sexualized manner.

Ignacio Zuloaga, a self-proclaimed admirer of Gitanos,¹⁶² famed for his representations of “Black Spain,” turned to the subject of the gypsy consistently throughout his career. Zuloaga’s preference for flamenquista themes, borrowed from the Andalusian “gypsy culture,” found expression in flamenco tableaux, portraits of women

¹⁶¹ Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations*, 152

¹⁶² “Alla en sus años juveniles de Andalucía sintió todo el atractivo misterioso y arrebatador de esta raza extrasocial y magnífica que logra casi siempre saber vivir al margen de los artificios convencionales del urbicola, dominando la vida precisamente por despreciar las cosas que convierten a los civilizados en esclavos.[...] Ante su desden por el bien y el mal, solía comentar Zuloaga con profunda admiración: “Son ellos, los gitanos, los ricos, y nosotros, los civilizados, los pobres”. Zuloaga’s biographer, Enrique Lafuente Ferrari discusses in detail the artist’s admiration for what he perceived to be the gypsy culture, his study of Calé language and his encounters with Gitanos in Ferrari, *Ignacio Zuloaga*, 142

in colorful ‘gypsy’ fashions, and images of dancers, such as the 1906 *Gypsy with the Parrot*. This painting introduces a nude young woman with a flower in her hair and a fan in her hand, posed as a flamenco dancer. Zuloaga accentuates the nubile gracefulness of the woman’s body by painting her in red shoes, while holding a black shawl that provides a strong contrast to the creamy complexion of her skin. The gitana’s facial features are downplayed in this piece – the viewer’s understanding of the model as “gypsy” depends almost entirely on her flamenco-derived pose, which *gitana* would be more likely to assume in a painting.

In 1906 *Musa Gitana* Julio Romero de Torres constructed ‘gypsiness’ through an alegory. Torres’s model for his painting, generally acknowledged to be a flower-sales-girl, Ana López, also known as Carasucia,¹⁶³ was of Gitano ethnicity and previously posed for Torres’s 1903 painting *Vividoras del Amor* as one of the prostitutes. In *Musa Gitana* the artist displays López laying on top of ornate, if somewhat soiled sheets, against the Andalusian background, gazing brazenly at the viewer. Fully nude, with the exception of the dark red ribbon tied around her neck, which serves a similar function to the shoes of Zuloaga’s model in *Gypsy with the parrot*, namely to accentuate the woman’s nudity, this brooding muse is more reminiscent of Manet’s *Olympia*, than of the creature from classical mythology, whose title she bares. The woman’s insalubrious olive-tinted complexion is offset by the dark male form with the guitar at her feet, bringing to mind Henry Fuseli’s Incubus in *The Nightmare* (1781). Shrouded in darkness, enveloped in an aura of flamenco and Andalusia, with eyes that burn through the viewer,

¹⁶³ Identified in Joanna Banham and Jill Burk Jimenez, *Dictionary of Artist’s Models* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2001), 581

this sensual gitana represents a paradigm of the nineteenth-century representation of gypsy.

‘Between the Erotic and the Macabre’: Gypsy on Canvas and in Stone

In 1874 John Brande Trend wrote for *Romany Rye*, the London-based magazine for gypsy aficionados, his impressions about the Andalusians and the gypsies: “[T]he Andalusians have certain gypsy qualities as well: the mixture, or rapid change from garrulous merriment to gloomy silence, show most of all when they pass from ritual sensuality of the gypsy dance to the passionate sincerity of *cante hondo*, with words which alternate between the extremes of the macabre and the erotic.”¹⁶⁴ In this passage Trend defined the two poles, namely the erotic and the macabre, between which the visual representation of the gypsies and their culture came to move in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, manifesting in many works associated with flamenquismo, such as José María López Mezquita’s *The Wake*.

In this 1910 critically acclaimed painting José María López Mezquita brought together the macabre and the erotic to create a brutal and highly sensualized image of the gypsies in *The Wake* (Fig. 2). According to Quesada Dorador, this scene depicting the wake for a baby was painted from life during the artist’s stay in Granada in 1910. The weeping mother sits next to the coffin placed in the center of the dark room, while the young ornately-dressed woman in complete state of abandon dances in front of it, surrounded by other figures, mostly female, whose faces range in emotion from joy to pensive sadness. All spectators, with the exception of the mother, appear to be absorbed in the musical spectacle before their eyes, and as Quesada Dorador pointed out the

¹⁶⁴ John Brande Trend, *Spain from the South* (London: Darf, 1928), 10-11

merriment of the dance calls the viewer’s attention to what many believed was the cruelty of this fiesta.¹⁶⁵

Mezquita’s representation is remarkable for its close adherence to the unspoken guidelines of flamenquismo. The scene is set during a musical spectacle, and as previously mentioned, most of the participants are female. With the exception of the little girl next to the man with the guitar and the old woman to the left of the grieving mother, all women present are young and attractive. Gitanos were traditionally imagined as dancers in European and Spanish arts and literature at the turn of the century, thus Mezquita’s characters follows in line with the other European paintings and prints of the period on the subject, including Fortuny’s *Gypsy dancing in the garden of Granada*.

In 1872 Fortuny painted this open-air scene with Carmen Bastián as the central figure. The natural setting and the clarity of colors Fortuny used in *Gypsy dancing* poses contrast to the somber tones employed in Mezquita’s painting, nevertheless, both scenes are erotically charged and focused on dancers. Fortuny’s gitana coyly invites the viewer to step into the garden, while Mezquita’s characters remain seemingly ignorant of the outsider’s presence. Carmen is flirting with the male viewer, while another young gitana is having a tryst with a man, whose features the artist has purposefully obscured, leaving no clue whether he is gypsy or payo, hinting at the *male* observer that he could take place at Carmen’s side. In comparison to the playfulness of Fortuny’s dancer, the central figure in Mezquita’s work appears to be more threatening, her erotic appeal reflecting a growing tendency in late nineteenth – early twentieth century painting to combine the beautiful and the macabre for a more frightening, sexually charged representation of the gypsy woman to exaggerate her racial difference from the bourgeois woman and further

¹⁶⁵ Quesada Dorador, “Gitanos,” 136

exoticize her. The ecstasy of the dancer in *The Wake* is a result of her intimate contact with death, an experience shared by her people that enhances her desirability for the presumably white, male viewer.

The mystical bond between gypsy and death was a prominent feature of both the Moderniste and Noucentiste representations of gypsy women. One of the iconic painters of Noucentisme, Hermenegildo Anglada-Camarasa is notable for his representations of Gitanas as savages, reflecting the macabre pole of representation. In 1904 he painted *Gypsies with Dogs* (Fig. 28), a work exhibiting a high level of abstraction that problematizes the viewers ability to distinguish between the gypsies and the dogs, thus likening one to the other. One of the most colorful representations of the threateningly bestial nature of the gypsy emerges in Anglada-Camarasa’s 1910 painting *Old woman with child* (Fig.29). The gypsy mother in this piece is the very antithesis of the demure young lady characteristic of mother and child paintings plentiful in Western art, and revived in the nineteenth-century images painted by William Bougereau. The woman’s exaggeratedly ugly face is turned towards that of her offspring, while her thickly painted skeletal hand, prominently stands out against the black robe. With her mouth gaping wide, this demonic mother appears about to consume her child, incarnating death itself. The child, however, is unperturbed, looking out at the viewer intensely with his hypnotic gaze. His greenish complexion is cadaverous like that of his mother. To enhance the ominous tone of the painting the pair is staged against the night scene, yet again inverting the cannons of mother and child representation that tends to pose the two against sunny landscapes. Angalada-Camarasa dismissed the anecdotal detail of gypsy costume, urging

his viewer instead to identify the mother and child as “gypsy,” by portraying them in “the macabre” mode.

Born one year before Isidre Nonell, but blessed with a career that would span over 80 years, Anglada-Camarasa was the artist whose early, highly expressionistic style of painting bore the most resemblance to Nonell’s own. *Gypsies with dogs*, for instance, reflects a similar tendency to apply paint in thick luxurious brushstrokes, while favoring dark earthtones accented with greens and yellows. Nevertheless, Anglada-Camarasa’s treatment of the gypsy subject differed remarkably from that of his contemporary. The emphasis in his painting is on the savagery of his subjects, where the “gypsy” is merely a vehicle of his expression.

In *Old woman with child* Anglada-Camarasa eliminates the flamenquista details, such as the skirts of the dancers from *Gypsies with dogs*, basing his audience’s understanding of the characters as “gypsy” on their familiarity with the macabre elements of the European gypsy mythology, such as the infamous “gypsy eyes” and “the hypnotic gaze” in case of *Old woman with child* and the equation of gypsy with savages in *Gypsies with dogs*, where the gypsies and the dogs form an undifferentiated mass. I contend that for Isidre Nonell the humanity of his Gitano protagonists was always at the epicenter of his work, where by isolating the figures from their surroundings, eliminating the colorful accessories and constructing them through posture, the artist was able to draw his viewer’s attention to the figures themselves rather than the mythology behind them, thus significantly differentiating his works from those of his contemporaries, such as Anglada-Camarasa.

Chapter V

Nonell and the Social Painting

Nonell within the Context of Anarchist Painting

As was mentioned in the introduction, the goal of this work is to broaden the limited understanding of Isidre Nonell as an artist “whose proverbial *gitana[s]* [were] only a pretext to develop and affirm...his superior skills as a colorist.”¹⁶⁶ In order to do this, I have analyzed the artist and his subjects within the much larger socio-historical context of the period and contrasting his “gitana paintings” to other visual representations of the Spanish gypsy at the turn of the century. Finally, I assert that the contemporary critical reception of Nonell’s works as well as the public perception of the artist’s subjects was shaped by and firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century discourses on degeneration and criminology.

This final chapter will expand further upon Alfredo Opisso’s view of Nonell’s gitanas in Sala Parés as “Lombroso transformed into painting” by suggesting a connection between Nonell’s art and the concept of “social art” promoted by Barcelona anarchists, whom Lombroso understood as degenerate. Several scholars, among them Carmen María López Fernández, pointed to Nonell’s connection to Barcelona-based

¹⁶⁶ Original quote: “En varios bustos de gitanas, de una parecida actitud y semejante expresion, en apariencia casi iguales, se observa muy rica variedad de armonias y de inesperados matices, porque la proverbial gitana de Nonell fue tan solo pretext para desarrollar y afirmar con manifesta y creciente superioridad sus grandes dotes de colorista.” In Carolina Nonell, *Nonell: Figuras* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, S.A., 1964), unpaginated

anarchists, most notably Jaume Brossa and Alexandre Cortada associated with the Moderniste Catalan publication *L’Avenç*, between late 1890s and early 1900s.¹⁶⁷ And yet, the prevailing view of Nonell’s works as suggestive “of misery that cannot be eliminated”¹⁶⁸ prevented them from being addressed in context of anarchy. However, I believe that, in part, Nonell’s visual language could have been shaped by the anarchists’ rhetoric of “the art of the social struggle.” For the following reason, it is essential to define the meaning of “social art” as it was understood by the anarchists.

What is a “social painting”?

The broad implications of the concept of “social painting” as a separate art genre make it highly problematic to discuss, and yet it remains essential to the understanding of the goals set by the anarchists. Art historian Carolina Nonell has suggested that “social painting” separated itself in the final third of the nineteenth century from the history painting, fueled by the triumph of realist tendencies in Spanish art. Based on the models offered by Goya and Velazquez, contemporary artists, such as Lu  s Graner y Arruf  , Joaquin Sorolla¹⁶⁹ and Antonio Fillol turned to contemporary social dilemmas for inspiration.¹⁷⁰ Accurate description of the social questions had foremost importance to the intellectuals associate with anarchists groups of Spain.

All art, according to the anarchists, had to actively participate in the social struggle and draw its inspiration from the lives of the working class; its chief purpose

¹⁶⁷ L  pez Fern  ndez, “Aproximaci  n,” 357

¹⁶⁸ Benet, *Nonell y su   poca*, 357

¹⁶⁹ Joaquin Sorolla is more famous now for his Impressionistic renditions of sunny beaches of Valencia, but in the late 1890s and early 1900s he was renowned for his canvases, depicting pressing social matters of the day, such as prostitution (*Trata de blancas*) and Spain’s defeat in Spanish-American War of 1898 (*Triste herencia*)

¹⁷⁰ Carolina Nonell, “La Pintura Social,” in *Glosa revista cient  fica dedicada a la practica rural de Barcelona* 183 (September 1969), 4

being the fomentation of the spirit of rebellion that would eventually instigate the proletariat to take up arms against its oppressors, i.e. “the parasitic classes.”¹⁷¹ “Contemplative” and “decorative” paintings were devalued because they did not invite viewer’s active participation (Alexandre Riquer was attacked in the anarchist press for his decorative style) and thus served to promote the values of the oppressors. “Successful” works of art, on the other hand, had to adequately portray the class struggle, featuring the poor and the miserable always as victims of social inequality, the dispossessed, continually forced to relive the trauma imposed on them by their marginal social status.¹⁷² Many anarchists, including Federico Urales, saw culture as a class-based phenomenon, which meant that all art produced for the degenerate aristocracy, inevitably bore the markers of its “disease,” whereas the “healthy” art of the working classes and their supporters was “virile.”¹⁷³

Ramon Casas’ infamous *The Charge* (Fig.30) (painted in 1899, but signed and exhibited in Salon of Paris in 1903) was singled out for praise by the anarchists¹⁷⁴ as one of the iconic “exemplifications of the spirit of rebellion.”¹⁷⁵ This work depicts a tragic moment during the workers’ demonstrations situated in an imaginary Spanish town,¹⁷⁶ when the civil guard on horseback, encircled by the crowd of protesters, as they are being chased away by the other guards, looms ominously over the fallen figure of either dead or wounded worker. The ambitious scale of the piece (2.98 X 4.705 m), traditionally

¹⁷¹ Lily Litvak, *Musa Libertaria: arte, literatura y vida cultural del anarquismo español (1880-1913)* (Barcelona: A. Bosch, 1981), 291

¹⁷² Litvak, *Musa Libertaria*, 290

¹⁷³ Litvak, *Musa Libertaria*, 293

¹⁷⁴ See Federico Urales, “El ideal en la Exposición de Bellas Artes,” in *La Revista Blanca* 7-145 (1 July 1905), 10-12

¹⁷⁵ Litvak, *Musa Libertaria*, 293

¹⁷⁶ The authors of the following catalogue view this work as situated in an imaginary space, in Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, *Ramon Casas: el pintor del modernismo* (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, 2001), 202

associated with history painting, coupled with Casas’ gestural manner of work, as well as the off-balance composition, where the main event takes place at the far-right side of the image, forcing the fallen worker into the viewer’s space, all contribute to the distinctly modern sensibility of the painting.

The Charge was among several socially conscious works produced by the artist, ordinarily distant from matters of politics, between 1894 and 1899. The irony of praise bestowed by the anarchists upon the piece, and in turn on Casas himself, was that the artist was a fully functioning member of bourgeoisie, “the parasitic class,” uninvolved in the plight of the working poor, who drew his clientele from the very same elite milieu. Remarkably, during the last years of the nineteenth century Casas turned to social subjects on several occasions, most notably in *Garrote vil* (1894) and *Embarkation of the troops* (1896). *Embarkation of the troops* (Fig. 31) is important for the sake of this discussion because the socially-charged matter of the soldiers sent to Cuba and then back to Spain in 1898 constituted an essential subject for many Moderniste painters, bringing up the issue of “how should Spain treat its veterans?” similar to “what needs to be done about the miserable conditions of Gitanos in Barcelona?” suggested by Nonell’s paintings, since both of these questions implicate the government and call the public to action.

Social Question of *Els Repatriats de Cuba*: Nonell, Casas, Graner

Before the representations of the Cuban veterans can be addressed it is essential to review some of the social issues brought to light by the Spanish-American War of 1898. The law of 1837 established an obligatory military service for all Spanish men, but also

included a certain clause known as “cash redemption,”¹⁷⁷ a system that allowed wealthy families to spare their heirs from enlisting through payment to the government, while leaving no alternative, other than enlistment to the sons of lower-class families. In 1896 Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, a Spanish politician and avid supporter of the Bourbon Restoration, famous for the oppressive policies towards the anarchists and responsible for Montjuich trials, urged Spain to fight in Cuba “’til the last man, ‘til the last peseta.” To implicate the Spanish government in the unfair enlistment practices, Catalan anarchists refashioned Canovas’ phrase into “until the last man who does not have 300 *duros* to redeem himself,” 300 duros being a standard cash redemption during the Cuban war, thus suggesting that the working classes are the ones bearing the costs of war.¹⁷⁸ Assassinated in 1897, Cánovas did not live to see Spain’s defeat in 1898 and its horrific aftermath.

Once sent to Cuba, Spanish soldiers lacked the necessary military training and proper equipment, facing abysmal sanitary conditions upon their arrival as a result of Spain’s inability to provide financial support for its colonial campaigns (1895-1898).¹⁷⁹ In 1895 103,761 soldiers disembarked in Cuba, constituting only the half of all soldiers to participate in the War. In January of 1898 Ministry of War counted 38, 137 casualties, among them only 1,948 men perished in action and 1,002 as a result of a battle injury, while all the others died from disease (nearly 20,000 soldiers fell victim to yellow fever) or accident.

Historian Silvia Sánchez Abadía called the ships owned by Compañía Transatlántica used for transportation of soldiers back to Spain “the true floating

¹⁷⁷ *rendición en metálico*

¹⁷⁸ “hasta el último hombre que no tenía los 300 duros para redimirse.” Cited in Silvia Sánchez Abadía, “Olvidos de una Guerra: el Coste humano y económico de la independencia (Cuba-España, 1895-1898),” in *Revista de Indias* 61-221 (2001), 116-117

¹⁷⁹ Sánchez Abadía, “Olvidados de una Guerra,” 118-119

cemeteries of the repatriated soldiers” because of the remarkably high disease-related death-rate on board, resultant from the lack of food and drink, the unsanitary mixing of the healthy and the sick and the absence of adequate medical assistance and proper medication. 158, 492 soldiers returned home from Cuba, among them 10,995 severely handicapped and 33,808 sick; the veterans were in need of medical care, while struggling to find employment in the hostile economical environment of Spain.¹⁸⁰ Left without financial means, these men turned to vagrancy, becoming a common sight on the streets of Spain, but especially in the port cities, such as Barcelona, where they were portrayed by the artists of the period.

Isidre Nonell, Lluís Graner and Ramon Casas were among some of the artists most associated with the subject. The orderliness of Casas’ 1896 drawing (Fig. 32) and painting produced the same year as *Embarkation of the troops* provides distinct contrast to the other two representations, namely Graner’s crowd of sick, wretched-looking soldiers in *Disembarkation of sick soldiers from Cuba* (Fig. 33) and Nonell’s single dejected figure, alongside the seashore in the *Repatriated Soldiers from Cuba* series both, completed after the end of the war.

Between March of 1895 and April of 1896 90,000 men embarked on ships to Cuba from the ports of Barcelona, an occasion witnessed and documented in forms of sketches by Ramon Casas.¹⁸¹ A particular sense of orderliness and containment predominates in Casas’ charcoal sketch, that divides the composition neatly into two equally balanced segments, represented by the two groups of men, separated by the soldier carrying a rifle in the foreground of the piece. As the figures walk towards the

¹⁸⁰ Sánchez Abadía, “Olvidados de una Guerra,” 121, 126

¹⁸¹ MNAC, *Ramon Casas*, 164

ship, they are being observed by the civil guard on horseback, reminding of government’s authoritative presence in the scene that would re-emerge yet again in *The Charge*. Unlike the drawing, the linear quality and orderly composition of which contribute to the contained nature of the environment (the two groups of soldiers do not continue into the space outside of the viewer’s line of sight), *Embarkation of the troops* is more suggestive of the sheer mass of men departing for war.

The neat division is no longer reflected in the painting; with the exception of several men in the foreground on the right side of the painting, the bodies of soldiers seem to blend into a single undifferentiated mass, with no end in sight. The location of the port is suggested by the Mount Montjuich,¹⁸² which also serves as a vanishing point for the entire painting. Like the drawing the painting also features the civil guards, whose higher position in the scene resultant from being on horseback makes them appear as if floating amidst the sea of indistinguishable soldier bodies.

Unlike Casas’ figures, the cluttered assembly of soldiers returning from the war in Graner’s piece creates a distinctive sense of chaos. The slouched postures and somewhat awkward positions of these soldiers, disfigured by war, call for a compassionate response from the viewer. Whereas both works by Casas portray figures looking straight ahead, most of Graner’s soldiers are featured looking down, contributing to an overall wretched aspect of the figures. The viewer can clearly make out four emaciated individuals walking out of the port, but only see two of their faces, while the rest of the men are merely suggested by the thick charcoal lines, surrounding the ship, implying that more wounded men are leaving the vessel and coming into the city. A medical assistant with a cross on his sleeve rushes towards the crowd of veterans, but it is obvious that his

¹⁸² Identified as such by MNAC, *Ramon Casas*, 164

services cannot encompass all of the men. Like Casas, Graner chose to prominently include the figures of government authority, although not the civil guards, into his drawing. The two men in the lower left-hand corner stand out of the crowd because of their uniquely refined mode of dress, which contrasts to rags worn by the soldiers, but more importantly because of their confident, yet relaxed postures.

Being mindful of the conditions on board of the vessels used for soldiers’ transportation, it is notable that all three artists included ships as part of background, thus providing an instant way to recognize their subjects as soldiers of Cuban war for their viewers. In 1898 Nonell also created a series of drawings on the subject of Cuban War veterans, four of which were published in Barcelona daily publication *La Publicidad* on November 26, 1898 alongside the article “Llegada de *Los Andes*,” which narrated the veterans’ pitiful tale. Whereas the sketches of Graner and Casas emphasize the sheer mass of soldiers as a whole, Nonell’s drawings, like his *Gitana* paintings, focus on an isolated figure. In *Remembering Cuba*, a drawing produced using ink, pastel and watercolor, “a cadaverously pale”¹⁸³ soldier walks along the shoreline, buried deep in his own thought. The thin anxious line Nonell employs for the body and the face of the veteran, which contrasts sharply to the hard precision of Casas’ soldiers, is emphasized by the ethereal smokiness of the background, out of which the figure emerges in a manner of a cutout. Whereas Casas’ descriptive approach to the soldiers was akin to that of a journalist, while Graner’s concerned primarily with the diseased aspect of the bodies, Nonell’s take on the subject was intensely psychological.

As evidenced by *Remembering Cuba* (Fig. 14) and *Repatriated soldier on the dock* (Fig. 34) facial features of his protagonists constitute the focal point of interest for

¹⁸³ MNAC, *Isidre Nonell*, 96

the artist. Both men’s profiles are delicately drawn; pensive face of *Repatriated Soldier* is turned towards the murky night background of the seaport, while the character of *Remembering Cuba*, whose sharp pointed features are reminiscent of Daumier’s Don Quixote, stares down, unaware of his surroundings. As the two figures walk the shoreline, the viewer is invited to project him or herself into their dejected state of mind, doing so would create a level of empathy for the soldiers on part of the viewer, thus eliminating the distance between the protagonist and the spectator suggested in the works of his teacher Graner and his early influence Casas. Nonell’s way of representing the dilemma of the Cuban War veterans is not based on any discernable narrative, such as Casas’ *The Charge*, however it does portray the working-class soldier as victim, left to his own devices, as a result of Spanish government’s lack of financial support. This alternative reading of Nonell’s series sets a precedent in his artistic career for the use of socially charged subjects, portrayed in the manner encouraged by the anarchists, with lower-class veteran presented as victim. When the series *Els Repatriats* series was exhibited in Els Quatre Gats, it did not receive much public attention, causing Alfredo Opisso to lament for the fate of his friends “drawings of such great merit” destined for obscurity because of the lack of appeal they have for the bourgeoisie, thus foreshadowing the outrage produced by the gitanas in November of 1903.

Chapter VI Conclusion

Nonell’s “gypsy paintings” as a Paradigm of Modern Spanish Painting

In conclusion, I would like to re-visit Nonell’s November 1903 Sala Parés show of gitana paintings as a logical continuation of the narrative of misery, alienation and social marginalization, that he explored in the 1898 *Els Repatriats* series. The gitana paintings were at once a visual manifestation of marginalized position of modern Spanish painting as well as Spain’s own marginalized position within the context of European modernity. The alienation of Nonell’s gitanas, suggested by the matted colors, lack of detail and the women’s physical placement in the architectural corners was understood by contemporary press to represent the current socio-political climate of Spain, a country whose golden age has long passed, leaving behind the nation, much like Nonell’s gitana, drained of all vital energy required to produce art that is truly modern. Spain’s perception in Europe at the turn of the century was dominated by the images of an exotic land with glorious past and no future and found reflection in the works of many 19th- and turn-of-the-century European and North American artists, that often depicted Spain’s ultimate internal “Other,” the gypsy, as a stand-in for the nation as a whole, drawing on the established conventions of Orientalist and *flamenquista* representations.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ M. Elizabeth Boone explores at length the visual representations of Spain as a failed empire with a glorious past, illustrated by art by Murillo and Velázquez, but presently in the state of decay, as

Conceptualization of the gypsy as Spain’s and Europe’s internal “Other” full of destructive potential created a noticeable tension in the portrayal of the gypsy. For the French journalist Auguste Avonde “there [was] nothing remarkable about the gypsies except for their extreme misery and their degradation...[but] if one were to believe some people [i.e. artists and writers] nature has done everything for the gypsies: agility, suppleness, strong hearts! free spirits! charming gaiety! insouciant and happy life! independence and philosophy!”¹⁸⁵ In order to contain the threat of miscegenation and ultimately degeneration of the European races, the imaginary gypsy was assigned a set of representational conventions, expressly ridiculed by Avonde, ranging from the erotic to the macabre, that would draw the viewer’s attention away from the dilemma of the nation without a national territory by situating the spectator in the unchanging world of colorful, free-loving gypsies, cut off from the social reality.

As previously stated, Nonell’s art was aimed precisely against these kinds of standardized representations. Ricard Opisso interpreted Nonell’s gitana paintings exhibited in 1903 as “Lombroso transformed into painting,” thus implying that the artist’s models were immersed in the state of mental and physical decline, as expressed through their slumped postures, downward glances and crude features, and therefore constituted a visual equivalent of Cesare Lombroso’s concept of the “degenerate.” Government sanctioned understanding of the Gitanos as inherently delinquent and archetypal of Spain’s criminal underbelly, already emerged in the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the language of *the Royal Pragmatic Sanction*, however it did not acquire a scientific

demonstrated through the works of mid-19th- and early-20th-century American artists in her excellent study: Mary Elizabeth Boone, *Vistas de España: American Views of Art and Life in Spain, 1860-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)

¹⁸⁵ Auguste Avonde, “Les Bohémiens en 1843,” in *L’Univers* 6-343 (15 July 1843), 1

status until the late nineteenth century with the advent of criminal anthropology, in the works of Rafael Salillas and Bernaldo de Quirós, Lombroso’s Spanish followers. These criminologists worked to change other European nations’ visions of Spain as racially inferior due to the centuries-long mixing process with populations viewed as undesirable, i.e. the Jews and the Moors. Salillas and his colleagues did so by countering and substituting the claims of Spain’s racial inferiority with the idea of national superiority and vitality, based on “a good mix” between the many different groups that coexisted on the Iberian soil.¹⁸⁶ To substantiate this claim, they placed the Gitanos in contrast to the rest of the Spaniards, as a social group whose refusal to integrate into the Spanish society, led to its stagnation and degeneration.

The emblematic status and marketability of the gypsy, led many European as well as Spanish artists to focus on the gypsy as a central motif in their art. The renowned Spanish painters of the day, including Mariano Fortuny y Marsal, José María López Mezquita and Ignacio Zuloaga, turned to folkloric gypsies of Andalusia for inspiration, portraying them as dancers, entertainers and prostitutes, however Catalonia, a Spanish region with the second highest concentration of Gitano communities, was almost entirely left out of the visual narrative. The image of Catalonia in Spanish press as the seat of industry and progress, clashed sharply with the social reality of Gitanos, living in decrepit shacks on the outskirts of the cities. By drawing from the live models, who came from the Barri de Pekín and Somorrostro, Nonell’s images acquired a kind of a symbolic power, where the gitanas ceased to be merely a decorative motif, and came to embody the poverty-stricken Gitano neighborhoods instead to the bourgeois public and critics visiting

¹⁸⁶ This idea is further articulated and illustrated in Joshua Goode’s superb study on the development of criminal anthropology in Spain in Joshua Goode, *Impurity of Blood: Defining Race in Spain, 1870-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009)

Sala Parés in 1903. Nonell’s choice of models, their sculptural solidity, as well as the artist’s serialized way of painting them called the viewer’s attention to rather than away from his subjects, as was suggested by previous scholars.

Analyzing Nonell’s paintings within the paradigm of social reform, offered by Barcelona-based anarchists, allows for a deeper understanding of his work, traditionally restricted to the study of technique and personal expression, adding a new, more nuanced layer of interpretation to the works of this Catalan artist, situating his art within the nexus of new market economies’ critiques of Spain’s social policies, and anarchist politics at the turn of the century. While I do not propose a direct connection between Nonell and the anarchist movement, nor do I consider Nonell an anarchist in the political sense of the word, I do believe that the concept of art as a powerful tool for social reform, associated with anarchism, shaped and informed Nonell’s pictorial rhetoric. The socio-historical analysis offered in this work draws out the connections between the subjects of Nonell’s gitana paintings and the marginalized neighborhoods of Barcelona, such as Barri de Pekin and Somorrostro, thus situating misery and alienation explored by the artist in very specific social conditions, rather than within the realm of pure self-expression.

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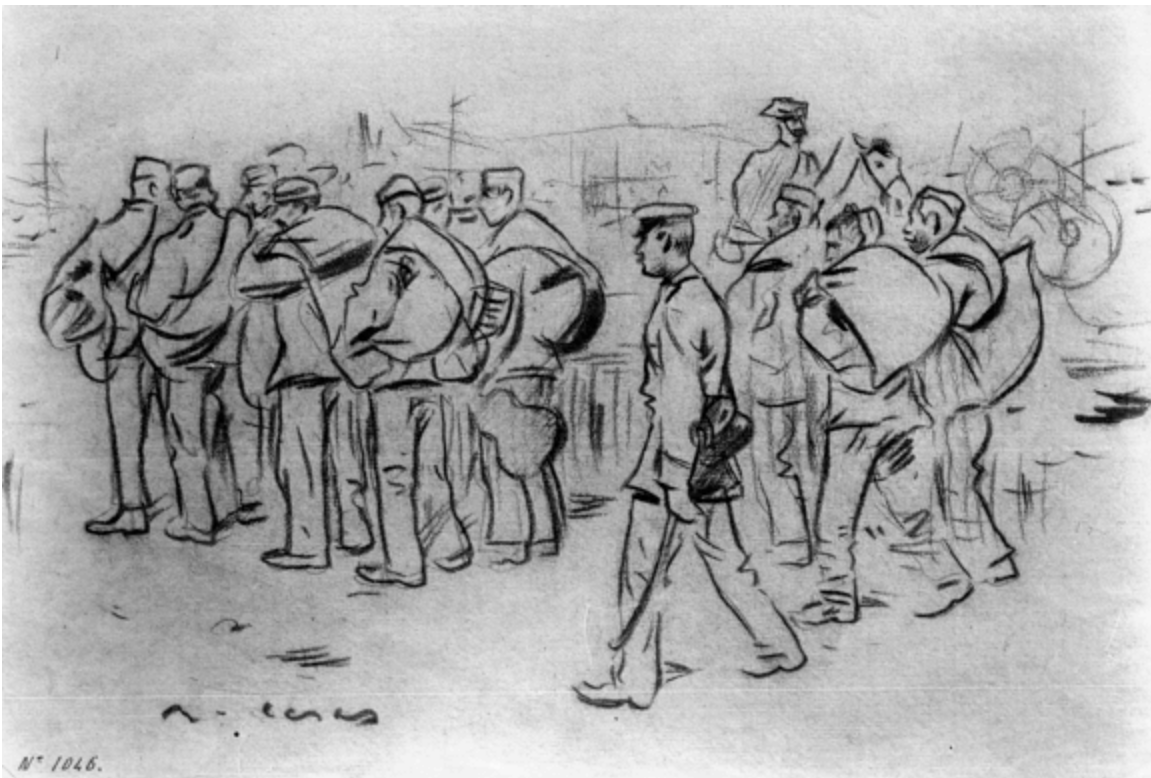


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