

Painting, Popular Culture, Putrefaction: Depicting Tradition on the Eve of the Spanish  
Civil War (1936-1939)

by

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents and grandparents.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on painterly explorations of tradition, a modernity that supposedly opposed it, and the putrefaction and decay inherent in each cultural pole, during the years leading up to the Spanish Civil War. These themes are manifest in the work of José Gutiérrez Solana (1886 – 1945), Maruja Mallo (1902 – 1995) and Salvador Dalí (1904 – 1989), all active as painters in Madrid at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although each came from provinces wherein regional identities were strongly asserted, their artistic output does not betray evidence of a particular interest in exploring these aspects of locality. Rather these artists, also all accomplished writers, were drawn toward the complex realities of everyday historical existence as they played out more generally in a Spanish context. They refused easy promotion of the stereotypical cultural elements of Spanish folklore just as they were ultimately suspicious of modernity and the supposed infrastructural and social improvements it involved.

Solana, a member of the old guard of painting, celebrated by Madrid's avant-garde circles, looks at Spain and sees and paints decay. His treatment of the theme in a sustained pictorial language is so recognizable that it engendered its own adjective: *solanesco*. Mallo and Dalí, committed modernists, celebrate the diverse offerings of the machine age, which would seem to place them a world apart from the older artist. Moreover, in their paintings the younger artists, friends during their student years, were

known for the application of an ever-changing panoply of figurative styles, further differentiating their work from Solana's. Yet like Solana they recognized elements of decay and putrefaction within their environs, and their plastic considerations of these themes took on a decidedly *solanesco* character.

This dissertation brings the paintings and writings of these artists into a productive conversation revealing not only shared attitudes concerning tradition in Spain during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also allowing for a reframing of their work. I consider Solana's oeuvre not as representative of the end of particular tradition of Spanish genre painting, but as a stimulus for avant-gardists Mallo and Dalí, usually discussed within the context of Surrealism.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on painterly explorations of tradition, a modernity that supposedly opposed it, and the putrefaction and decay inherent in each cultural pole, during the years leading up to the Spanish Civil War. These themes are manifest in the work of José Gutiérrez Solana (1886 – 1945), Maruja Mallo (1902 – 1995) and Salvador Dalí (1904 – 1989), all active as painters in Madrid at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although Solana, Mallo, and Dalí came from provinces wherein regional identities were strongly asserted, their artistic output does not betray evidence of a particular interest in exploring these specific aspects of locality. Rather these artists, who were also accomplished writers, were drawn toward the complex realities of everyday historical existence as they played out more generally in a Spanish context. All three refused easy promotion of the stereotypical cultural elements of Spanish folklore -- represented in markets, religious celebrations, and bullfights, among other social arenas -- just as they were ultimately suspicious of modernity and the supposed infrastructural and social improvements it involved.

Solana, a member of the old guard of painting who was celebrated by Madrid's avant-garde circles, looks at Spain and sees and paints decay. His treatment of the theme in a sustained pictorial language is so recognizable that it quickly engendered its own adjective: *solanesco* or "Solanesque." Mallo and Dali, in many ways committed modernists, celebrate the diverse offerings of the machine age, cinema in particular,

which would seem to place them a world apart from the older artist. Moreover, in their paintings the younger artists, friends during their student years in Madrid, were known for the application of an ever-changing panoply of figurative styles, further differentiating their work from Solana's. Yet like Solana they recognized elements of decay and putrefaction within their environs, and their plastic considerations of these themes took on a decidedly *solanesco* character, as aptly noted by art historians Eugenio Carmona and Agustín Sánchez Vidal.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation takes as its point of departure these artists' explorations of the recognizable landscapes of Spain's traditional and popular culture, as well as their consideration of the uncanny space of the modern metropolis. A nuanced reading of their paintings, grounded within their respective social and artistic contexts, reveals shared attitudes concerning the space occupied by tradition in Spain during the first decades of the twentieth century, albeit attitudes that take on a variety of forms. In this introduction I set out to outline the political context shaping the environment in which these artists worked, and which was responsible for promoting an active generation of regionalist painters. In doing so I highlight the significance of the stances that Solana, Mallo, and Dalí took in responding to cultural manifestations that defined their experiences, yet also resonated with a larger Spanish populace. During the first third of the twentieth century each of these artists worked through the problem of representing the Spain they knew

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<sup>1</sup> Carmona, Eugenio, "Solana. El invitado, el primitivo y lo inquietante," *José Gutiérrez Solana*, eds. María José Salazar, Andrés Trapiello (Madrid: Turner, 2004), 121-189. Agustín Sánchez Vidal, "Carnuzos, cloacas y campanarios," *El surrealismo en España* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Ministerio de Cultura, 1995), 71-89.



through both paint and prose. This dissertation traces their respective journeys, following Solana's meandering through Madrid's forgotten corners; Mallo's surprising trajectory, from student of public celebrations to champion of the sewers; and Dalí's search for a new visual language to illustrate a conflicted modern society. These three artists are rarely discussed in tandem, as they are usually separated on formal grounds. Moreover, there are only a few English language studies dedicated to Solana and Mallo. Mallo, as a woman painter, is even more marginalized within both Spanish and Latin American art history. Yet by treating these artists as part of the same historical moment and cultural formation, this dissertation brings focus to the social and political landscape in which they operated and argues for the integrity of a shared conception of Spanish modernity and unsentimental view of popular culture manifested in themes and motifs that cut across the very different work produced by each artist.

### **The Disaster**

Solana, the oldest of the artists under investigation in this dissertation, was born at the end of the nineteenth century into what many considered a decaying country, a far cry from its status as one of the richest colonial powers during the early modern era. Such a circumstance was partly due to the defeat that Spain suffered in 1898, only twelve years after his birth, during the Spanish-American War, which precipitated the loss of the remaining colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The losses of 1898 came to be termed "the Disaster," and while it did not necessarily effect tangible changes within Spain's economic system as a whole -- Spain had lost other colonies throughout the

nineteenth century -- the blow to national pride was a heavy one. As a result of “the Disaster,” politicians and liberal intellectuals within Spain rallied for change. One of the loudest voices belonged to Joaquín Costa (1846 – 1911), who called for “Regenerationism.”<sup>2</sup> Costa, a lawyer and statesman, published pamphlets and books promoting agricultural reform, encouraging Spain to increase production of staple items, and infrastructural improvements, among other initiatives. Costa and others blamed Spain’s poor economic situation on Prime Minister Cánovas, under whom the economy operated through the corrupt and inefficient system of *caciquismo*, rule by thuggish local village bosses.<sup>3</sup>

Mallo and Dalí were born in the early twentieth century when regional differences brought about by “the Disaster” provoked a growing alienation from Madrid and its centralist government with the region of Castile at its center. The regions at the periphery, Catalonia, the Basque Country, and to a lesser extent Galicia, felt that the central government had failed them.<sup>4</sup> Galicia, the least developed, claimed that her Celtic origins distinguished her from other people in Spain and characterized her nationalism by the

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<sup>2</sup> Sebastian Balfour, “The Loss of Empire, Regenerationism, and the Forging of a Myth of National Identity,” *Spanish Cultural Studies: An introduction, the Struggle for Modernity*, Eds. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 25-31.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828 – 1897) head of the Conservative Party, had served several times as prime minister alternating with the head of the Liberal Party Práxedes Mateo Sagasta (1825 – 1903). Cánovas was assassinated in Mondragón, Basque Country. He is blamed for the mass discontent in Cuba due to his repressive politics. José Alvarez Junco, “History, politics and culture, 1875 – 1936,” *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 67-85. *Cacique* is a Caribbean word that means chieftain and was applied to authoritarian local political bosses.

<sup>4</sup> Enric Ucelay da Cal, “The Nationalism of the Periphery: Culture and Politics in the Construction of National Identity,” *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 32-39.

revival of traditional culture and of Galician as a literary language.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Catalonia there was a convergence of economic power and cultural vibrancy centered on the Catalan language and the relative social cohesiveness of Catalan urban society. In the 1880s Barcelona's textile factories were working full steam due to the boom that followed the Spanish textile industry's dominion over the Cuban market, allowing recently established urban and industrial centers to foster new elites and challenge Madrid control.<sup>6</sup> After the loss of the colonies the fragile ideological ties with Madrid were strained, and in 1901 the Catalan industrialists and regionalists formed the conservative Catalanist party, the Lliga Regionalista.<sup>7</sup> 1914 saw the creation of the Mancomunitat, the Commonwealth of Catalonia, an organ of administrative self-government that consolidated the administrative resources of the four provinces of Catalonia: Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida and Girona. However, the Mancomunitat was short-lived: in 1932 General Primo de Rivera dissolved it under a forced banner of Spanish unity.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Generation of '98**

While politicians at the turn of the century cried for the "regenerationism" of Spain and made attempts to stimulate the conditions of modernity within a society that was still largely agricultural, the artistic response to these circumstances seemed to focus on the

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<sup>5</sup> Inman Fox, "Spain as Castile: Nationalism and National Identity," In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, 21 – 36.

<sup>6</sup> José Alvarez Junco, 67-85.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Silvina Schammah Gesser, *Madrid's Forgotten Avant-Garde, Between Essentialism and Modernity* (Eastbourne, England: Sussex Academic Press, 2015), 230-231.

nation's degeneration. This movement is specifically embodied by those writers affiliated with the retroactively named *Generation of '98* and the painters loosely allied with it. The group's name, *Generation of '98*, was coined by the writer Azorín in 1913 and made reference to those writers of his generation mostly born in the 1860s and 1870s, including Miguel de Unamuno (1864 – 1936), Ramiro de Maeztu (1875 – 1936), Pio Baroja (1872 – 1956) and Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866 – 1936), among others who explored distinctly Spanish themes and set their novels and poems largely within the Castile region.<sup>9</sup> Visible in their literary works is a deep attachment to the Castilian landscape, imagined as essentially Spanish owing in part to the liberal historiography of the nineteenth century. Historians writing during that era, in particular Modesto Lafuente, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, and Rafael Altamira, foregrounded the notion of Castile and its cultural golden age as central to shaping the Spanish nation.<sup>10</sup> Also apparent in the literature of the *Generation of '98* is a disavowal of modernity and Europeanism. Yet at the same time a deep pessimism regarding Spain's backwards qualities is evident, among these Spanish religiosity, fanaticism and superstition.

Pio Baroja's novel *Camino de Perfección* ("Path to Perfection") exemplifies this notion. Fernando Ossorio, the protagonist, is disenchanted with urban life and takes a regenerating sojourn to the countryside.<sup>11</sup> What he finds there, however, is degenerate traditionalism, religious fanaticism and cheap folklore represented by the *jota*, a dance, and flamenco, which the character considers repulsive. Yet, at the end of the book, when

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<sup>9</sup> José Martínez Ruiz (1873 – 1967), better known by his pseudonym as Azorín, was a journalist, novelist, essayist and literary critic.

<sup>10</sup> Inman Fox, "Spain as Castile: Nationalism and National Identity," 21-36.

<sup>11</sup> Pio Baroja, *Camino de Perfección* (Madrid: B. Rodríguez Serra, 1910).

his child is born, Ossorio decides to remain away from the city. The tension between modernity and tradition is one that is heightened in most literary works associated with the *Generation of '98*.

Questioning the reasons behind “the Disaster,” conservatives felt that Spain had lost the empire because it had abandoned those virtues that had once made the country great: unity, hierarchy and militant Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> They believed that the decline of Spanish dominance had begun with the corrosive effects of reforms based on foreign models first imported by the Habsburgs, then the Bourbons, and finally borrowed from French Enlightenment. The innovators, on the other hand, sought to counter the corruption of the old system by introducing a European-style administration. The term “Regenerationism” and the slogan “Europeanize!” figured heavily into their rhetoric meant to reanimate a sluggish economy and a skeptical populace. Social reformists managed to improve living conditions in larger cities, but those on the periphery continued to live in deprivation.<sup>13</sup>

Some intellectuals reacted to “the Disaster” with optimism and defiance while others retreated into pessimism. Two major Spanish intellectuals represent these opposed positions, José Ortega y Gasset (1883 – 1955) and Miguel de Unamuno (1864 – 1936), who in the words of Schammah Gesser are “points of reference to understanding the intellectual context in which the Madrilenian vanguards emerged.”<sup>14</sup> Unamuno famously wrote “*Que inventen ellos*” (“Let others invent”) meaning that those residing on the

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<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Balfour, “The Loss of Empire, Regenerationism, and the Forging of a Myth of National Identity,” 25 – 31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Schammah Gesser, *Madrid's Forgotten Avant-Garde*, 28.

northern side of the Pyrenees should occupy themselves with scientific innovations so that Spaniards could focus on their glorious past and heroic feats.<sup>15</sup> This controversial quote from the book *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* was first introduced in an epistolary exchange with Ortega in 1906, the same year he included the quote in his essay *El pórtico del templo* (“The Temple’s Portico”).<sup>16</sup>

The tacit acceptance of Spain as a country whose achievements could only be imagined in the past tense illustrates one of the tenets of the *Generation of '98*: a modernity that is wished for, yet despised.<sup>17</sup> Another tenet is that Spain rests on Castile as its ancestral cradle and that this should become the model of a renewed country with *casticismo* as the guarantee of “old Christian ancestry.”<sup>18</sup> From this old definition, which alluded to racial and religious classification, *casticismo* came to signify attachment to customs and behaviors -- *castizo* is an adjective used to refer to something “pure” and

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<sup>15</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (Madrid: Austral, 1971), 224.

<sup>16</sup> The quote is part of a dialogue between Román and Sabino discussing the Spanish anti-European position.

“Román.- Inventen, pues, ellos y nosotros nos aprovecharemos de sus invenciones. Pues confío y espero en que estarás convencido, como yo lo estoy, de que la luz eléctrica alumbra aquí tan bien como allí donde se inventó.

Sabino.- Acaso mejor.”

“Román, - Then, let others invent and we will take advantage of their inventions. Indeed I trust and hope that you are convinced as well as am I that the electric light shines here as well as where it has been invented.

Sabino, - Perhaps better.” Miguel de Unamuno, “El pórtico del templo,” *Ensayos*, Vol. 2 (Madrid: Aguilar, 1942-1951), 491-496.

<sup>17</sup> José María del Pino, “La tradición permanente: apuntes sobre casticismo y europeísmo en los fines de siglo,” *Nuevas Perspectivas sobre el 98*, ed. John P. Gabriele (Frankfurt am Main and Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1999), 161-170.

<sup>18</sup> Schammah Gesser, *Madrid’s Forgotten Avant-Garde*, 8.

“genuine” belonging to the country or place in question.<sup>19</sup> The paintings of both Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945) and Solana address notions of Castilian *casticismo* as many feature the intense, arid landscapes of the region serving as a backdrop for typically Spanish characters. I discuss the relationship between the kinds of works these two artists made in Chapter One, and in Chapter Two I provide a history of the canonization of Spanish landscape painting in the late-nineteenth century. I introduce the themes here in order to demonstrate briefly the types of artwork that countered the dark visions so commonly associated with the *Generation of 98*.

Art historian Francisco Calvo Serraller notes that despite the strength of this darkly stereotypical view of Spain (“La España negra), one that was popular abroad, an “España blanca” was also visible.<sup>20</sup> Joaquin Sorolla’s (1863-1923) paintings of his native Valencia are perhaps the best known made in this vein. Meanwhile, for many artists in Catalonia and the Basque Country the notion of an *España negra* was completely foreign and they preferred to render in paint their own landscapes and heritage, which they recognized as distinct from Castile’s. Joaquim Sunyer (1874-1956) and Josep de Togores (1893-1970) painted seascapes of their native Catalonia taking cues from late symbolist painting, and post-impressionism, respectively. These artistic decisions further distanced their work from that of Spanish tradition, placing it more within the realm of modern European painting. Aurelio Arteta (1879-1940) painted Basque themes, once again rejecting the hegemony of Castile.

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<sup>19</sup> Diccionario de la lengua española, Real Academia Española.  
<http://dle.rae.es/?id=7qyaw48>

<sup>20</sup> Francisco Calvo Serraller, *Paisajes de luz y muerte. La pintura Española del 98* (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 1998), 11-13.

Returning to this theme, historian Sebastian Balfour believes that the celebration of medieval Spain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and of traditional rural life was a flight from the dilemmas of modernization that increasingly threatened the autonomy of a petty bourgeoisie caught between the revolt of the working classes and the spread of capitalism. It was within this context that a new right wing sought to modernize the nation through the creation of a strong economy that would rest on the back of an even stronger army leading an imperialist expansion into Africa.<sup>21</sup>

From 25 July through 2 August 1909 Barcelona was the site of the *Semana Trágica* (the “Tragic Week”) when a general strike led to a popular insurrection that left 100 dead and several religious buildings burnt to the ground. The strike was called to protest the recruitment of soldiers and a massive dispatch of troops that were to set sail from the Barcelona Harbor to fight a war in Morocco.<sup>22</sup> Having lost its colonies overseas Spain wished to maintain a colonial presence closer to home and therefore focused its military strategy on North Africa. The Barcelona anti-militaristic and anti-clerical uprising supported by anarchist groups was harshly put down, resulting in 1,200 imprisoned, seventeen death sentences, and finally five executions. Although Spain did not take part in the First World War, the war in which the country did participate did not turn out well in terms of economic success and international prestige. This time Spain sustained another serious blow at the Battle of Annual in 1921 when Abd-el-Krim, the leader of the Rif tribes of Morocco and his followers, defeated the Spanish army,

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<sup>21</sup> Balfour, “The Loss of Empire,” 30.

<sup>22</sup> Schammah Gesser, 35



inflicting more than 10.000 casualties.<sup>23</sup> The country was thus reeling from yet another defeat and faced numerous subsequent strikes and general political unrest. In 1923 General Primo de Rivera seized power and instituted a military dictatorship. He used *regenerationist* rhetoric to justify his anti-constitutional intervention and dissolved the Catalan Mancomunitat, as mentioned earlier. The principles of fatherland, religion, monarchy and anti-regionalism were the platform on which the UP, (*Unión Patriótica* or “Patriotic Union”) was based - Primo de Rivera’s political party, a conservative coalition.<sup>24</sup> The general’s reputation survived nearly two years thanks to ending the Moroccan war and his populist economic measures.<sup>25</sup> Still, Primo de Rivera was forced to resign in January of 1930 as the country failed to achieve the financial and social stability he promised, and King Alfonso XIII appointed another general to serve and reestablish the constitutional regime.<sup>26</sup> The general Dámaso Berenguer promised a *dictablanda*, as opposed to a *dictadura*.<sup>27</sup> The *dictablanda* did not last long: in 1931 King Alfonso XIII abdicated and the Second Republic was proclaimed.<sup>28</sup>

### **Painters and Writers**

Despite this context of poverty, strife, and discontent, the arts were not totally neglected and the government opened museums of modern art throughout the country in an effort to transform private collections into public museums. The state as the main purchaser of art

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 72-73

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 75

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>27</sup> A play of words between the adjectives *-blanda* (soft) and *-dura* (hard)

<sup>28</sup> Schammah Gesser, 131

set up a link between contemporary art museums and official exhibitions, furnishing museums and public offices with this art. In this way officials could use objects in the collection to manifest their national or regional character. As a result the Museo de Arte Moderno opened in Barcelona in 1891, and numerous museums of contemporary or modern art opened in Madrid, Bilbao, and Valencia between 1884 and 1916.<sup>29</sup>

In 1997, *Paisaje y figura del 98* (“Landscape and Figure of 98”), a significant retrospective of the work of painters associated with the *Generation of '98*, was held in Madrid to mark the 100th anniversary of “the Disaster.” The curators were Javier Tusell and Alvaro Martínez-Novillo González, two important historians whose work focused on modern Spain.<sup>30</sup> A debate arose between Tusell and historian Nieto Alcaide, who wondered whether the sentiment expressed by the *Generation of '98* originated in literature or in the visual arts. Tusell believed that writers saw the paintings, prompting them to come to the realization that change was necessary. By way of example he cited landscape paintings by Solana that featured dead horses, victims of bullfights, and pointed to both Spanish brutality and neglect.<sup>31</sup>

Nieto Alcaide, on the other hand, believed that the painters were inspired by the writers, and defined *Generation of '98* as a literary movement.<sup>32</sup> He noted that the writers were genuinely driven by national concerns, and that the painters, many of whom had

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<sup>29</sup> Jaime Brihuega, *Las Vanguardias Artísticas en España, 1909-1936* (Madrid: ISTMO, 1981), 114.

<sup>30</sup> Javier Tusell, “El regeneracionismo y las artes plásticas,” *Paisaje y figura del 98* eds. Javier Tusell and Alvaro Martínez-Novillo Gonzalez (Madrid: Fundación Central Hispano, 1997) 31-47.

<sup>31</sup> Javier Tusell, *El regeneracionismo*, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Víctor Nieto Alcaide, “Tradición y renovación del arte de fin de siglo,” *Paisaje y figura del 98*, 115-131.

studied in Paris, had a more international outlook in general. Thus their decision to turn towards quintessentially Spanish themes was a result of the influential character of the *Generation of '98* literature.<sup>33</sup> In any case, the spirit of the *Generation of '98* came through most significantly in the work of Solana, the oldest of the three artists studied here. However, the legacy of this generation certainly informed the work of the two younger artists. Meanwhile Solana himself was no stranger to avant-garde circles as his relationship with Ramón Gómez de Serna demonstrated.

In considering the question of whether artists influenced writers, or the other way around it is fruitful to look to the Spanish institution of the *tertulia*. The *tertulia* was the fertile ground that brought together the two bands and made the ideological and aesthetic exchange that ultimately reshaped the nation possible. Similar in some respects to a salon, the *tertulia* was and still is a regular informal social gathering, usually held in a café where issues of common interest are discussed. It is a friendly way of transmitting old ideas and introducing new ones. The *tertulianos* – members of the *tertulia* – meet at the same appointed time in the same café. One of the most famous *tertulias* in Madrid in the early twentieth century was held at the Café Pombo.<sup>34</sup> Every Saturday night literary and artistic figures flocked to the *tertulia* presided by Ramón Gómez de la Serna (1888 – 1963). Gómez de la Serna, or simply Ramón, was a towering figure of the avant-garde. He promoted literature and art and was a prolific writer who authored novels, essays, biographies and *greguerías* – a poetic form, both brief and freeform, that Ramón invented

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Juli Highfill, *Modernism and its Merchandise, The Spanish Avant-Garde and Material Culture* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 36-52.

and defined as “humor + metaphor”.<sup>35</sup> Although committed to the avant-garde, Ramón did not like to associate himself with a particular current or movement. He famously said he did not belong to a generation, but was himself a generation.<sup>36</sup>

Solana, a member of the *tertulia* at the Café de Pombo and a close friend and contemporary of Ramón’s, painted *La Tertulia del Café de Pombo* in 1920 [Fig. 0.1]. It is a group portrait on a large canvas (161.5 x 211.5cm) that was used to decorate the dingy room where the *tertulia* met and is currently at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. It is ironic that even in 1914 the café where the *tertulia* started was a drab and decaying establishment with the gas lamp visible on the upper right side corner of the painting as its only source of light and heat.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the *tertulia* at the Café de Pombo attracted the main artists and writers of the age. When in town, Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera, Sonia and Robert Delaunay, and Pablo Neruda, among others, would drop by.<sup>38</sup>

In 1931 Ramón published *Ismos* (“Isims”), a book that purported to explain an era through its aesthetic tendencies, from *Apollinairismo* to *Riverismo* to *Suprarrealismo*, even *Jazzbandismo* and *Chaplinismo*.<sup>39</sup> Ramón wrote in his prologue: “We are coming

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<sup>35</sup> An example: “El automóvil que se exhibe en pleno reducimiento de aluminio es como una coctelera de las velocidades, las distancias y los peligros.” (“The automobile that displays itself, trimmed to the hilt with gleaming chrome, is a cocktail shaker of speed, distance and danger”). Ibid, 86.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>37</sup> Juan Manuel Bonet, *Diccionario de las Vanguardias en España* (1907 – 1936) (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2007), 131.

<sup>38</sup> Juli Highfill, *Modernism and its Merchandise*, 215.

<sup>39</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Ismos* (Buenos Aires: Poseidon, 1943).

out of our age and it is necessary to leave behind our time explained.”<sup>40</sup> He writes that artists today are characterized not only by their art, but also by their common goal to achieve liberty from political, religious, and economic forces.<sup>41</sup> In his commitment to visualizing an ideal in which art and life are combined, Ramón is truly avant-garde. Yet it is often difficult to parse out Ramón’s philosophies due to the biographical nature of *Ismos* and much of his writing in general. Rather than dwell on methods, theories, or doctrines, Ramón focuses on the progenitors and stars of each movement he describes – including the artists analyzed in this dissertation, who were each known and admired by the writer –defining history through anecdotes and the exploration of personality.<sup>42</sup>

All three artists I study here came from privileged backgrounds. In fact, Solana and Dalí could be called *señoritos*. The word is a diminutive of *señor* and when applied to a young man it is an unflattering way of referring to someone whose father is a person of importance and means and does not need to work; someone rich and frivolous; someone who has servants; and, finally, someone of good position and bad habits.<sup>43</sup> When referring to a female, *señorita* is a respectful way of addressing an unmarried young woman, and so Mallo could rightfully be called *señorita*. While studying in Madrid these three artists did not have to look for odd jobs or give private lessons to survive. They did not live in garrets without indoor plumbing, but rather in comfortable

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<sup>40</sup> Estamos saliendo de nuestra época y hay que dejar explicado nuestro tiempo. Ibid. 12

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 13 – 14.

<sup>42</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *José Gutiérrez Solana* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón, 1944); *Maruja Mallo. 59 Grabados en negro y 9 láminas en color*, ed. Ramón Gómez de la Serna (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1942); Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Dalí* (Seacucus: NJ: Wellfleet Press, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> Diccionario de la lengua española, Real Academia Española.  
<http://dle.rae.es/?id=XcT6x6x>

environments surrounded by other artists who shared similar interests and could enthusiastically dedicate themselves to their art. Although they enjoyed the good life of *tertulias*, bars, nightclubs and all the cultural offerings provided by Madrid at that time, they were far from idle.<sup>44</sup> These three artists were true examples of the old Latin maxim *primum vivere deinde philosophare* (“first live and then philosophize”).<sup>45</sup> Because their everyday necessities were covered they could dedicate themselves to loftier pursuits.

Solana, Mallo, and Dalí were also thoughtful writers with expressive styles and points of view as strong and believable as their plastic output. Solana’s tireless wanderings through Spain and the streets of her capital resulted in his publishing several books on his travels and walks through Madrid.<sup>46</sup> Solana published the majority of his books at his own expense. Mallo revealed her attitude towards her art and the inspiration she found in popular arts in “Lo popular en la plástica española (a través de mi obra) 1928 – 1936” [“The popular in Spanish art (through my work) 1928-1936”].<sup>47</sup> It is possible that she also wrote “Relato veraz de la realidad de Galicia” (“True tale of the reality of Galicia”), published in the Barcelona daily *La Vanguardia* where she recounts her experiences of the early days of the Spanish Civil War as they affected her native

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<sup>44</sup> Even Dalí refers to Ramón’s tertulia in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1993).

<sup>45</sup> Latin phrase of unclear origin sometimes attributed to Seneca.

<sup>46</sup> José Gutiérrez Solana, *Obra Literaria* (Madrid: Taurus, 1961)

<sup>47</sup> “Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936.” This text was first delivered as a lecture at the Sociedad Amigos del Arte de Montevideo, Uruguay, in July of 1937, and subsequently published in Argentina by Editorial Losada in 1939 [Fig. 2.40] and in the volume edited by Ramón in 1942, cited above [Fig. 2.39]. Maruja Mallo, *Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1939).

Galicia.<sup>48</sup> Always a delightful and witty conversationalist, Mallo was often interviewed and quoted in numerous press features and articles in Spain and Latin America. Dalí, a faithful correspondent to his friends, at least until 1928/1929, exchanged countless letters discussing his aesthetic obsessions, and many of these ideas would be published in journals based in Madrid, Barcelona, and Paris.<sup>49</sup>

### **Tremendismo**

Solana's impact on Spanish culture and language is such that the adjective *solanesco* was created to designate something sordid, disturbing and seedy just like Solana's paintings and writings. Both art critics Juan de la Encina and Antonio Espina first used *solanesco* as an adjective in 1927 in their respective rave reviews of Solana's first solo exhibition at Madrid's *Museo del Arte Moderno*.<sup>50</sup> The word, so evocative of a particular visual language and subject matter, is still used to this day. A corollary, *Goyesco/a* is another adjective derived from the painting style of the great Goya. In today's Spanish it designates 18<sup>th</sup> century Spanish fashion used by the lower classes – the majos and majas – and bullfighters

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<sup>48</sup> Maruja Mallo, "Relato veraz de la realidad de Galicia," *La Vanguardia* (14, 16, 21, 26 August, 1938). Although the account was signed by Mallo, there are doubts as to its true authorship.

<sup>49</sup> Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca, *Sebastian's Arrows. Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca*, ed. and trans. Christopher Maurer (Chicago: Swan Isle Press, 2004).

<sup>50</sup> Juan de la Encina, "De arte. Solana," *La Voz* no. 2208 (November 15, 1927), 1.; Antonio Espina, "Arte. Solana," *La Gaceta Literaria* no. 22 (November 15, 1927), 5.

*Solanesco* style is synonymous with *tremendismo*, an art system parallel to *costumbrismo*.<sup>51</sup> *Costumbrismo* is a style associated with regional painting where the artists depicted traditional customs of towns and villages and idealized them, in the process investing them with beauty and nobility. Thus scenes of dances, pilgrimages, processions and festivals with smiling villagers were portrayed as ideally positive. *Tremendismo*, on the other hand, corresponds to a way of showing the reality of the lives of the lower strata of urban or rural society. This reality is hopeless and the painter and writer adopt the role of chronicler of the dim lives of their subjects.<sup>52</sup> *Tremendismo* appropriately derives from Latin, *tremere* meaning to tremble, because of the feeling of revulsion and unease it may provoke in the spectator.<sup>53</sup> *Tremendismo*, a style utilized in the portrayal of the wretchedness of Spain in the early twentieth century, was a logical extension of the pessimism associate with the *Generation of '98*.

In his 1903 novel *La Busca* (“The Quest”), Pio Baroja described characters inhabiting the shantytowns surrounding Madrid as though discussing a painting by Solana. He writes:

One could only see stupid looking swollen faces, inflamed nostrils and twisted mouths, melancholy old women fat and heavy like whales, skeletal crones with sunken mouths and noses of birds of prey; shamefaced beggars with warty chins full of hairs and the look between ironic and elusive; young women skinny and exhausted with black and disheveled hair; and all old and young enveloped in threadbare clothes, patched, mended, mended again until not one inch was left without a patch.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Valeriano Bozal, *El realismo en España. De 1900 a 1936* (Barcelona: Ediciones Peninsula, 1967), 79.

<sup>52</sup> Valeriano Bozal, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> No se veían más que caras hinchadas, de estúpida apariencia, narices inflamadas y bocas torcidas, viejas gordas y pesadas como ballenas, melancólicas; viejezuelas



Solana painted characters aptly described by Baroja while passing through the poor villages of Castile and the subject matter was not the only factor used to achieve the dark and heavy atmosphere. His choice of colors aided this purpose as he used, according to art historian Valeriano Bozal, “dark, even dirty, colors, like those muddy whites and yellows that eliminate any possibility of shine or radiance that is not a reproduction of real whites or yellows, greys and ochers with which he imitates old flesh and gaunt features; the elimination of sunlight and with it the use of the psychological atmosphere defined by an anxious lead-like gravitation of space and the look of objects and people...”<sup>55</sup>

Art historian Francisco Calvo Seraller sees black as the typical color of Spain and in questioning how that came to be, he locates the color’s dominance in Spanish painting as early as the seventeenth century, a time when the Spanish empire was already beginning to decline.<sup>56</sup> The Habsburg monarchs and their courtiers wore black to signify their seriousness and rank. Black was therefore the color of tradition, yet Calvo Seraller

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esqueléticas de boca hundida y nariz de ave rapaz; mendigas vergonzantes con la barba verrugosa llena de pelos y la mirada entre irónica y huraña; mujeres jóvenes, flacas y extenuadas, desmelenadas y negras; y todas, viejas y jóvenes, envueltas en trajes raídos, remendados, zurcidos, vueltos a remendar hasta no dejar una pulgada sin un remiendo Pío Baroja, *La busca* (Madrid: Editorial Cid, 1958), 103.

<sup>55</sup> “... colores oscuros, hasta sucios, como esos blancos y amarillos turbios que eliminan cualquier posibilidad de brillo o esplendor, que no es tampoco una reproducción del blanco o amarillo reales, de los grises y ocre con que reproduce una carne experimentada y unas facciones demacradas; la eliminación sin más, de la luz del sol y, con ella, de la atmósfera psicológica determinada por una gravitación angustiosa, plomiza del espacio y el aspecto de objetos y personajes . . .”Valeriano Bozal, 85-86.

<sup>56</sup> Francisco Calvo Seraller, *Paisaje y figura del 98*, 95-110.

does not believe that the writers of *Generation of '98* were defeatist and pessimistic.<sup>57</sup>

The looking inward by intellectuals was to him a cyclical occurrence that happened first in 1898 and then again in 1927 with the arrival of the modernists.<sup>58</sup>

The bleak urban and rural landscapes described in literature were depicted in the canvases of Darío de Regoyos (1857 – 1913). His paintings, however, included modernist concerns as well, sometimes through his choice of subject matter. For instance, he painted countless landscapes featuring trains running through them, sometimes even next to Holy Week processions.

Elaborating on the idea of blackness, I wish to present the notion of *España negra* (“Black Spain”) as it was articulated in writings by Regoyos and Solana. The former published a book called *España Negra* in 1899 together with the Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren (1855 – 1916).<sup>59</sup> The book was a grotesque and orientaling view of the Spanish countryside. The two friends delighted in the odd customs of rural towns and the constant references to death, which were absent, according to Verhaeren, in the more civilized north. Only in Spain, according to Verhaeren, could one find a coffin displayed together with trunks and suitcases in a shop that sold luggage. Verhaeren wanted to visit a

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<sup>57</sup> It should also be noted that black dress represented the height of fashion in the sixteenth and earlier seventeenth century in many European countries including Spain, and good black dye was very expensive. The association of black with Spain and its decline was to a degree a modern construction, as Calvo Serraller argues at various points. This blackness was thrown into sharp relief by the European avant-garde’s cultivations of color and light beginning in the late nineteenth century and on.

<sup>58</sup> The generation of 1927 refers to a group of poets that included García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Guillermo de Torre, Luis Cernuda and Gerardo Diego among others. They were considered modernist. Schammah Gesser, *Madrid’s Forgotten Avant-Garde*, 107.

<sup>59</sup> Darío Regoyos and Emile Verhaeren, *España negra*, ed. Mercedes Prado Vadillo (Bilbao: El Tilo, 2004).

funeral home in Madrid and was shocked and thrilled to find out that once the corpse was in the coffin, the coffin was not nailed shut, but locked with a key, and once locked, the relatives kept the key. In another vignette the two men stopped at the castle in Medina del Campo and were gleefully disgusted by the piles of rotting mules they found in its moat.

Toward the end of *España negra*, Regoyos observed that, instead of becoming cheerful with our sunlight, Verhaeren returned home sadder than when he came and remarked: “for the same reason that Spain is sad, it is beautiful.” Their approach was not critical, but descriptive. I bring it up because it forms a foil with the book Solana would publish some twenty years later in 1920 with the same title.<sup>60</sup>

Solana’s *La España negra*, which respectfully acknowledged its predecessor, was a more somber and dignified account, but no less bizarre. He went to Medina del Campo and saw the castle, but this time there were no rotting mules, just an unremarkable ruin taken over by ravens. On the other hand, Solana was deeply impressed by traditional processional sculpture and detailed his visit to Valladolid’s National Sculpture Museum, where he marveled at the “dark” Spanish art represented by Juan de Juni (1506 – 1577), Gaspar Becerra (1520 - 1570), Gregorio Hernández (c.1576 – 1636) and Alonso Berruguete (1488 – 1561). He ended his visit remarking that the “sculptor who would take up the legacy of the Spanish tradition contained in the Museo de Valladolid has not yet been born.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> José Gutiérrez-Solana, *La España negra*, (Barcelona: Barral Editores Comares, 1972), 71.

<sup>61</sup> “Todavía está por nacer el escultor que recoja la herencia de la tradición española que está encerrada en el Museo de Valladolid.” *Ibid.*, 71.

I draw on this account to demonstrate that while many Spanish politicians of the early twentieth century looked toward the future, artists and writers did too, but with more reticence, as their art revealed. Regarding their visual language Regoyos and Solana accepted modernist artistic trends. Regoyos especially assimilated post-impressionistic techniques of paint application. Their subject matter, however, showed their interest in studying and possibly maintaining an essential Spanish character considered to be “degenerate” by the era’s full-fledged modernists looking to regenerate and Europeanize.

Upon returning to Madrid from his trip Solana went through his house and admired his treasured possessions, starting with the giant painting *La tertulia de Pombo* [Fig. 0.1]. He respected Ramón whom he considered a Spanish Stendhal or Balzac. Solana then observed the mirror hanging above Ramón in his painting, which looked to him like a film screen and on which he could see all the images of people who have been reflected on it through its history.<sup>62</sup> Although Solana is not considered an avant-garde artist his interest in the immense possibilities of the motion picture brings him closer to the modernist age.

### **Chapter Contents**

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on paintings by José Gutiérrez Solana, in particular those that treated mundane aspects of the Spanish experience -- second-hand markets, social gatherings, dusty museums --, as opposed to the stereotypical subjects portrayed by his contemporaries -- flamboyant flamenco dancers, glamorous Holy Week

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

processions, smiling gypsies -- whose pictures sold well in foreign art markets. Solana did not find success abroad, nor did he seek it. In his home country, however, he never lacked for a captive audience made up of members from both the general public and the art world. Although Solana's chosen themes were essentially personal obsessions that he tracked over decades in drawings, prints, paintings, and writings, that showed little evidence of modernity's effects in Spain over time, I argue that this was an issue that concerned the artist. Solana never advocated for social causes, nor did he outwardly support political parties, as the chapter describes. Yet his insistence on picturing society's lower registers is significant because it visualizes a world that was otherwise concealed. The dark pictorial language he utilized in these depictions became instantly recognizable and formed a point of departure for younger artists to continue such investigations.

The second chapter focuses on Maruja Mallo, the least known of the three artists. No adjective was created to typify her output and no posters of her paintings have become iconic like Dalí's, yet Mallo was essential to Madrid's avant-garde scene. Her career began with bright paintings of *verbenas*, or popular festivals, that despite their cheerful appearance alluded to social inequality. This inequality became much more explicit in Mallo's *solanesco* series, *Cloacas y campanarios*, ("Sewers and Belfries"), often considered in terms of the Surrealist movement. I argue, however, that these images belong to a tradition of typically Spanish landscape painting that Mallo turned on its head. If academic landscape painting was meant to emphasize the supremacy of Castile, as I demonstrate, then Mallo's landscapes presented an inverted view of this corrupt hegemony.

Finally, the third chapter focuses on Salvador Dalí, whose investigations of putrefaction link him inextricably to both Solana and Mallo. Dalí, due in part to his fondness for an unceasing expansion of his autobiography, is most often discussed in terms of his personal legend, his childhood fixations, and his paranoid critical method, which engaged the obsessions of the paranoid mind of the subject. His entry into the realm of putrefaction, however, was closely linked to a collective ethos that grew between Dalí and his friends at Madrid's *Residencia de estudiantes*, a college dormitory. Dalí's series of caricatures termed *putrefactos* ("putrefieds") which mocked a traditional bourgeoisie, as well as his early critical writings about modernity, revealed wider set of concerns outside of his own wildly creative imagination. I demonstrate how Dalí's studies of putrefaction and rot were the result of his search for a visual language that could stand up to modernity, as well as his response to an ultimately ambivalent reception of modernity. His work, I argue, while not directly linked to the *solanesco* in conventional stylistic terms, its ethos is echoed in Dalí's strange juxtapositions of crystalline canvases and rotting donkeys.

## CHAPTER ONE JOSÉ GUTIÉRREZ SOLANA'S MANNEQUINS AND MARKET FINDS

### Introduction

At least 13 human figures populate José Gutiérrez Solana's *El Rastro* (ca. 1922) [Fig.1.1]. El Rastro, Madrid's outdoor market, opened in the mid eighteenth century and continues to be an institution in the capital city, welcoming thousands of shoppers, Spaniards and tourists alike every Sunday.<sup>63</sup> In Solana's version some customers make their way both between vendors and through the back alleys of the famous flea market, while others stand among the objects for sale. Jumbled together near the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas are the torsos of four female mannequins in various states of disrepair, two painted portraits and a small crucifix. The dolls, with their raggedy hair, missing parts and haphazard placement appear as downtrodden as the old pair of patrons frozen in the center of the composition, their blackened faces and hands emerging from heavy clothing. Piles of chairs, a globe turned on its side, and scattered books augment the low cultural connotations of this dreary urban landscape.

This painting of people and things (and people-things) left behind touches upon key themes found in Solana's oeuvre: the wretched poor, their dilapidated habitat, and, above all, the debris -- paintings, oriental jugs, mannequins and religious sculpture -- of

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<sup>63</sup> Carlos Osorio, *Lavapiés y el Rastro* (Madrid: Tempora, 2014), 27.

popular culture. Although during the time the painting was made, Madrid experienced rapid growth in both size and population, Solana chose not to depict the sleek modern metropolis.<sup>64</sup> While he, at times, acknowledged that a brighter side of life indeed existed, the artist seemed to revel in the sordid details of the periphery. In his 1913 book *Madrid, callejero* (“Madrid, Street Guide”), Solana recognized the contrast between the bustling weekend character of the market and its bleak weekday aspect, writing that

To go to the Rastro on a Sunday is to find it more animated and more joyful, when there is more selling going on, heaps of skirts and handkerchiefs; everything seems to be rejuvenated, clean; but during working days is when we see and encounter more outlandish and rare things, heaps of sack coats and short coats, the kind worn by *chulos* [pimps]; top hats, bowler hats, tails, morning coats, all faded and filled with dust, dirty socks and broken boots; capes with discolored collars, all belonging to people who have slept for many years in mausolea and common graves.<sup>65</sup>

Although “off-days” at the Rastro seemed to hold more interest for the artist than Sundays, he easily recognized the inherent social injustice of the market’s organization.

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<sup>64</sup> In 1900 Madrid’s population was 539,835, and by 1930 it had grown to 952,832. During the same time the collective population of small towns bordering the capital went from 45,752 to 200,714. Susan Larson, *Constructing and Resisting Modernity: Madrid 1900-1936* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011), 37.

<sup>65</sup> Ir al Rastro en domingo, es encontrarlo más animado, más alegre, cuando abundan más las ventas, montones de faldas y pañuelos; todo parece que se rejuvenece, que lo asean; pero en los días de trabajo es cuando vemos y encontramos más cosas estrambóticas y raras, montones de americanas y chaquetas cortas, de chulos; chisteras, sombreros hongos, fracs y chaqués empolvados y de colores desteñidos, calcetines sucios y botas rotas, de elásticos; capas con embozos descoloridos, de gente que duerme hace muchos años en los panteones y en la fosa común. José Gutiérrez Solana, *Madrid callejero, escenas y costumbres*, facsimile edition (Madrid: Asociación de Libreros de Lance, 2000), 290. All translations in this dissertation, unless stated otherwise, are my own.



Weekend customers were treated to clean and, perhaps, new wares while during the week poor Madrileños had to sift through the filthy leftovers of their predecessors.<sup>66</sup>

In this chapter, I will introduce major aspects of the oeuvre of Spanish painter and writer José Gutiérrez Solana (1886-1945) and argue against prevailing notions of Solana's disinterest in a world outside of that of his own imagination. In doing so, I will trace Solana's self-constructed artistic persona that informed early responses to his work. I also address more recent evaluations, which although attempting to disregard the mythology surrounding the artist, continue to insist upon the view that while deeply personal, Solana's work was divested of broader political and cultural concerns. In order to refute this notion and assert that Solana's practice was, in fact, deeply political, I will compare his painting with those by his contemporaries, whose subject matter explored similarly popular themes. I will argue that Solana's paintings featured a distinct lack of resolution, thus avoiding easy categorization and indicating the complexities of the socio-political climate in which they were made.

I will also examine Solana's writing, an endeavor closely linked to his painterly activities. Solana's books featured accounts of his observations of Madrid, from the city's churches and slums, to her famous market, as excerpted above. Solana also wrote accounts of his travels throughout Spain, giving special attention to his favorite milieus. Altogether during his lifetime Solana published six books: *Madrid. Escenas y costumbres* (1910), *Madrid. Escenas y costumbres. Segunda serie* (1913), *La España negra* (1920), *Madrid callejero* (1923), *Dos pueblos de Castilla* (1924), and the novel *Florencio Cornejo*

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<sup>66</sup> Solana treated the theme throughout his career in a variety of media.

(1926). Only *Dos pueblos de Castilla* was part of an edited volume, while all of the other books he published at his own cost, a gesture that not only demonstrates the seriousness with which he approached the task of writing, but also that writing was equally as important to him as painting.<sup>67</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna recounts that at one point Solana learned that land in Mexico had been stolen from his family.<sup>68</sup> When Ramón and others told Solana it was his duty to travel to Mexico and sort out the problem, Solana apparently responded, “And for what! Lots of travel, lots of ocean, lots of fuss . . . I need to paint and write our affairs.”<sup>69</sup> Planned books that never came to fruition were *Escenas y costumbres. Tercera serie* and *Madrid, sus museos y sus pueblos*. In 2002 Andrés Trapiello, poet and Solana scholar, published a facsimile edition of the sketchbooks and notebooks Solana utilized while living in exile in Paris from 1938-1939, writings he had planned to eventually turn into a publication as well.<sup>70</sup>

Solana’s interests, as revealed through his paintings and writings, as well as biographies written by Ramón Gómez de la Serna and Manuel Sánchez Camargo (first published in 1944 and 1945, respectively) leaned towards the bizarre and colored the artistic persona he took on during his lifetime and maintained long after his death.<sup>71</sup> The dark persona brought him notoriety, although his lifework spoke for itself, with paintings

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<sup>67</sup> Ricardo López Serrano, “Estudio,” *La España Negra (II). Viajes por España y otros escritos*. Ed. Andrés Trapiello (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2007), 9.

<sup>68</sup> His father, born in Spain, made the family’s fortune in Mexico.

<sup>69</sup> López Serrano, “Estudio,” 10.

<sup>70</sup> José Gutiérrez Solana, *Los cuadernos de París*. Ed. Andrés Trapiello (Madrid & Santander: MNCARS, Fundación Marcelino Botín, 2002).

<sup>71</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *José Gutiérrez Solana* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón, 1944); Manuel Sánchez Camargo, *Solana. Vida y pintura*, ed. revisada (Madrid: Taurus, 1962).

appealing to modern eyes. They are heavily outlined, gestural and flat and depict scenes of city life on the margins; carnival celebrations; still lives of curious collectibles; portraits of poets and fishermen; and meditations on death, all forming part of Solana's lexicon of Spanish popular culture. Many of these canvases are alluring in their strangeness, while others, especially his tauromachy, are repulsive for their violence. The paintings, I argue, need to be examined in their own right, rather than interpreted largely in terms of the persona Solana constructed for himself, which has shaped subsequent understandings of him and his work.

### **The Solana Myth**

Solana's paintings, still admired in Spain today, have been the subject of major solo exhibitions.<sup>72</sup> In 1929, when the artist was only 43 years old, the Museo de Arte Moderno in Madrid held the first retrospective of Solana's work. The scholarly essays published in the accompanying catalogues examined issues ranging from Solana's relationship to the *goyaesca*, his use of photography as a source for his painting, to the construction of his artistic identity. This final point was one that art historians have discussed at length in recent decades. The definitive Solana biography, *Solana. Vida y pintura*, by Manuel Sánchez Camargo, was published in 1945, just months after the

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<sup>72</sup> Centro Cultural Conde Duque. *J. Solana*, exh. cat., text by Luis Alonso Fernández and others. Madrid, 1985; Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, *José Gutiérrez Solana (1886-1945)*, exh. cat., text by Luis Alonso Fernández and others. Madrid, 1992; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *José Gutiérrez Solana. Colección Banco de Santander*, exh. cat., text by María José Salazar and others. Madrid, 1998; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *José Gutiérrez Solana*, exh. cat., text by Juan Manuel Bonet and others. Madrid, 2004.

artist's death of uremia. The author, friends with Solana and his brother Manuel, would spend afternoons at their house on Madrid's Santa Feliciana Street, transcribing stories as Solana recounted them. The resulting biography, which seemed to have been largely directed by Solana, includes unsettling stories, the most popular being two anecdotes that described terrifying home robberies carried out by masked thieves during carnival.<sup>73</sup> Solana apparently experienced both events while still a boy in Santander and would later go on to paint a series of canvases portraying carnival celebrations, complete with villagers wearing frightening masks while gesturing menacingly. The episodes described by Sánchez Camargo were repeated by critics and art historians writing after the publication of *Solana: vida y pintura* and frequently used to inform a biographical interpretation of the images, citing the artist's childhood trauma as a motivating factor behind his practice.

In addition to the stories contained in the 1945 biography, Solana contributed to the growth of his reputation as a peculiar, obsessive and uncouth loner through thematic repetition in his art and writing. His painted self-portraits, as well as photographic portraits, also emphasized Solana's apparent strangeness. In *Self-portrait with Dolls*, painted in 1943, the artist depicted himself seated beside two dolls from his private collection. One stands behind Solana and is turned slightly towards him, although her subtle, yet lively (also haunting), gaze looks past the seated painter. The lone head of a second mannequin is propped up on a raised surface so that Solana can rest his right hand on her hair. He appears as still as the dolls do and they appear as lively as he does, a

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<sup>73</sup> Sánchez Camargo, *Solana. Vida y pintura*, 37-38; 49-50.

situation that cancels out any possibility of determining who among the group is indeed animate, resulting in a reading of the painter as undeniably eccentric.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, in *Solana Gazing into the Mirror of Death*, the artist, photographed alone, comes across as fully self-absorbed as he intensely contemplates his own reflection, further demonstrating his cultivation of a particularly peculiar public image.

While he outwardly valorized the inelegance of popular culture and projected a coarse, rustic and weird character, Solana was, in reality, a bourgeois gentleman. His parents had encouraged his interest in the visual arts and the young Solana had private drawing lessons for four years before matriculating at Madrid's prestigious San Fernando Fine Arts Academy in 1900.<sup>75</sup> There Solana rejected impressionism, the dominant style of the era's successful painters, most notably Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923). Avoiding the sentimentality of the aforementioned mode of depiction, Solana came to admire most the realist tradition in Spanish painting, seeing himself as following a trajectory set out by Velázquez, Zurbarán and Goya.

Despite his dark brand of realism, which set him apart from the Impressionists on one hand and the avant-gardists on the other, and his general distaste for *isms* and reluctance to join any specific artistic movement, Solana was included in important avant-garde exhibitions, such as the famous 1925 exhibition of the *Sociedad de artistas*

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<sup>74</sup> In his notes on Solana, poet Antonio Machado comments on the “insane voluptuousness” with which Solana paints “the living as dead and the dead as living.” Antonio Machado, *Los complementarios* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1971), 127.

<sup>75</sup> According to Gómez de la Serna's biography of Solana, it was the artist's uncle, who determined his nephew was ready to matriculate after asking him to draw an ear from memory and being impressed with his nephew's resulting “auricular labyrinth” Gómez de la Serna, *José Gutiérrez Solana*, 26.

*ibéricos*. Furthermore Solana featured in important contemporary art publications, such as the Ultraist journal *Grecia* (Sevilla, Madrid, 1918-1920) and critic Manuel Abril's *Arte* (Madrid, 1932-33). Further confirming his presence among the New Art, Solana was one of 26 members of the *Amigos del Arte Nuevo* or ADLAN (Madrid 1935-1936).<sup>76</sup> He had a close friendship with poet Ramón Gómez de la Serna, the main promoter of European and Spanish avant-garde movements in Madrid, and generally shared the aesthetic and cultural values of these groups; in particular, an interest in popular culture, the valorization of the ugly, and an emphasis on materiality and flatness.<sup>77</sup> Although he did not explicitly write about his interest in the culture of mass media, Solana consumed it avidly and used published photographs, advertisements and crime posters as sources for his paintings.<sup>78</sup>

Art historians writing about Solana today are interested in removing focus from the bizarre details of his biography and the ensuing biographical readings of his work. However, in doing so they have cast him as an impartial observer who painted, according to Carmona, "his own imagination."<sup>79</sup> Art historian Raquel González Escribano, for example, argues that Solana did not follow a set ideology such as that of "regeneration,"

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<sup>76</sup> The group started in Barcelona in 1932 to promote avant-garde art. The Madrid branch was short lived (1935-1936) due to the Spanish Civil War. Juan Manuel Bonet, *Diccionario de las vanguardias en España (1907-1936)*(Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2007) 25-26.

<sup>77</sup> Raquel González Escribano. *José Gutiérrez Solana* (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, Instituto de Cultura: 2006), 137.

<sup>78</sup> José Luis Barrio Garay. *José Gutiérrez Solana: Paintings and Writings* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1978), 63. Also, Raquel González Escribano. "Album de la España Negra," *José Gutiérrez Solana*, eds. María José Salazar, Andrés Trapiello (Madrid: Turner, 2004), 249-277.

<sup>79</sup> Carmona, Eugenio, "Solana. El invitado, el primitivo y lo inquietante," *José Gutiérrez Solana*, (Madrid: Turner, 2004), 189.

which was at times both promoted and rejected by the members of the *Generation of 98* with whom Solana was often loosely aligned.<sup>80</sup> During Solana's lifetime, the hispanist Jean Cassou, who helped organize Solana's 1927 exhibition in Paris, saw "no type of prejudice, hierarchy or superstition" and Manuel Abril admired Solana's purity and lack of rhetoric.<sup>81</sup>

Although such views of Solana function to dismantle the most prevalent myths surrounding the artist's character, they created yet another mold that allows only limited readings to be derived from the artist's work. Can Solana's alleged objectivity stand up in the face of the political realities in which the artist was immersed, where the image of Spain and the meaning of Spanishness were contested? Even if he was not particularly interested in the concept of regeneration or other ideologies, can we assume his gaze was not a critical one? While adherence to the mythology of the artist can be unproductive, in the case of Solana I believe that a fixation on Spanish popular culture is a key aspect of the personality Solana projected through various artistic interventions, both visual and literary, and through the biography written by Sanchez Camargo. How may this particular feature of Solana's self-imaging aid in interpreting his paintings? Most importantly, what were the meanings of popular culture in Spain during the years that Solana painted and how did Solana engage in a dialogue with these various interpretations? In order to begin

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<sup>80</sup> González Escribano, *José Gutiérrez Solana*, 137. María José Salazar, "El siempre insólito Solana" in *José Gutiérrez Solana (1886-1945). Dibujos. Catálogo razonado*. Santander: Fundación Botín, 2013. Francisco Calvo Serraller, *Paisajes de luz y muerte. La pintura española del 98*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 1998.

<sup>81</sup> Cassou, Jean. "José Gutiérrez Solana," *L'Art et les Artistes*, 76. (Paris: April, 1927), 140-41; Manuel Abril, *De la naturaleza al espíritu. Ensayo crítico de pintura contemporánea desde Sorolla a Picasso* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1935), 60-67.

answering these questions, it is important to consider the nature of Solana's complex relationship with "the popular" and the tradition that supported it, as well as with modernity, which apparently opposed it. It is also necessary to view Solana's paintings in relation to those who explored similar subject matter in their work.

### **Solana and Zuloaga**

There are ways in which, on a superficial level, one may compare Solana's work to Sorolla's (1863 – 1923), whose regionalist scenes were fashionable during Solana's youth.<sup>82</sup> Solana was also often compared to his extremely successful contemporaries Josep Maria Sert (1874-1945) and Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945), both of whom had a popular approach in their chosen subject matter. Sert, for example, painted variations on Hispanic themes for wealthy patrons in Europe and the United States. His *Goyaesque* genre scenes decorated the walls of the dining room at Manhattan's Waldorf Astoria Hotel, showing guitarists, dancers, bulls and *Castellers*, the famous human pyramids of Catalonia.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, Solana was often exhibited alongside regionalist painters, whose work portrayed scenes of the Spanish coast and countryside, and of religious rites and celebrations, while seeming to ignore concurrently developing trends in advanced

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<sup>82</sup> In 1911 Archer Milton Huntington commissioned Sorolla to complete large-scale paintings of Spain's regions for the recently established Hispanic Society of America (1904) in Manhattan's Washington Heights. The series of 14 paintings forms a major part of the Society's collection and is still on display today. While the Sorolla Room was renovated during 2009-2010, the series, titled *Vision of Spain*, was exhibited at Madrid's Museo del Prado, among other locations in Spain.

<sup>83</sup> Palacio de Velazquez. *José María Sert, 1874-1945*, exh. cat., text by María del Mer Arnús and others. Madrid, 1987.



artistic practices and whose outlook as a whole was decidedly uncosmopolitan.<sup>84</sup>

In particular, Solana was often paired with Zuloaga, whose gloomy Castilian landscapes corresponded to Solana's own [Fig. 1.2]. While Solana considered himself indebted to Zuloaga to some extent, the latter's legacy has proved to be much weaker than that of his supposed protégé. Still, Solana admired the older artist and dedicated his book *Madrid, callejero* to Zuloaga. The two began correspondence during the first decade of the twentieth century, when they met in Madrid at the Tertulia del Nuevo Levante and soon afterward the older artist began purchasing paintings from Solana, including *El Rastro*, which he exhibited at his home-studio in Zumaya.<sup>85</sup>

The curators of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, in their most recent installation of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish art, invited comparison between the two painters, exhibiting Solana's *The Visit of the Bishop* (1926) alongside Zuloaga's *The Christ of the Blood* (1911) in a small room that also contained prints by Solana and Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913), another artist known for his depictions of mysterious Spanish themes [Figs. 1.2-1.3]. Such a comparison is fruitful in allowing the viewer to appreciate similarities and significant differences between two dark visions of Spanish Catholicism. *The Christ of the Blood* displays the intense piety of priests and laymen from the Castilian town of Ávila, recognizable by its medieval fortifications. The object of their devotion, a life-size crucified Christ is grotesque, but delightfully so. The Christ's skin is

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<sup>84</sup> For example, Sorolla, Zuloaga and Solana were all included in the section "Regeneracionismo y la generación del 98 en la pintura" in the large-scale exhibition *Centro y periferia en la modernización de la pintura española (1880-1918)*, ed. Carmen Pena (Madrid: Centro Nacional de Exposiciones y Promoción Artística, D.L., 1993).

<sup>85</sup> Zuloaga purchased paintings from Solana during the 1920s and 30s and exhibited them at his home studio in Zumaya. González Escribano, *José Gutiérrez Solana*, 28, 32-34.

colored a dull grey, but it shines brilliantly, mimicking the smooth surface of polychrome sculpture.<sup>86</sup> His hair hangs down to his waist, long and black, and bright red blood pours from his various wounds. Although visually arresting, this extra bloody touch comes across as a theatrical exaggeration, especially where the liquid trickles over the loincloth, a sloppy passage where the illusionary effect of the painted crucifix is interrupted. This contrived element, in addition to the frieze of religious types carefully arranged in front of a picturesque landscape, creates an image of Spanish religiosity that is at once somber and highly entertaining.

The exploitative manner in which Zuloaga engaged his audience differs from Solana's less ostentatious artistic practice. In fact, Spanish critics at the beginning of the twentieth century worried about the image of Spain that the older artist conveyed to a largely foreign audience. It was also a chief factor in assessments of Zuloaga's work by Spanish critics at the beginning of the twentieth century as they discussed the so-called "Zuloaga question." José María Salaverría wrote eloquently on the topic, identifying two ways of feeling subject matter in the creation of art: from within and from outside. In Salaverría's estimation, Zuloaga was among those who "feels things from outside, from the place of a spectator . . ." "Zuloaga," he writes, "has made a passionate Spain; this may be very artistic; but it is anti-patriotic. It is [his] fault that a considerable number of young

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<sup>86</sup> Seventeenth century Spanish polychrome sculpture was known for its extremely lifelike appearance. The figures were often adorned with real clothing and hair, as well as glass eyes to heighten the illusionistic effect. The sculptures were placed in altars and were also used in religious processions, most notably during Holy Week.

Spanish and American painters exercise in filling their canvases with exaggerated and incandescent figures.”<sup>87</sup>

Unlike Salaverría, the critic Manuel Abril did not identify Zuloaga’s oeuvre as insincere, although he did find some of his figures “lamentable” and “ungainly” for their adherence to stereotypes of Spanish styles, an estimation which contrasts sharply with his admiration for Solana, who, according to Abril, avoided them altogether.<sup>88</sup> This avoidance, for Abril, resulted in a more autonomous artistic practice, one that was not attempting to meet the demands of a particular audience. On Solana’s paintings, Abril claimed that “the most grand portraits of history always coincided in saying all without saying it absolutely; they do not think anything; they do not try to insinuate anything; they simply are.”<sup>89</sup> Of course such a judgment was not universal: as such, Abril felt he had to lift Solana’s reputation in the face of the shallow criticism he often received in the press. He writes:

Solana is not dirty, nor pathological, nor immoral, nor does he complete his works with rags. Almost everything that they say about Solana is superficial and light, said as a result of not looking well, not paying attention to things. That he paints everything the same, it could be,

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<sup>87</sup> José María Salaverría, “La España pintoresca,” *ABC*, May 19, 1910, 4-5.

<sup>88</sup> Abril sees this impulse in Zuloaga as part of the artist’s personality, but not necessarily a flaw even though he acknowledges that it betrays a certain shallowness. “Style matters even more than the theme itself. Zuloaga is not a painter of themes, he is a painter of forces and impetus. . . Zuloaga does not want to tell, but wants to cry out . . . to bellow and propel” “La dicción en Zuloaga importa más aún que el tema mismo. Zuloaga no es un pintor de temas, es un pintor de fuerzas y de ímpetu. . . Es que Zuloaga no quiere decir, sino que quiere clamar . . . bramar y empujar e impeler.” Abril, *De la naturaleza al espíritu*, 58;62.

<sup>89</sup> “Los más grandes retratos de la Historia coinciden siempre en decir todo sin decir absolutamente: no piensan en nada; no pretenden insinuar nada: están y son simplemente.” *Ibid.*, 63.

although there are sometimes surprises. That everything he paints is the same, certainly not.<sup>90</sup>

Abril spoke to Solana's very recognizable painterly style, one that could prompt lazy eyes to believe if they have seen one, they have seen them all, but insisted that while Solana's oeuvre as a whole may appear uniform, there were, in fact, multiple meanings and themes that the artist addressed with great sensitivity.

Like Zuloaga, Solana may have created exaggerated visions, but his figures are rarely "incandescent" and certainly do not conform to the types an audience used to consuming visions of Spain conjured up by "outsiders" such as Théophile Gautier, in the literary realm, and Zuloaga and John Singer Sargent among others in the painterly, would expect. Solana engages his subject matter more thoroughly, obsessively one could say, and without the pandering quality of his colleague.

### **Solana's Subjects**

As a result Solana's compositions are not definitive depictions of an exotic backwater, but more suggestive of life as it is lived and its attendant difficulties. That is not to say that the intimately staged *Visit of the Bishop* is devoid of strange characters. The painting features a stern bishop in a broad purple cape who is flanked on his right by a woman staring blankly into space, and a priest, in profile, who looks solemnly into his lap [Fig. 1.3]. On the bishop's left is an old woman, whose gaze meets the viewer's, and

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<sup>90</sup> Solana ni es sucio, ni es patológico, ni es inmoral, ni hace sus obras con harapos. Casi todo lo que dicen de Solana es superficial y a la ligera, dicho por no mirar bien y no fijarse en las cosas. Que todo lo pinte igual, pudiera ser, aunque hay a veces sorpresas. Que todo lo que pinte sea igual, eso ya no. *Ibid*, 64.

an old man wrapped in blankets, possessed of a severe glare, also facing outward. These two are possibly the bishop's hosts and each looks slightly deranged.

The viewer is treated to an intimate vista of an interior, but in addition to the impossibility of deciphering the scene is the fact that many elements within the composition block the spectator's access. The mirror above the bishop's head reflects nothing and in fact thick swaths of paint further obfuscate the illusionary effect of the surface, another point of contrast with the licked surfaces of Zuloaga's canvases. The hands of each person seated at the table betray agitation, as they all grip tightly to objects in the vicinity. The priest holds onto his hat, while both women clasp their own hands tightly. The bishop's left fist rests decisively on the table and the old man, motionless in his rocking chair, grips tightly onto its armrests.

While there are theatrical elements to Solana's composition, such as the drawn curtain on the right side of the painting mimicking a theatrical stage, Solana does not "proclaim," an activity ascribed to Zuloaga by Abril. Unlike the procession, featured atop a hill with Ávila in the background, Solana invites the viewer into a private space, revealing an even less accessible aspect of the local culture. It is difficult and ultimately impossible to apprehend the reason for this somber gathering, but the staging and some elements of dress featured in *The Visit of the Bishop* recall two other paintings by Solana, which perhaps hint at the possibility of another identity for the seated and bearded man pictured in *The Visit of the Bishop*. The paintings *La vuelta del indiano* (1924) and *Los indianos* (1934) both picture men identified as *indianos* [Figs. 1.4-1.5]. *Indianos* were Spanish men who were either born in the New World or emigrated there and made their

fortunes before returning to Spain and are not to be confused with *indios*, the name for the native populations of the Americas, the so-called *Indias Occidentales*. The *indianos* depicted in these paintings resemble, both in age and physiognomy, the elderly man from *The Visit of the Bishop*.

Scholars have identified two stages of the repatriation of the *indianos*. Before the crisis of 1898, the typical *indiano* would return to his town with his fortune, buy a farm, build a home and live comfortably and quietly from the profits. Some founded schools or hospitals. These men were considered *los jubilados de la emigración* or retired emigrants. This situation changed at the end of the century when wealthy *indianos* moved from the passive classes to the active. They created new businesses, new sources of wealth, and contributed to the general well-being of the community.<sup>91</sup> *Indianos* had their particular historical moment at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. During this era their homes and foundations changed the architectural landscape of Northern Spain, because much like similarly wealthy Americans during the era, *indianos* funneled their profits into luxurious homes.<sup>92</sup>

Individually, or through societies of emigrants, *indiano* capital financed roads, bridges, waterways, and diverse building projects and used architecture as a means of inserting themselves in the local bourgeois culture.<sup>93</sup> Compared to their involvement in

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<sup>91</sup> German Ojeda, José Luis San Miguel. *Campesinos, emigrantes, indianos: emigración y economía en Asturias, 1830-1930*. (Salinas, Asturias: Ayalga Ediciones, 1985), 78.

<sup>92</sup> José Ramón Alonso Pereira, “El fenómeno indiano en Asturias y en Galicia” In *Julián García Núñez: Caminos de Ida y Vuelta. Un español en Argentina, un ‘indiano’ en España*. Ed. Ramón Gutiérrez (Buenos Aires: CEDODAL- Centro de Documentación de Arte y Arquitectura Latinoamericana, 2005), 9.

<sup>93</sup> Alonso Pereira, “El fenómeno indiano en Asturias y en Galicia,” 11.

lay projects, the *indianos*' participation in religious matters was somewhat marginal; however *indianos* were involved in the construction of chapels, oratories and shrines in their hometowns and in financing reforms on their local parish churches. There are also records of *indianos* contributing to the creation and enlargement of cemeteries and funerary monuments.<sup>94</sup>

These historical facts demonstrate that the *indianos* were highly aware of their status within their communities and saw themselves as represented through their patronage as well as through their personal building projects, in particular their stately multiple-level homes painted in bright colors, which almost always featured a signature palm tree planted in front. It is interesting then that Solana has depicted these repatriated men without most of the trappings of *indiano* pretension [Figs. 1.4-1.5]. In all three paintings people are engaged in a somber, somewhat unsocial form of socializing. This format allowed Solana to emphasize the individuals themselves, creating a group portrait, a genre to which *The Visit of the Bishop* also belonged [Fig. 1.3]. As Solana himself was the son of an *indiano* it is certain he would have had the opportunity, as a child and young man in his ancestral home of Santander, to observe such events.

In *La vuelta del indiano*, *Los indianos* and possibly *The Visit of the Bishop*, Solana depicts men who returned to Spain before 1898 and who had likely been adventurers in their younger years. However, they had traded in their earlier exploits for stability, respectability and above all responsibility. The discomfort caused by a radical change in routine, which in this case is certainly mild, as the *indianos* had no serious

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<sup>94</sup> Alonso Pereira, 21.

financial concerns, is a subtle quality that Solana capitalizes on in order to add psychological interest to the traditional genre of group portraiture.

### **Solana and War**

Returning to *The Visit of the Bishop*, in addition to the strange gathering of lay people with men of the cloth, it is the building anxiety that arrests the viewer's attention and allows one to see beyond the formal similarities that the painting shares with other group portraits by Solana. With this in mind, in addition to the knowledge of the *indiano* phenomenon, and the charity for which they were known, it stands to reason that the bishop has visited this *indiano*'s home in order to negotiate a charitable gift of some kind. After all, a bishop would probably reserve his visits for important citizens, leaving regular priests to call upon the poor.

Here the difference between Zuloaga and Solana becomes readily apparent. While Zuloaga has depicted a religious procession, an event one could attribute to Holy Week, the reason for the gathering Solana has painted is not immediately clear, although it welcomes conjecture. The non-spectacular scene, painted in mostly muted colors, makes for a focus on more mundane experiences of Catholicism, so that in addition to sentiments of faith and respect, those of unease and, above all, tension, are also visible.

These comparisons invite consideration of Solana's outward lack of interest in politics as opposed to both Zuloaga's and Sert's assertive political voices. Although the Republican government included fifteen of his paintings in the 1937 Pavilion at the World Fair, hosted in Paris, (indeed after Picasso, Solana was the artist with the most



works exhibited), Solana's exhibited work for the most part avoided direct references to war, battle and repression. This stands in marked contrast to Picasso and Joan Miró, whose *Guernica* and *The Reaper*, first exhibited at the Pavilion, have respectively come to symbolize the Republican plight.<sup>95</sup>

Of the fifteen canvases exhibited in Paris, only one dealt explicitly with the theme of the Spanish Civil War, *Recogiendo los muertos*. The painting, now lost, was likely based on graphic work that Solana completed during the earliest part of his exile from Madrid, in Valencia.<sup>96</sup> While there a drawing of his was reproduced in the June 1937 issue of the leftist journal *Nueva Cultura*.<sup>97</sup> Although no evidence of a commission remains, it is very likely Solana was encouraged by his colleagues to contribute to the publication, one of whose founders was Josep Renau. Renau, a graphic artist and committed communist, was also responsible for the design and implementation of the poster program running through the 1937 Spanish pavilion.<sup>98</sup> While Solana's allegiance appeared to be with the Republic due to these involvements, in 1939 in order to return to Spain from Paris, Solana signed a document signaling his obedience to Franco, and citing none other than Zuloaga as a friend who could vouch for his loyalty. In a poignant letter to Zuloaga, Solana thanked his colleague for his support, but also expressed his

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<sup>95</sup> Josefina Alix Trueba. *Pabellón español:Exposición Internacional de París 1937*. Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1987, 246-249.

<sup>96</sup> Alix Trueba, 249. In December of 1936 Solana left for Valencia with his brother where they stayed at the Ritz, which the Republic had converted into a cultural center. The Solanas lived there for five months, among other artists in exile. See María José Salazar, "Biografía," *José Gutiérrez Solana*, eds. Salazar and Trapiello, 362.

<sup>97</sup> Salazar, *José Gutiérrez Solana (1886-1945)*. *Dibujos. Catálogo razonado*, 516.

<sup>98</sup> On Renau and the pavilion see Mendelson, *Documenting Spain*, 125-182.

heartbreak for the situation in Spain, as well as hinting at his dismay at having to define any sort of political alliance, as he had never done so before.<sup>99</sup>

The Pontifical Pavilion at the same 1937 fair provided support for the rebel cause, exhibiting Sert's painting *St. Teresa, Ambassadors of Divine Love to Spain, Offers to Our Lord the Spanish Martyrs of 1936* (1937) [Fig. 1.6].<sup>100</sup> The canvas, measuring 6 x 3 meters, was commissioned by Toledo's archbishop and glorified the martyrdom of Franco's loyalists. It featured, as Marko Daniel has astutely observed, "Christ flying his cross like a precision bomber" as he reached down to embrace St. Theresa.<sup>101</sup> Zuloaga's most important contribution to the right during the Civil War was his 1938 painting, *The Alcázar in Flames*, depicting damage inflicted by Republican forces upon a major emblem of Spanish cultural heritage. The painting was reproduced widely in order to incite support for the rebel cause.<sup>102</sup> Although Solana generally distanced himself from politics, I argue that what he in fact achieved was a disavowal of the politics of certainty and resolution, as well as the aesthetics of spectacle.

### Visiting Markets and Museums

Rather than featuring extraordinary events, Solana focused on the ordinary and the low. He did not attempt to appeal to an international or politically compromised

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<sup>99</sup> Letter dated 23 March 1939. J. I. Tellechea Idígoras, ed. *Ignacio Zuloaga: epistolario y dibujos* (San Sebastián: Caja de Ahorros Municipal, 1989), 64.

<sup>100</sup> Ironically, Sert's grand-nephew, Josep Lluís was the architect of the Republican government's Spanish pavilion.

<sup>101</sup> Marko Daniel, "Spain: Culture at War." In *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930-1945*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1995), 64.

<sup>102</sup> Miriam Basilio, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War* (Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 191.

audience because his obsession was with cultural elements indigenous to Spain, and he did not care to manipulate them to achieve outside approval. Few of Solana's contemporaries embraced low culture with his enthusiasm and breadth. And it was Solana's very interest in this realm, visited in both his paintings and writings, that also precluded him from having a truly "regenerationist" voice. In Solana's images of a popular Spain we do not see the sun-swept beaches favored by Sorolla nor the noble village paupers of Zuloaga. Solana's interest was in a darker reality, but even though it was to a degree a world of his own making, he did not disregard social and political issues of the day. In a posthumously published volume Solana critiqued the modernization of the Spanish capital, especially the renovation of Madrid's Gran Vía:

[. . .] this alarming manner of totally reforming Madrid and placing it at the level of great European cities is not going to have a result because Madrid has always been small, poor . . . without conditions for it there are those who believe that we have come out ahead, but what all of this advancement has served has been nothing more than to raise taxes and cause food to cost four or five times more than before.<sup>103</sup>

For Solana, "regeneration" resulted merely in aesthetic change that indirectly made life more difficult for the majority of Spaniards. Solana focused on the way life is lived, showing its struggles, but not necessarily calling for change, which is why so many readings of his work speak to his impartiality and freedom from easy rhetoric. Yet is this repetitive focus on popular and low culture a rhetorical device in and of itself? A return to

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<sup>103</sup> "Esta manera alarmante de reformarse Madrid en todo y ponerse al nivel de las grandes ciudades europeas no nos va a dar resultado pues Madrid siempre ha sido chico, pobre y sin condiciones para ello. Hay quien cree que hemos salido ganando, pero para lo que ha servido tanto adelanto no ha sido más que para aumentar las contribuciones y hacer que cuesten los alimentos cuatro o cinco veces más que antes." José Gutiérrez-Solana, *La España Negra II*, 304.

the dingy world of *El Rastro* [Fig. 1.1], which includes cast-away mannequins, and a discussion of another mannequin-centric painting, *The Visitor and the Vitrines* [Fig. 1.7], demonstrates some of the social issues contemporary Spaniards struggled with that are given voice in painting.

In *El Rastro* an entry way takes the viewer into a confusing space and doorways on either side of the image serve as a backdrop for the market's workers and customers. Solana does not reconfigure this grimy scene to make it appealing. A pile of cast-off paintings, not unlike those found in the home the bishop visited in his painting of that subject, evoke ruin, while the mannequins insinuate decay, all of which is emphasized by the chaotic mountain of chairs on the left side of the painting. The devastation of the scene, along with the toppled globe implies a country that has lost its empire.

Excerpts from *Madrid, callejero* give further context to *El Rastro*, even allowing us to identify the section depicted:

Uphill . . . the stalls are neater; everything is cleaner. But let's go downhill, to the gangway, where a sign says: 'The primitive Americas.' At the entrance there's a wine skin . . . Through the gate, one sees a tavern and a food stall, where the junk-men go, sack over the shoulder, to eat.<sup>104</sup>

The shingled entryway and *Vinos* sign, along with the seated man with an empty sack over his right shoulder indicate that this painting likely represents *The Primitive Americas* section of *El Rastro*. In his own book on the market, also titled *El Rastro* and published for the first time in 1914, Gómez de la Serna discusses the irony of this wretched area

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<sup>104</sup> "Arriba . . . los puestos son más aseados; todo es más limpio. Pero volvamos abajo, al portalón, donde hay un letrero que dice: "Las primitivas Américas." . . . Dentro de la puerta se ve una taberna y tienda de comidas, donde van los traperos, con el saco al hombro, a comer." José Gutiérrez Solana, *Madrid callejero, escenas y costumbres*, 291-292.

sharing the name with what was formerly a prized possession of the Spanish Empire. He writes:

Spain, the conquistadora, retreats and retires to her own plot. In Madrid, the capital of everything she lost, there are likenesses, corners, symbols of what was breaking off the tree, now hollow like a sentry box. Each time it moves me more when I walk by them. They symbolize in a macabre and sarcastic manner, that rips our boots, the old dominion of America.<sup>105</sup>

Solana, while lacking Gómez de la Serna's nostalgic tone, is similarly moved by what he sees at *The Primitive Americas*, struck in particular by the decrepitude of this section of the market. Another excerpt from *Madrid, callejero* highlighting the exceptional shabbiness reads:

Further below . . . are the final and most colorful stalls of the Rastro. Seamstress's dress forms and hairdressers' cardboard heads, poorly treated and faded, with dirty hair fallen to the shoulders; some of these heads are placed on sticks, others on a wicker body wearing a blue blouse and a black skirt, full of stains, that revolt.<sup>106</sup>

From his use of *colorful* and *revolt* it seems Solana delights in the grotesque qualities of *El Rastro*. But this grotesque delight is markedly different from the exoticizing gaze of Zuloaga. Solana, although an affluent gentleman, does not take this conventional

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<sup>105</sup> "España, la conquistadora, se retrotrae y se recoge en su propio solar. En Madrid, la capital de todo lo que se perdió, hay transuntos, rincones, símbolos de lo que se fué desgajando del árbol, ya hueco como una garita. Cada vez me conmueve más el tránsito por ellas. Simbolizan macabramente, y con sarcasmo que raja nuestras botas, el antiguo dominio de América." Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *El Rastro*, facsimile edition (Madrid: Asociación de Libreros de Lance de Madrid), 214.

<sup>106</sup> "Más abajo . . . son los últimos y más pintorescos puestos del Rastro. Maniqués de modista, cabezas de cartón de peinadoras, maltratadas y despintadas y con el pelo sucio y caído por los hombros; puestas estas cabezas en un palo y otras con el cuerpo de mimbre, con una blusa azul y una falda negra, llena de manchas que da grima." José Gutiérrez Solana, *Madrid callejero, escenas y costumbres*, 293.

approach; he views the market from within, and thrives in its muddled atmosphere and all its heterogeneous realities.

If mannequins signal collapse in *El Rastro*, their symbolism is quite the opposite in *The Visitor and the Vitrines* (1910) [Fig. 1.7]. The setting for *The Visitor and the Vitrines* appears to be a museum. The strange visitor viewing the mannequins, who are dressed in attractive eighteenth-century attire, functions as a representation of Solana's own times. He has an awkward physiognomy and a strange shape, yet has managed to fit himself into a suit, complete with a fancy top hat. He almost looks proper; however, he appears as though he is trying to make up for some defect. The visitor does not even look at the mannequins, choosing instead to stand beside them in an unsuccessful attempt to imitate their regal bearing. The noble image of eighteenth-century Spain embodied by the mannequins contrasts with the broad connotations of the visitor's suit, which acts as an eraser of national identity.

In his notes the artist describes in vivid detail the holdings of Madrid's Museum of Archeology where the *Vitrines* are located.<sup>107</sup> The passage comes from texts meant for a book Solana was preparing, but never published during his lifetime, entitled *Madrid, sus museos y sus pueblos*. In the excerpt Solana explains the contents of each room and, at the beginning, comments on the institution's forgotten status, calling it Madrid's "least known and most abandoned" museum.<sup>108</sup> Among the objects he describes are: stone age tools (used, Solana comments admiringly, for a variety of activities, including peeling an

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<sup>107</sup> The Archivo Solana at Madrid's Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía was established in 1999 after Emilia Solana, Solana's niece and the adopted daughter of his brother Manuel, donated suitcases full of materials to the museum.

<sup>108</sup> José Gutiérrez Solana, "El Museo Arqueológico," *La España Negra II*, 130.

apple, killing an enemy, making art, all carried out by men he deems more intelligent than those of his day), Egyptian antiquities, Iberian artifacts, Greek and Roman statuary, Etruscan ceramics, a reproduction of the Alhambra's *Patio de los Leones*, jewelry, modern glassware and ceramics, tapestries, vitrines filled with figures from China and Japan, etc... Solana admires the museum not only for the richness of its collection, but also for its role in assigning importance to the ephemeral, a function he also completes in his painting and writing. He is grateful to the museum " . . . for the lesson in history and world wisdom that it gives us in demonstrating the ephemeral of our life and . . . makes us admire man, despite all his blunders and brutalities, in his nobler and more spiritual part . . ." <sup>109</sup>

Finally, in room Seven Solana confronts the mannequins depicted in his painting.

[...] we pass into the Seventh room in which we may admire, in vitrines, a portion of clothing, placed on whole mannequins, belonging to the age of Charles IV, Ferdinand VII and the Empire. They are very well conserved and the figures have great beauty in their colors and ornaments. The author of this book, seduced now for many years by the marvelous quality of these mannequins and clothing, made two paintings of them titled, *What the vitrines say (Lo que dicen las vitrinas)*. <sup>110</sup>

The paintings today carry different titles, the first *The Visitor and the Vitrines* and the second, simply, *The Vitrines*, neither of which are as evocative as the title Solana attributes to the pair in his text [Fig. 1.8]. Solana's vitrines have much to say, particularly

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<sup>109</sup> Solana, "El Museo Arqueológico," 130.

<sup>110</sup> . . . pasamos a la sala séptima en la que puede admirarse, en vitrinas, una porción de trapos, colocados sobre maniqués completos, pertenecientes a la época de Carlos IV, Fernando VII e Imperio. Están muy bien conservados y tienen estas figuras una gran belleza en sus colores y tocados. El autor de este libro, seducido ya hace muchos años por la maravilla de estos maniqués y ropajes, hizo de ellos dos cuadros que tituló *Lo que dicen las vitrinas*. Ibid., 137.

when faced with the juxtaposition of eras and their respective modes of dress. A photograph of the time confirms that both vitrines were indeed in the Seventh room. Solana used diluted brush strokes to reflect the finery of the historical clothes.<sup>111</sup>

*The Visitor and the Vitrines* is a painting that speaks to Spanish concerns following the loss of empire and regarding Spain's place within Europe. Solana confronts the political tensions that existed at the turn of the twentieth century between traditional and popular notions of Spanishness and the impulse to modernize by becoming more "European." The context in which he worked during this period was the aftermath of the so-called "Disaster" of 1898 in which Spain lost its remaining colonies. The ensuing political debates between adopting a European-style administration through regenerating Spain's corrupt parliamentary system and upholding a unique national character set the tone for Solana's early practice. Solana brings an issue into focus, but does not necessarily call for regeneration.

Part of this may be due to the dim view Solana had of his contemporaries, who were perhaps not even capable of undertaking such a change. In his chapter on the Museum of Archaeology, Solana comments on the usually empty state of the museum, save for the visitors who come so that they'll have a story to tell. He writes:

Visitors are rare and many of them only visit in order to see one more museum; they are generally out-of-towners that come with limited time and the need to see everything in order to give an account of their doings

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<sup>111</sup> Madrid's Museo del Traje currently houses these garments in its collection. Antonio J. Sánchez Luengo, "Lo inquietante en Gutiérrez Solana: las vitrinas del Museo Arqueológico Nacional," *Museos.es* (2009-2010), 108-121.



at the capital to family and friends and to demonstrate that they haven't wasted their time.<sup>112</sup>

The description of his contemporaries is short and unflattering and one may apply it to the visitor depicted in the painting as well. Solana does not return to the subject in his chapter on the Museum of Archaeology, preferring instead to maintain his focus on the collection itself, a focus so intense that upon leaving the museum, he observes his dizziness, a result of having been immersed in the cluttered universe of the museum, a space he deems altogether more fulfilling than reality, which he conceptualizes as “... unpleasant and false, because the only reality is here in the museums, among these people that put all of their art and life in creating something . . . that is beautiful because it is fantasy.”<sup>113</sup> The fantasy the museum objects suggest to Solana is colored by their status as remnants of a not-so-distant and possibly more prosperous past, much like the goods at the Rastro flea market.

Solana's level of political engagement is unlike Zuloaga's and Sert's, but neither is he an impartial observer. He demonstrates his politics through a focus on popular and low culture that belongs to the lower classes as well as disregarded remnants of Spain's past that have become *démodé*. In doing so, Solana claims this terrain as occupied, rejecting the threats of an advancing mass culture. Just as he saw no place for skyscrapers along Madrid's Gran Vía, he seems to view the European visitor in the museum as a disruptive force within an already fraught culture. After all, he pictured the very real

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<sup>112</sup> Raros son sus visitantes y muchos de ellos lo hacen por ver un museo más; son generalmente forasteros que vienen con el tiempo tasado y lo tienen que ver todo para dar cuenta a sus familiares y amigos de las cosas de la Villa y Corte y demostrar que no han perdido el tiempo. Solana, “El Museo Arqueológico,” 130.

<sup>113</sup> “El Museo Arqueológico,” 140-141.

burden of urban poverty in *El Rastro* [Fig. 1.1], as well as the often-oppressive force of the Catholic Church in *The Visit of the Bishop* [Fig. 1.3].

At the same time, however, Solana identifies those undervalued details, specific to Spanish tradition that deserve wider acknowledgement. Rather than reference events with the aim of garnering support for a specific cause or appealing to a particular audience, Solana demonstrates the complexity of a situation in which an entire nation is implicated, along with all of its inhabitants. Solana references a heritage that is singularly Spanish, but the focus of his paintings and writings move beyond the mere illustration of custom, to face up to real conditions. He embodies a conflicted situation without the simple solutions offered by modernity on one hand, or an adherence to conservative tradition on the other.

## CHAPTER TWO MARUJA MALLO'S *VERBENAS* AND ANTI-LANDSCAPES

¡That Madrid! We used to go with Maruja Mallo, the Galician painter, through poor neighborhoods looking for shops that sold esparto grass and mats, looking at the streets of coopers and rope makers, of all the dry matters of Spain that braid and choke her heart.<sup>114</sup>

-- Pablo Neruda

Like Solana, Maruja Mallo enjoyed traversing Madrid's streets, observing the capital's vibrant traditions and characters. Although most celebrated for her colorful fairground scenes, Mallo's interests also veered into darker territory, leading her beyond the city's limits, where she found inspiration not in nature, but in trash heaps. In this chapter I focus on Mallo's interactions with the material culture of the fair as well as the organic matter of Madrid's outskirts. In doing so, I will demonstrate how they betray the artist's ambivalent attitude towards high culture and modernity's homogenizing effects.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> “¡Aquel Madrid! Nos íbamos con Maruja Mallo, la pintora gallega, por los barrios bajos buscando las casas donde venden esparto y esteras, buscando las calles de los toneleros, de los cordeleros, de todas las materias secas de España, materias que trenzan y agarrotan su corazón.” Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974), 166.

<sup>115</sup> Parishioners and ecclesiastics of the town of Arévalo were surprised one day in 1933 when into the church rode a young woman on her bicycle. Apparently she had taken a wrong turn and, as the cathedral door was wide open, had no choice but to float down the nave until stopping, just in time, at the altar. Once there, the woman promptly turned her bicycle around and rode out as swiftly as she had ridden in, leaving bewildered glances in her wake. This story is one recounted by the painter Maruja Mallo, who apparently experienced the event during her tenure as an art professor in the province of Ávila. The account points to several factors that demonstrate Mallo's involvement with a nascent Spanish modernity. First, she was riding a bicycle, a sporty activity that went part and

Mallo was an avant-garde artist, interested in sports, who traversed Madrid without a hat -- a sartorial choice considered indecent in the Spanish capital during the 1920s -- and counted the triumvirate of Salvador Dalí, Federico García Lorca and Luis Buñuel among her friends.<sup>116</sup> Her status as a modern woman is important as it ties her to the space of the city and shows her to not only be a keen observer of this setting, but also an active participant within it. Mallo painted in distinctly defined series, which she herself classified and described in a small number of essays.<sup>117</sup> Of particular interest for this chapter are the following series, all of which implicate the *pueblo* (people) and the social constraints, or lack thereof, placed upon them within different spaces: *Verbenas*,

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parcel with a newly popular athletic culture; second, she took the bicycle into a sacred space, one associated with clearly defined behavioral norms that did not so much as allow women to enter with uncovered heads, let alone on bicycles. Europeans familiar with Dadaist transgressions would surely have applauded such an incident. Juan Pérez de Ayala, "Álbum/cronología," in *Maruja Mallo (Tomo 2: Álbum y textos históricos)*, eds. Fernando Huici y Juan Pérez de Ayala (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2009), 16.

<sup>116</sup> Mallo matriculated at the Academia de San Fernando in Madrid in 1922. At the time she and her friends often walked through the city without wearing hats. From this transgression comes the term "sinsombrerismo," which roughly translates to "without-a-hatism." Mallo also famously won a blasphemy competition. Juan Pérez de Ayala, "Álbum/cronología," 11.

<sup>117</sup> "Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936." This text was first delivered as a lecture at the Sociedad Amigos del Arte de Montevideo, Uruguay, in July of 1937, and subsequently published in Argentina by Editorial Losada in 1939 and 1942. Maruja Mallo, *Lo popular en la plástica española á través de mi obra, 1928-1936* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1939); Maruja Mallo, "Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936" in *Maruja Mallo. 59 Grabados en negro y 9 láminas en color*, ed. Ramón Gómez de la Serna (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1942), 39-43. "Proceso histórico de la forma en las artes plásticas," was also a lecture delivered in 1937 and published in 1942. Maruja Mallo, "Proceso histórico de la forma en las artes plásticas," in *Maruja Mallo, 59 grabados*, 27-32. "El Surrealismo a través de mi obra," was a lecture delivered in Santander, Spain in 1982, and published in 1983. Maruja Mallo, "El surrealismo a través de mi obra" in *El Surrealismo*, ed. Antonio Bonet Correa (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983), 189-194.

*Estampas* and *Cloacas y campanarios*. The *Verbenas* are depictions of traditional celebrations that took place in the city, while the *Estampas* (*Images* or *Prints*) have a purely metropolitan aesthetic and are grouped into categories such as *Estampas cinemáticas* (“Cinematic Images”) and *Estampas de máquinas y maniquíes* (“Images of Machines and Mannequins”). Finally the *Cloacas y campanarios* (“Sewers and Belfries”) depict the dirty outskirts of Madrid, which represented an alternative to the city, an “anti-landscape,” according to art historian Carmen Pena.<sup>118</sup>

All of these subjects are fitting with the themes visited by Spanish artists and writers contemporary to Mallo, who prolifically and enthusiastically explored traditional subjects – popular culture and landscape – as well as the modern metropolis.<sup>119</sup> Art critic Manuel Abril commented on the phenomenon, noting that this fascination could come from a place of sincerity and did not necessarily result in portrayals of typically Spanish manifestations of popular culture that were simply parodic or retrograde in the sense of presenting a facile promotion of folklore. He writes:

In the pictures of Spanish folklore there is a very current concept at play, cherished in the poetry of many youths today. The ironic concept of the *españolada* does not prevent a lyric sense of the same. On the contrary, its authentic and sincere lyricism removes the humor that could come across

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<sup>118</sup> Comment by art historian Carmen Pena in Antón Reixa, *Maruja Mallo. Mitad ángel, mitad marisco*. Documentary. 1 hour 17 minutes. 2010 <http://www.rtve.es/alcarta/videos/imprescindibles/imprescindibles-maruja-mallo/966721/>.

<sup>119</sup> Juan Manuel Bonet, “De la verbena a Vallecas: divagaciones en torno a la primera Maruja Mallo.” *Arte y Parte*, 82 (Agosto/Septiembre 2009): 30-39. Jaime Brihuega, *Imágenes para una generación poética (1918-1927)* (Madrid: Consejería de Educación y Cultura, Madrid, 1998), 42.

as simple parody, leaving joy and poetry, alternatively and at the same time, in a bittersweet arrangement.<sup>120</sup>

While the propaganda machine behind Primo de Rivera's military dictatorship relied upon "el españolismo folclórico" in order to promote a conservative, as well as constructed, sense of national unity, avant-garde artists were drawn to the same subject because of its paradoxically insider/outsider cultural status.<sup>121</sup> For a cosmopolitan city dweller, the cultures of provincial Spain and the annual celebrations of centuries-old *verbenas* and *romerías* represented forms of culture that bordered metropolitan societal norms and were, by definition, marginal.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, these very cultural forms, although sanctioned by local governments and committees and watched over by members of the *Guardia Civil*, had the potential to present a challenge to authority.<sup>123</sup> For example, Maruja Mallo recognized festivals and other manifestations of popular celebration as battlegrounds. She wrote in her article *Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936*, published for the first time in Buenos Aires in 1938, that

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<sup>120</sup> "En los cuadros de españolismo folclórico juega todo un concepto actual, caro a la poesía de muchos jóvenes de ahora. El concepto irónico de la españolada no impide un sentido lírico de la mismo, sino que, al contrario, su lirismo auténtico y sincero quita al humorismo lo que pudiera tener de parodia fácil, dejando así que jueguen, alternativamente y a la par, la gracia y la poesía en agridulce componenda." Manuel Abril, "Maruja Mallo", in *Maruja Mallo (Tomo 2: Álbum y textos históricos)*, 84-85.

<sup>121</sup> On a "constructed" vision of national unity see Jordana Mendelson's analysis of the "Poble espanyol," built for the 1929 World's Fair in Barcelona. Jordana Mendelson, *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 1-37.

<sup>122</sup> On the filthy aspects of these fairs see note 50.

<sup>123</sup> The Guardia Civil, or Civil Guard, is a military force that carries out police duties. They report to both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense.

the “popular festivals in Spain are manifestations that change with the seasons. They are a pagan revelation and express discordances with the existing order.”<sup>124</sup>

## Verbenas

Madrid sees a variety of festivals throughout the year: some are neighborhood affairs, while others attract a wider audience. Three of the more important *verbenas* are the *Verbena de San Isidro* (May 15), the *Verbena de San Antonio de la Florida* (June 13), and the *Verbena de la Paloma* (August 15), all of which continue to be celebrated today. San Isidro, patron saint of Madrid and of farmers, lived toward the end of the eleventh century, and is believed to have worked the land in the area that is now known as the *Pradera de San Isidro* (Meadow of San Isidro), where angels routinely aided the humble farmer in his tasks. The *verbena* in his honor now takes place in this very location and has been pictured by many artists.<sup>125</sup> The *Verbena de San Antonio* celebrates Saint Anthony of Padua at the site of the 1798 church dedicated in his honor located at Madrid’s *Paseo de la Florida*.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> “Las fiestas populares en España son manifestaciones que giran con el año. Son una revelación pagana y expresan las discordias con el orden existente.” Maruja Mallo: “Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936”, in *Maruja Mallo (Tomo 2: Álbum y textos históricos)*, 48.

<sup>125</sup> Pedro Montoliú Camps, *Fiestas y Tradiciones Madrileñas* (Madrid: Ed. Silex, 1990), 70.

<sup>126</sup> The church is well known for its fresco program painted by Goya. In addition to being the patron saint of lost items, San Antonio is also known as a patron of marriage, which is why it is tradition for single women to line up in order to place their hands into the baptismal font, which is filled with pins. The number of pins that are stuck to a woman’s hand after removing it from the font represent the number of boyfriends she can expect that year. The *Verbena de la Paloma* venerates the *Virgen de la Paloma* in Madrid’s historic *La Latina* neighborhood, and it inspired Tomás Bretón’s 1894 *zarzuela*, a

Mallo completed the *Verbenas* series of four paintings between 1926 and 1928 [Fig. 2.1 – 2.4]. These oil paintings showcase a sustained focus on material culture and its display, an aspect of the fair that artists picturing the same theme both in Spain and throughout the rest of Europe did not privilege as enthusiastically as Mallo. By centering her attention on display, Mallo evokes the artifice of the fair, an event that was at once immensely appealing, fleeting, and deceptive.<sup>127</sup> Another common theme of the series is the ridicule of official cultural forces, a feature that critics have commented upon frequently since Mallo's reevaluation, beginning in the mid-1970s.<sup>128</sup>

In her book on Mallo, part of the "Artistas Españoles Contemporáneos" series, Consuelo de la Gándara notes a satirical and sarcastic tone mounting in the *verbena* paintings as Mallo delves further into the theme. De la Gándara views the initial painting of the series (the Christmas *verbena*) [Fig. 2.1] as, first and foremost, a demonstration of the artist's skills and recognizes a sweet quality she identifies as absent in the later paintings. A joyful mood indeed permeates the canvas, which features the three kings, a Christmas tree, an angel and cheerful revelers in scarves and hats.

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Spanish genre of operetta, which is still performed today. Camps, *Fiestas y Tradiciones Madrileñas*, 70-74.

<sup>127</sup> Mallo would explore display further in her next series, *Estampas*, this time honing in on the commercial presentation of consumer goods and women.

<sup>128</sup> A renewed interest in Mallo's work coincided with the recuperation of the legacy of Spain's historical avant-garde, a result of the end of Franco's dictatorship. The Galería Multitud, for example, headed by Ángel González and Francisco Calvo Seraller, organized the pioneering exhibitions *Orígenes de la vanguardia española* (1974) and *El surrealismo en España* (1975). Earlier criticism includes illuminating commentary regarding the social aspects of Mallo's practice, but just as much of it is focused on Mallo's gender, personality and physical characteristics with various authors citing her short stature, her black hair, her large eyes, etc.



The second painting [Fig. 2.2] de la Gándara views as satirical, but not yet as biting sarcasm as the final two [Figs. 2.3-2.4]. The notion of a crescendo of sarcasm and cynicism seems somewhat arbitrary, but it is evident that Mallo pokes fun at various figures, especially those with some form of power, by giving them either ridiculous or menacing airs. The principle players in this painting are a rotund and well-fed bourgeois couple endowed with various unattractive qualities. The male member of the couple sits with his legs wide open, and lets his stomach jut out. His vapid face and beady eyes are supported by a double chin stuffed into a stiff collar adorned with a small bow tie. The portrayal of his partner, with her empty stare emanating from a puffy face is no more forgiving and the two seem to regard the *verbena* with disdain; Mallo does not portray them as participants within the *verbena*, rather they are observers.

In the background shadowy figures appear in what looks like a train car on the right side of the painting. The most prominent silhouette, wearing a hat with sharp corners, looks like a member of the Guardia Civil; meanwhile, a zeppelin in the background brings to mind war, a timely reminder of Spain's involvement in the Rif mountains of Morocco, where Spanish troops fought to keep a colonial presence in Africa (see page 10). In addition to these dark references are proliferations of typically Spanish items, including fans and *mantones de manila*, fashionable signifiers of national identity, and the usual rides associated with fairs throughout Europe.

## La verbena (1927)

One of the most often reproduced paintings of Mallo's *Verbena* series<sup>129</sup> is *La verbena* (1927) [Fig. 2.3], which also presents a stunning display of the characters and activities associated with the popular celebrations Mallo observed and joyfully recounted in "Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936." Vibrant colors and a proliferation of figures dazzle the eye, while the sharp focus of almost each and every person and object leaves one uncertain as to where to begin taking in the composition. The all-over arrangement lends a dizzying, almost vertiginous effect to the canvas, somehow at odds with the precise delineation of all of the things Mallo has depicted. The composition's kaleidoscopic nature, rides and automobiles lend a frenetic energy to the painting, one that Mallo faithfully captured in her writing as well.

Despite the mad jumble, four sets of figures stand out as the painting's focal points. These are a pair of modern, winged young women in the bottom third of the painting; next to them on the extreme bottom right is a group of sailors; a pair of *gigantes* depicting a veiled lady and a member of the Spanish Civil Guard to their left; and finally, another pair of *gigantes* above them, this time portraying medieval royalty holding exaggerated scepters.<sup>130</sup> In *La verbena* the *gigantes* tower over the other figures, just as

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<sup>129</sup> *La verbena* (considered the third painting in the series of four completed between 1926 and 1927) from 1927 belongs to the Reina Sofia Museum, which contributes to its status as the most viewed and well-known painting of the series in Spain. *Kermesse* (4 of 4) belongs to the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and is displayed intermittently, while the other two paintings of the cycle, *Verbena de invierno* (1 of 4) and *Verbena* (2 of 4), belong to private collections.

<sup>130</sup> *Gigantes*, or giants, are hollow figures at least eight feet tall that feature paper maché heads and hands, but are otherwise hollow. They are usually clothed over a wooden armature to conceal the person underneath who is operating the individual *gigante*.

they would in person, one aspect of the composition that has remained somewhat faithful to true-life scale. Otherwise, this concept of scale is one that applies neither to this image nor to others in the series.

In her essay Mallo notes that various levels of society come together at the verbena and to some extent these different classes are recognizable in the painting. There are uniformed men (the Civil Guard and sailors), flappers masquerading as angels, a hooded monk, what appears to be a gypsy with a club foot holding a guitar, as well as a woman and a doll dressed up *a la españolada*, the latter with a *mantón de manila* draped across her shoulders.<sup>131</sup> A waiter carrying a tray laden with a clear glass bottle and a slice of watermelon is visible slipping in between the *gigantes* and the angels.

The figures of authority holding court at the verbena -- the king and queen and the Civil Guard -- are ironic representations meant to mock the referenced institutions. The presence of the monk as well is most certainly meant as a jab at the Catholic Church. Mallo herself wrote the following regarding the mixing of orders, both social and otherwise, and the resulting irreverence:

At the same time that the frightened devil passes by in a rented coach, the priests fight in stalls and ride the Ferris wheels. Likewise we see in these rites or popular manifestations how they are representing satirically the nobles and the army. Kings, nobles, bourgeois, bullfighters, boxers and *manolas* appear ludicrously gigantic. All of these characters have a grotesque presence, a puppet reality. They stroll through the streets of the fair among the people's creation that builds carousels and Ferris wheels, astronomy stalls, clapping hands, whistles, toy windmills, rustic drums, guitars and miraculous scarecrows.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *A la españolada* means "in a Spanish style" that emphasizes the folkloric. A *mantón de manila* is a large embroidered shawl with a long fringe.

<sup>132</sup> "Al mismo tiempo que el demonio pasa espantado en un coche de punto, los sacerdotes tolean en las barracas y giran en las norias. Asimismo vemos en estos ritos o

In addition to pointing to the grotesque nature of the king and queen, Mallo notes the objects through which the figures must navigate. In various points of her essay Mallo recounts lists of things found at the fair that seem to interest her greatly:

The people of Madrid join together during these commemorative dates, mingling with the crowds from neighboring communities near the capital, which arrived loaded with bouquets, toys, almonds, rattles, palm leaves, jugs, wine skins, rugs, baskets, wicker furniture, built out of the earth, vegetables and joy from the towns of Alcalá, Ávila, Toledo, Colmenar, Cuenca and Tarancón.<sup>133</sup>

This seemingly juvenile interest may be one of the reasons why Shirley Mangini commented upon the “innocent gaiety” of Mallo’s pictures of festivals and fairs (as well as those created by other artists associated with *el arte nuevo*).<sup>134</sup> Mangini posits that images coming out of Germany at the same time depicting nightclubs and cabarets demonstrated a cynicism lacking in the work of Mallo and her colleagues. José Luis Ferris, on the other hand, references “a feigned infantile naïveté” on Mallo’s part.<sup>135</sup> This latter estimation, I believe, is a more productive way to approach Mallo’s practice as her

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manifestaciones populares cómo están representados satíricamente los nobles y el ejército. Aparecen agigantados burlescamente reyes, nobles, burgueses, toreros, boxeadores y manolas. Todos estos personajes tiene presencia grotesca, realidad de fantoches. Se pasean por las calles verbeneras entre la creación del pueblo que construye carruseles y norias giratorias, barracas astronómicas, palmas, pitos, molinillos de viento, zambombas, guitarras y espantajos prodigiosos.” Maruja Mallo, “Lo popular en la plástica española,” 48.

<sup>133</sup> “El pueblo de Madrid se reúne en estas fechas conmemorativas entremezclándose con las multitudes cercanas de la capital que llegan cargadas de ramos, juguetes, almendras, carracas, palmas, jarras, botijos, esteras, cestos, muebles de junco, mazapanes, contruidos con las tierras, los vegetales y la gracia de los pueblos de Alcalá, Ávila, Toledo, Colmenar, Cuenca y Tarancón.” Ibid., 49.

<sup>134</sup> Shirley Mangini, *Maruja Mallo and the Spanish avant-garde*. (Farnham, Surrey & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 78.

<sup>135</sup> José Luis Ferris, *Maruja Mallo: la gran transgresora del 27*. (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2004), 140.

perceptive commentary regarding the contested nature of the space of the *verbena* has much in common with that of sociologist Stuart Hall, who also views the relations that define “popular culture,” to be “in a continuing tension . . . to the dominant culture.”<sup>136</sup> Mallo identifies an underlying social tension in addition to the gaiety of the fair.

One of the most in-depth studies of *La verbena* is María Soledad Fernández Utrera’s 2003 article, which focuses upon the popular and social aspect of the work.<sup>137</sup> Fernández Utrera ultimately argues that Mallo, although displaying an interest in *el pueblo* through her writing, has only depicted members of the newly formed petit-bourgeois intelligentsia as the protagonists of her painting. It is this class of intellectual elites that has risen up to confront the ruling and official Spain -- represented by the *gigantes* in the form of the king and queen -- rather than the working class, with whom the intellectuals, despite their best intentions, had a tense relationship.<sup>138</sup> Fernández Utrera sees in the female figures the idealized modern woman and in the sailors, a symbol for the artistic soul in general. Both angels and sailors, as Fernández Utrera notes, appear in the poetry of Rafael Alberti, with whom Mallo shared an artistic and personal

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<sup>136</sup> Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular’”, in *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 235.

<sup>137</sup> María Soledad Fernández Utrera: “Esencia de verbena: sabor popular y estética de minorías en la pintura de Maruja Mallo,” *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 28, no. 1 (Otoño 2003): 87-102.

<sup>138</sup> Fernández Utrera, “Esencia de verbena,” 95.

relationship.<sup>139</sup> In his evaluation of the painting, hispanist John Crispin notes the presence of “. . . strange allegorical figures who in some cases have little to do with the supposed atmosphere of Madrid.”<sup>140</sup> He most likely refers to these very same sailors and flappers who bring the timeless and traditional world of the *verbena* firmly into the twentieth century. Although Fernández Utrera identifies these figures as resonating with an emerging intelligentsia, it is also possible to see how they, especially the sailors, reference a lower cultural register as sailors were often associated with unsavory pursuits that had little to do with artistic creation. In any case, as I will argue later on, these figures are hardly the painting’s only protagonists.

Fernández Utrera recognizes that Mallo aspired to an idealistic populism, and that the large size of the painting seems to gesture towards mural status, the democratic art form of the age. The painting itself, however, is still an easel picture, one that was snapped up right away into the realm of the cultural elite. Indeed, first displayed in 1928

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<sup>139</sup> See for example, Robert Havard, “Rafael Alberti, Maruja Mallo, and Giménez Caballero: Materialist Imagery in ‘Sermones y Moradas’ and the Issue of Surrealism,” *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 93, no. 4 (October, 1998), 1007-1020; Fernando Huici, “El poeta y la mujer pájaro,” in *Entre el clavel y la espada. Rafael Alberti en su siglo*, eds. Juan Manuel Bonet, Carlos Pérez, Juan Pérez de Ayala (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2003), 175-193.

<sup>140</sup> “. . . extrañas figuras alegóricas que en algunos casos poco tienen que ver con el supuesto ambiente madrileño.” John Crispin, “La generación de 1927 y las artes plásticas,” in *Nuevas perspectivas sobre la generación del 27*, ed. Hector R. Romero (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1983), 35.

at the offices of *La Revista del Occidente*, the painting now belongs to the permanent collection of the Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Fernández Utrera further argues that Mallo's interest in the popular is negated due to the absence of the people in *La verbena*. Among the only members of the popular classes visible, according to her, are the waiter and the gruff looking fellow seen in the reflection of a mirror in the painting's lower right-hand corner.

The composition is bustling, but lacks multitudes. Rather than expose Mallo's inability to truly unite with the popular classes, I believe the absence of hordes allows for a focus on the objects associated with the fair, which are the subject of the composition. Mallo was, after all, deeply interested in these items –decorations, dolls, crafts, fashions - - and their attendant social functions. These objects are responsible for the “realidad de fantoches,” or “puppet reality,” that she mentions in her essay and which, for her, characterizes the fair. A key object of any *verbena* is the doll and in *La verbena* Mallo presents a veritable taxonomy of the item. The king and queen are the main dolls, who reign over a kingdom of lesser puppets and toys, notably the aforementioned lady and Civil Guard. There is a decapitated doll in the upper right hand corner and another doll, the king's right hand man, brandishing a large blade.

In “Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936” Mallo emphasizes again and again that her art is based upon Spanish popular art (“el arte popular español”), which she conceptualizes as “the lyrical representation of the creative force of man.”<sup>141</sup> Similarly, she defines the *verbena* as the “the creation of the people”

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<sup>141</sup> Maruja Mallo, “Lo popular,” 47.

(“la creación del pueblo”).<sup>142</sup> In this way Mallo equates the *verbena* and its visual culture with the popular arts and their makers. Certainly everything at the fair is an artful construction, belonging to the category of “las artes populares”: from the flower streamers at the café and the canopies which adorn the merry-go-round, to the painted guitar and the lacy curtain hanging in front of the various silly hats worn by much of the *verbena*'s population. Physical crowds may not be visible in Mallo's *verbenas*, but the people are certainly present through the objects they fabricated and the fair itself, which is, once more, their creation [Figs. 2.2-2.4].

### **Verbenas in Film**

In terms of style, *La verbena* is far from naturalistic, yet its stylization may be seen as echoing key aspects of the vocabulary of popular and folk art. Additionally, despite lacking naturalism, realistic aspects of the experience of a *verbena* are present. Ernesto Giménez Caballero's 1930 short black-and-white film entitled *Esencia de verbena* is a cinematic document that illuminates the realist aspect of Mallo's painting.<sup>143</sup> Before the Civil War, Giménez Caballero was something of a champion of Mallo's. He penned a short text in 1928 that canonized Mallo as “Notre Dame de la Aleluya,” (“Our

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ernesto Giménez Caballero, *Esencia de verbena* (Madrid: Cinematiraje Riera, 1930).  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpaUF2kpv\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpaUF2kpv_Y)



Lady of the Broadsheet”).<sup>144</sup> He also commissioned the artist to illustrate his writings and included her painting *La verbena* in his film.<sup>145</sup>

During the short, Giménez Caballero provides a voice-over narration while the viewer is treated to the sights and sounds of a few of the capital’s most famous fairs, among them the verbenas of San Isidro and San Antonio de la Florida. At multiple points during the film’s eleven minutes, the camera spins around, striving and ultimately succeeding in mimicking the dizzying effects of merry-go-rounds, rotating swings and Ferris wheels. Also numerous enough to merit mention are the images of dolls, mannequins and cardboard silhouettes that appear throughout. These figures are objects of admiration (in the case of pretty *chulapas*), wonder (in the case of the *Pabellón artístico* where one mechanized doll removes its head) and aggression (in the case of the shooting gallery – in Spanish, *Pim Pam Pum* - wherein a player must knock down as many dolls as possible in order to win a prize). In the depiction of the latter game, Ramón Gómez de la Serna makes an appearance, standing in between two dolls, mimicking their up-and-down movements, and clumsily dodging projectiles hurled by a laughing mob.

In Giménez Caballero’s film there are images of the very things and activities Mallo depicted in *La verbena*, which demonstrate that her work incorporates elements expressive of the reality of the fair. This lends credence to the notion that her support of the *pueblo* is born of a genuine interest in and knowledge of its activities. Her positively

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<sup>144</sup> Ernesto Giménez Caballero, “Notre Dame de la Aleluya,” *Papel de Aleluyas* 3 (septiembre de 1927): 1.

<sup>145</sup> Mallo’s illustrations appeared in Giménez Caballero’s avant-garde literary journal *La Gaceta Literaria* and she designed the cover for his book *Hércules jugando a los dados* (Madrid: La Nave, 1928).

charged representation of the fairground decorations and puppets and the attention she gives to observing them, offers evidence of her very real sympathy with the visual styling and imaginative resonances of popular image making and craftsmanship. Among the scenes of the film that especially resonate with Mallo's painting are images of a display of paper hats like those worn by the winged flappers, swings, cafés, mannequins, dolls and of course *gigantes* [Figs. 2.5-2.7]. There is even an extended segment showing a young woman suggestively pulling up her stocking, which calls to mind the tan and sturdy legs of the aforementioned female protagonists.

In addition to this short film, the feature-length melodrama *Rosa de Madrid* (1927), directed by Eusebio Fernández Ardavín, prominently features two *verbenas*, one of them the *Verbena de San Antonio*. Once more many elements of the fairs in the film recall passages in Mallo's paintings.<sup>146</sup> For example, the camera focuses on women's legs stressing the novelty of this once uncommon sight [Fig. 2.8]. *Rosa de Madrid* also shows a variety of rides, swings, and carousels, and *mantones de manila* [Fig. 2.9]. As a group of the main characters ride to the fair in a horse drawn carriage, they pass by the back of the stall belonging to Tondonia Tinto (a red wine from La Rioja) and as a result the wine's title appears backwards ("OTNIT AINODNOT" instead of "TONDONIA TINTO") [Fig. 2.10]. There are two places in *La verbena* where Mallo has included series of letters that do not amount to logical words or phrases ("TSHL" on the left side of the painting and "SNL" to the left of the *gigantes*); these random strings of letters might refer to the abundance of signage at the fair that is ultimately rendered illegible.

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<sup>146</sup> Eusebio Fernández Ardavín, *Rosa de Madrid*. Silent film. 88 minutes. Producciones Ardavín, 1927. Thank you to Juli Highfill for introducing me to this film.

Finally of interest are a few seconds of footage that show freshly formed churros dropping into a vat of boiling oil fading into a close-up of a flat doll wrapped in a *mantón* [Fig. 2.11].

Giménez Caballero invokes these ubiquitous, crunchy, and greasy morsels both in his short film and in a humorous and strange ode to Mallo:

Churros possess the regular ribbing of corrugated roofing material. And they evoke the canvases of the German Schrimpf. And they remind me above all, of you, *young* one.

Maruja Mallo eats a churro.

And I have these words: the churro is an oil product. Fried oil. The dough leaves the syringe tightly packed into the cauldron, like colored material – a chromatic maggot – from the tube to the palette. The churro is something as terribly thick as a streamlet of paint. But, just like paint, nothing is as spiritual as a churro. . . .<sup>147</sup>

This rumination, which points to the churro's capacity to transcend its oily origins to achieve a spiritual status, is perhaps another version of what Mallo attempts in her painting. All of the objects she lists and paints are quotidian and, above all, ephemeral in nature, but through capturing their essence in art and writing she expands their lifespan and gives them a voice and an image. Mallo takes great care to endow the representation of these objects with a painterly interest and variety that underscores her investment in them. She is not just straightforwardly describing the fair and its ephemera, but conveying through her painterly mode of depiction an imaginatively charged character

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<sup>147</sup> “Los churros poseen el acanalado regular de los tejados de uralita. Y evocan las telas del alemán Schrimpf. Y me recuerdan a usted, sobre todo, *joben* [sic]. Maruja Mallo come un churro. Y yo estas palabras: El churro es un producto al oleo. Óleo frito. Su pasta sale apretada desde la jeringa hasta la caldera, como la materia colorante – gusano cromático – desde el bote hasta la paleta. El churro es algo tan terriblemente pastoso como un chorro de pintura. Pero, como la pintura, nada tan espiritual como un churro . . . ” Giménez Caballero, “Notre Dame de la Aleluya,” 1.

she sees them as possessing, one that has both positive and negative resonances. She achieves this complex representation through clever utilization of the oleaginous “chromatic maggots” that are her tools as an artist.

### **Puppet Reality**

Mallo acknowledges the insecurity of the people’s creation that is evident everywhere in *La verbena* [Fig. 2.3]. The painting evokes different times of day and even different seasons at once, meaning that pinning down which *verbena* is depicted is impossible, even though art historians and critics assume that the *verbena* depicted is that of San Antonio de la Florida.<sup>148</sup> Rather than transcend time to represent a concept as sentimental and trite as the eternal popular, Mallo’s artistic decisions demonstrate its invalidity. In fact, the *verbena* as a cultural manifestation bound to sacred tradition does not seem to interest the artist at all, and her use of a modern mode of representation, as well as focus on modern figures (the flappers and the sailors), throws this very notion into disarray.<sup>149</sup> Mallo and her contemporaries saw popular forms of entertainment, such as the *verbena* or the circus, as sharing an affinity with a modern sensibility, and these artists emphasized what they recognized as a rejection of the conservatism and traditional naturalism of bourgeois high art.

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<sup>148</sup> María Soledad Fernández Utrera, “Esencia de verbena,” 95; Shirley Mangini, *Maruja Mallo and the Spanish avant-garde*, 22.

<sup>149</sup> Consuelo de la Gándara comments on the “rigorously modern treatment” of the work. Consuelo de la Gándara, *Maruja Mallo* (Madrid : Servicio de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1978), 19.

Another curious detail of the painting that outwardly points toward the *verbena*'s transitory nature is the half-state of dress of the *gigante* representing the king [Fig. 2.3]. His purple robe does not nearly reach the ground, exposing what appears to be a wooden board armature. Additionally, the *gigantes*, the rides and the café are all collapsible items that will disappear into storage and bonfires once the fair is over. "Puppet reality", though temporary and artificially constructed, serves as an escape from mundane drudgery, allowing those who recognize it to aspire to an improved existence. Unfortunately official cultural forces seem to suppress it at every turn, a truth visible in the writings and compositions of Solana and Mallo, who reveal "puppet reality" to be an imaginative creation as well as a vehicle for the release of suppressed popular emotions and attitudes.

Puppet reality at the fair exists at the other end of the spectrum from the enforced political reality that existed at parades, which presented a homogenized and intransmutable vision of the nation. Interestingly, in an interview conducted by Juan Manuel Bonet in the 1970s, Mallo recalls having been impressed by the manifestations organized by Primo de Rivera during her formative years in Madrid.<sup>150</sup> Yet her fascination with the *verbena* seems to have been more complex and far-reaching than her interest in military parades. Moreover the notion of puppet reality that she investigates in the *Verbenas* series also differs from the critical readings of fairs and carnivals that identify the organized event as co-opting the populace by entertaining them with a mere illusion of freedom. The fact that her paintings also project an image of genuine enjoyment and release from the oppressions of ordinary everyday existence is key.

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<sup>150</sup> Antón Reixa, *Maruja Mallo. Mitad ángel, mitad marisco*.

## The New Realism and the Fair

Mallo explored the fairground alongside various Spanish painters active at the same time, among them, writer and artist Gabriel García Maroto, Solana, Dalí, and painters Carlos Sáenz de Tejada and Alfonso Ponce de León.<sup>151</sup> In Germany, Franz Roh lauded the carnival scenes of Walter Spies. Mallo, in conversation with Giménez Caballero, referred to Spies, together with Bauchant and Severini, as her “hand of aces.”<sup>152</sup> The comment foregrounds the importance that the German painter’s work and thematic choices held for Mallo as she approached her own artistic practice.<sup>153</sup> Roh had included two illustrations of Spies’s paintings in his 1925 *Magischer Realismus*, published in Spain two years later by the *Revista de Occidente* press.<sup>154</sup> Spanish art critics devoured the text and integrated its celebratory recognition of a new European painterly aesthetic into their reviews and articles.

Critics Antonio Espina and Francisco Alcántara were impressed both by Roh’s contextualization of contemporary trends in the visual arts as functioning largely in opposition to Expressionism and by his discussion of science in relation to the painting of the 1920s. While Roh categorized Expressionist artists as largely anti-scientific, he

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<sup>151</sup> Juan Manuel Bonet, “De la verbena a Vallecas: divagaciones en torno a la primera Maruja Mallo,” 36.

<sup>152</sup> Giménez Caballero, “Notre Dame de la Aleluya,” 1.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus, magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925). Franz Roh, *Realismo mágico, Post expresionismo: problemas de la pintura europea más reciente*, trans. Fernando Vela (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1927). In 1997 the Institut Valencià d’Art Modern published a facsimile edition of Vela’s translation to accompany the exhibition *Realismo mágico: Franz Roh y la pintura europea, 1917-1936*.

identified the new “magical realists” as producing artwork in line with recent discoveries in physics. This resulted in rationalist work that appeared static, but in reality portrayed layers of meaning through use of a deceptively simple schematic visual language. Espina found this analysis particularly applicable to the pared down and stylized landscapes of Gabriel García Maroto.<sup>155</sup> Alcántara dedicated two articles to Roh’s text and ended the second requesting that the book’s translator, Fernando Vela, and other leading art critics and theorists, such as Antonio Espina and Manuel Abril, deliver a series of lectures about *Realismo Mágico* so that the ideas presented therein could be more widely disseminated among Madrid’s artistic community.<sup>156</sup> Although Mallo never explicitly cites the book, it is most likely she was aware of it and its arguments and had seen the paintings reproduced at the end of the volume.

Mark Gertler and Stanley Spencer are two English artists linked to the tendencies described by Roh and for whom the merry-go-round also formed the basis for noteworthy artistic investigation [Figs. 2.12-2.13]. Gertler’s 1916 *Merry-Go-Round* pictures small groups of soldiers, sailors and regular citizens riding merry-go-round horses [Fig. 2.12]. His image of a typical fairground ride features a muted color palette and has none of the celebratory spirit of Mallo’s *verbenas*, although the figures each artist portrays share the visual language of *Return to Order* painting. The people are depicted in a realistic manner, but appear far from naturalistic. They are pictured using a volumetric, pared-

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<sup>155</sup> Antonio Espina, “Exposición Maroto,” *La Gaceta literaria* (August 8, 1927), 5.

<sup>156</sup> Francisco Alcántara, “La vida artística. Los libros de los artistas – ‘Realismo mágico’ por Franz Roh,” *El Sol*, (November 2, 1927), 2; “La vida artística. Más sobre el libro de Franz Roh,” *El Sol*, (November 16, 1927), 4.

down aesthetic, emphasizing general human characteristics, but eschewing the precision of portraiture for a homogenizing stylization.

Completed during the First World War, Gertler's painting conveys the horror of its historical moment. While Mallo pictures freely moving "angels," smiling and wearing funny hats, Gertler shows automatons, each endowed with the same frightening, open-mouthed expression. The clothing of the riders indicates the class or order to which each belongs, but is one of the few differentiating characteristics between them. These people do not appear to have the freedom to choose their ride, rather they have been thrust upon it, doomed to spin around unceasingly. While Mallo's sailors may suggest the poetry of her close artistic collaborator Rafael Alberti, or indicate that these voyagers might enjoy leisure time at a *verbena*, the sailors of *Merry-Go-Round* cannot dismount.

These fairgrounds are public spaces, regulated by the local and provincial governments, as well as parishes and associated confraternities. While they do allow for some form of release, the space is not one that affords complete freedom to the revelers, which is a point Gertler emphasizes more harshly than Mallo. While the presence of the king and Civil Guard allude to those powers that control the lives of the popular classes, Mallo seems to demonstrate that the space of the fair is a hopeful one [Fig. 2.3]. Gertler, painting during wartime, did not recognize such a possibility nor did Spencer, whose *Roundabout* is void of revelers altogether. This eerie view of the fair corresponds to Sáenz de Tejada's *Pim Pam Pum (Shooting Gallery)* (1924) as well as Alfonso Ponce de León's *Puestos (Stalls)* (1929) [Figs. 2.14-2.15]. Although, as Fernández Utrera points



out, Mallo did not paint crowds, her *Verbenas* portray the lively presence of the popular that is wholly rejected by these other artists.

Solana's contribution to fairground imagery of the 1930s is in stark contrast to Mallo's; however, like Mallo, his canvas also suggests the *verbena* as a site of popular entertainment [Fig. 2.16]. But although he essentially pictured one of the same events that Mallo did, Madrid's San Isidro fair, his vision is subdued and drab, lacking Mallo's modern vitality as well as the wealth and verve of Goya's famous *Pradera de San Isidro* (1788). There are at least three fairground rides featured in Solana's painting. The swings, which Mallo also included, a simple Ferris wheel and what appears to be a merry-go-round on the right-side of the background. Shades of brown dominate the painting, a far cry from Mallo's kaleidoscopic *verbena*. Solana has expressed the sleepy nature of the scene through placement of covered wagons, horses, rickety wooden structures and simply dressed citizens in old-fashioned getups against a sandy background full of open spaces complete with a visible skyline.

Despite the fact that Mallo's departure from a more traditional naturalism is emphasized through such a comparison, de la Gándara insists that Mallo and Solana have a common vision:

Her [Mallo's] *verbenas* could seem to be at the antipodes of the carnivals of Solana. Pure appearance. Neither the rotating rhythm, nor the colorist harmony, nor the clean calligraphy minimally alleviates the force and the sarcasm. In Solana and Mallo the paintbrushes are dipped in diverse inks, but their minds and hearts are moved by one impulse.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> "Sus verbenas podría parecer que están en las antípodas de los carnavales de Solana. Pura apariencia. Ni el ritmo rotario, ni la armonía colorista, ni la limpia caligrafía atenúan mínimamente la fuerza y el sarcasmo. En Solana y en Mallo los pinceles mojan en tintas

The critic maintains the two share a cynical viewpoint despite the differences in the visual language employed by each. Certainly negative opinions regarding the *verbena* abounded during the first third of the twentieth century, but there is no evidence of either Mallo or Solana taking on a wholly sarcastic or critical stance concerning the *verbena*.

### **Verbenas in the Popular Imagination**

Respected novelist, political writer, and art critic Margarita Nelken, on the other hand, provided in 1915 an analysis of the *verbena* that is much more emblematic of the kind of sarcastic response that de la Gándara forcibly attributes to Mallo and Solana. Nelken's article, "Aspectos de Madrid. Las barracas verbeneras" ("Aspects of Madrid. The Stalls of the Verbenas"), emphasized the unsavory while nodding only here and there to a few of the fair's positive aspects. She defined the jumble of the fair in a way that could very well describe Mallo's *La verbena* [Fig. 2.3].

At the verbena all the stalls get mixed up and fused with one another . . . Next to the luxurious carousel is a stall with hazelnuts; it is not clear to which stall the barrel organ belongs, nor in front of which the *chula* stands, she who so painstakingly believes she is the queen of the verbena.<sup>158</sup>

The blending Nelken refers to is visualized by Mallo in paintings as well as by Giménez Caballero and Eusebio Fernández Ardavín in their respective films, *Esencia de verbena*

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bien diversas, pero sus mentes y corazones se mueven por un mismo impulso." De la Gándara, *Maruja Mallo*, 21.

<sup>158</sup> "En plena verbena todas (las barracas) se confunden y se compentran . . . Junto al lujoso "tio vivo" está el puesto de avellanas; no se sabe bien a cual pertenece el organillo ni delante de cuál está parada aquella chula que se siente tan concienzudamente reina de la verbena." Margarita Nelken, "Aspectos de Madrid. Las barracas verbeneras" *España* no. 85 (1916), 13.

and *Rosa de Madrid*. General descriptions of the fair give way to Nelken conceding the transformative effect of the boat-shaped swings (*columpios*) for lower class city dwellers, who have no opportunity to escape the stress of the metropolis [See *columpios* in Figs. 2.3, 2.5, 2.9, 2.16]. She writes that after having swung around in the fresh air, they feel reinvigorated, having experienced an activity akin to the country jaunt their financial situation makes impossible. But for Nelken this ride represents one of the few wholesome features the fair has to offer. One of the only others she identifies are the flowers, whose ferocity and savagery she admires, as these are not the delicate plants that one finds at the florist, but hearty species bred to withstand rough conditions. Yet, Nelken does not hesitate to point out that they are mangled, dusty and smell of oil. As a whole her article functions as a condemnation of the *verbena*, which she labels as tragic, cheap, cold, and sad. The merchants appear miserable to her, while the air reeks of churros and smoke. She is disturbed by a popular stall filled with clay figurines that are either religious (crèche figures), or pornographic; these are examples of “popular arts” that for Nelken do not merit celebration.

The shooting gallery, a dynamic site in the short film of Gímenez Caballero, is wretched for the critic, who is repulsed by the majority of dolls she sees there. Curiously, two dolls stand out among the chaos she describes:

Nevertheless I have seen once in a shooting gallery a marvelous spectacle. It was in a poor shooting gallery, a shooting gallery with faded dolls, almost broken, dolls that were never replaced and with a kerosene lamp that gave the woman in charge of the stall - one of those wretched women with a dirty camisole, dirty hair, bags throughout her whole face and deformities on her back and abdomen - the tragic relief of a Gorki hovel. In that shooting gallery on each side of the line of dolls there was an almost life-size figure of cut-out painted wood. They were two profiles, a

bullfighter and a *manola* drawn with such a secure instinct that its ignorance reached the highest stylization. Especially the bullfighter with his very short jacket, his very prominent hip, the rouge on his cheek and his eye that looked straight ahead in the middle of his profile, was an unforgettable sight. I have never seen a more tragic and more revealing caricature than this unconscious one. The scene amid the absolute solitude of that poor stall was chilling.<sup>159</sup>

It is noteworthy that the naïve representation of the bullfighter and *manola* appealed to Nelken, as Mallo took her cue from this very stylization in composing *La verbena* [see Fig. 2.7.b and Fig. 2.7.c]. But while Mallo celebrated this popular visual language, and used it to inform a whole series of paintings, Nelken saw it as a flash of misguided creativity within an otherwise ghastly setting.

Nelken's condemnation of the festival site is echoed in the aforementioned *Rosa de Madrid*, where major plot twists revolve around *verbenas*.<sup>160</sup> Both Nelken and Ardavín included humor in their portrayals of the *verbena*, but they also approached the

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<sup>159</sup> Emphasis my own. "Sin embargo, he visto una vez, en un pim-pam-pum, un espectáculo estupendo. Era en un pobre pim-pam-pum, un pim-pam-pum con muñecos descoloridos, casi deshechos, muñecos que no se reemplazaban nunca, y con un quinqué de petróleo que daba a la mujer que presidía la barraca, una de esas mujeres-miseria con camisola sucia, moño sucio, ojeras por toda la cara y deformidad de espaldas y de vientre, el relieve trágico de una creación de chamizo de Gorki. En ese pim-pam-pum, había de cada lado de la fila de muñecos, una figura casi de tamaño natural recortada en madera y pintada. Eran dos perfiles, un torero y una manola, dibujados con un instinto tan seguro que su ignorancia llegaba a la más alta estilización. El torero sobre todo, con su chaquetilla muy corta, su cadera muy acentuada, el colorete de su mejilla y su ojo que miraba de frente en medio de su perfil, era una visión inolvidable. Nunca he visto caricatura más trágica y más reveladora que esta caricatura inconsciente. La escena, con la soledad absoluta de aquella pobre barraca, era escalofriante." Margarita Nelken, "Aspectos de Madrid. Las barracas verbeneras," 12.

<sup>160</sup> Ardavín, *Rosa de Madrid*. Enrique, a motivated student of medicine from the provinces, first spots the eponymous Rosa, a seamstress, at Madrid's *Verbena de San Antonio*. There she stuns Enrique and his friends with her beauty and fortitude (unlike the men, she braves the most dizzying rides without suffering side effects). While the *verbena* depicted in the film is lively and attractive it is also the locus of Rosa's fall from

topic with a biting sarcasm that, I argue, Mallo and Solana tended to avoid.<sup>161</sup> Mallo and Solana's views of the fair do not correspond to a sentimentalizing image of the festival, nor do they come down on the side of those critics who emphasize the dangerous and disgusting facets of the *verbena*. Their separate artistic imaginations coincide in their estimation of the potential of the site; Mallo in particular is attuned to the creative forces that the *verbena* encourages, paving the way for expressions of the popular unfettered by official and commercial forces.

### **Mallo's Estampas**

In her *Verbenas* series Mallo explored "Puppet reality," granting visibility to its creative actors. In her metropolitan *Estampas* series, on the other hand, the only living people implied are passive consumers. Mallo exhibited the latter series, works on paper, together with the *Verbenas* at the *Revista de Occidente*, drawing rave reviews from critics. Melchor Fernández Almagro, acknowledging Mallo's impact on the art scene,

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grace. When Enrique returns home for the summer Rosa, despite feelings of malaise, attends a *verbena* at Madrid's *Bombilla* park with her friends. She imbibes too much wine at the prompting of Enrique's friend, Miguel, and the segment ends with latter's malicious gaze. Months later, after having disappeared from Enrique's life, Rosa gives birth, her baby delivered by none other than her former beau, now working full time as a doctor. While in the film Rosa eventually achieves success as the owner of a chic atelier, the story is filled with heartbreak and even includes the suicide of Enrique's erstwhile fiancée.

<sup>161</sup> In opposition to the cynicism on display in the examples mentioned above, are accounts of the *verbena* that romanticize it entirely. For example, Alberto Insúa, in his popular 1926 novel *La señorita y el obrero o un flirt en la verbena de San Antonio* (*The Young Woman and the Worker or a Flirt at the Verbena de San Antonio*), tells the story of the successful union between a bourgeois young woman and a working class man. The two meet and fall in love at the *verbena*, as a result of class mixing that is allowed at the festival. Alberto Insúa, *La señorita y el obrero o un flirt en la verbena de San Antonio* (Madrid: Rivadeneyra Gráfica, 1926).

remarked “These days María Mallo has struck the art scene as with the mallet implied by her forceful last name.”<sup>162</sup> The *Estampas* series of drawings and paintings are similar to the *Verbenas* in the modern visual language employed by the artist (montage, cubist compositional techniques, dynamic cinematic imagery) and in their focus on *things* and their display. Many images depict shop windows (*escaparates* in Spanish), whole mannequins, as well as mannequin parts, streetlights, cocktail glasses, cars and skyscrapers.<sup>163</sup> Unlike the mostly “homemade” objects at the *Verbenas*, the things pictured in the *Estampas* are evidently mass-produced and consumed at a mass level. The fair might become crowded, but the number of revelers at a given *verbena* pales in

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<sup>162</sup> “Ha golpeado estos días la actualidad artística María Mallo con ese martillo al que alude su contundente apellido.” Melchor Fernández Almagro, “Maruja Mallo,” *Verso y Prosa* (June 1928). “Mallo” is the Spanish word for mallet.

<sup>163</sup> The poet Concha Méndez was a close friend of Mallo’s and in her memoirs Méndez recounts the time they spent together, activities vividly reflected in Mallo’s work between 1927 and 1930. “Maruja Mallo was with whom I spent the most time: we used to go to the Prado Museum and to Eugenio d’Ors’s lectures, to the *verbenas* and to the poor sections of Madrid. We used to take walks to look at those picturesque characters lit by the streetlights. Women were not allowed to enter the taverns. In protest, we leaned against the windows to look at what was going on inside.” “Con quien más me reunía era con Maruja Mallo: íbamos al Museo del Prado y a las conferencias de Eugenio d’Ors, a las verbenas y a los barrios bajos de Madrid. Nos paseábamos para ver aquellos personajes tan pintorescos que pasaban a nuestro lado iluminados por los faroles de la calle. Estaba prohibido que las mujeres entraran en las tabernas; y nosotras, para protestar, nos pegábamos a los ventanales a mirar lo que pasaba dentro.” Paloma Ulacia Altolaguirre, *Concha Méndez. Memoria Habladas, Memorias Armadas* (Madrid: Mondadori, 1990), 51. Méndez also recounts that her mother and father destroyed a portrait Mallo had painted of her in retaliation for Méndez, then age 30, traveling internationally without their permission. In the portrait Méndez was pictured reclining with books at her feet. Her position reminded her parents uncomfortably of Goya’s *Maja Desnuda* and it was their chauffeur who later told Méndez that they slashed the painting while she was away. As Kirkpatrick notes in response to the anecdote, the social and familial expectations placed upon women like Méndez and Mallo were stifling and in view of such challenges their achievements are even more remarkable. Susan Kirkpatrick, *Mujer, modernismo y vanguardia en España (1898-1931)* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2003), 252.

comparison with the number of consumers purchasing department store goods. The *verbenas* also feature a local flavor, an essence that is obviously lost in mass production. On the twentieth century commodity Stuart Hall notes that “Rather than simply ‘falling into disuse’ through the Long March to modernization, things are actively pushed aside, so that something else can take their place.”<sup>164</sup> Mallo’s paintings demonstrate that not only was she highly aware of the transitory nature of artisanal crafts; she also recognized the ephemeral nature of machine-made goods.

In terms of situating the series within a larger European context, one may consider similarities between the *Estampa (Escaparate) (Image, (Shop Display))* and Otto Dix’s *Prager Straße* [Figs. 2.17-2.18]. Both Mallo and Dix offer disjointed visions of the city through a proliferation of objects, both whole and fragmented. Although the German artist’s painting clearly represents a much harsher depiction of the modern metropolis, the juxtaposition is helpful because it demonstrates two examples of work aligned with the ethos of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. As mentioned earlier, artists and critics in Spain were interested in the new painting, sculpture, and architecture coming out of Germany, and in early 1928 Giménez Caballero dedicated an issue of his prestigious journal *La Gaceta Literaria* to contemporary German culture.<sup>165</sup> Gertrudis Richert’s article on developments in German painting references the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, “la nueva objetividad” in Spanish, although curiously fails to mention Roh and *Realismo mágico*. Richert is drawn to the social dimension of the new realism, writing that works belonging to this category retain the dynamism of Expressionism, while rejecting its interiority to speak to a more

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<sup>164</sup> Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Popular,’” 228.

<sup>165</sup> *La Gaceta Literaria*, no. 33 (January 5, 1928).

universal experience.<sup>166</sup> While *Prager Straße* in particular evokes Expressionist angst, it is precisely situated in its historical moment, clearly addressing anti-Semitism and the tragic effects of World War I. The war cripples take center stage, but there are also various consumer goods visible in Dix's painting, a contrast that indicates the social contradictions in Weimar society following the Great War.<sup>167</sup> From the fur hats on display in the vitrine in the background, the yellow glove in the middle ground, to the platform-heeled shoe in the foreground, the painting at once insists on the vulgarity of these objects and showcases their individual consumer appeal.

Mallo is in many respects very modern in her approach to painting, as well as critically aware, yet her work does not align with the satirical and darkly ironic mode of artists such as Dix. Mallo's *Estampas* also feature mannequin parts, but the city is not depicted as a violent place, simply a cold one. Her inclusion of skyscrapers, trains, and elegant goblets alludes to the frenetic pace of city life, yet these things appear to exist in a vacuum. Mallo's *Estampas* show dead or empty wares, which are unlike the lively objects of the *verbenas*, invigorated by their incorporation in popular festivals, giving them agency beyond their categorization as mere commodity.

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<sup>166</sup> Gertrudis Richert, "Notas. El nuevo arte alemán," *La Gaceta literaria*, no. 33 (January 5, 1928), 3.

<sup>167</sup> Paul Wood, "Weimar Germany" in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism. Art Between the Wars*, eds. Briony Fer, David Batchelor, Paul Wood (London: Yale University Press in association with The Open University, 1993), 290-300.



## Dolls of the City: the Mannequin

The dolls of the *Estampas* series are not creations of the *pueblo*, rather they are mannequins tasked with selling. In this way mannequins have more in common with live models than with the dolls who populate the *verbena*.<sup>168</sup> An article by Magda Donato (the pseudonym of Carmen Eva Nelken, Margarita Nelken's younger sister) that appeared in the magazine *Estampa*, explains the process of creating the mannequin which, as Donato recounts, involves live models, various materials including clay and wax, and artists, who labor to create a life-like look, focusing on the delicate details of gesture and facial expression. The largest Paris factory produced a quarter of a million mannequins annually, female mannequins accounting for the vast majority.<sup>169</sup> Donato ironically suggests that in some ways mannequins are superior to humans, as they are cheaper to maintain, despite the fact that their upfront costs are high. Bargain mannequins went for 500 francs, but the high-quality mannequins found in Madrid's great department stores were purchased wholesale from Paris for 4000 - 5000 francs (before factoring in fees associated with transit and customs tax).<sup>170</sup> Mannequins, like people, are not everlasting, and a shabby figure is bad for business, so old mannequins were cast away, sent to the

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<sup>168</sup> Martin Roberts, "Mutations of the spectacle: vitrines, arcades, mannequins," *French Cultural Studies* 2, no. 6 (October 1991): 235-240.

<sup>169</sup> By 1896 Pierre Imans had set up a thriving business on the Boulevard Haussmann. His mannequins had wax faces, wigs of real hair, glass eyes, and articulated limbs and waists. His competitor Victor-Napoléon Siégel was known for "peach skin" models with silky eyelashes and hair." Alyce Mahon, "The Assembly Line Goddess: Modern Art and the Mannequin," *Silent Partners: Artist and Mannequin from Function to Fetish*, ed. Jane Munro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 205.

<sup>170</sup> Magda Donato, "Maniquies," *Estampa*, no. 37 (November 9, 1928), 23.

Rastro market according to Donato, where a regular celebrity shopper might offer them a chance at immortality.

And the old mannequin will end up in some flea market waiting to be picked up by Ramón Gómez de la Serna who will give it shelter in the Capernaum (city of comfort, field of repentance) of his room where he will pamper it, comfort it, sing to it and give it true immortality with his pen.<sup>171</sup>

Mallo's mannequins lack vibrancy, a nod to their status as disposable commodities. This series shows the artist taking on a slightly more critical stance than she exhibited with the *Verbenas*, but she would not exhibit a truly subversive streak until her *Cloacas y Campanarios* ("Sewers and Belfries") series.

### **Maruja Mallo's *Cloacas y Campanarios* as Anti-Landscape**

In 1932, five years after her debut at the offices of *La Revista de Occidente*, Maruja Mallo held her third successful exhibition, this time at the influential Galerie Pierre in Paris. In Paris Mallo showed a group of works belonging to her latest project, *Cloacas y Campanarios*. Unlike the exuberant paintings from her *Verbenas* series, the latter paintings are characterized by their earthy theme, muted color palette, and repeating motifs that include skeletons, footprints, discarded fabric, and excrement; there are no outright references to the city as in the *Estampas* series. Critics in both France and Spain praised the works and their creator, and were quick to draw connections between Mallo's painting and a Spanish realist tradition that spanned centuries.

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<sup>171</sup> "Y el viejo maniquí va a parar a algún 'rastro', en espera de que Ramón Gómez de la Serna se lo lleve, le dé albergue en el cafarnaum de su cuarto, lo mime, lo consuele, lo cante y le dé, con su pluma, la verdadera inmortalidad." Magda Donato, "Maniqués," 23.

The Hispanist Jean Cassou wrote that , “ . . . everything is depicted in whites, blacks, and grays, those inimitable grays: one might say that they are humorous grays, known only to the Spaniards. . . .”<sup>172</sup> Similarly, Gómez de la Serna compared her with El Greco and referenced her, “ . . . mastery of the gamut of dark tones, and with them works in the gray, the opaque, the ‘dead’, a typically Spanish color. . . .”<sup>173</sup> Eduardo Westerdahl termed Mallo’s an "underground" painting style, that depicted a brutal and unforgiving Spain, akin to the nightmare version exposed by Buñuel.<sup>174</sup>

Scholarship on Mallo and the *Cloacas y Campanarios* has discussed her work in terms of Surrealism; however, Estrella de Diego has convincingly argued that the links between the Paris-based movement and the artist are tenuous at best.<sup>175</sup> While Mallo’s imagery may have appealed to the Surrealist aesthetic (Breton famously purchased *Espantapájaros* after the Galerie Pierre show), the designation seems to have come about as a result of critics calling her a “surrealist” to facilitate the reevaluation and recuperation of her work. It might also be a result of Mallo’s own words regarding her early projects: a lecture Mallo delivered in 1981, *El surrealismo a través de mi obra*, was heavily based upon what she had written about *Cloacas y Campanarios* in her 1937 lecture (and later publication) “Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra,

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<sup>172</sup> Jean Cassou, "La Revue Hebdomadaire," in *Maruja Mallo*, ed. Ramón Gómez de la Serna, 54.

<sup>173</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, "Maruja Mallo," in *ibid.* 19.

<sup>174</sup> Eduardo Westerdahl, "Maruja Mallo. La constante dramática de su pintura," *Gaceta de arte* no. 17 (July 16, 1933).

<sup>175</sup> Estrella de Diego, *Maruja Mallo*, 23-37; Ana Vazquez de Parga, “¿Maruja Mallo surrealista?” *Maruja Mallo*, eds. Juan Pérez de Ayala, Francisco Rivas (Madrid: Artegraf, 1992), 31-43.

1928-1936.”<sup>176</sup> De Diego has argued that Mallo showed little interest in surrealist methods, psychic automatism chief among them, and was in fact deeply interested in geometry, order, and nature.<sup>177</sup> Art historian Fernando Huici has pointed to the influence of Solana and his depictions of *la España negra*.<sup>178</sup>

Mallo’s interest in nature leads to the third major point of entry critics have taken into the series, discussing the compositions in terms of the activity surrounding the *Escuela de Vallecas* or *Vallecas School*.<sup>179</sup> This loose collective formed around the artists Alberto Sánchez (1895-1962) and Benjamin Palencia (1894-1980), who between 1929 and 1931 frequently traveled to the village outside of Madrid, taking the nature they observed there as inspiration for their sculptures and paintings. Mallo described their

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<sup>176</sup> In 1981, on the heels of the activity of the Galeria Multitud, Antonio Bonet Correa convened artists and art historians in Santander for a conference dedicated to the study of Surrealism, in particular its Spanish context. Key scholars delivered lectures (among them Juan Manuel Bonet, Angel González García, Rafael Santos Torroella) and Maruja Mallo gave a talk titled *El surrealismo a través de mi obra*, which was later published alongside the rest of the conference papers in 1983. The majority of *El surrealismo a través de mi obra* is lifted from Mallo’s 1936 lecture *Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra*. The term “Surrealism” never appeared in the earlier essay, but Mallo utilized it in the title of the latter and also referenced the movement, and its “pope” André Breton, in the expanded text. (De Diego also cites this copying in *Maruja Mallo*, 68). Mallo even pays homage to surrealist psychic automatism writing, “Yo, con el lápiz debajo de la almohada que no uso . . . , despierto con el cerebro en la mano.” “I, with a pencil under my pillow that I do not use . . . wake up with my brain in my hand.” Despite such language, Mallo did not use this technique to guide her work. Maruja Mallo, “El surrealismo a través de mi obra,” 193.

<sup>177</sup> De Diego, *Maruja Mallo*, 49.

<sup>178</sup> Huici, “El poeta y la mujer pájaro”, 185.

<sup>179</sup> Carmen Pena, “La Escuela de Vallecas (1927-1936),” *Revista de occidente* no. 103 (December 1989), 61-83; Eugenio Carmona, “Materias creando un paisaje: Benjamin Palencia, Alberto Sánchez y el ‘reconocimiento estético’ de la naturaleza agraria. 1930-1933,” *El surrealismo en España* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1994); Maite Barragán discusses this collective in her forthcoming dissertation, *Mediating Modernity: Visual Culture and Class in Madrid 1926-1936* (Temple University).

journey to Vallecas thusly: "... we were captivated with walking on the iron paths. This unique morphologic transport trend was our escape ahead; this desire to march over the metal parallels was like a foretoken to cross the world borders. That's how we arrived at the Vallecas Hill."<sup>180</sup> Considering the *Cloacas y campanarios* within this framework places the paintings within a specific context (that of the village of Vallecas and the artists who went there) and ties them to the genre of landscape painting. Indeed, it is when considering how the genre was constructed in Madrid during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the viewer may recognize how Mallo subverts convention to perform a cagey political critique of nationalism, while promoting her singular vision and, at the same time, constructing an extravagant artistic persona, which is visible in a series of portraits Mallo would complete at the same time.

Mallo's *Antro de Fósiles*, like the paintings of the *Verbenas* series, is a large-scale picture, but its subject matter is anything but festive [Fig. 2.19]. No flags wave in the air, just a rag attached to a stick jutting out of a broken jug. Instead of revelers, human remains hover across a dingy terrain. Strewn among the bones of the painting's foreground are discarded horseshoes, an impaled frog, errant mushrooms, and a couple of lizards. Multiple rows of columns recede into the background causing the skeletal remains to appear that much closer to the surface of the canvas. The column was an architectural detail favored by Giorgio de Chirico and often featured in his metaphysical

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<sup>180</sup> "... Seduciéndonos caminar sobre los caminos de hierro. Esta singular tendencia morfológica de transporte, era nuestra fuga hacia adelante; este deseo de andar sobre las paralelas metálicas, sería una previsión de atravesar las fronteras del mundo. Y así llegamos al Cerro de Vallecas." Maruja Mallo, "Maruja Mallo y La Escuela de Vallecas," *Maruja Mallo*, eds. Juan Pérez de Ayala, Francisco Rivas, 80.

paintings; however, unlike those images, Mallo's is dynamic, humming with a macabre energy that seems at odds with the decaying subject matter. In writing about these paintings for the first time in 1937, Mallo remarked that she was impressed with nature's facility for eliminating the trash produced by humanity, by the transitory nature of things.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, the chaotic scene at hand seems to demonstrate the very process by which nature eventually conquers all.

These desolate scenes are surprising following Mallo's artistic activity of the late 1920s, which saw the artist completing multiple compositions featuring crowded *verbenas* and sleek shop windows. Certainly, Mallo's links to the *Escuela de Vallecas* may have encouraged the artist to turn her focus to sights outside of the Spanish capital. Also, having studied at the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts while living at the *Residencia de Señoritas* Mallo knew firsthand the benefits of the excursion as a supplement to both general education and artistic practice.<sup>182</sup>

Mallo embarked upon her exploration and interpretation of the rough terrain surrounding Madrid with enthusiasm and confidence as exemplified through her writing, the paintings themselves, and a series of photographs staged and taken around the same time. A 1931 photo shows Mallo standing behind *Antro de Fósiles* with journalist Josefina Carabias [Fig. 2.20]. The scale of the painting is emphasized as it takes up the

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<sup>181</sup> Mallo, "Lo popular," 49-50.

<sup>182</sup> The *Residencia de Señoritas* is the subject of a 2015-2016 exhibition held at the *Residencia de Estudiantes* in Madrid. See Margarita Márquez Padorno, Almudena de la Cueva, eds. *Mujeres en vanguardia. La Residencia de Señoritas en su centenario (1915-1936)* (Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes, 2015).

width of the hallway in which the two women stand, each one with an elbow supported by the canvas.

The most interesting photographs of Mallo at this time were taken by her brother Justo between 1928 and 1930 and show Mallo taking on a curious persona while inhabiting a landscape similar to the ones depicted in the *Cloacas y Campanarios* series [Figs. 2.21-2.23]. In one photograph, published in at least two different Madrid newspapers in the fall of 1933, Mallo looks out from a small opening on the face of a railroad switchman's shack [Fig. 2.21].<sup>183</sup> In addition to Mallo's made up visage, the door is decorated with animal skulls, a long cotton thistle, chalk drawings of a cross and a guitar, and writing in chalk featuring Mallo's name along with the words, "España" and "Sotanas y . . ." ("Cassocks and..."). The dark visions of Spain depicted in the photographs and in the paintings flow together seamlessly, allowing Mallo to claim authorship over this new way of inventing and depicting landscape, one that at once was indebted to and divorced from tradition.

### **The Development of Spanish Landscape Painting in the Nineteenth Century**

Landscape as a genre was not highly valued nor widely discussed in Spain until the second half of the nineteenth century. When a professorship in landscape was instated at the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts by order of the Ministry of Governance in 1844, the decree praised the genre, not only for its utility as decoration, but for its use in

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<sup>183</sup> Gaceta de arte, año 2, octubre 1933. Heraldo de Madrid, 23 September 1933.

“scientific journeys and nature studies.”<sup>184</sup> Landscape allowed for a new way of knowing and relating to the reality of the country, and respected painter Aureliano Beruete (1845 – 1912) was the foremost promoter of the new concept of landscape.<sup>185</sup> Beruete was also a founding member of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (ILE). The ILE, founded in 1876, was a cultural enterprise that emerged out of a nationalist project dedicated to developing and employing modern pedagogical methods to illuminate the essential qualities of the Spanish nation and to regenerate it. Chief among the positivist tactics promoted at the ILE was the excursion, an activity inseparable from the practice of landscape painting during the later half of the nineteenth century.<sup>186</sup>

Beruete’s paintings were unlike the type of landscape style popular during the first half of the nineteenth century, exemplified by Jenaro Pérez de Villaamil (1807 – 1854), who depicted landscapes that were both timeless and exotic. Beruete’s paintings, which systematically pictured the emblems of Castile, engaged a newly imagined tradition of Spanish painting, and made homage to the landscapes depicted in the canvases of Velázquez and El Greco. Beruete contributed to a specific conception of the Spanish nation, which considered Castile its center. E. Inman Fox has noted how Spanish nationalism imposed a high culture on a society where a popular culture had previously

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<sup>184</sup> Francisco Calvo Serraller, “La teoría del paisaje en la pintura española del siglo xix: de Villaamil a Beruete (47-62),” *Tres grandes maestros del paisaje decimonónico español: Villaamil, Haes, Beruete* (Madrid: Concejalía de Cultura, 1990), 51.

<sup>185</sup> María del Carmen Pena López, “Paisajismo e identidad. Arte español,” *Estudios Geográficos*, Vol. LXXI, 269 (July-December, 2010): 505-543.

<sup>186</sup> María del Carmen Pena López. *Pintura de paisaje e ideología: la generación del 98* (Madrid: Taurus, 1983), 80-90.



dominated.<sup>187</sup> In the case of Spain, the cultural elite of the late nineteenth century established institutions, such as the aforementioned ILE, and published histories (such as those by Modesto Lafuente and Rafael Altamira), which foregrounded Castile as central to the development of Spanish culture.<sup>188</sup> They identified Castile as setting the tone for Spain's Golden Age and championed the writers and painters of the era. Within the realm of painting then, it is important to recognize that the landscape genre aided this cultural project as a whole.

Beruete's emblematic *View of Madrid from the Meadow of San Isidro* (1909) is an impressionistic painting that references the work of another authentically Spanish artistic genius, namely Goya. Easily recognizable are a few of the capital's architectural landmarks and seats of power, including the Royal Palace and the church of San Francisco el Grande, both situated behind Madrid's "apprentice river," the Manzanares. The relative weakness of the river, coupled with the scattering of trees along its banks, is revealing of the fact that Madrid's geographical position in relation to the rest of Spain made it a strategic political location, rather than its surrounding topography.

### **Mallo's Rejection of a Genre**

Mallo called her series *Cloacas y Campanarios*, but there is not a belfry in sight. The title refers to a lofty architectural structure that one expects to find in a landscape or cityscape, and pairs it with a subterranean system that has less appealing associations.

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<sup>187</sup> E. Inman Fox, "Spain as Castile: Nationalism and National Identity," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21-36.

<sup>188</sup> Fox, "Spain as Castile," 30-33.

Yet one cannot deny that like Beruete, Mallo is depicting an invented version of Madrid's surrounding landscapes, and her vision, like Beruete's, is inherently political. Mallo, having had a traditional artistic education guided in part by the principles of the ILE, was familiar with the type of nationalist myth promoted by the landscape painting of Beruete and his artistic descendants. Mallo's pictures are still representative of Spain, and even reference the Spanish realist tradition in painting, but they reject the notion of Castile as a seat of high culture and political power. Instead of directing her gaze to the belfries' heights, she dove into the trash heaps normally hidden from sight, thus enacting an institutional critique, a hallmark of avant-garde artistic practice.

It would be incorrect, however, to take Mallo's rejection of this brand of nationalism too seriously, as it ignores the performative aspect of her photographs. Mallo clearly enjoyed inhabiting the strange, unpleasant terrain she created in paint and experienced, however briefly, in real life. By emphasizing the constructed nature of the paintings of the *Cloacas y Campanarios* series, Mallo was able to promote her artistic persona and artwork while calling into question the veracity of the landscape genre as a whole.

### **Coda: Maruja Mallo's Archive and Legacy**

The question of genres, and Mallo's understanding of them, is key when approaching Mallo's work. The praise Mallo received from Ramón Gómez de la Serna and other luminaries at the start of her career was largely responsible for her quick ascendance in the avant-garde art world. However, it would later become necessary for Mallo herself to ensure that she would remain there for posterity.

In 1942 Ramón's bibliographic essay about Mallo was published by Editorial Losada in Buenos Aires, where both Spaniards had lived since leaving Spain at the start of the Civil War in 1936. In 1939, Losada had published its first book with Mallo, this one, taking its name from the artists' eponymous essay, first published in the Argentine literary magazine *Sur* one year earlier, titled *Lo popular en la plástica española a través de mi obra, 1928-1936*. Mallo's essay focuses on the trajectory of her artistic practice within the context of her interest in the work and celebrations of the popular classes, as well as their arts and crafts and even the spaces they inhabited, which at the time were transitioning from rural to urban. The text of this small volume is accompanied by a color reproduction of *La verbena*, forty-eight black and white reproductions of paintings and prints, photographs of maquettes of her set designs, and a selected bibliography.

The 1942 publication, in which Ramón is the credited author, is simply titled *Maruja Mallo*. It once more included Mallo's essay *Lo popular*, but also featured important additions, for example Ramón's study, which opens the book. *Maruja Mallo* is much larger than the previous publication and also contains excerpts from her critics, as well as forty-seven plates, arranged according to Mallo's exhibition history. The book was an important one for Mallo's career and nearly all subsequent publications about the artist have mentioned Ramón's assessment of her work. Mallo herself held on dearly to Ramón's words, as evidenced by several sets of notes from her archive.

Ramón's initial treatment of Mallo in the essay is humorous and respectful. He writes, "Maruja Mallo crops up like a true new spring in Madrid, like a Mayday present

with confusing spelling.”<sup>189</sup> (Mallo’s last name is easily confused with Mayo, the name of the month due to the similar pronunciation.) After this word play, Ramón calls Mallo “una brujita joven,” (“a cute young witch”) and a *meiga*, (a Galician term for witch) and imagines her mixing up paints like potions in a northern hamlet. In addition to these playful Ramonian touches, there are other points within the article where the author, as usual, inserts much of himself. Mallo’s depictions of festivals and fairs, for example, lead him to eulogize Madrid, home of the *Verbena de San Isidro*. Ramón muses that the angels who helped Madrid’s patron saint work the land next to the Manzanares are also on Mallo’s side, inspiring her hand as she paints. The Ramonian flavor of the essay increases when the author gets carried away contemplating that miraculous site that has inspired so many artists (Goya, Beruete, Mallo). He writes,

That painting by Maruja Mallo was born at the San Isidro meadow pilgrimage, the starting point of a Spain that is enterprising, migrating, reconquering. I would say that Christopher Columbus does not take off from an Andalusian port, rather from a cove made by the unnavigable Manzanares at the beachy bend of the San Isidro meadow.<sup>190</sup>

This statement is more closely linked to Ramón’s love of Madrid than nineteenth century historiography that gave Castile pride of place, even though it also plays a small role here.

Although he revels in these ironic digressions, Ramón does provide creative insights

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<sup>189</sup> “Aparece Maruja Mallo, como una verdadera primavera nueva en el aire de Madrid, como un regalo de mayo en confundida ortografía.” Ramón Gómez de la Serna, “Maruja Mallo,” 7.

<sup>190</sup> “Aquella pintura de Maruja Mallo había nacido en la romería de la pradera de San Isidro, punto de partida de la España emprendedora, trashumante, reconquistadora. Yo diría que Cristóbal Colón no sale de un puerto andaluz sino de esa ensenada que hace el innavigable Manzanares en la curva playera del prado de San Isidro.” *Ibid.*, 9.

into Mallo's career and paintings, achieving this with refreshingly little dependence on anecdote, a feat not accomplished often enough in writings about Mallo. Ramón discusses her work in terms of a specific tradition of Spanish realist painting, naming both El Greco and Goya as her predecessors, and while he also recognizes the important role that folklore plays in Mallo's oeuvre, he is quick to point out that her painting is by no means "*folclórico*." Ramón goes on to describe her very metropolitan *Estampas* and provides plenty of examples that define Mallo's career as both international and avant-garde. He notes Mallo's 1932 exhibition at the famed Galerie Pierre, and the fact that Breton, "el jefe surrealista," (the surrealist boss) purchased *Espantapájaros* ("Scarecrow"), but instead of simply labeling Mallo a surrealist as many, he enthusiastically explores the dirty topography of the *Cloacas y Campanarios*, noting Mallo's inventiveness in finding scraps and leftovers an appropriate subject for artistic inquiry, as well as her contribution to the genre of Spanish landscape painting.<sup>191</sup> He also points out the repeated images of the cotton thistle and makes a connection to Francisco Giner de los Rios, another founder of the ILE, who collected them in the Guadarrama Mountains outside of Madrid to decorate his home. The thistle with its sharp thorns is a hardy and enduring plant that thrives in the dry landscape and sandy soil surrounding Madrid, particularly the working class areas such as Vallecas where there are not many trees.

Later on, in 1956, Ramón published once more on Mallo, this time in an article in the magazine *Atlántida*. The first two thirds of the article come straight from the 1942 work,

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<sup>191</sup> Ramón refers to leftovers as "los archivos de meriendas" (archives of snacks), *ibid.*, 11.

but the final third delves into Mallo's more recent successes and mentions their friendship.<sup>192</sup> It shows that Mallo's interaction with Ramón was ongoing, as was her interaction with his essay.

In her archive currently housed at Madrid's Galería Guillermo de Osma, there is a pair of documents listing people in the United States to whom Mallo sent copies of the 1942 monograph, as well as a scattering of thank you notes from polite recipients, including Nelson Rockefeller. There is also a photocopy of Ramón's essay that Mallo has marked up with red and green pen, underlining and dotting various sections of the text. Most surprisingly, Mallo has copied words and phrases from Ramón's essay onto sections of toilet paper of varying lengths.

The photocopied essay is dated 8 May 1980 and features a key in the upper right hand corner. "Plas." corresponds to the sections Mallo has underlined with red pen. "Medi." corresponds to the sections underlined in green, and red and green dots mark beings and objects. After reviewing the variety of phrases underlined in red pen it seems that "Plas." in this case most likely refers to the adjective *plástico/a*, defined as follows: It applies to a style or phrase that by its conciseness, precision and expressive power emphasizes ideas or mental images.<sup>193</sup> "Medi." probably stands for *medio*, or environment, which would also account for the fact that both "Islas Canarias" and "sepulturas de basuras" (garbage graves) are underlined in green. On seven separate pieces of toilet paper labeled A-G

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<sup>192</sup> Ramón Gómez de la Serna, "Maruja Mallo," *Maruja Mallo (Tomo 2: Álbum y textos históricos)*, 121-128.

<sup>193</sup> "Dicho de un estilo o una frase: Que por su concisión, exactitud y fuerza expresiva da mucho realce a las ideas o imágenes mentales." "Plástica" in *Diccionario de la lengua española*, Real Academia Española: <http://dle.rae.es/?id=TLksLOy>.

Mallo has copied down passages from Ramón's essay. On six separate pieces of toilet paper numbered 1-6 Mallo has either copied down text or included lists of words with definitions and/or synonyms she has probably found in a dictionary. Finally, on some loose-leaf pieces of paper Mallo has taken notes about Dalí and several other aspects of twentieth century art history. She does not cite an author, but writes "Según L.F." ("According to L.F.") at the top of the page. I have verified that these notes come from the 1962 book *De Trajano a Picasso. Ensayos (From Trajan to Picasso. Essays)* by art historian Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, which further demonstrates Mallo's concern with her place in art history.<sup>194</sup>

Mallo herself glued graph paper to the edges of the toilet paper in order to increase its structural integrity. It is obviously a material that is difficult to write upon, so Mallo had to take great care and write with a light touch. Clearly what she was copying was of importance to her, but she wrote on a material that is utterly disposable. She was filling regular bound notebooks at the same time, so her decision to use toilet paper seems deliberate. There is also a clear link (a logical conclusion?) between toilet paper and the excrement pictured in her series *Cloacas y Campanarios*.

Mallo was meticulous in the construction of her archive and the record keeping of her bibliography. A catalogue of her 1936 ADLAN exhibition includes her additions, in pencil, to the printed bibliography. She also kept scrapbooks with all of her reviews. These are not marked up, so her focus on Ramón's essay demonstrates its importance to the artist. Mallo returned to Spain in 1961 and by that time she was relatively unknown; it

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<sup>194</sup> Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, *De Trajano a Picasso. Ensayos* (Barcelona: Editorial Noguer, 1962), 452-463.

was up to her to build up her reputation to its former glory. One way for her to define her place within the Spanish avant-garde was to revisit the words of Ramón, who was not widely read in Spain at this time by any means, but who was nevertheless familiar to the cultural elite.

By the 1970s Mallo was well known in artistic circles and her work featured in two key exhibitions focused on the art of the historical avant-garde, the first that had been staged since 1936. The young art historians responsible for the activities of the Galería Multitud (1974-1978), among them Francisco Calvo Seraller and Ángel González García organized two pioneering exhibitions *Orígenes de la vanguardia española: 1920-1936* (1974) and *El surrealismo en España* (1975).

A collage that Mallo constructed during the 1970s also functioned to direct conversations about her career in a very specific direction (and was reminiscent of the photo-plastered walls of Ramón's office). The collage features images of paintings she created after 1936, as well as photographs; however, its focus is clearly the newly fashionable historical avant-garde. Ramón is at the center and many familiar faces and sets of eyes grace the page. Beginning from the upper left hand corner we can recognize: Picasso, Lorca, a caricatured Buñuel, Dalí, Ortega y Gasset, Neruda (post-1936), more Picasso, more Ramón, Breton, Buñuel's eyes, and Antonio Machado. She included a photo of a bearded Quico Rivas between Ramón and Ortega y Gasset. Rivas, along with the academics behind the Galería Multitud, was largely responsible for the resurrection of both Mallo's career and an interest in the historical avant-garde in Spain.



Just as Mallo recognized where the *Cloacas y campanarios* stood in relation to a particular tradition of landscape painting, as I have argued in this chapter, she recognized that her work was emblematic of Spanish avant-garde's artistic practice. However, she also saw that being a woman and having been away from Spain for nearly three decades, her work was in danger of falling from the canon of twentieth century Spanish art history. Although she was on the same level as Dalí in the early 1920s, in terms of recognition, she did not stay there. Her reading of Lafuente Ferrari and her exhaustive notes demonstrate an impulse to understand how she fitted, or could make herself fit, into the canon of the historical avant-garde as it was being constructed. Mallo gave the marginal a prominent place in her compositions. She then used that setting to play with her own artistic image, one that became a salient concern for the artist in the final decades of her life.

Interestingly, copying her career highlights onto toilet paper, Mallo avoided placing the historical avant-garde on too high a pedestal. Her impulse to preserve her legacy in waste is a direct allusion to her earlier series, *Cloacas y campanarios*; indeed, in her later years Mallo's own archive channeled the ethos of her prior artistic preoccupations. Such a move was fully consistent with the very specific conception of Spanish modernity that Mallo shared with both Solana and Dalí, wherein she and these other artists regarded elements of Spanish culture, both high and low, with fascination and disgust.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
***PUTREFACTOS AND PUTREFACTION IN THE EARLY WORK OF***  
**SALVADOR DALÍ**

María Mallo, the most skillful harmonizer of trash prints; Rafael Alberti, regrettably separated from his own beautiful and natural self by the light green decal of Maruja Mallo and the pen and brush of Salvador Dalí, flood with their innocent ‘putrefied’ asperity the new Spanish spring, having sucked up the worst German expressionism and the most spectacular French surrealism.

-- Juan Ramón Jiménez

**Introduction**

In 1931 the esteemed poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958), who would go on to win a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1956, was duly disappointed with the artistic trajectory of his protégé Rafael Alberti (1902-1999), a dissatisfaction he voiced in an article published that year in *La Gaceta Literaria*, excerpted above.<sup>195</sup> In 1925 Alberti had won the coveted Premio Nacional de Poesía with *Marinero en tierra*, (“Sailor on dry land”) a book characterized by its nostalgic tone, with some of its poems based on popular forms of song.<sup>196</sup> In the subsequent years, however, his preferred motifs took on a less appealing nature. 1929 saw the publication of Alberti’s poem “La primera ascensión de Maruja

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<sup>195</sup> “María Mallo, acopladora habilísima de estamperías de basura; Rafael Alberti, lamentablemente separado de su propio y bello ser natural por la calcomanía verdiblanca de Maruja Mallo y la pluma y el pincel de Salvador Dalí, empantanan con su inocente terribilidad “putrefacta”, chupada en el peor expresionismo alemán y el más espectacular sobrerrealismo francés, la nueva primavera española.” Juan Ramón Jiménez, “Acento. Historias,” *La Gaceta Literaria* no. 98 (January 15, 1931), 3.

<sup>196</sup> Juan Manuel Bonet, *Diccionario de las vanguardias* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2007), 32.

Mallo al subsuelo” (“The First Ascension of Maruja Mallo to the Subsoil”), also in *La Gaceta Literaria*.<sup>197</sup> Clearly referencing her interests as they pertained to her *Cloacas y campanarios* series, the poem describes Mallo rising through various subterranean levels of the earth, encountering sewers, shit, dirt, and oily puddles along the way.<sup>198</sup> On the front page of the gazette, Alberti’s poem was framed by two illustrations by Mallo, both of which were deemed as “trash prints” by Jiménez [Fig. 3.1]. The elder writer also invokes Dalí in his diatribe, naming him as a second force corrupting the psyche of a once promising poet with his (and Mallo’s) “‘putrefied’ asperity.”<sup>199</sup>

Solana and Mallo were not alone in their investigations of the decay in their midst. Salvador Dalí also favored the theme of putrefaction, a theme he treated through “pen and brush,” as Jiménez noted. His earliest iteration of the concept came in the form of a series of caricatures he called *putrefactos* (loosely translated as “putrefieds”). In his memoirs, *La arboleda perdida*, Alberti provides a humorous account of the *putrefacto*, at once defining the term and describing Dalí’s accompanying illustrations. He writes:

The putrefied, as it is not hard to deduce from its name, summed up everything that was outmoded, everything that was dead and anachronistic

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<sup>197</sup> Rafael Alberti, “La primera ascensión de Maruja Mallo al subsuelo,” *La Gaceta Literaria* no. 61 (July 1, 1929), 1.

<sup>198</sup> “Mira siempre hacia abajo. / Nada se te ha perdido en el cielo.” (Always look down./ You haven’t lost anything in the heavens). Alberti, “La primera ascensión de Maruja Mallo al subsuelo.”

<sup>199</sup> It is not surprising that Juan Ramón Jiménez felt it necessary to include Dalí in this attack as the young artist had singled out Jiménez as the subject of his idiosyncratic brand of ironic indignation just two years earlier. Jiménez was celebrated for his 1914 prose poem *Platero y yo*, which tells the touching story of the life and death of the poet’s pet donkey, Platero. For Dalí the book epitomized “putrefaction,” a concept this chapter sets out to explore. On Dalí’s disgust with Jiménez see for example, Dawn Ades, “Morphologies of Desire,” *Salvador Dalí: the Early Years*, ed. Michael Raeburn (London: Royle Print Limited, 1994), 139.

symbolized by many beings and things. Dalí understood the putrid well drawing them in different ways. There were putrefieds with a scarf, full of coughs, the solitary putrid on benches of the promenades. There were putrefieds with a walking cane, elegant, a flower in the buttonhole, accompanied by the beast. There was the academic putrefied and the one who was also academic but was not. There were putrefieds of all genders, masculine, feminine, neuter, and epicene. And of all ages. The term ended up designating everything, in literature, painting, fashion, homes, the most varied objects, to whatever smelled rotten, to whatever disturbed or prevented the clear advance of our time.<sup>200</sup>

An early example of these *putrefactos* are visible on a page that Dalí sent to his friend José (Pepín) Bello between 1924 and 1925, which bears the subtitle: “I trust you not to lose these because I’m thinking of editing a book of caricatures and these cannot be forgotten.”<sup>201</sup> The page included three distinct groups of illustrations, all of which featured human figures drawn with the traits that would come to typify the *putrefacto* [Fig. 3.2]. The *putrefactos* are simple, grotesque beings with angular bodies, large heads, and unruly mustaches that are quite often pictured with pipes jutting from their faces at odd angles. The text below the central group reads, “They are at the café and nothing

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<sup>200</sup> “El putrefacto, como no es difícil deducir de su nombre, resumía todo lo caduco, todo lo muerto y anacrónico que representan muchos seres y cosas. Dalí cazaba putrefactos al vuelo, dibujándolos de diferentes maneras. Los había con bufandas, llenos de toses, solitarios en los bancos de los paseos. Los había con bastón, elegantes, flor en el ojal, acompañados por la bestie. Había el putrefacto académico y el que sin serlo lo era también. Los había de todos los géneros: masculinos, femeninos, neutros y epicenos. Y de todas las edades. El término llegó a aplicarse a todo: a la literatura, a la pintura, a la moda, a las casas, a los objetos más variados, a cuanto olía a podrido, a cuanto molestaba e impedía el claro avance de nuestra época.” Rafael Alberti, *La arboleda perdida* (Barcelona: Editorial Bruguera, 1982), 161.

<sup>201</sup> “Te ruego no me los pierdas pues pienso editar un libro de caricaturas i estas no pueden olvidarse ya.” Rafael Santos Torroella, *Los Putrefactos de Dalí y Lorca. Historia y antología de un libro que no pudo ser* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes, 1998), 120.

more.”<sup>202</sup> The “nothing more” of the caption embodies the harmless nature of the *putrefactos*, as opposed to the disturbing connotations evoked by their sobriquet. Dalí’s engagement with the theme of putrefaction from 1924-1927 would come to reference those associations later on, an evolution I trace in this chapter.

Dalí’s paintings and performances from the 1930s onward are well known as Dalí became, and remained, an international celebrity. His drawings, paintings, and writings from the 1920s are less familiar, but are essential for comprehending his later work since established elements in the Dalinian iconography -- ants, phallic fingers, and ubiquitous double images -- first appeared during this decade (see for example: *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, *Little Ashes*, *Apparatus and Hand*, all works created during his so-called “Lorquian” period) [Figs. 3.3 - 3.6].<sup>203</sup> These early works also throw into relief Dalí’s active participation within the culture of Madrid’s *Residencia de Estudiantes* (where he lived from 1922-1926), as well as his contribution to artistic debates in Catalan art criticism, which engaged in discussions of local and European representational tendencies. In terms of the subject matter he explored in his paintings during the early years of his career, Dalí’s trajectory is not unlike Mallo’s, discussed in the previous chapter. Dalí painted *verbenas*, as well as a number of compositions dedicated to Madrid’s cosmopolitan nightlife, followed by ruminations, both literary and painterly, on putrefaction and rot.

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<sup>202</sup> “Están en el café i [sic] nada más”

<sup>203</sup> The term Lorquian period was coined by Rafael Santos Torroella to define works completed during the zenith of the friendship between Dalí and García Lorca, ca. 1926-1927. See Rafael Santos Torroella, *La miel es más dulce que la sangre* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1984).

Dalí, author of anti-artistic treatises and texts on silent film stars, and a patron of the Spanish state, to whom he left a vast number of paintings upon his death in 1989, is known for his celebrations of the new, as well as for his unpopular rightist political leanings.<sup>204</sup> In 1928 Dalí, alongside the art critics Sebastià Gasch and Lluís Montanyà, published the *Manifest Groc (Yellow Manifesto)* in which they denounced tradition and mindless repetitions of classical modes of painting and literature in favor of the innovations of the machine age [Figure 3.7].<sup>205</sup> In a lecture he delivered in March of the same year at the Sitges Atheneum, published in *L'Amic de les Arts* the following May, Dalí specifically called for the destruction of Barcelona's Gothic Quarter and the

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<sup>204</sup> An early version of Dalí's painting *The Weaning of Furniture Nutrition* included a "Hitlerian wetnurse," which greatly disturbed Breton. See Robin Adele Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 54.

<sup>205</sup> The manifesto took the form of a small poster printed on yellow paper with clean, modern lines following the format of a newspaper with two distinct columns. In the first column the authors declare their grievances in large bold font with frequently repeated expressions such as: "we have eliminated," "we warn," "we know," "we live," "we declare," "we denounce." The objects of their exasperation are various: reasoning, literature, poetry, philosophy and especially the Catalan intelligentsia, Catalan traditions, and sentimentality. In the second column a litany of bold geometric lettering reads "HI" and "HA," meaning "there is" or "there are." This section brings about a whole list of modernity's positive innovations, such as the cinema, sports, popular music, fashion shows, modern poets, modern dance, etc. The manifesto ends with the authors dedicating themselves to the great artists of the day, listing a diverse group that begins with Picasso and ends with Breton, mentioning others along the way such as Stravinsky, Lorca, and Brancusi. See Joan Minguet Batllori, *El manifest groc. Dalí, Gasch, Montanyà i l'antiart* (Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, 2004). Juan José Lahuerta also notes that the original Catalán version was printed without a title and that it appeared to mimic contemporary announcements for medicines, a logical aesthetic decision considering that the writers of the manifesto meant to attack "infections." Cited in Salvador Dalí, *Obra Completa Vol IV, Ensayos I, Artículos, 1919-1986*, ed. Juan José Lahuerta. (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2005), 952.

abolition of the *sardana*, a Catalan dance.<sup>206</sup> In 1930 Dalí published an article disparaging Catalan intellectuals, this time from his new base in Paris. While allied with the French Surrealists, Dalí mocked the Catalan intelligentsia by questioning its very existence in 1930 in the second issue of *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*.<sup>207</sup> He criticized everything from their mutual appreciation societies to their bathroom habits, from their ridiculous mustaches (an attribute he would famously adopt in later years) to their fondness for the aforementioned *sardana*.

This disavowal of the cultural and political heritage of Catalonia needs to be understood in relation to the key role the latter played in his upbringing and early artistic endeavors. Catalan nationalism flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century in the form of *Noucentisme*, a movement whose title imitated the appellation of Renaissance centuries *Trecento* and *Quattrocento*.<sup>208</sup> In Catalan, *Noucentisme* referred to the 1900s, with the prefix *Nou* implying both “nine” and “new.” Just as the Renaissance embodied renewal, the ideologists behind *Noucentisme* strove to revive the relevance of Catalonian culture, language, and history, while pointing to its Mediterranean, as opposed to Castilian, roots.<sup>209</sup> The writer, aesthete, and cultural activist Eugenio D’Ors (1881-1954) symbolized the movement in his famous prose poem *La ben Plantada*, (“The Well-

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<sup>206</sup> Lecture given by Dalí at the *Ateneo El Centaure de Sitges* in March 1928, originally published in *L’Amic de les Arts*, no. 25, May 31, 1928. Salvador Dalí, “For the Sitges Meeting,” *Oui: The Paranoid Critical Revolution. Writings, 1927-1933*, ed. Robert Descharnes, trans. Yvonne Shafir (Boston: Exact Change, 1998), 51-52.

<sup>207</sup> Salvador Dalí, “Intellectuels castillans et catalans,” *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* no. 2 (October, 1930): 7-8.

<sup>208</sup> Silvina Schammah Gesser, *Madrid’s Forgotten Avant-Garde: Between Essentialism and Modernity* (Eastbourne, England: Sussex Academic Press, 2015), 51-57.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

Planted One”) published in 1911. Its main character Teresa represented the “national spirit,” while the work as a whole portrayed projected values of “civility, order, restraint, proportion, and elegance.”<sup>210</sup> Interestingly, “Lydia of Cadaqués,” a colorful local woman, the wife of a fisherman, from the seaside village where the Dalí family spent their summers, was convinced that D’Ors, who had passed through her town one season at the beginning of the century, based Teresa on her.<sup>211</sup> Lydia’s obsessions fascinated Dalí, who wrote in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* that “Lydia possessed the most marvelously paranoiac brain aside from my own that I have ever known. She was capable of establishing completely coherent relations between any subject whatsoever . . .”<sup>212</sup>

Both Lydia’s “paranoiac brain” and the more conventional brains behind Catalonia’s cultural revival made strong impressions on a young Dalí, as his career would prove. The composer Pep Ventura (1817-1875) predated *Noucentisme* but was essential to its project as he was responsible for lengthening the duration of the *sardana*, increasing its popularity so much so that it reached the status of national dance. Ventura figured explicitly at least twice in the early work of Dalí, and would be invoked implicitly many more times as the object of derision, one example of which has already been cited above. The two aforementioned works date from 1921 and 1927, respectively [Fig 3.8 and Fig. 3.9]. The former is a watercolor design for the frontispiece of a special issue of *El Dia Grafica* dedicated to Ventura, who was from the Empordà region, and in fact had

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 52

<sup>211</sup> Although D’Ors ignored years worth of letters that Lydia sent him, he would eventually publish a book about her in 1954 with illustrations by Dalí. Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1993), 265.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.



died in Figueres [Fig. 3.8].<sup>213</sup> The cover features a rosy-cheeked nude woman holding a plate of fruit before a crescent shaped beach, an illustration that at the time was compared to the satirical, but sympathetic, spirit visible in artist Xavier Nogués' print album of 1919, *La Catalunya Pintoresca*, which itself belonged to a larger tradition of sardonic, popular Catalan printmaking.<sup>214</sup> By 1927 Dalí's satirical bent with regards to Ventura was much sharper [Fig. 3.9]. Where the somewhat classical frontispiece of the Ventura biography is evocative of pleasure and bounty, Dalí's later portrait of the composer suggests tension and madness. Ventura is pictured with a psychotic glare and clenched jaw, his mouth obscured by a heavy moustache.<sup>215</sup> The drawing resembles the *putrefacto*, the type that appeared in Dalí's oeuvre as he began to develop his anti-art theory.

In this chapter I analyze Dalí's little known series of caricatures, termed *los putrefectos* ("the putrefieds") by the artist and his peers. The *putrefectos* represent a key moment in Dalí's body of work, as they demonstrate an early iteration of the artist's thinking about what exactly constituted a rancid state of affairs and how to represent it. While this line of investigation would eventually lead Dalí to illustrate, film, and write about rotting donkeys covered in flies -- work that Dalí completed in terms of his paranoiac critical method -- around 1925 a *putrefacto* for Dalí, was an old-fashioned, decidedly non-threatening, member of the old guard, who upheld traditional values. I will

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<sup>213</sup> Dawn Ades, *Morphologies of Desire*, 130.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. and Fèlix Fanés, *Salvador Dalí: The Construction of the Image, 1925-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 8.

<sup>215</sup> It is interesting to note that in November 1925 Dalí opened his first one-man show at the Galeries Dalmau in Barcelona with great success. There was a banquet to celebrate the young artist at the Hotel España that attracted the cultural and social elite of the city, and a quintet performed music by none other than Pep Ventura. Fanés, *The Construction of the Image*, 1-2.

also introduce early works by the artist, completed at the very beginning of the 1920s, a time during which Dalí was fully committed to formal exploration and innovation but nevertheless cooperated with the status quo, in so far as he carried out municipal commissions. Complying with such assignments in the years directly following would have been unimaginable; indeed in 1928, the mayor of Figueres had a heart attack and dropped dead at the end of a lecture Dalí delivered in conjunction with an exhibition of his work.<sup>216</sup> This chapter will end with a look toward Dalí's iconic paintings completed around 1927 within the context of the activities that immediately preceded them [Figs. 3.3 - 3.6]. I argue it is in these paintings where Dalí's attempts to create an aesthetic appropriate for modernity are visible. Despite the fact that Dalí equates putrefaction with outmoded forms of bourgeois tradition, as I demonstrate, these modern paintings feature the inclusion of rotting donkeys, showing Dalí's recognition that a truly clean and objective modernity is not an achievable goal. Despite his unceasing espousal of the treasures offered up by twentieth century innovations, these paintings show Dalí ironizing any too easy or crude identification with modernity.

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<sup>216</sup> Dalí, "For the Sitges Meeting," 51-52. The lecture was delivered in conjunction with an exhibition of nine paintings by Dalí at the Casino Menestral in Figueres. Montserrat Aguer and Fèlix Fanés, "Illustrated biography," *Salvador Dalí: the Early Years*, 36. About the event Dalí wrote "The comic papers claimed that the enormities expressed in the course of my lecture had killed him. It was in fact simply a case of sudden death - angina pectoris, I believe - fortuitously occurring exactly at the end of my speech." Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 19.

## Los putrefactos

Among the drawings belonging to the *putrefactos* collection all, even the abstract illustrations that form the latter, “astronomical” part of the series, picture in some shape or form the same non-threatening, mustachioed, pipe-smoking protagonist [Fig. 3.10 - Fig. 3.15 and Fig. 3.16 - Fig. 3.18]. He resembles a figure of authority from days of yore, whose influence has long diminished, leaving him with nothing left to do but procreate (in some cases the *putrefacto* is pictured with children) and enjoy life’s small pleasures (hunting, fishing, café culture, etc.) [Fig. 3.2]. The drawing *Paternity* features a seated, adult *putrefacto* holding a swaddled baby *putrefacto* in his lap, the caption below them reading “Le printemps” (“Spring”) [Fig. 3.10]. Their faces are identical, each featuring the same pared-down physiognomy. Their heads are large and round with two tiny side-by-side circles standing in for eyes, while vertical lines bisecting the bulbous pates serve as noses. The father and son are not without their matching pipes, another putrid attribute *par excellence*. As they sit on a park bench enjoying the spring day, they are surrounded by pairs of things, natural and mechanical: airplanes, birds, and clouds surround them, as well as a couple of cars, trees, and dogs. The scene almost certainly appears as an ironic comment on the fecundity of the season.<sup>217</sup>

A number of the drawings carry references to banal traditions, both of the secular and religious varieties. *Dirigible Salvador Dalí* (*Hot Air Balloon Salvador Dalí*, 1925), for instance, combines material and spiritual signifiers of custom [Fig. 3.11]. In the center of the china-ink and colored-pencil composition is a *putrefacto* whose mustache,

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<sup>217</sup> Santos Torroella, ‘*Los putrefactos*,’ 80.

comprised of four thin lines, is spread across his face like a set of wings. He floats in a hot-air balloon of the kind featured at local festivals, and which Dalí depicted in his early paintings of *verbenas*, to be discussed below [Figs. 3.22-3.30]. The *putrefacto* even waves a flag and holds a banner that reads “Viva Santa Carmen,” identifying him as a reveler at her *verbena*. Meanwhile a blasphemous Marian-style *putrefacto* in the upper-right hand corner looks on from above. Her placement on the page and her framing within a sun burst, in addition to the child she holds against her breast all confirm her status as the blessed mother. Her face and the Christ child’s, on the other hand, featuring tiny hats and the ubiquitous pipes are indistinguishable from those of any other *putrefacto*.

Two more drawings, both extracted from letters that Dalí sent to Pepín Bello, further exhibit Dalí’s playful send up of religion, but also show his complicity with its conventions [Fig. 3.12 and Fig. 3.13]. In the context of a country such as Spain, with its rich tradition of hyperrealistic processional sculpture and expertly painted, somber depictions of Christ by masters such as Velázquez, Zurbarán, and Goya, Dalí’s sketchy Jesus is truly putrid [Fig. 3.12]. Drawn with a thin, wobbly line, Christ is seen with a pipe stuck into his face, while *la Magdalena* pathetically rips out thin strands of her hair, her heart prominently, and mockingly, displayed on her chest. The text reads, from top to bottom, “Hello Pepin!” and “Yes Sir!” which could be directed to the postcard’s recipient, but also to the blessed father, who in Spanish is referred to as “Señor.”

Although the artist ridicules religious sentiment in this picture, and in numerous texts, in another missive to the same friend, Dalí congratulates Bello on the occasion of

the feast day of his saint [Fig. 3.13]. The postcard features a drawing of a putrid Saint Joseph, complete with a halo and lily. While the greeting is certainly ironic, the fact that he continues to observe an event as outmoded as a saint's day is not insignificant.

The *putrefactos*, spread across private correspondence and independent sheets of paper, formed the subject of an unrealized project that Dalí was to undertake together with his friend the poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). Dalí and Lorca had conceived of a book of the so-called *putrefactos*, a collection that would include the crude drawings by Dalí, and an introductory essay by Lorca. The term, *putrefacto*, applied to all people and things that the friends deemed to be old-fashioned, traditional, cloying, sentimental, stagnant, and stinking. The art historian and Dalí scholar Rafael Santos Torroella traced the genealogy of the term, noting that it first came into use as a harsh insult at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>218</sup> He theorizes that the strength of *putrefacto* as an aspersion is indebted to both the Spanish propensity for eschatology and to the contrasts between the old and ancestral, and new and modern that the era's urban growth brought into sharp relief.<sup>219</sup> During the 1920s, the word became a favorite in Dalí's Madrid dormitory the *Residencia de Estudiantes*, known colloquially as the *Resi*, where a certain collective consciousness formed among the inhabitants, who recognized themselves to be at the forefront of a new wave of cultural production.<sup>220</sup> The artist José Moreno Villa attempted to shed light on its signification in a 1927 article on linguistics

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<sup>218</sup> Santos Torroella, '*Los putrefactos*,' 18.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> For an excellent demonstration of the close connections between artists and writers of the age, many of whom were connected directly or indirectly to the *Residencia de estudiantes* see Irene García Chacón, *Cartas animadas con dibujos: la complicidad estética de las vanguardias en España* (Madrid: Visor Libros, 2014).

published in *El Sol*, in which he discussed changes in words' meanings, usage, and popularity over time. The word *cosa* or "thing", for example, Moreno Villa described as ancient, but one that had been abused in modern times, in particular in the ten to fifteen years preceding the publication of his article. He believed the word *cosa* had reached the point of vulgarity as a result of its overuse in place of more suitable, and specific, nouns. *Putrefacto*, although not necessarily an obscure term, did not face the same predicament, according to the author, partly because Dalí and Lorca's project never came to fruition.

He writes:

Two years ago in a literary group in Madrid originated a type of man who was summed up in the word putrid. The group charged this word with a nuance or a new meaning. I don't think this has been explained by anybody. I feel that I will explain it badly. Perhaps it started from pompier, but unconsciously. In that group "the putrified" was sometimes a normative and opinionated spirit, empty and full of clichés, routine and stupid wisdom. But other times it was not about a moral being, but a very plastic one. The Catalan painter Salvador Dalí even managed to sketch a book, and I saw the drawings, where the putrified was truly repulsive. It appears that the most characteristic trait of the type was the moustache. Well, because the book was never published, the word in its new meaning did not spread and did not become tiring or disliked. Otherwise, we would renege on it, as of the pasodobles that every summer the barrel organs and the maids launch on the sweet and clear Madrid air.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> "Hace dos años nació en un grupo literario de Madrid todo un tipo de hombre que se resumía en la palabra putrefacto. A esta palabra vieja le cargó el grupo un matiz o una acepción nueva. No sé que haya sido explicado por nadie. Yo siento que voy a explicarla defectuosamente. Tal vez arranque del pompier, pero de un modo inconsciente. En aquel grupo "el putrefacto" era unas veces un espíritu normativo y petulante, hueco y lleno de lugares comunes, de rutina y de sensatez imbécil. Pero otras veces no se trataba de un ente moral, sino muy plástico. El pintor catalán Salvador Dalí llegó a esbozar todo un libro, y yo vi los dibujos, en que el putrefacto era verdaderamente repugnante. Parece que lo más característico del tipo eran los bigotes.

Pues bien: como el libro no se publicó, con su nuevo significado, no se ha difundido y no ha llegado a cansar ni a cobrar antipatía. De otro modo ahora estaríamos renegando de ella como de los pasodobles que cada verano lanzan los organillos y las

While everything *putrefacto* represented was as worthy of scorn as *cosa*, the word *putrefacto*, according to Moreno Villa, never became a worn-out cliché, and in this sense avoided total “putrefaction” in terms of its use value. However, during the time that Dalí prepared the book, the term rapidly gained cultural currency, adopted as it was by the members of a very specific academic (and anti-academic) milieu.

Indeed the *Resi* was an essential locus of creativity and scholarship in Madrid, particularly before the Spanish Civil War. Based on an “Oxbridge” model, the residence was founded in 1910 as part of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza and attracted students of means whose parents, invested in their sons’ educations, wished for them to have exposure to a variety of rigorous extracurricular activities while away from home.<sup>222</sup> Not only did the institution house students studying an array of disciplines, but it also hosted lectures, films, theatrical productions, concerts, and visiting scholars from Spain and abroad, making it an important center for the transmission of local and foreign trends in art and scholarship.<sup>223</sup> Even though the *Resi* was in many ways a beacon of modernity, art historian Juan José Lahuerta has pointed out that it was not necessarily on the cutting edge of European avant-gardism. His argument is partly based on a comparison of photographs taken by students of their classmates at both the *Residencia de Estudiantes* and the Bauhaus [Fig. 3.19]. While the Bauhaus portraits are spontaneous and informal, showing students mugging for the camera, often wearing funny costumes of their own

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‘menegildas’, al dulce y claro ambiente madrileño.” José Moreno Villa, “Escritos superficiales – Equilibrios en las palabras,” *El Sol*, no. 3160 (September 20, 1927), 1.

<sup>222</sup> On the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, see pp. 37-38 in the previous chapter.

<sup>223</sup> Schammah Gesser, *Between Essentialism and Modernity* 93-94.

design, the students at the *Resi* always appear posed, their hair combed back, and their suits very proper. When they did dress up, it was often to don the garb of priests and nuns; these were irreverent acts, but the photographic proof still shows a reserved demeanor betraying inexperience with, and perhaps an old-fashioned outlook toward, the photographic apparatus.<sup>224</sup>

Nevertheless, those who belonged to the elite, close-knit community of the *Resi* identified as modern and banded together when their faction was threatened. For example, the artist Gabriel García Maroto delivered a lecture in 1925 in conjunction with the exhibition of the *Sociedad de Artistas Ibéricos*, in which he criticized theoretical art, a likely jab at cubism, and equated originality, not with an eagerness to embrace new artistic trends, but rather with creating art that was in accordance with the realities of the moment.<sup>225</sup> The painter Benjamin Palencia wrote to Lorca of the lecture, letting the poet know that they, *los modernos* (“the moderns”), had been attacked and that Maroto had referred to them as brats who simply copied everything from what they read in *L’Espirit Nouveau*. In his reply to Palencia, Lorca referred to Maroto as a *putrefacto*, writing: “Maroto, oh Maroto! Putrid! Putrid! Putrid! Don’t pay attention to him at all. Now we need to get together . . . and defend ourselves like wild horses from wolves.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Juan José Lahuerta, “Sobre la economía artística de Salvador Dalí y Federico García Lorca en los años de su amistad,” *Dalí, Lorca y la Residencia de Estudiantes, Vol. 1* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2010), 32-33.

<sup>225</sup> For a summary of the lecture see “Conferencias. D. Gabriel García Maroto,” *El Sol* (June 26, 1925), 4.

<sup>226</sup> “Maroto ¡Ay, Maroto! ¡putrefacto! ¡putrefacto! ¡putrefacto! No le hagáis ningún caso. Nosotros tenemos ahora que estrecharnos mucho . . . y defendernos como caballos salvajes contra lobos.” *Federico García Lorca, Epistolario completo, Libro I* (1910-1926), ed. Christopher Maurer (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997), 281-282.



Santos Torroella also invokes the name of philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, whose seminal 1925 essay “La deshumanización del arte” addressed the representational tendencies, aesthetic goals, and sociology of modern art.<sup>227</sup> Ortega y Gasset’s sentiments, which would be echoed by Clement Greenberg at the end of the 1930s, tended towards disparaging art that was narrative and representational, favoring works that challenged audiences through abstract forms and themes – the very work that Maroto criticized. Such art then, was not meant for the masses, nor was it destined for popularity. Ortega wrote that, “All new art is unpopular, and not by accident, but by virtue of its essential destiny.”<sup>228</sup> According to Santos Torroella, Ortega y Gasset addressed the notion of putrefaction without using the term outright, in remarking upon the disdain with which the era’s advanced artists regarded traditional art. The philosopher reasoned, hyperbolically, that the elite was left with two options, either to shoot these artists, or to try and understand them. He ultimately selected the latter.<sup>229</sup>

Certainly, Ortega y Gasset’s description of the rejection of tradition bears resemblance to Dalí’s views as he outlined them in his seminal essay “Saint Sebastian” and in a letter to García Lorca, both written in 1927. He writes in the latter:

I think no epoch has ever known the perfection of ours. Until machines were invented, there had never been anything perfect, and man had never seen anything as beautiful as a nickel-plated engine. The machine has changed everything. Our age is as different from others as the Greece of the Parthenon is from the Gothic. One has only to think of the badly made,

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<sup>227</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, “La deshumanización del arte,” *Obras completas. Tomo III (1917-1928)* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1966), 353-386.

<sup>228</sup> “Todo el arte joven es impopular, y no por caso y accidente, sino en virtud de un destino esencial.” Ortega y Gasset, “La deshumanización del arte,” 354.

<sup>229</sup> Ortega y Gasset, 326.

ugly objects that existed before technology. We are surrounded by perfect, novel beauty, which brings about new states of poetry. [...]

I look at Fernand Léger, Picasso, Miró, etc., and know that machines exist and new discoveries in the natural sciences.

Your songs are of a Granada with no trolleys and still without airplanes. They are an old Granada with natural elements, far removed from today, purely popular and constant. ‘Constant,’ you will tell me, but that ‘constant eternal’ element you all talk about takes on a different flavor in each age. Some of us live in new ways from the same ‘constant’ elements, which is the taste we prefer. (But you will do whatever you want to, that goes without saying).<sup>230</sup>

So much of Dalí’s language is deeply polarizing, yet in one particular description of the *putrefactos*, his tone is somewhat forgiving, an attitude that is apparent in the drawings themselves. Writing to Lorca in the summer of 1925, he stated the following:

Grosz (German) and Pascin (French) have already tried to sketch putrefaction. But they’ve painted - for example - the Stupid Gent with hatred, with rage, with malice, in a social sense. And so they’ve merely scratched the surface, barely capturing his most superficial elements. They’ve barely managed to distinguish The Stupid Gent from one less stupid. You and I are different - we’ve raised The Stupid Gentleman - and idiocy itself - to a lyrical category. We have reached a lyric of human stupidity, but with an affection and a tenderness toward that stupidity that is almost Franciscan.

The difference

The Stupid Gentleman of Grosz repels us, we hate him.

As for ours, we adore him, he brings tears to our eyes, we could kiss him. He’s not our obsession, but our joy.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca, *Sebastian’s Arrows. Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca*, ed. and trans. Christopher Maurer (Chicago: Swan Isle Press, 2004), 72-73. Maurer’s *Sebastian’s Arrows*, as he acknowledges, is indebted to Santos Torroella, who published this material for the first time: Rafael Santos Torroella, “Salvador Dalí escribe a Federico García Lorca (1925-1936)” *Poesía, revista ilustrada de información poética* no. 27-28, 1987. For the most recently published, widely available version of these letters in the original Castilian see *Querido Salvador, Querido Lorquito*, eds. Víctor Fernández and Rafael Santos Torroella (Barcelona: Elba, 2013).

<sup>231</sup> *Sebastian’s Arrows*, 41.

Dalí's sympathetic view with respect to the *putrefactos* is curious, but I believe "Saint Sebastian," in which he introduces his theory of art sheds light upon the matter.<sup>232</sup>

### **Saint Sebastian**

Dalí's essay, named for the third century Christian martyr who met his death through countless arrow wounds, is comprised of eight short, hallucinatory sections, each one roughly describing an aspect of the saint, based upon either his mythology or the familiar conventions utilized in sculpted and painted representations of the subject.<sup>233</sup> In the segment titled "Description of the Figure of Saint Sebastian," for example, Dalí defines a character at once recognizable and foreign: on one hand, plaster of Paris is a featured material in the particular representation he observes, on the other hand, half of the saint's head is "made of a substance similar to that of a jellyfish."<sup>234</sup> Despite the inclusion of such baffling particulars, Dalí makes it clear his focus in the essay is "the patience in the exquisite agony of Saint Sebastian."<sup>235</sup> For the artist, the saint's calm and collected demeanor expresses the aspirational ethos of modern aesthetics, one very much

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<sup>232</sup> Salvador Dalí, "Saint Sebastian," *Oui*, 3-8. Original publication: Salvador Dalí, "Saint Sebastian," *L'Amic de les Arts* no. 16 (July 31, 1927), 52-54.

<sup>233</sup> Dalí and Lorca discussed the saint frequently in letters back and forth, but scholars note it is impossible to determine which one first introduced the figure as parts of their correspondence have been lost. Lorca first mentions him in April of 1926 after having been invited by Jorge Guillén to deliver a lecture in Valladolid, where the Andalusian poet took the time to visit the National Museum of Sculpture. There he saw Alonso Berruguete's (ca. 1488-1561) polychrome wood sculpture of Saint Sebastian tied to a tree. After his trip he wrote a letter to Guillén asking him to send a reproduction of that sculpture, as well as others of the same subject, for he wished to prepare a lecture series on the theme. Christopher Maurer, "Prologue," *Sebastian's Arrows*, 18.

<sup>234</sup> Dalí, "Saint Sebastian," *Oui*, 4.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

in line with French Purism.<sup>236</sup> Of the figure, Dalí writes, “Independent of any symbolism, Saint Sebastian was a fact by his unique and simple presence. Only with such objectivity can one follow a stellar system with calm.”<sup>237</sup> These phrases come from the section titled “Invitation to Astronomy,” and they demonstrate the cool modernist detachment characteristic of the celestial realm so admired by Dalí, and according to him, the territory occupied by Saint Sebastian.

In the article, Dalí’s imagination runs wild visualizing a panoply of fantastic apparatuses connected to the saint that calmly quantify everything from the temperature of each site pierced by an arrow to the precise measurement of his agony. The so-called *Heliometer for deaf-mutes* is the instrument that determines the latter and Dalí describes each part in great, and perplexing detail, including the engravings on the platinum setting of the heliometer’s upper part, which include “Invitations to Astronomy,” “Saint Objectivity,” and “Measure of the Apparent Distances Between Pure Aesthetic Values.” Dalí illustrated this apparatus as part of a small series of drawings he intended to include in the *Putrefactos* publication [Fig. 3.16 and Figs. 3.17 and 3.18]. As he explained in a letter to Bello in December of 1925,

In a little while I’m going to publish a book of my putrefieds with a preface by Federico. In the last analysis, putrefaction is SENTIMENT. Therefore it is something inseparable from human nature. As long as there is an atmosphere around the earth, there is putrefaction. The only thing outside our atmosphere is astronomy, and that is why we oppose astronomy to Putrefaction . . . In the little

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<sup>236</sup> Lahuerta discusses Dalí’s interest in the movement in Juan José Lahuerta, “Santa Objetividad,” *Realismo Mágico. Franz Roh y la pintura Europea, 1917-1936*, ed. Juan Manuel Bonet (Valencia: Institut Valencià d’Art Modern, 1997) 55-63.

<sup>237</sup> Dalí, “Saint Sebastian,” *Oui*, 7.

book, in order to disinfect it from so much putrefaction, I will include six invitations to astronomy (sketched in a certain style invented by me)<sup>238</sup>

The appearance of the *Heliometer for deaf-mutes* is very spare and abstracted, and in this way avoids the sentimentality expressed by the *putrefactos* [Fig. 3.16]. The thin lines are evocative of constructivist design, yet at the same time the propeller-like shape in the center of the composition is not unlike the moustache of a *putrefacto*. Indeed, the other drawings forming part of the “invitation to astronomy” series feature moustaches as they are simply abstracted portraits of French serial killer Landrú and an “important lawyer,” respectively [Figs. 3.17 and 3.18]. It seems even in the astronomical orbit Dalí does not see an escape from putrefaction.

Returning to “Saint Sebastian,” what Dalí means to emphasize in this strange article is his commitment to modernity and its associated innovations, which he sees as based upon scientific observation rather than an arbitrary adherence to tradition and schools. That Dalí uses the figure of Saint Sebastian as a cipher through which he accesses this theoretical stance has implications both logical and hypocritical. The viewer may easily recognize the detachment with which the elegant and sinewy saint experiences the tremendous violence of his martyrdom, an attitude that embodies Dalí’s prioritization of objectivity. However, declaring Saint Sebastian as the patron saint of this very approach utilizes the same outmoded expression of devotion that Dalí finds so abhorrent, so far from the desired “anti-artistic and astronomical orbit of the Fox newsreel.”<sup>239</sup> Within this orbit Dalí perceives, with the help of the saint’s magnifying glass, a

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<sup>238</sup> *Sebastian’s Arrows*, 190.

<sup>239</sup> Dalí, “Saint Sebastian,” *Oui*, 7.

succession of vignettes associated with modern life (flappers dancing the Charleston, a painting by de Chirico, an advertisement for Petit Beurre biscuits, a private clinic, mannequins) that contrast sharply with the opposing side of the magnifying glass that corresponded with “Putrefaction,” the sub-title of the essay’s final section. The vista through the putrid side of the instrument, according to Dalí, is tinged with “anguish” and “darkness,” but curiously it features “. . . tenderness: tenderness, because of the exquisite absence of spirit and ‘naturalness.’”<sup>240</sup> Here then, Dalí provides a clue as to why he continues to enact tradition by paying homage to an antiquated Catholic saint: the pathetic nature of such a convention, its cultivated sluggishness, was a quality Dalí ultimately found sympathetic, and this attitude is visible in the *putrefactos* series.

This outlook is wholly unlike that of Dadaist George Grosz, whose lithographs likely served as an inspiration for Dalí.<sup>241</sup> George Grosz’s *Ich will alles um mich herausrotten, was mich einschränkt, das ich nicht Herr bin* (“I will root up from my path whatever obstructs my progress toward becoming the master”) (1922) serves as an emblematic example of the artist’s caustic representations of a post-WWI Germany [Fig. 3.20]. Utilizing simple black lines Grosz created a caricatured portrait of a bloated factory owner who stands before a group of faceless workers spilling from a doorway, while smoke forming spirals and geometric patterns spews from chimneys in the background. The man’s sausage-like fingers stroke a phallic cigar as he placidly gazes

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>241</sup> Lahuerta goes as far as to suggest that the Dalí’s idea to unite the *putrefactos* in a book was modeled on Grosz’s portfolios from the 1920s. Juan José Lahuerta, “Sobre la economía artística de Salvador Dalí y Federico García Lorca en los años de su amistad,” 51.

into the distance. The social position of this character, his traditional dress, and his many unpleasant attributes, both depicted and implied, would seem to mark him as a *putrefacto*, yet Grosz, according to Dalí, missed the mark completely. Grosz, born in 1893, was eleven years older than Dalí and had served in WWI, an experience that embittered his attitudes toward nationalism and capitalism. By the mid-1920s, Dalí had already spent some time in jail,<sup>242</sup> but was not committed to a political agenda -- surprisingly for an avant-garde artist, he thoroughly enjoyed carrying out his mandatory military service in Figueres -- and seemed to pledge allegiance to putrefaction above all else.<sup>243</sup> However the notion he held of putrefaction was far from steadfast and Dalí's illustrations of it varied widely as the years progressed.

Around 1924-25, putrefaction for Dalí was still rooted within a curiously tender landscape. After all Grosz's works did not form Dalí's only precedent for this project; Dalí was also indebted to Henri Rousseau, whose gentle scenes of terrains real and imagined could not be further from the terrible conditions depicted by the German artist. Dalí praised the French painter and in 1925, when the Louvre acquired Rousseau's *The War*, he wrote to Pepín Bello telling him to rejoice, that the "Pope of putrefaction" had

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<sup>242</sup> He was arrested in May 1924 as retaliation against his father, who had engaged in activities protesting the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Aguer and Fanés, "Illustrated biography," 25.

<sup>243</sup> Dalí began military service in Figueres in February of 1927 (Ibid., 30). He mentioned the experience several times in letters to Lorca. The first time was in early March of 1927 when he wrote, "You won't believe this, but for the past month I've been a soldier. I haven't mentioned it until now because it's a very long story, but anyway I love it, it's so strange." *Sebastian's Arrows*, 66.

entered the “Lubre.”<sup>244</sup> The hot air balloons and flags pictured in *Dirigible Salvador Dalí* are reminiscent of those in Le Douanier’s *Myself: Portrait-Landscape* (1890), and another drawing (*Viva Rousseau* [sic], 1925) directly quotes Rousseau’s self-portrait, portraying him in the composition’s center where he performs the function of symbolic anchor for the *putrefactos* that surround him in three directions [Figs. 3.11, 3.14, and 3.21]. The timelessness of Rousseau’s world, coupled with what were to Dalí the sweetly outdated aspects of Lorca’s poetics, and the elitist culture of the *Resi*, all factor into his portrayal of the *Putrefactos*. They represented démodé elements that Dalí embraced one last time before fully rejecting them in favor of his personal brand of modern aesthetics that would guide his painting in the period immediately following.<sup>245</sup>

## Verbenas

Before looking towards the disturbing landscapes that would occupy Dalí after he had abandoned the *Putrefactos* project, it is helpful to consider his early work, in which he celebrated the cultural traditions that he would come to mock mercilessly, particularly within his native Catalonia. As Fèlix Fanés, Dawn Ades, and Ian Gibson have noted, it is unthinkable to consider Dalí’s early work outside of the context of his home region’s traditions and language, and despite his later posturing these elements never ceased to affect Dalí’s artistic and practical decisions; the artist spoke and wrote in Catalan

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<sup>244</sup> Dalí’s is known for his terrible orthography. Rafael Santos Torroella, ‘*Los putrefactos*,’ 66.

<sup>245</sup> Juan José Lahuerta discusses the “démodé” quality that attracted Dalí to Rousseau, as well as locates genealogy of the *putrefacto* type across modern European painting, citing Rousseau, and later on Juan Gris, among others. Lahuerta, “Sobre la economía artística,” 54-56.



throughout his life, and in his paintings he referred repeatedly to the landscapes surrounding Figueres and Cadaqués.<sup>246</sup> He also resumed residence with his wife Gala in Cadaqués in 1948 after more than a decade abroad. Finally, a major part of his artistic legacy is physically and permanently tied to Figueres, since in 1974 Dalí established the Theatre-Museu Dalí, which houses an important collection of his works (not to mention his earthly remains).<sup>247</sup>

His earliest public contribution to the cultural life of his birthplace was much more ephemeral in nature. In 1921, together with his friend, the art historian Joan Subias, Dalí was asked to create the float that would carry the three kings in the town's Epiphany parade. Anna María Dalí's description of her brother's handiwork recalls a flashy, démodé craft project: "It consisted of a large closed bulky object. On the upper walls, there were enormous winged dragons with tongues of fire and sparking eyes that shone above bright, decorative colours. On the wings, eyes and mouth, there were pieces of transparent paper that gave them great luminosity."<sup>248</sup> The float was surely a success for later that same year Dalí received a commission to create two posters advertising the annual fair of *Santa Cruz*, celebrated in Figueres in early May [Figs 3.22-3.24].

Dalí's schematic approach in carrying out the designs produced minimal and attractive posters that surprisingly resulted in one of the earliest public controversies of

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<sup>246</sup> Fanés, *The Construction of the Image*; Adés, "Morphologies of Desire"; Ian Gibson, "Salvador Dalí: the Catalan Background," *Salvador Dalí: the Early Years*, 49-64.

<sup>247</sup> Antoni Pitxot recounts his and his family's close relationship with Dalí, as well as his involvement with the creation of the Theatre-Museu, of which he would eventually become director (until his recent death in June of 2015) in Antoni Pitxot. *Sobre Dalí: conversaciones con Fernando Huici*. (Barcelona: Planeta, 2014).

<sup>248</sup> Anna Capella, *El País de Dalí*. (Figueres: Ajuntament de Figueres, Consorci del Museu de l'Empordà, 2004), 401.

the artist's career. An editorial in the newspaper *Nuevo Figueres* criticized the posters for their "snobbism," prompting journalists writing for the *Empordà Federal* and the *Alt Empordà* to defend Dalí in their respective newspapers.<sup>249</sup> An article in the latter used the term *pompier* to describe the truculent audience unable to stomach Dalí's work, a foretelling choice of vocabulary as Moreno Villa would later cite the French word as a possible etymological source for *putrefacto*.<sup>250</sup> Nevertheless, despite these squabbles in 1922 Dalí once again lent his contemporary vision to picturing the timeless tradition [Figs. 3.25-3.27].

Advertising materials from the 1913 and 1923 celebrations of the Fair of the Holy Cross are curiously sober, demonstrating the ethos of *noucentisme* in terms of how each respectively emphasized the local rather than the spectacular [Figs. 3.28 and 3.29]. The 1913 poster features a photograph of downtown Figueres, where the Cathedral plays a prominent role in an otherwise unremarkable urban scene devoid of people [Fig. 3.28]. The program produced a decade later fully embraces the classical aesthetic promoted by *noucentisme* with its symmetrical design resembling a frontispiece brimming with Mediterranean elements, including a blue color scheme, naked nymphs, and Solomonic columns, framed by fruity friezes [Fig. 3.29]. While Dalí's posters are not necessarily representative of radically avant-garde visual language, they do show a distinctly modern take on the festival theme in their focus on crowds alone [Figs. 3.23, 3.24, 3.26, 3.27].

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<sup>249</sup> The posters were printed in color by Seix y Barral of Barcelona (100 large, 540 small). Capella, *El País de Dalí*, 401-411.

<sup>250</sup> Moreno Villa, "Escritos superficiales – Equilibrios en las palabras," 1.

In *Las Ferias de Figueres* and *Verbena de Santa Cruz*, the latter of which did not feature in advertising materials, the revelers at the fair form the main subject matter and are the first and most easily recognizable figures [Figs. 3.25 and 3.30]. Pictured are groups of friends in modern dress, a couple, and a soccer player, alongside so many indecipherable heads. *Verbena de Santa Cruz* also features the hallmark figures of any such gathering, including a merry-go-round, a harlequin, a strong man, and two *gigantes* in the background representing a king and queen.

In what Rafael Santos Torroella has described as *greguerías dalinianas*, Dalí also wrote about the fair in 1922 for a local newspaper, the *L'Empordá Federal*. In one observation Dalí alluded to the commercial aspect of the celebration, writing, "The Fair is like a living bazaar."<sup>251</sup> He also imagined the fair's main plaza as a mechanical object, a remark that presages his propensity for everything modern and mechanized: "Little by little the entire plaza is one great flag, made from many small flags, until the day arrives in which the plaza changes into a music box. All of the balconies opened to hear it."<sup>252</sup>

Dalí, always fascinated by authority -- a fascination that would lead to his excommunication from the surrealist group for Fascist tendencies in February of 1934 -- did not aspire to depict in his pictures of *ferias* the momentary social freedom described by Mallo. Nor did he seem as interested in *la creación del pueblo* and how the *gigantes* might form part of it. Rather his images of the fair focus on crowds following prescribed

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<sup>251</sup> "La Feria es como un gran bazar viviente." Quoted in Santos Torroella, *Dalí Residente* (Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes, 1992), 32.

<sup>252</sup> "Pero poco a poco toda la plaza es una gran bandera, hecha de muchas banderas pequeñas, hasta que llega un día en que la plaza se convierte en una caja de música. Todos los balcones se abrieron para oírla." *Ibid.*, 32.

patterns of behavior, following norms of conduct just like the protagonists of the *putrefactos* series.<sup>253</sup>

### The Madrid Period

The artist's obsession with modern life began to take shape in Madrid, where in 1922, an 18-year-old Dalí began his studies at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. After mere months in the capital, Dalí painted *Sueños noctámbulos* (probably in November or December and possibly at home in Figueres during the Christmas holidays), an ink and water color composition featuring simultaneous views of Madrid's streets by night, as well as multiple self-portraits of the artist and portraits of his friends [Fig. 3.31].<sup>254</sup> These included Luis Buñuel, the Uruguayan painter Rafael Barradas (who only appears once, at the bottom wearing a hat, saying goodbye to his friends) and Maruja Mallo.<sup>255</sup> The coincident depiction of multiple spaces owes much to futurism and cubism, as well as to the vibrationism and simultaneism developed by Barradas.<sup>256</sup> Dalí

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<sup>253</sup> These gouache sketches of *verbenas* are painted on cardboard and remain in remarkably good condition, a testament to the enduring quality of the medium, as well as Dalí's skillful handling of the opaque paint. Cardboard is an unforgiving surface on which to paint, and had Dalí added too much water the surfaces of these works would not be in the pristine condition that they are in today. Dalí was only 18 when he made these illustrations, and probably used materials easily available in Figueres, which would have been of lower quality than those available for purchase in Barcelona. In any case, gouache was commonly used in poster design as it produced high contrasts that showed up favorably in reproductions, especially those in black and white. I am grateful to conservator Joseph M. Guillamet Lloveras of the Fundació Dalí for taking the time to remove Dalí's *verbena* paintings from storage and show them to me during my study visit.

<sup>254</sup> Santos Torroella, *Dalí residente*, 29.

<sup>255</sup> Mallo and Dalí were classmates at the Fine Arts Academy [Fig. 3.32]. Santos Torroella, *Dalí, Época de Madrid* (Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes), 25-26.

<sup>256</sup> Santos Torroella, *Dalí residente*, 31.

depicted himself with Buñuel and Mallo at various points in the painting. A multitude of cats (*gatos madrileños*), the city's nocturnal creatures par excellence, accompany the group of friends, while a lone owl presides over the scene.<sup>257</sup> Also visible are staircases, streetlights, dark buildings lit from within, belfries and crosses, and a number of smiling faces, whose grins are encouraged by the bottles of wine and glasses of spirits pictured in the composition. Shadows populate the watercolor, giving it depth and sophistication. Dalí completed a series of compositions in this fragmented and exuberant style during his first semester of studies in Madrid, which focused on the capital city's exteriors, interiors and carnal temptations, all evocative of the Jazz age, and signaling their creator's enthusiasm for the metropolitan aesthetic, as well as his new group of peers at the *Resi* [Figs. 3.33-3.35].

In Madrid Dalí tried his hand at cubism, cubo-futurism, and other innovative artistic styles that demonstrated he was as comfortable working in abstracted modes of painting as he was in mimetic figuration. These exercises were mostly self-guided as Dalí shared creative differences, to put it mildly, with his professors at the Fine Arts Academy.<sup>258</sup> The Madrid setting also allowed the young artist to band together with like-

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>258</sup> In October of 1923 Dalí was suspended for one year from the Fine Arts Academy as punishment for his involvement in protests against the school when they declined to appoint Daniel Vázquez Díaz as Professor of Open-Air Painting. Aguer and Fanès, "Illustrated biography," 25. Two years later, in October of 1926 Dalí was finally expelled when he refused to submit to an oral exam in art history. He includes this episode in Chapter One of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, "Anecdotic Selfportrait": "The following year I came up for my examination in the history of art. I was anxious to be as brilliant as possible. I was wonderfully well prepared. I got up on the platform where the examining committee of three sat, and the subject of my oral thesis was drawn by lot. My luck was unbelievable: it was exactly the subject I should have preferred to treat. But

minded individuals, which as I have already pointed out, spurred important collaborative endeavors.

When Dalí returned to Figueres for the winter break he revisited the festival theme one last time, producing *Christmas Scene* (1922), a depiction of an Epiphany celebration, probably one he witnessed [Fig. 3.35]. However, in this instance there is no evidence that Dalí worked on commission. Using a compositional aesthetic similar to the one he had employed in the Madrid paintings, Dalí provided an urban edge to the small-town affair. Unlike in the earlier festival pictures, Dalí drew his focus away from crowds, and like in Mallo's paintings, placed an emphasis on the material objects of the fair. Two Kings and a camel at the top of the image have a doll-like aspect and of particular interest is a man in the center with a moustache and bowler hat, who resembles a marionette-like *proto-putrefacto* with articulated joints. I draw attention to the doll because like Mallo, Dalí would go on to portray the doll of the twentieth century, the mannequin, in his 1926 painting *Mannequin of Barcelona*, a depiction very much in line with the objective aesthetics he would go on to discuss in 1927 in "Saint Sebastian" [Fig. 3.36].

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suddenly an insurmountable feeling of indolence came over me, and almost without hesitation, to the stupefaction of my examiners and the people who filled the hall, I got up and declared in so many words, 'I am very sorry, but I am infinitely more intelligent than these three professors, and I therefore refuse to be examined by them. I know this subject much too well.' As a result of this I was brought before the disciplinary council and expelled from the school. This was the end of my scholastic career." Dalí, *Secret Life*, 16-17.

## Mannequins and the Metropolis

Like Mallo, Dalí also favored lists in his theoretical writings of the later 1920s and it is precisely during this era that dolls, and in this case, mannequins, take on importance for the artist. Interestingly, Ortega y Gasset also addressed the issue of mannequins in 1925. In *La deshumanización del arte* Ortega devoted an extended passage to the discussion of wax figures, and his disdain for the viewer response they elicit. He explained that sophisticated viewers, those who appreciate and understand “dehumanized” art, only feel revulsion before wax figures, whereas common consumers find them delightful. For Ortega, the mannequin reveals no essential truth or reality; instead, these phony humans represent nothing more than “pure melodrama.”<sup>259</sup>

The affinity that Santos Torrella suggests between Ortega y Gasset and Dalí in terms of his discussion of the *putrefactos* is expedient insofar that each observes and/or participates within a wholehearted rejection of tradition and traditional painting, represented in this case by the tenets of academic perspective, composition, and narrative. Yet, while the anecdotal and commercial artwork is anathema to Ortega’s concept of modernism, it is Dalí’s lifeblood.

Dalí’s mannequins are mass-produced, certainly not created by the *pueblo*, and present a modernist alternative to the shabby detritus of the past. By the nature of their manufacture then, they retain for Dalí an air of objectivity, a quality that they lack entirely for Ortega y Gasset, who argues that one cannot hold an objective view of such a figure.

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<sup>259</sup> Ortega y Gasset, “La deshumanización del arte,” 370.

In a 1928 essay titled “Poetry of Standardized Utility” Dalí presented the reader with the following inventory: “Telephone, pedal-sink, refrigerators white and shining with ripolin (brand of enamel paint), bidet, little photograph . . . objects of authentic and very pure poetry!”<sup>260</sup> The opposite of the “aseptic, anti-artistic and joyful precision” that Dalí encountered in these objects is “artistic taste,” responsible for “refuse from epochs that are for the most part absurd and uncomfortable, unearthed from the midst of the antihygienic and necrological trash of antiquarians.”<sup>261</sup> Here Ortega y Gasset would probably sympathize with Dalí; the same is not the case for Dalí’s excitement for mannequins, however.

In *Saint Sebastian*, published just eight months earlier, he included a paragraph dedicated to that “aseptic” creature, the mannequin:

Shoes in the window of the Grand Hotel. Mannequins. Immobile mannequins in the electric splendor of shop displays, with their mechanical neuter sensualities and their perturbing articulations. Sweetly simple-minded live mannequins, walking with an alternating rhythm, with hips and shoulders moving in the opposite directions; gripping in their arteries the new reinvented physiologies of clothing.<sup>262</sup>

Here Dalí shows the mannequin to have both human and mechanical attributes, possessing soft and hard textures, respectively. While he mentions arteries and veins, both Dalinian obsessions, he also celebrates “mechanical sensualities,” “disturbing articulations,” and a “reinvented physiology.” In various essays published between 1927 and 1929, Dalí defined tradition, patina and handiwork as fetid, a notion that supports the arresting aesthetic of the mannequin Dalí depicts in *Mannequin of Barcelona* [Fig. 3.36].

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<sup>260</sup> Salvador Dalí, “Poetry of Standardized Utility,” *Oui*, 43.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> Dalí, “Saint Sebastian,” 8.



Indeed, for Dalí, or at least following the rhetoric he vehemently employed at the time, the lifeless mannequin was a creature of beauty and vitality. In a letter to Pepín Bello in November of 1927, in advance of the March 1928 publication of the *Manifest Groc*, Dalí even gave the mannequin the ability to write: “I am totally anti-artistic and I am preparing a manifesto to that effect; tailors, motorists, ballerinas, bankers, film directors, mannequins, music hall artists, aviators and rotten donkeys will sign it.”<sup>263</sup>

Dalí’s depiction of the Barcelona mannequin shows the figure posed in a commanding stance, as if in a shop window [Fig. 3.36]. The overlapping in the figure owes much to cubism and there are several aspects reminiscent of Picasso’s synthetic cubism, especially the abdomen. The layers also suggest the presence of at least four mannequins (pink, blue, red and black) at once wearing a slip, a bathing suit, a pink dress, a brassiere, and high-heeled shoes. Although emphasizing a confident bearing, Dalí also indicated through repetition, and the depiction of fashionable consumer wares, that this figure was a mass-produced, commercial tool. That she was only pictured with a single eye further emphasizes her status as a non-sentient being.

The text of “Saint Sebastian” included a single drawing by Dalí upon its publication in *L’Amic de les Arts*, in July of 1927 [Fig. 3.37]. The figure, a torso missing both its head and its left arm is reminiscent of a mannequin in the clean breaks visible at the neck and shoulder. Yet the torso betrays characteristics of living humans in both the bones visible in its right arm and the vein that slides out of its left shoulder. A flurry of

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<sup>263</sup> “Estoy completamente antiartístico y preparo un manifiesto titulado así, *Manifiesto antiartístico*, lo firmarán sastres, motoristas, bailarines, banqueros, cineastas, maniquís, artistas de *music hall*, aviadores y burros podridos.” Dalí, *Obras completas*, Vol. IV, 952.

staccato lines flow in the direction of the torso's heart, the site of a bloody wound, all of which bring to mind the arrows that pierced Saint Sebastian. This is an apt illustration for the article as it evidences the blood and torture of the saint's martyrdom, while avoiding "putrid" sentimentality. Instead of the face of the suffering saint, Dalí depicts a fish, an absurd inclusion that is comical rather than tragic. The drawing exemplifies a form where the *putrefactos* and the "invitations to astronomy" merge into the representation of a being that is both fleshy and man-made, hard and soft. It is also a bridge that links the *putrefactos* project to the paintings created between 1926 and 1927 [Figs. 3.3-3.6].

Like the "Saint Sebastian" drawing, these paintings exemplify a new aesthetic of Dalí's devising that is representative of the modern age he celebrates. *Little Ashes* is one of the most famous paintings of this period and its central amorphous form resembles the torso published in 1927, albeit in a "softer" version [Figs. 3.5 and 3.37]. The fluid shape is certainly torso-like in that it features a navel, and its pink color is evocative of pale skin. What might be the left leg of this figure turns into a finger at its terminus, mimicking another finger that floats on the left side of the painting. A multitude of red specks attack the form, and bring to mind ants gathering over dead flesh, an image that featured in a formative memory from Dalí's childhood, as well as in the 1929 short film he co-directed with Luis Buñuel, *Un chien andalou* [Fig. 3.38].<sup>264</sup> A more explicit

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<sup>264</sup> As evidenced by his artistic and literary output Dalí's interest in physical rot and decay was one he sustained from childhood. In a representative scene from *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* the artist recalls happening upon a dead hedgehog at Molí de la Torre, the summer residence of the Pitxot family. He poked the quilled exterior with a crutch he found nearby to discover the soft insides of the creature teeming with maggots. Herein one may identify various elements that dominate Dalí's oeuvre. There is the obvious description of putrefaction and rotting flesh, which Pepín Bello would describe

representation of the theme comes in the form of three rotting donkeys, the heirs of the *putrefactos*. These donkeys appear in a crystalline, “objective” landscape where shapes are discernable, painted with incredible delicacy and precision. The landscape is populated with at least two modern, abstract apparatuses, two totems visible in the bottom center of the painting, as well as a pyramid in the upper left hand corner. In addition to the putrid donkeys, there are two fleshy female torsos, along with several pairs of breasts that float across the composition. These segments of the female form also signal putrefaction in that they represent one of the most popular -- and thus most outmoded -- subjects in the history of art.

Putrefaction in the guises of the female form and, more overtly, the rotting donkey, also appear in Dalí’s filmic work. The medium is one he and his cohorts regarded as the *sine qua non* of modern technology, its reproducibility essentially non-elitist, as well as its mode of creation, which was one that required the collaboration of supposedly objective technicians rather than the single vision of a tortured fine artist. Yet Dalí utilized cinema not to elucidate upon these aspects, but in order to show his unique view of putrefaction *in motion*. In his first collaboration with Luis Buñuel, for example, *Un chien andalou* (1929), the male protagonist of the film tries in vain, and somewhat violently, to pursue his female counterpart, a modern woman. They are trapped in a room where she avoids his clumsy advances. He is further impeded in his goal by the weight of

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with a term he himself coined and which was used with frequency at the *Resi* in tandem with “putrefacto”: *carnuzo*. There is also an evident interest in textures, both hard and soft, and the hedgehog itself is visually analogous to the martyr Saint Sebastian. *The Secret Life*, 93-94.

rotten tradition that literally slows his progress. All of a sudden he is pulling two grand pianos behind him, markers of bourgeois taste, which support the weight of two rotting donkeys. Attached to these musical instruments are two Marist priests, one of them played by none other than Dalí himself. In his cinematic escapades, as in his paintings, Dalí reveals that modernity lacks the ideal qualities of cool objectivity that he initially attributed to it.

The landscapes that Dalí deems appropriate expressions of his anti-art theory are still riddled with putrefaction, an inclusion that seems at odds with his writings that unceasingly champion modernity. However, they demonstrate what I argue is Dalí's reluctance to categorically extricate himself from tradition, no matter how much putrefaction it implies.

## CONCLUSION

In describing *Cloacas y campanarios*, Maruja Mallo wrote that the world she depicted was one in which “...excrements blossom and garbage conquers.”<sup>265</sup> She was describing the desolate areas of Vallecas where she walked with other artists to explore a neglected world that was both *solanesco* and putrid. Mallo was aware that her work, while abstracted in many ways, illustrated genuine experiences that existed outside of an idealized Spain pictured by regionalist artists and politicians alike. In a 1939 interview in Buenos Aires Mallo remarked, “My painting marched always in step with what was happening in Spain. The destructive impulse, a necessity before any building can take place, found its more concrete expression in my second exhibition. I called it *Sewers and Belfries*.”<sup>266</sup> The destructive impulse she described is one that is also visible in the work of Solana and Dalí. All three have complicated responses to tradition, celebrating and disavowing it at different steps, but they do not identify modernity as a solution. Rather, for these artists modernity brings the states of putrefaction and decay into sharp relief.

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<sup>265</sup> “...florecen los excrementos y triunfan las basuras.” Maruja Mallo, “Lo popular en el arte español a través de mi obra, 1927-1936,” *Maruja Mallo (Tomo 2: Álbum y textos históricos)*, eds. Fernando Huici y Juan Pérez de Ayala (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2009), 50.

<sup>266</sup> “Ante la sociedad dominante, una nueva sociedad pugnaba por levantarse... Mi pintura anduvo siempre de acuerdo con lo que pasaba en España. El impulso destructor, necesidad previa a toda edificación, se expresó de manera más concreta en mi segunda exposición. La titulé *Cloacas y campanarios*.” Córdova Iturburu, “Una inteligencia a la caza de la armonía: Maruja Mallo,” *Maruja Mallo*, eds. Juan Pérez de Ayala, Francisco Rivas (Madrid: Artegraf, 1992), 105.

Their dark depictions of Spanish landscapes and cityscapes speak to this stance, which was very different from that of committed communist Alberto Sánchez (1895-1962), for example. Alberto, considered the leader of the *Escuela de Vallecas*, looked to the earth and saw the potential for the transcendence, not of excrement, but of the people of Spain. The sculpture that he completed for the 1937 Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Fair described this positive outlook: *El pueblo español tiene un camino que conduce a una estrella* (“The Spanish people has a path that leads to a star”). Solana, Mallo, and Dalí counter narratives of a great imperial past, just as they avoid the clichéd subjects of regional folklore. But unlike Alberto, who looked to a promising future (which sadly, he falsely predicted), these artists focused on a putrid present that was often firmly rooted in the past.

Juan de Valdés Leal’s *Finis Gloriae Mundi* (1670-72), for example, is a centuries old image of *la España negra* that appears to have informed the work of all three artists [Fig. 4.1]. Solana, Mallo, and Dalí each reanimate the decaying bishop of Valdés Leal at different steps, not in order to blindly follow a particularly Spanish mode of depiction, nor to appeal to a foreign art market, but because this mode embodies a historical reality that all three recognize as essential. Solana transposes the corpse onto a float in a religious march, where it takes on the social roll of processional sculpture [Fig. 4.2]. These manifestations carried out during Holy Week are shocking, yet very routine --after all the processions feature the same sculptures and follow the same routes year after year. Solana’s procession, filled with skeletons and painted in brown and black tones, amplifies the stagnant and moribund ethos characterized by the literary work associated with the

*Generation of '98*. But the flatness of the overall depiction, in addition to the rectangular cityscape in the shallow background of the painting, demonstrates a subtly modern approach to traditional subject matter.

Mallo's reinterpretation of the seventeenth century painting by Valdés Leal is to remove the trappings of wealth and glamor, changing the setting to a mysterious, Italianate boneyard, creating an image suggestive of the poor resources of a place like Vallecas, and indicating the necessity for change [Fig. 2.19]. Her canvas pictures earthy elements that attracted the artists associated with the *Escuela de Vallecas*, who sought to escape from the bustle of the city in pursuit of a more genuine communion with the cycle of nature. For example, there are simple earthenware jugs, fungus, frogs, lizards, horseshoes, and of course bones. But Mallo is clearly aware that the quest for authenticity is necessarily fraught, and her portrait series, in which she recreates (in the lush town of Cercedilla) the vision of Vallecas pursued by herself, Alberto Sánchez and Benjamin Palencia, betrays this knowledge. Though their idealistic and modern approach is undertaken with good intentions, it creates a dichotomy between the civilized metropolis and the wild outskirts of Madrid that Mallo cogily recognizes as false; therein lies Mallo's critique of modernity.

Finally, Dalí's appropriation of the image for the film *L'age d'Or* (1930), his second and final collaboration with Luis Buñuel, is very personal as the bishops are strewn across the enigmatic rocks of the Cap de Creus, where the artist had spent countless hours as a child [Fig. 4.3]. However, the skeletons fit into his wider interrogations of putrefaction and modernity, and represent both states with affection, rigor, innovation, and criticism in equal measure.

## FIGURES



Figure 0.1

José Gutiérrez Solana, *La tertulia del Café de Pombo*, 1920, oil on canvas, 161.5 x 211.5 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid





Figure 1.1

José Gutiérrez Solana, *El Rastro*, 1922, oil on canvas, 154 x 128 cm, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao



Figure 1.2

Ignacio Zuloaga, *El Cristo de la sangre*, 1911, oil on canvas, 248 x 302 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



Figure 1.3

José Gutiérrez Solana, *La visita del obispo*, 1926, oil on canvas, 161 x 211 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid





Figure 1.4

José Gutiérrez Solana, *La vuelta del indiano*, ca. 1924, oil on canvas, 164 x 210 cm, Colección Grupo Santander



Figure 1.5

José Gutiérrez Solana, *Los indianos*, 1934, oil on canvas, 161 x 224 cm, Private Collection, Santander



Figure 1.6

Josep Maria Sert, *Intercesión de Santa Teresa de Jesús en la Guerra Civil española*, 1937, oil on canvas, 82 x 49.8 cm, Private collection. Photograph from the Pontifical Pavilion, 1937 World's Fair, Paris



Figure 1.7

José Gutiérrez Solana, *Las vitrinas y el visitante*, 1912, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm,  
Private collection, Santander





Figure 1.8

José Gutiérrez Solana, *Las vitrinas*, 1910, oil on canvas, 121 x 100 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid





Figure 2.1

Maruja Mallo, *Verbena de Pascua*, 1927, oil on canvas, 63.3 x 101.5 cm, Private collection



Figure 2.2

Maruja Mallo, *Verbena*, 1927, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, Private collection



Figure 2.3

Maruja Mallo, *La verbena*, 1927, oil on canvas, 119 x 166 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid







Figure 2.5

Stills from *Esencia de verbena*, 1930



Figure 2.6

Stills from *Esencia de verbena*, 1930



Figure 2.7

Still from *Esencia de verbena*, 1930



Figure 2.8

Stills from *Rosa de Madrid*, 1927





Figure 2.9

Still from *Rosa de Madrid*, 1927



Figure 2.10

Still from *Rosa de Madrid*, 1927



Figure 2.11

Stills from *Rosa de Madrid*, 1927



Figure 2.12

Mark Gertler, *Merry-Go-Round*, 1916, oil on canvas, 189.2 x 142.2 cm, Tate Collection, London



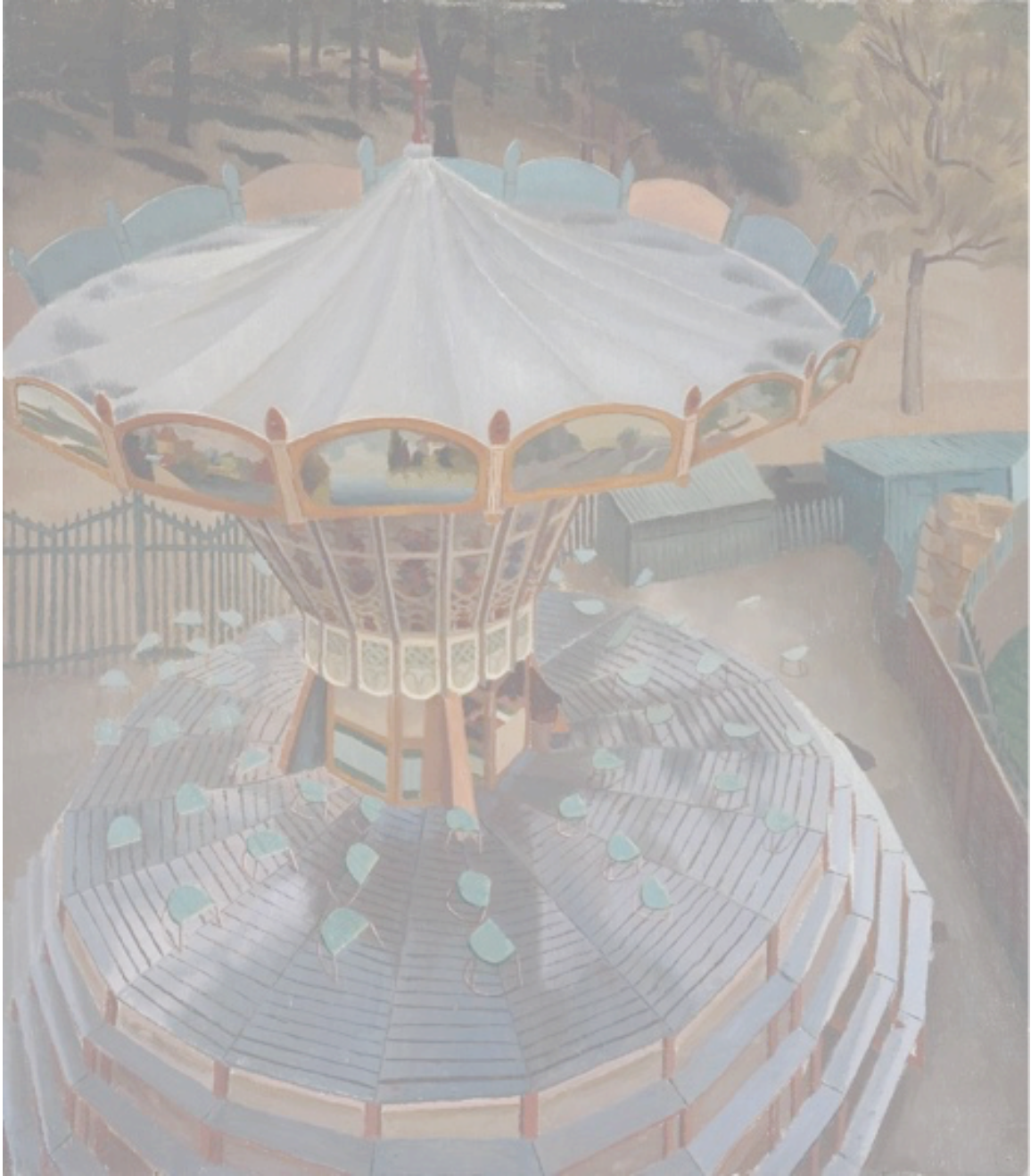


Figure 2.13

Stanley Spencer, *The Roundabout*, 1923, oil on canvas, 52.1 x 45.7 cm, Tate Collection, London



Figure 2.14

Carlos Sáenz de Tejada, *Mañana de verbena o El Pim, Pam, Pum*, 1924, oil and charcoal on canvas, 190 x 192 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



Figure 2.15

Alfonso Ponce de León, *Puestos*, 1929, oil on canvas, location unknown





Figure 2.16

José Gutiérrez Solana, *Verbena en la Pradera de San Isidro*, c. 1933, oil on canvas, 104 x 159.5 cm, Private collection





Figure 2.17

Maruja Mallo, *Estampa (Escaparate)*, 1928, oil on canvas, 105 x 80 cm, Private collection



Figure 2.18

Otto Dix, *Prager Straße*, 1920, oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm  
Kunstmuseum Stuttgart



Figure 2.19

Maruja Mallo, *Antro de fósiles*, 1930, oil on canvas, 135 x 194 cm,  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid





Figure 2.20

Maruja Mallo and Josefina Carabias with Mallo's *Antro de Fósiles*, Madrid, 1931,  
Archivo Maruja Mallo, Galería Guillermo de Osma, Madrid



Figure 2.21

Mallo photographed by her brother Justo in Cercedilla, ca. 1930, Archivo Maruja Mallo, Galería Guillermo de Osma, Madrid



Figure 2.22

Mallo photographed by her brother Justo in Cercedilla, ca. 1930, Archivo Maruja Mallo, Galería Guillermo de Osma, Madrid



Figure 2.23

Mallo photographed by her brother Justo in Cercedilla, ca. 1930, Archivo Maruja Mallo, Galería Guillermo de Osma, Madrid







Figure 3.2

Salvador Dalí, *Están en el café i nada más; Tocan muy bien*, 1924-25, china ink and colored pencil on paper, 20.5 x 14.8 cm, Colección Bello, Huesca





Figure 3.3

Salvador Dalí, *La mel és més dolça que la sang*, 1927, oil on unknown support, location unknown



Figure 3.4

Salvador Dalí, Study for *La mel és més dolça que la sang*, 1926, oil on wood panel, 37.8 x 46.2 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres



Figure 3.5

Salvador Dalí, *Cenicitas*, 1927-1928, oil on reinforced plywood, 64 x 48 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



Figure 3.6

Salvador Dalí, *Aparell i mà* (*Apparatus and Hand*), 1927, oil on wood panel, 62.2 x 47.6 cm, The Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida



Del present **MANIFEST** hem eliminat tota cortesia en la nostra actitud. Inútil qualsevol discussió amb els representants de l'actual cultura catalana, negativa artísticament per bé que eficaç en d'altres ordres. La transigència o la correcció condueixen als delinqüents i lamentables confusionismes de totes les valors, a les més irrespirables atmosferes espirituals, a la més perniciosa de les influències. Exemple: *La Nova Revista*. La violenta hostilitat, per contra, situa netament les valors i les posicions, i crea un estat d'esperit higiènic.

**HEM ELIMINAT** tota argumentació  
**HEM ELIMINAT** tota literatura  
**HEM ELIMINAT** tota lírica  
**HEM ELIMINAT** tota filosofia a favor de les nostres idees

Existeix una enorme bibliografia i tot l'esforç dels artistes d'avui per a suplir tot això.

**ENS LIMITEM** a la més objectiva enumeració de fets  
**ENS LIMITEM** a assemlar el grotesc i tristíssim espectacle de la intel·lectualitat catalana d'avui, tancada en un ambient resclós i putrefacte.

**PREVENIM** de la infecció als encara no contagiats.  
 Afer d'estricta asèpsia espiritual.

**SABEM** que res de nou anem a dir. Ens consta, però, que és la base de tot el nou que avui hi ha i de tot el nou que tingui possibilitats de crear-se.

**VIVIM** una època nova, d'una intensitat poètica imprevisible.

**EL MAQUINISME** ha revolucionat el món  
**EL MAQUINISME** -antitesi del circumstancialment indispensable futurisme- ha verificat el canvi més profund que ha conegut la humanitat.

**UNA MULTITUD** anònima -antiarística- col·labora amb el seu esforç quotidià en l'afirmació de la nova època, tot i vivint d'acord amb el seu temps.

**UN ESTAT D'ESPERIT POSTMAQUINISTA  
 HA ESTAT FORMAT**

**ELS ARTISTES** d'avui han creat un art nou d'acord amb aquest estat d'esperit. D'acord amb llur època.

**ACÍ, PERÒ, ES CONTINUA  
 PASTURANT IDÍLLICAMENT**

**LA CULTURA** actual de Catalunya és inservible per a l'alegria de la nostra època. Res de més perillós, més fals i més adúlterador.

**PREGUNTEM  
 ALS INTEL·LECTUALS CATALANS:**

-De què us ha servit la Fundació Bernat Metge, si després heheu de confondre la Grècia antiga amb les ballarines pseudoclassiques?

**AFIRMEM** que els sportsmen estan més a prop de l'esperit de Grècia que els nostres intel·lectuals.  
**AFEGIREM** que un sportsman verge de nocions artístiques i de tota erudició està més a la vora i és més apte per a sentir l'art i la poesia d'avui, que no els intel·lectuals, miops i carregats d'una preparació negativa.

**PER NOSALTRES** Grècia es continua en l'acabat numèric d'un motor d'avió, en el teixit antiartístic d'anònima manufactura anglesa destinat al golf, en el nu en el music-hall americà.

**ANOTEM** que el teatre ha deixat d'existir per a uns quants i gairebé per a tothom.

**ANOTEM** que els concerts, conferències i espectacles corrents avui entre nosaltres, acostumen a ésser sinònims de llocs irrespirables i avorridíssims.

**PER CONTRA**

**HI HA** el cinema  
**HI HA** l'estadi, la boxa, el rugby, el tennis i els mil esports  
**HI HA** la música popular d'avui: el jazz i la dansa actual  
**HI HA** el saló de l'automòbil i de l'aeronàutica  
**HI HA** els jocs a les platges  
**HI HA** els concursos de bellesa a l'aire lliure  
**HI HA** la desfilada de maniquins  
**HI HA** el nu sota l'electricitat en el music-hall  
**HI HA** la música moderna  
**HI HA** l'autòdrom  
**HI HA** les exposicions d'art dels artistes moderns  
**HI HA** encara, una gran enginyeria i uns magnífics transatlàntics  
**HI HA** una arquitectura d'avui  
**HI HA** útils, objectes, mobles d'època actual  
**HI HA** la literatura moderna  
**HI HA** els poetes moderns  
**HI HA** el teatre modern  
**HI HA** el gramòfon, que és una petita màquina  
**HI HA** l'aparell de fotografiar, que és una altra petita màquina  
**HI HA** diaris de rapidíssima i vastíssima informació  
**HI HA** enciclopèdies d'una erudició extraordinària  
**HI HA** la ciència en una gran activitat  
**HI HA** la crítica documentada i orientadora  
**HI HA** etc., etc., etc.  
**HI HA** finalment, una orel·la immòbil sobre un petit fum dret.

**DENUNCIEM** la influència sentimental dels llocs comuns racials de Guimera  
**DENUNCIEM** la sensibleria malaltosa servida per l'Orfeu Català, amb el seu repertori tronat de cançons populars, adaptades i adulterades per la gent més absolutament negada per a la música, i àdhuc, de composicions originals. (Pensem en l'optimisme del cor dels Revelers americans.)  
**DENUNCIEM** la manca absoluta de joventut dels nostres joves  
**DENUNCIEM** la manca absoluta de decisió i d'audàcia  
**DENUNCIEM** la por als nous fets, a les paraules, al risc del ridícul  
**DENUNCIEM** el soporisme de l'ambient podrit de les penyes i els personalismes barrejats a l'art  
**DENUNCIEM** l'absoluta indocumentació dels crítics respecte a l'art d'avui i l'art d'ahir  
**DENUNCIEM** els joves que pretenen repetir l'antiga pintura  
**DENUNCIEM** els joves que pretenen imitar l'antiga literatura  
**DENUNCIEM** l'arquitectura d'estil  
**DENUNCIEM** l'art decoratiu que no sigui l'estandarditzat  
**DENUNCIEM** els pintors d'arbres torts  
**DENUNCIEM** la poesia catalana actual, feta dels més rebregats tòpics maragallians  
**DENUNCIEM** les metzines artístiques per a ús infantil, tipus *Jordi*. (Per a l'alegria i comprensió dels nois, res de més adequat que Rousseau, Picasso, Chagall...)  
**DENUNCIEM** la psicologia de les noies que canten: *Rosó, Rosó...*  
**DENUNCIEM** la psicologia dels nois que canten: *Rosó, Rosó...*

**FINALMENT ENS RECLAMEM DELS GRANS ARTISTES D'AVUI**, dins les més diverses tendències i categories:

PICASSO, GRIS, OZENFANT, CHIRICO, JOAN MIRÓ, LIPCHITZ, BRANCIUȘI, ARP, LE CORBUSIER, REVERDY, TRISTAN TZARA, PAUL ÉLUARD, LOUIS ARAGON, ROBERT DESNOS, JEAN COCTEAU, GARCÍA LORCA, STRAVINSKY, MARITAIN, RAYNAL, ZERVOS, ANDRÉ BRETON, ETC., ETC.

**SALVADOR DALÍ** **LLUÍS MONTANYÀ**  
**SEBASTIÀ GASCH**

Barcelona, març de 1928

Figure 3.7

Salvador Dalí, Lluís Montanyà, Sebastià Gasch, *Manifest Groc*, March 1928

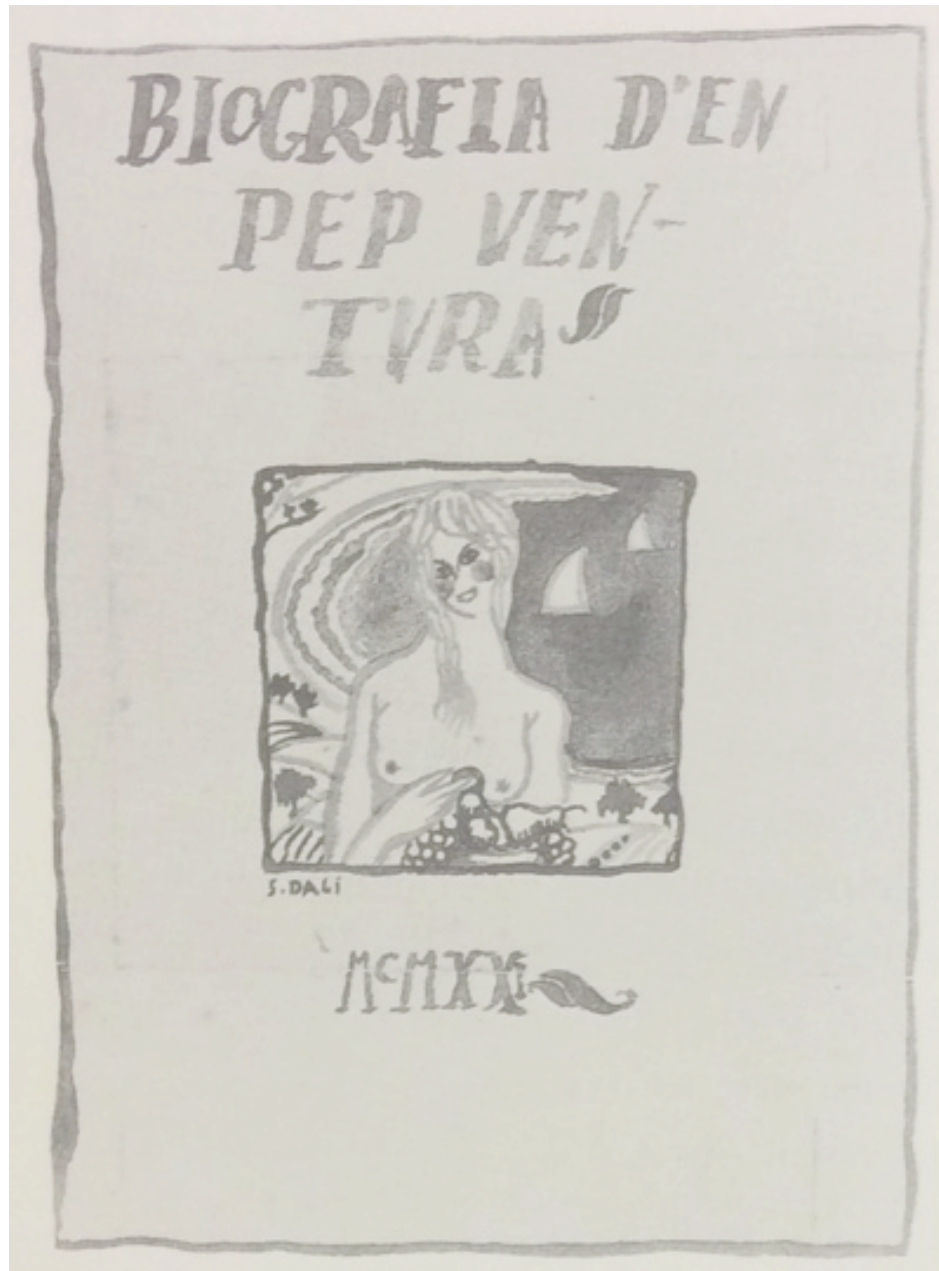


Figure 3.8

Salvador Dalí, Design for the cover of *Biografia d'en Pep Ventura*, 1921, watercolor on paper, 13.5 x 19 cm, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds Morse on loan to the Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida

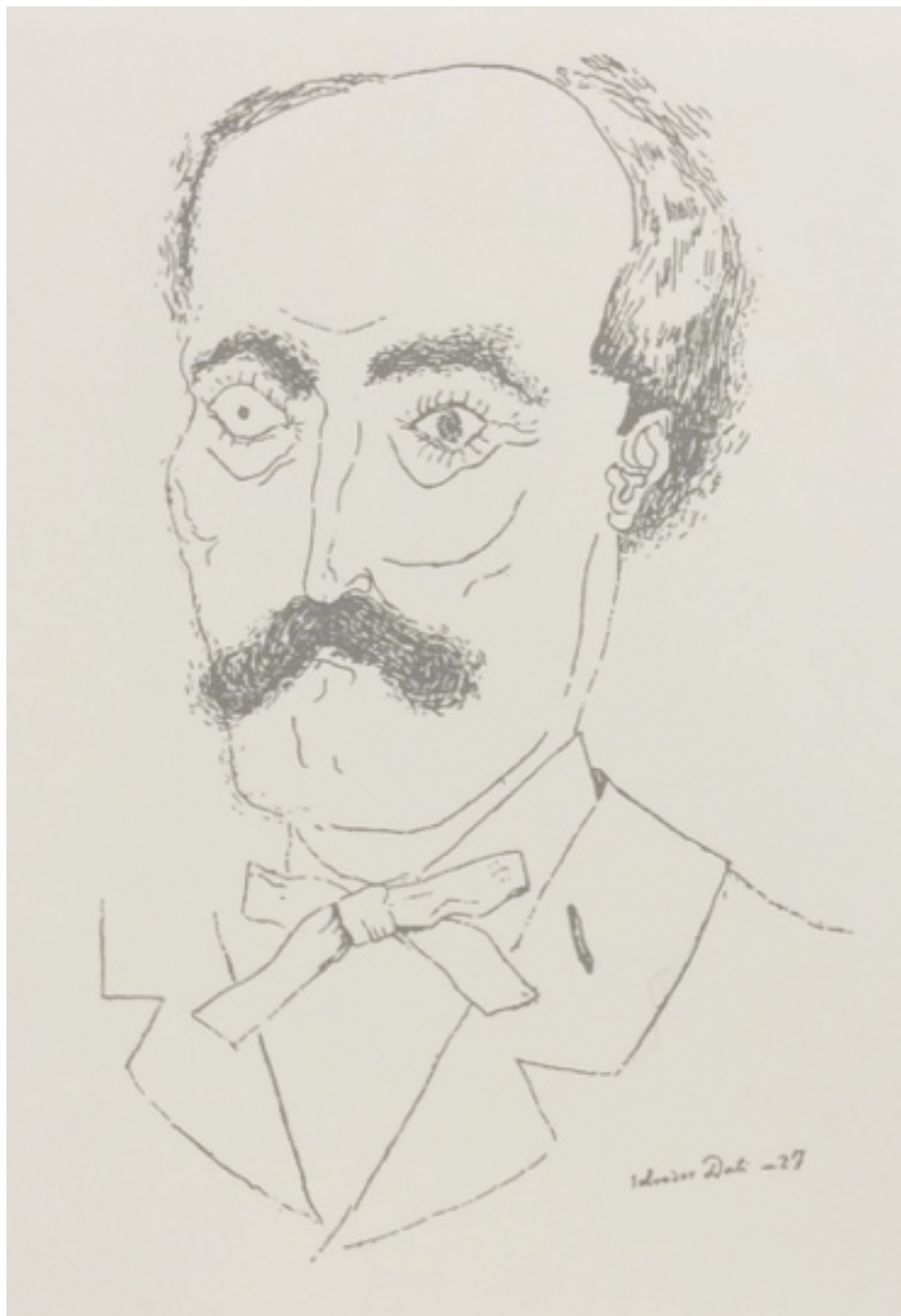


Figure 3.9

Salvador Dalí, *Portrait of Pep Ventura*, 1927, location unknown



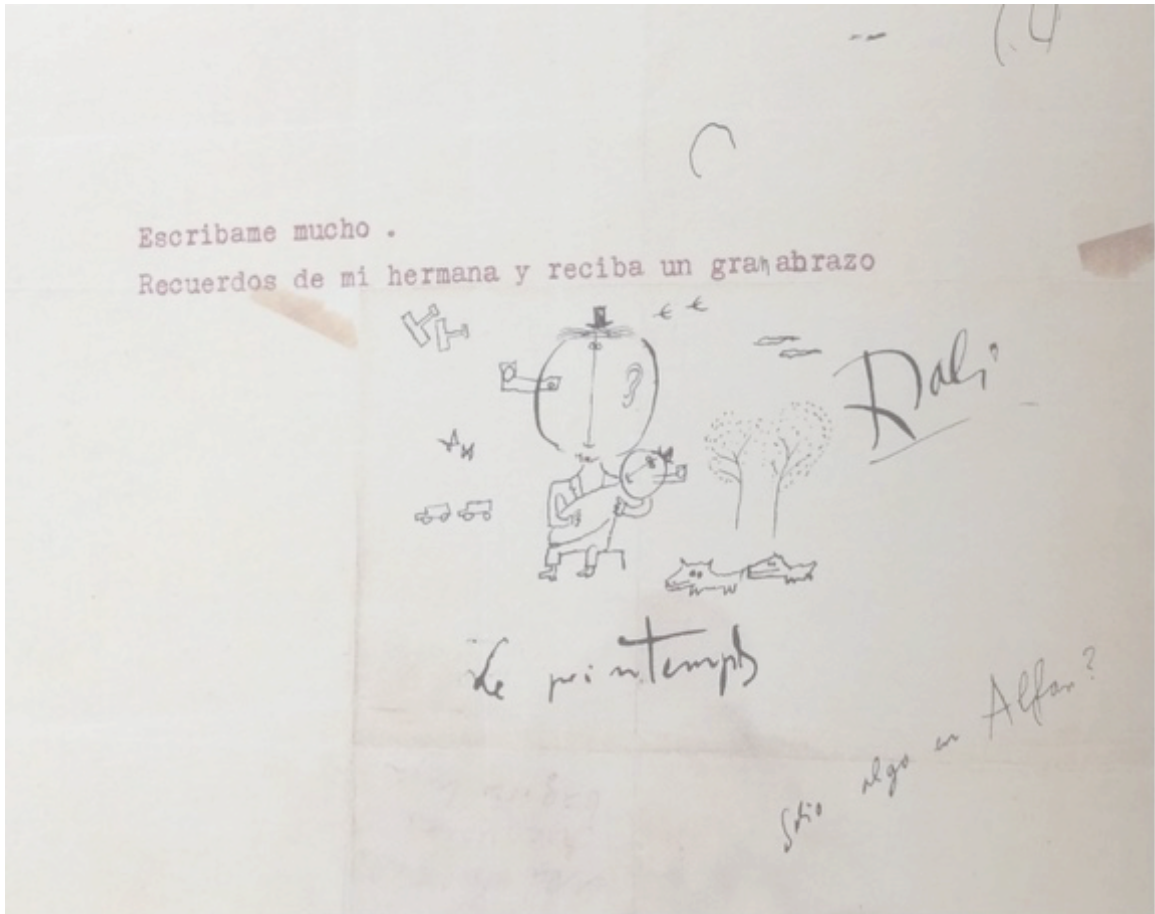


Figure 3.10

Salvador Dalí, *Paternidad*, 1925, china ink on paper, 21.5 x 16.5 cm, Colección Santos Torroella, Barcelona





Figure 3.11

Salvador Dalí, *Dirigible Salvador Dalí*, 1925, china ink and colored pencil on paper, 21 x 16 cm, Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid

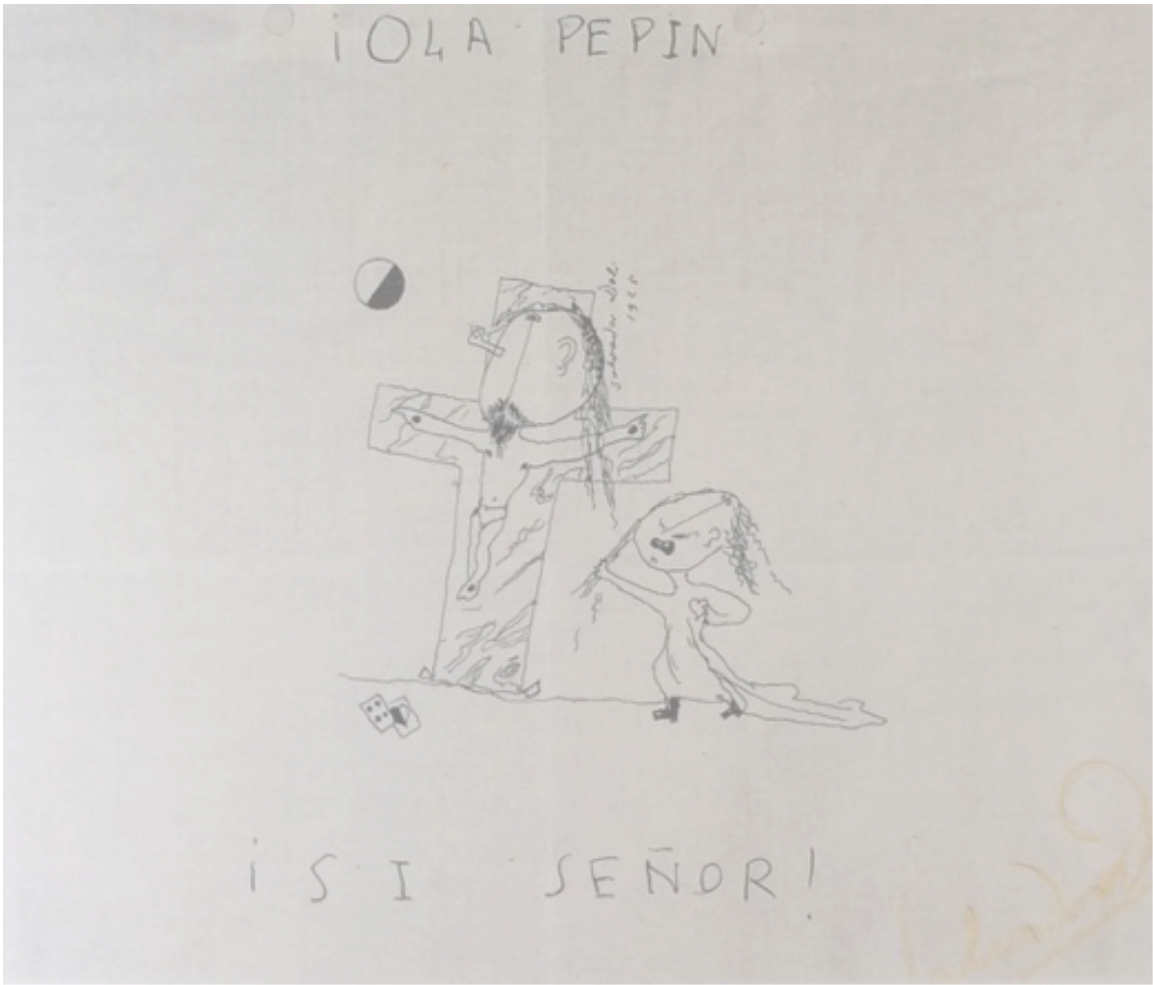


Figure 3.12

Salvador Dalí, *Crucifixión I*, 1925, china ink on paper, 17 x 20 cm, Colección Caballero-Bello, Madrid

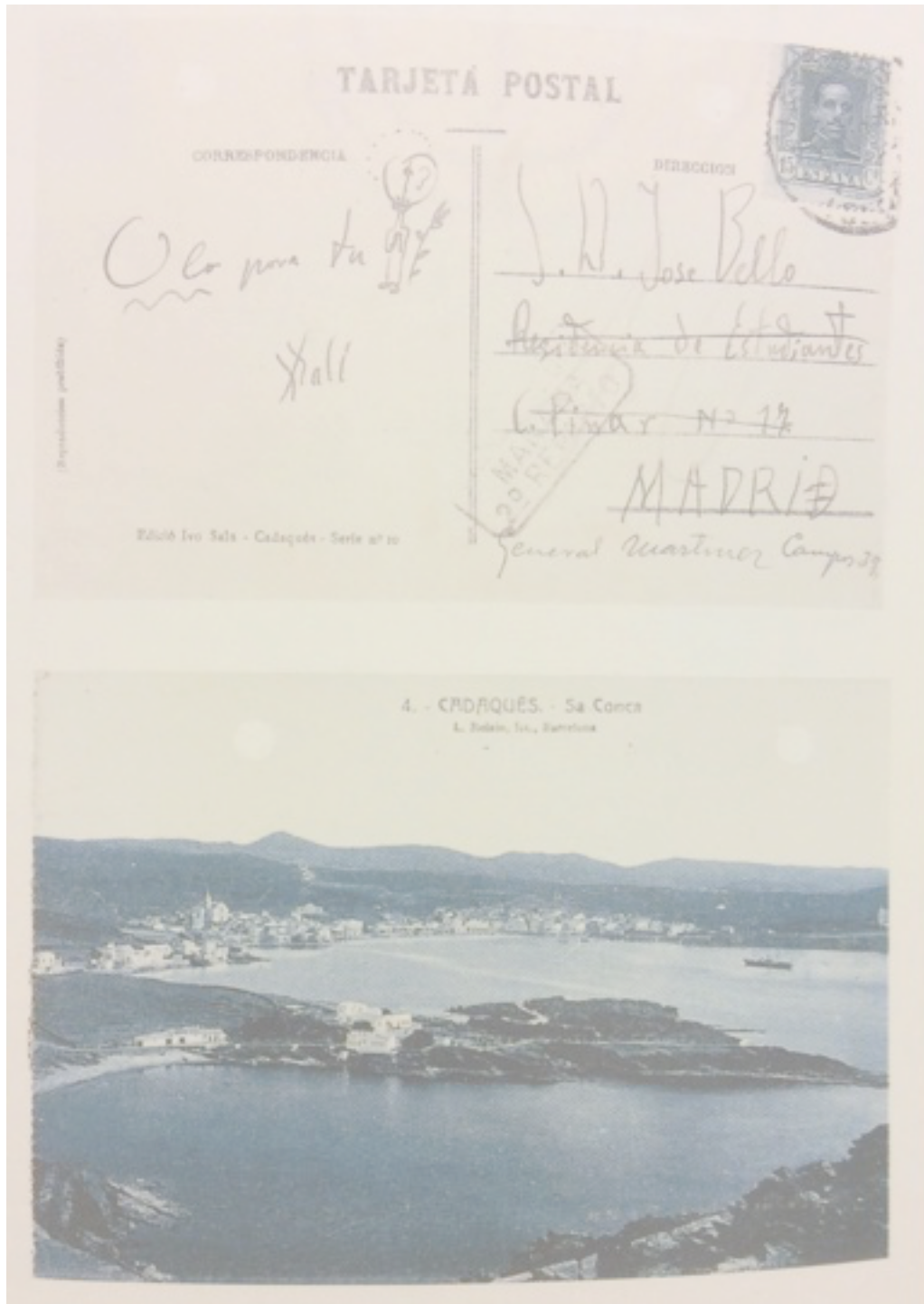


Figure 3.13

Salvador Dalí, *San José*, 1926, ink on cardboard (postcard), Colección Caballero-Bello, Madrid

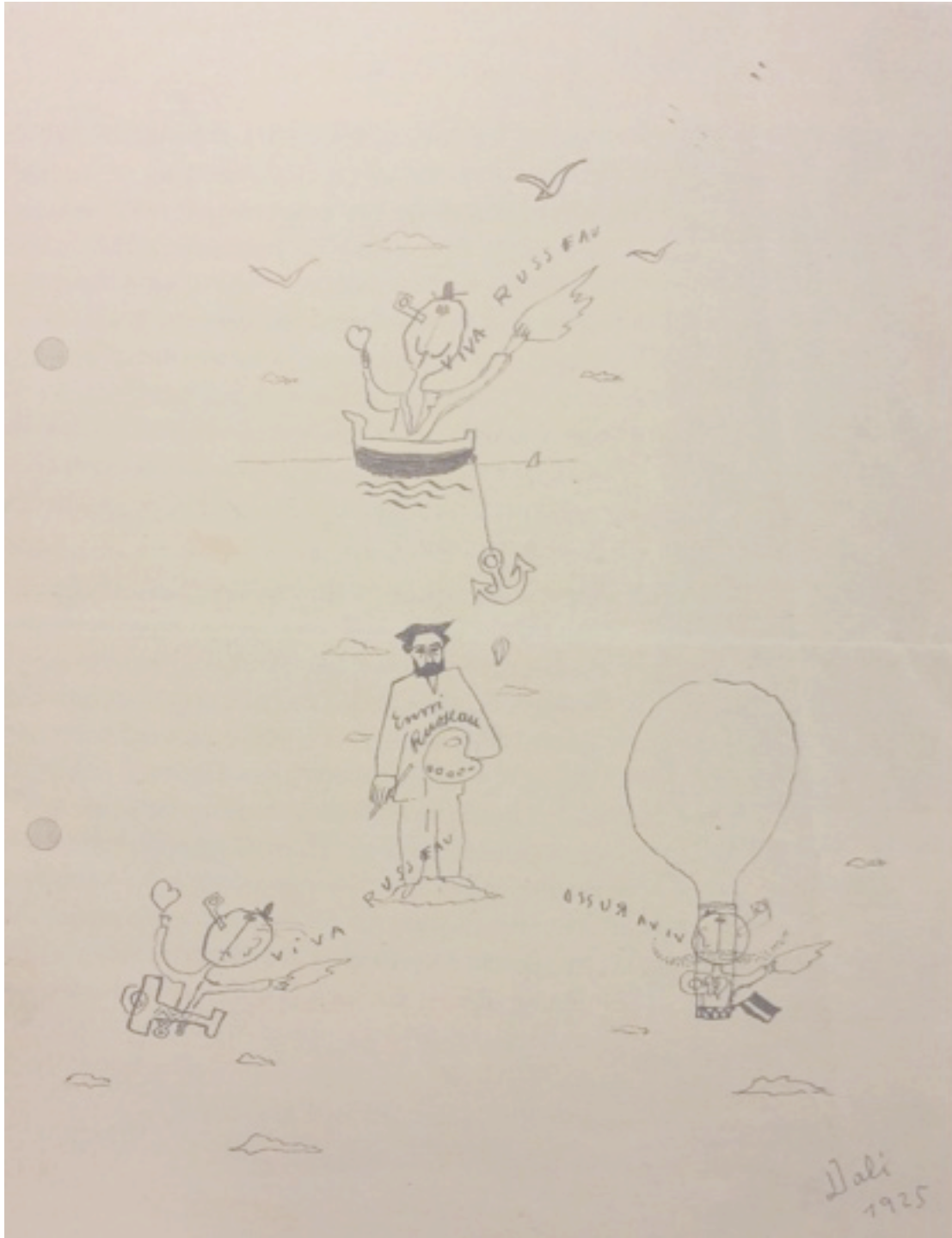


Figure 3.14

Salvador Dalí, *Viva Rousseau* [sic], 1925, ink on paper, 21 x 16.5 cm, Colección Caballero-Bello, Madrid

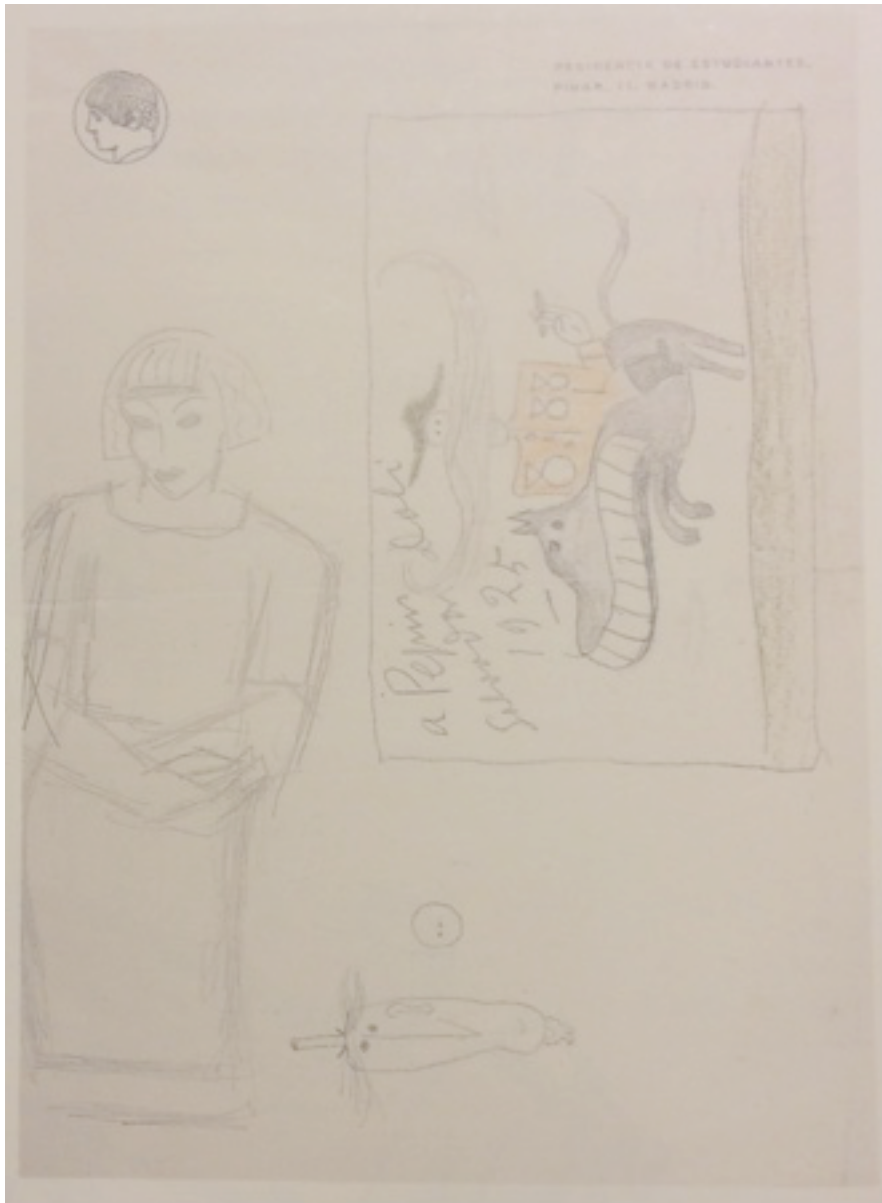


Figure 3.15

Salvador Dalí, *A Pepín*, 1925, pencil and wax on paper, 21.5 x 16 cm, Colección Caballero-Bello, Madrid





Figure 3.16

Salvador Dalí, *Heliometro [sic] per a sors [sic]*, 1924, china ink and pencil on paper, 27 x 21.5 cm, Colección Juana y Ricardo Pont, Barcelona

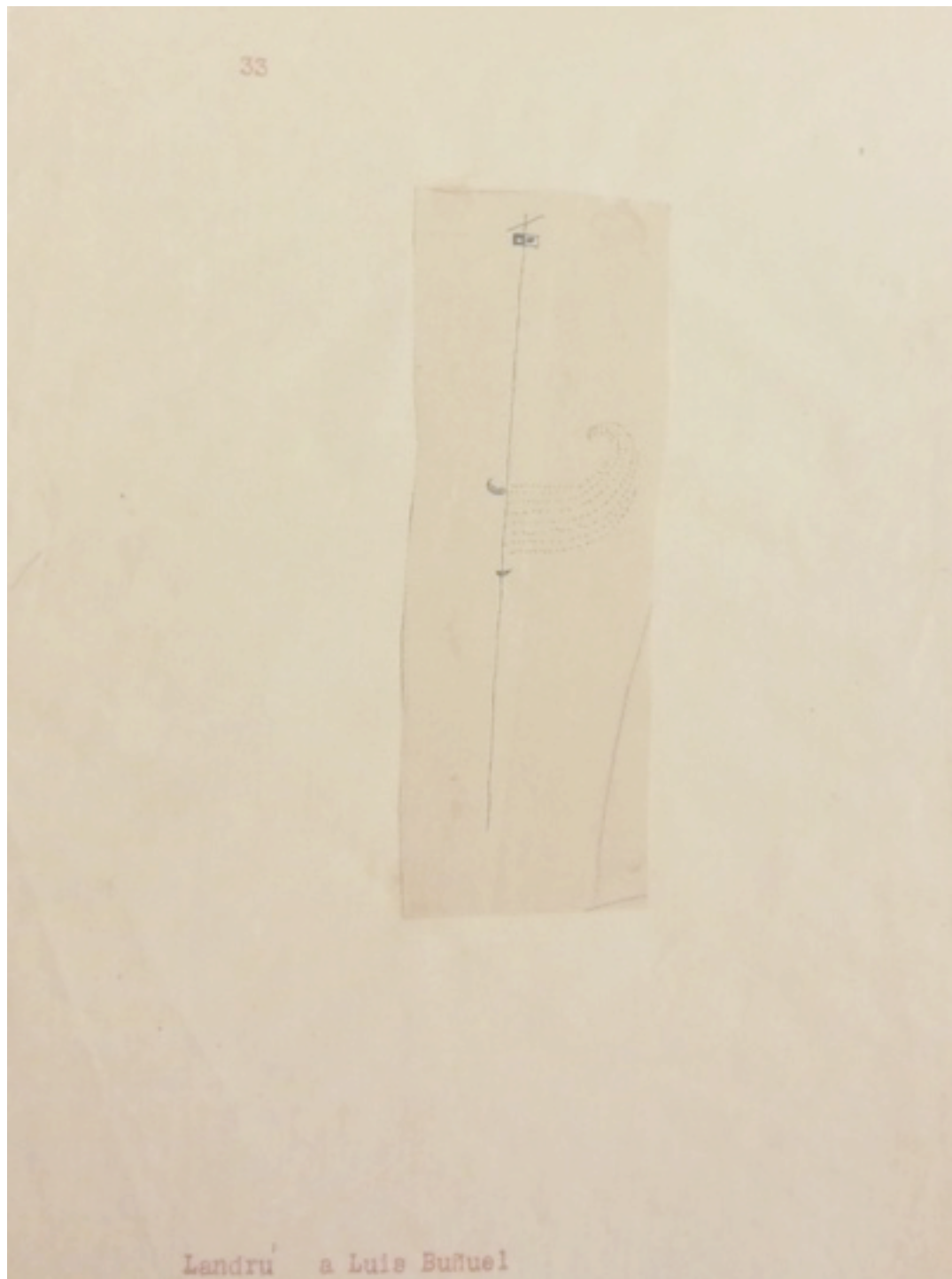


Figure 3.17

Salvador Dalí, *Landrú (a Luis Buñuel)*, 1924, china ink on paper, 27 x 21.5 cm, Colección Juana y Ricardo Pont, Barcelona



Figure 3.18

Salvador Dalí, *Abocat [sic] important*, 1925, china ink on paper, 27 x 21.5 cm, Colección Juana y Ricardo Pont, Barcelona



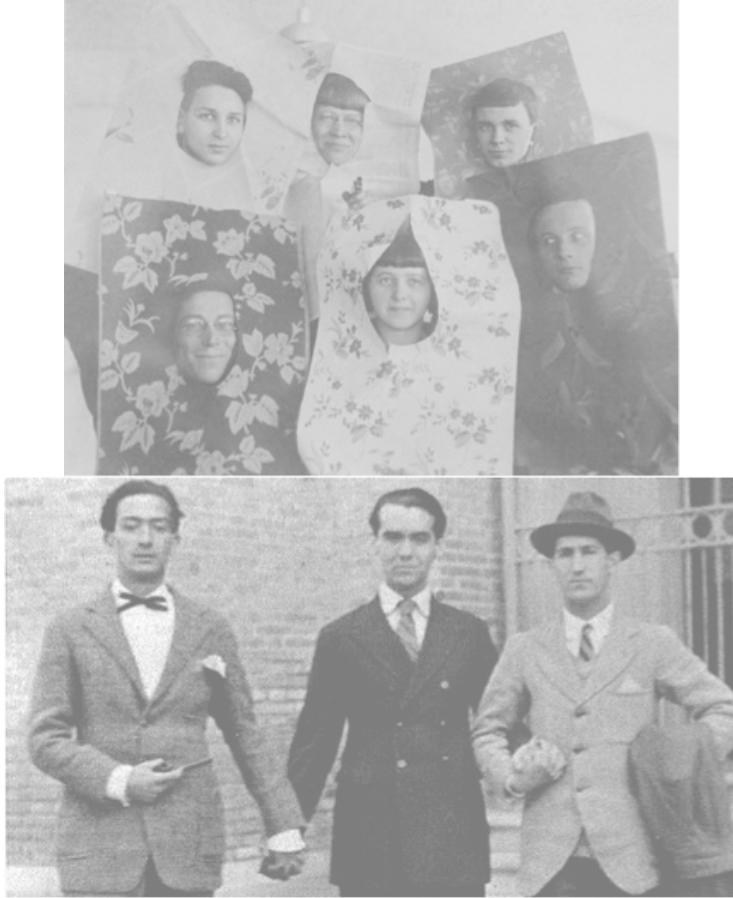


Figure 3.19

Above: Bauhaus Students Disguised as Wallpaper Weimar, 1923

Below: Salvador Dalí, Federico García Lorca, and Pepín Bello at the Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid, 1923



Figure 3.20

George Grosz, *Ich will alles um mich her ausrotten, was mich einschränkt, das ich nicht Herr bin*, 1922, transfer lithograph, 57.6 x 42.6 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



Figure 3.21

Henri Rousseau, *Myself: Portrait-Landscape*, 1890, oil on canvas, 146 × 113 cm, National Gallery, Prague



Figure 3.22

Salvador Dalí, *Cartell* (Poster for the *Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu*), 1921 gouache on paper, 52 x 64 cm, The Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida





Figure 3.23

Salvador Dalí, Poster for the *Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu*, May 1921



Figure 3.24

Salvador Dalí, Poster for the *Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu*, May 1921, Private collection



Figure 3.25

Salvador Dalí, *Las Férias de Figueres*, 1922, tempera on cardboard, 26.3 x 65.6 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres

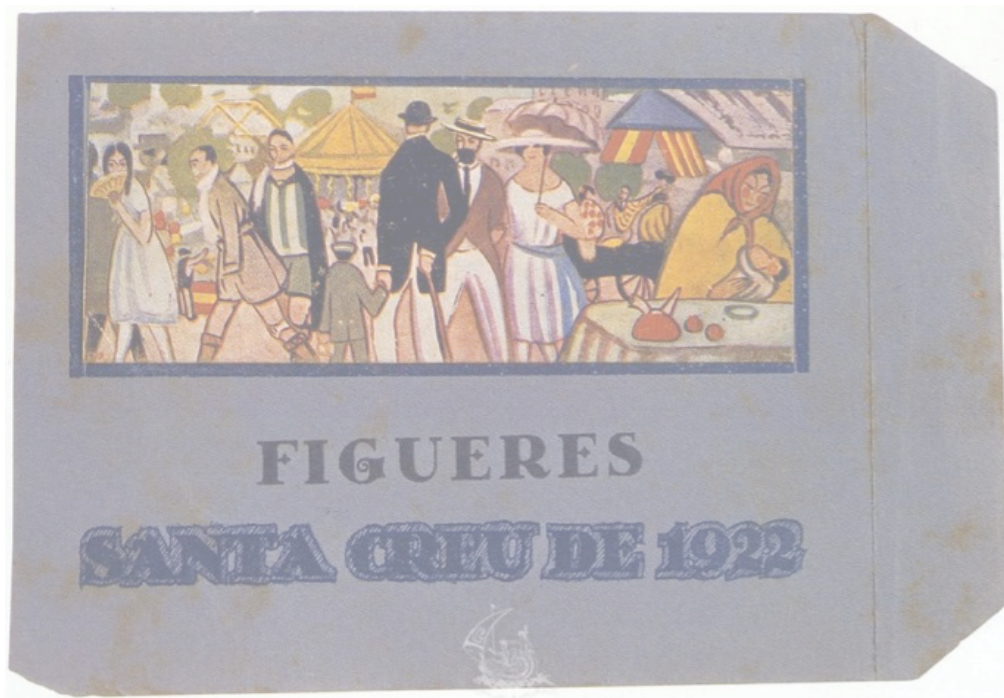


Figure 3.26

Salvador Dalí, Program, *Las Férias de Figueres*, 1922



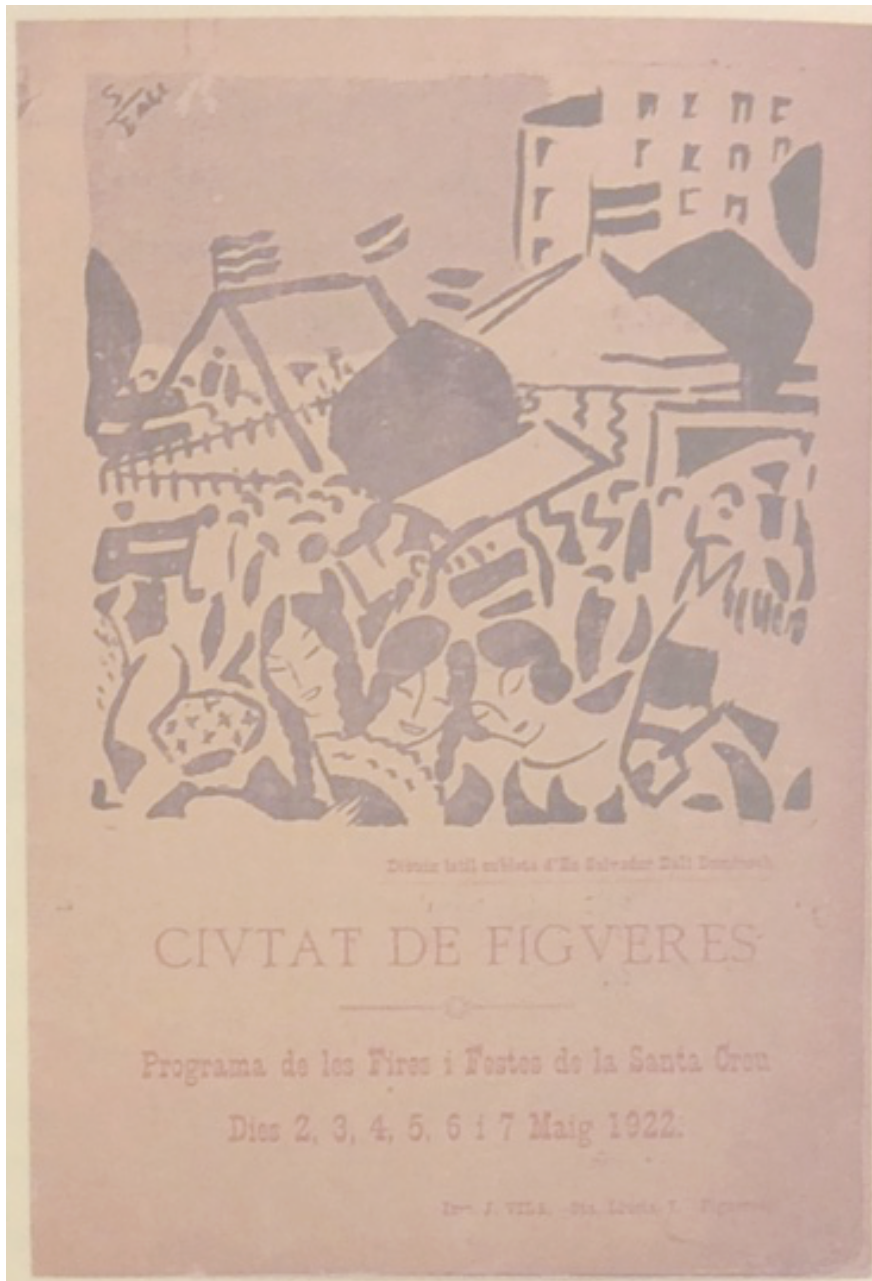


Figure 3.27

Salvador Dalí, Cover for *Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu* catalog, 1922, Josep Fajol collection, Figueres





Figure 3.28

Cover for *Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu* catalog, 1913, Col·lecció digital dels Programes de Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu, des de 1913 a 1950, Biblioteca Fages de Climent Figueres



Figure 3.29

Cover for *Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu* catalog, 1923, Col·lecció digital dels Programes de Fires i Festes de la Santa Creu, des de 1913 a 1950, Biblioteca Fages de Climent Figueres



Figure 3.30

Salvador Dalí, *Verbena de Santa Cruz*, 1921, tempera on cardboard, 52 x 75 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres



Figure 3.31

Salvador Dalí, *Sueños noctámbulos*, 1922, china ink and watercolor on paper, 31.5 x 24 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres



Figure 3.32

Left to right: Maruja Mallo, Ernestina de Champurcin, Salvador Dalí, ca. 1922





Figure 3.33

Salvador Dalí, *Maruja Mallo, Barradas (?) y Dalí en el Gran Café de Oriente de la glorieta de Atocha*, 1923, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres



Figure 3.34

Salvador Dalí, *Cabaret*, 1922, oil on canvas, 52 x 41 cm, Morohashi Museum of Modern Art, Fukushima, Japan



Figure 3.35

Salvador Dalí, *Escena de Navidad*, 1922, pencil, ink and wash on paper, 21 x 15.2 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres (Dalí bequest 1989)





Figure 3.36

Salvador Dalí, *Escena de navidad*, 1922, pencil, ink and wash on paper, 21 x 15.2 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres (Dalí bequest 1989)



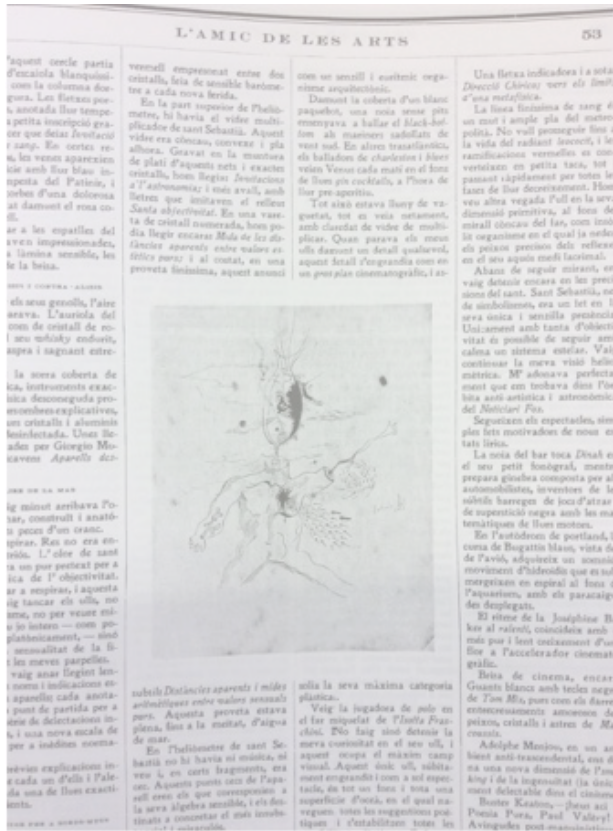


Figure 3.37

Salvador Dalí, "Saint Sebastian," *L'Amic de les Arts* (Sitges) no. 16 (July 31, 1927), 53



Figure 3.38

Still from *Un chien andalou*, 1929



Figure 4.1

Juan de Valdés Leal, *Finis Gloriarum Mundi*, 1670-72, oil on canvas, 220 x 216 cm,  
Hospital de la Caridad, Sevilla



Figure 4.2

José Gutiérrez Solana, *La procesión de la muerte*, 1930, oil on canvas, 210 x 123 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



Figure 4.3

Still from *L'Age d'Or*, 1930

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Materials relating to Maruja Mallo

Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid

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Centre d'Estudis Dalinians (CED), Fundació Gala - Salvador Dalí, Figueres, Catalonia, Spain

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