Spring 1-1-2012

The Barcelona-Paris Connection: A Response to the Critical Framings of Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol’s Engagement with French Art and Culture

Laura Marie Cales
University of Colorado at Boulder, laura.cales@colorado.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/arth_gradetds
Part of the Classical Archaeology and Art History Commons

Recommended Citation
Cales, Laura Marie, "The Barcelona-Paris Connection: A Response to the Critical Framings of Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol’s Engagement with French Art and Culture" (2012). Art History Theses & Dissertations. 10.
https://scholar.colorado.edu/arth_gradetds/10

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Art and Art History at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art History Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu.
THE BARCELONA-PARIS CONNECTION:
A RESPONSE TO THE CRITICAL FRAMINGS OF RAMON CASAS AND SANTIAGO
RUSIÑOL’S ENGAGEMENT WITH FRENCH ART AND CULTURE

by
Laura M. Cales
B.A., Wright State University, 2007

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master’s of Arts
Department of Art and Art History
2012
This thesis entitled:
The Barcelona-Paris Connection:
A Response to the Critical Framings of Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol’s Engagement with French Art and Culture
written by Laura M. Cales
has been approved for the Department of Art and Art History

____________________________________
Marilyn Brown

____________________________________
James Córdova

____________________________________
Robert Nauman

Date____________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Ramon Casas i Carbó and Santiago Rusiñol i Prats altered the scope of painting and the social
dynamic of artistic production in Catalonia during the late nineteenth century. Their works,
which drew and expanded upon their artistic sources from abroad, were some of the primary
contributors to the dynamic and transformative artistic production in Barcelona coined
Modernisme. As cultural activists, they implemented two iconic meeting places for regional as
well as international artists to share ideas and exhibit their creative productions, the Festes
Modernistes and Els Quatre Gats. While recognized for these achievements among scholars
today in Catalonia and Spain, their work and status as historical figures of nineteenth-century
Catalan art and culture remains relatively unknown to international audiences. Furthermore, the
extant scholarship has a tendency to stress Casas and Rusiñol’s debt to preexisting and
concurrent French art movements, which in effect undermines their achievements and
innovations.

Through an analysis of the critical framings of Casas and Rusiñol’s paintings and their
connection with the artistic currents of late nineteenth-century France in recent scholarship, I
contend that contemporary reception of this aspect of their work has been conditioned and
limited by the ideological view of Catalan modernity as a mere adoption and uneven application
of Parisian models. This view echoes and perhaps is informed by traditional framings of Spain
by historians and writers as a peripheral and “backward” country dependent upon hegemonic,
Northern-European models of modernization to redeem itself. Using case studies, I offer an
alternative approach to examine Casas and Rusiñol’s responsiveness to French art and culture
that reinserts the artists’ agency when viewed through the lens of intercultural appropriation.
Instead of marking their paintings as products of artistic “provincialism,” I situate specific works
by these artists as translations rather than derivative emulations of their artistic sources into
idiosyncratic images that referenced provocative socio-cultural issues in fin-de-siglo Catalonia
and Spain.
CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONING THE CRITICAL CONSTRUCTS OF ART HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP ON NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPANISH PAINTING: THE CASE OF RAMON CASAS AND SANTIAGO RUSIÑOL

I. Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol: Modernista Artists

1. NEGATIVE CRITICISM OF THE ARTWORK OF CASAS AND RUSIÑOL AND THE STIGMA OF SPANISH “BACKWARDNESS”

   I. Negative Responses to Casas’ and Rusiñol’s Artwork in Recent Scholarship
   II. Historicizing Spanish “Backwardness:” From Imperial Power to Other in Europe
   III. Spain’s Self-Reflexivity
   IV. Retraso’s Legacy

2. BARCELONA: “THE PARIS OF THE SOUTH”

   I. Barcelona In and On the International Stage
   II: Barcelona as a Conduit of Modern Parisian Culture
   III: Reconciling Catalanisme and “Cosmopolitanism”
   IV: Barcelona’s Uneven Application of Parisian Modernity

3. FRAMING CASAS AND RUSIÑOL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH FRENCH ART AND CULTURE

   I. Recent Literature on the French “Influences” in Casas and Rusiñol’s Work: Artistic Centers and Provinces
II. Artistic Translation: An Attempt to Look Beyond the Center versus the Province/Periphery Model.............................................................82

I. A Consideration of Casas And Rusiñol’s Relationship with French Art and Culture as Intercultural Appropriation.................................86

CONCLUSION..............................................................................................................101

FIGURES......................................................................................................................102

BIBLIOGRAPHY.............................................................................................................132
Introduction:
Questioning the Critical Constructs of Art Historical Scholarship on Nineteenth-Century Spanish Painting: The Case of Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol

Nineteenth-century Spanish painting is a relatively unexplored field of research among scholars outside of Spain. This is particularly evident in academic scholarship and broader knowledge of the Catalan artists Ramon Casas i Carbó (1866-1932) and Santiago Rusiñol i Prats (1861-1931).¹ Considered forerunners of the artistic and cultural movement of fin-de-siglo Barcelona known as Modernisme, Casas and Rusiñol were and are celebrated within Catalonia and Spain as the first artists to implement “modern” painting in Barcelona and as cultural activists who advocated for the development the Catalan arts. However, they have received recognition among an international audience not necessarily for their individual achievements, but mostly as the artistic sources of Pablo Picasso’s (1881-1973) formative years.

Most of the extant scholarship on Casas and Rusiñol’s artistic production is primarily written in Castilian and Catalan and composed of essays in exhibition catalogues. While this literature is the most valuable scholarship on their works and lives, it is of limited availability to international readers. Moreover, with the exception of Carmen Belen-Lord’s 1995 PhD dissertation on Casas’ early artistic career and personal life, detailed studies as well as solo

exhibitions of these artists’ works are non-existent outside of Catalonia and Spain.² In effect, Casas and Rusiñol remain virtually unknown to scholars and audiences in the international scope.

Indeed, international recognition of Casas and Rusiñol’s work has grown slightly in recent years, as evidenced by their inclusion in the macro-scale exhibitions **Els Quatre Gats: Art in Barcelona Around 1900** of 1978; **Homage to Barcelona: The City and Its Art** of 1986; **Paris-Barcelone: de Gaudí à Miró** of 2002; **Catalani a Parigi = Catalans in Paris** of 2002; **Prelude to Spanish Modernism: Fortuny to Picasso** of 2005; **Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, and Dalí** of 2006; and **Barcelona 1900** of 2007.³ However, attention to the artists’ lives and works in the corresponding exhibition catalogs are somewhat overshadowed by lengthier discussions of the development of artistic modernism during the early twentieth century in Spain. Casas and Rusiñol are often situated as preludes to Picasso’s early works or as painterly complements, although not equivalents, to the celebrated architecture of Antoni Gaudí i Cornet

---


(1852-1926). Thus, these texts, while certainly valuable as they contribute to the growth of the broader recognition of modern Catalan painting, offer little more than basic, introductory information on the two artists and their works.

It is telling that discussions of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works are absent from survey studies of nineteenth-century European art. To my knowledge, international scholarship on nineteenth-century European painting mentions Spain primarily in reference to the first quarter of the century in which Francisco Goya (1746-1828) worked, while the rest of the century is often defined, if at all, as a regressive or stagnant artistic period characterized by conservatism and historical painting that was eventually redeemed by the modernist “genius” of Picasso. Perhaps with the exception of the Catalan painter Marià Fortuny i Marsal (1838-1874), Goya and Picasso remain the sole representatives of Spanish painting in the “grand-narrative” of nineteenth-century European art. This is curious, considering the attention that art historians in Catalonia and Spain have given to number of artists who lived and worked in this country during the nineteenth century.

In addition to a lack of awareness among an international audience of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works, the extant scholarship has a tendency to stress these artists’ debt to preexisting and concurrent French art movements, which in effect undermines their achievements and innovations. Moreover, some scholars have commented that their works are derivative and chronologically behind that of their French predecessors and contemporaries; that they lack innovation and character and only held/hold significance to their local artistic community in Catalonia. While Casas and Rusiñol deployed some elements of major French artistic styles in their own works, their works certainly operate as more than derivative emulations of these styles and thus do not merit such uneven comparisons with their French counterparts. Further, these
pejorative statements occlude nuanced interpretations of these artists’ paintings and their connection to the “modern” international art scene, as they situate Casas and Rusiñol as inherently less accomplished than and indebted to French art movements. Thus, I propose that the framings of these artists as unoriginal, indebted to France, “provincial,” late to arrive to the avant-garde and of little interest to anything beyond Catalan art history, have perhaps made scholars in the international scope reluctant to study their works.

Indeed, not all commentary on Casas and Rusiñol’s works is markedly negative. In fact, much of the scholarship that focuses on aspects of their artistic production beyond that of their French sources, such as Casas’ role as a graphic artist, Rusiñol’s status as a writer, and their involvement in *Els Quatre Gats*, are informative and extremely valuable contributions to the field. Yet, art historians have not addressed the pejorative responses to their works in some of the recent art historical scholarship and the curious lack of attention to their works among international scholars. Although there are other facets of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s artistic production that merit analysis, it is my aim in this thesis to draw attention to these issues and to situate them as the result of some major methodological problems in the extant scholarship, specifically in studies of the artists’ relationship with French art and culture. I do not desire merely to argue that Casas and Rusiñol deserve greater recognition among a broader, English-

---

speaking audience. Rather, I am interested in contextualizing and theorizing the manner in which these artists and their works have been viewed and studied.

Through an analysis of the critical framings of Casas and Rusiñol’s works and their connection with French artistic currents in recent art historical scholarship, I contend that contemporary reception of this aspect of their work has been conditioned and limited by the ideological view of Catalan modernity, in the arts and elsewhere, as a mere adoption and uneven application of Parisian models. This view echoes and perhaps is informed by those found in traditional studies of Spanish history, politics and culture, in which Spain is often positioned as an inherently “backward” and peripheral country dependent upon hegemonic, Northern-European models of modernization to redeem itself. In the past decade or so, historians, although not art historians, have discussed the presence of this ideological and historically constructed notion of Spanish “backwardness” in Western literature and academic scholarship on early modern to contemporary Spanish history, politics and society. They have voiced the need to remove and challenge this limiting view so that we might examine Spanish history in nuanced and less biased ways. As of yet, no studies articulate or explore how notions of Spanish backwardness and provincialism may have conditioned scholarly and critical responses to nineteenth-century Spanish artistic production, or perhaps contributed to a lack of interest in it among international scholars. Thus, an aim of this thesis is to voice the presence of this mindset

material and other forms of artistic production of nineteenth-century Spain that have been subjected to such views.

In Chapter 1, I cite some of the negative comments directed towards Casas and Rusiñol’s work. I contextualize these comments as being conditioned by ideological, dichotomous conceptions of Spanish backwardness, or modern versus premodern. Through a historiographical analysis, I demonstrate how notions of Spanish backwardness have pervaded and continue to inform academic approaches to Spanish history, politics, culture and particularly, studies on the development of European modernity. In Chapter 2, I discuss motivations for the Catalan bourgeoisie’s receptivity to Parisian culture during the mid to late nineteenth century, as it is relevant to an understanding of Casas and Rusiñol’s engagement with the artistic and cultural expressions of this city. I also analyze the critical framings of the Barcelona-Paris connection among some contemporary scholars, which illuminates the presence of notions of provincialism and premodern in discussions of the dynamic between the two cities. In Chapter 3, I address the major methodological problems, beyond that of the negative commentary, that are inherent in the extant scholarship on Casas and Rusiñol’s connection to Parisian art and culture. I analyze the limiting frameworks, particularly that of artistic centers and provinces, used to discuss the artists’ connection to preexisting and concurrent art movements in France. Finally, using case studies, I offer an alternative interpretive approach to Casas’ and Rusiñol’s interest in and adoption of French artistic and cultural expressions that considers this as an appropriative and creative intercultural activity that resulted in idiosyncratic and meaningful artworks, as opposed to derivative ones produced by “provincial” artists.

In order to comprehend the constructs that inform much of the extant scholarship on Casas and Rusiñol’s relationship with French art and culture, it is first necessary to introduce
some of the artists’ works and activities, particularly those of the 1890s, in which they were the most prolific and actively involved in their artistic communities in Barcelona and Paris. Their “French” paintings of the 1890s and their interaction with Parisian art and culture will be the focus of this discussion, as the idea of their debt to preexisting and concurrent French art movements is of primary concern to this thesis. Thus, I will cite some of the posited French sources of their paintings, such as the artistic styles that have been referenced to describe and categorize their works. The following discussion is not a comprehensive view of their works and activities; rather, it is meant to provide the reader with the basic context needed in order to understand the critical constructs that make up the extant scholarship.

I. Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol: Modernista Artists

Ramon Casas is recognized and studied primarily for his paintings; however, he was also an accomplished draftsman, prolific poster artist and a fervent advocate of the Catalan arts and culture. His most well-known paintings consist of portraits, mostly of the people, especially women, connected to his social class in Barcelona, and crowd-scenes that reference specific socio-political events in the city. Casas is also well known for his scenes of urban life and popular culture, notably, the ones he produced in and of Montmartre during the early 1890s.

Rusiñol, also a prolific painter, poster-artist and draftsmen, was likewise a celebrated poet, playwright and novelist. His artworks range in subject matter, but largely consist of interior and exterior scenes characterized by quietude. His latest works are primarily focused on the landscapes and gardens of Spain. Rusiñol’s status as a writer and artist who focused on “modern” subjects, and most importantly, his ardent support and formation of a vibrant artistic
community in Catalonia, earned him the label of the “prophet of the new art” of \textit{fin-de-siglo} Barcelona.\textsuperscript{6}

Casas and Rusiñol early formed a relationship as close friends, travel companions and artistic contemporaries. They frequently exhibited their paintings together in Barcelona and Paris from the late 1880s to the ends of their artistic careers; thus, critics and historians, of their time and the present, often evaluate their works as if the same person created them. Both artists were born into wealthy, bourgeois families in Barcelona; therefore, they had the financial means to frequently travel abroad and to work in the occupation of their choice, painting. Paris, which was/is not far in distance from Barcelona, became the preferred foreign destination for Casas and Rusiñol to learn new painting techniques and exhibit their works during the 1880s and the 1890s. As a result of their travels, prolific art making, extensive artistic vocabulary and involvement in and promotion of Catalonia’s artistic community, Casas and Rusiñol were some of the primary contributors to the construction of the dynamic and transformative artistic environment within Barcelona at this time, coined \textit{Modernisme}.

Catalan \textit{Modernisme}, often studied as a component of a greater Spanish literary movement rather than an artistic one, was concurrent with and symptomatic of the many social, technological, and political transformations that took place in \textit{fin-de-siglo} Barcelona. \textit{Modernisme} refers to diverse forms of literary, architectural, musical and artistic production during the period from roughly 1888 to the last few years of the first decade of the twentieth

\textsuperscript{6} Critics of Rusiñol’s time often deployed this phrase to describe his ardent promotion of individual artistic expression and especially the forging of the Catalan arts and culture. This phrase is also deployed by contemporary scholars, such as McCully in \textit{Els Quatre Gats and Modernista Painting in Catalonia in the 1890s}, 141 and by Temma Kaplan in \textit{Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso’s Barcelona} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 40.
It does not denote a common style; rather, it refers to an ideology of art making that was informed by notions of internationalization, modernism, artistic freedom and Catalan nationalism, which are points that will be addressed further in the succeeding chapters.

Casas received his initial artistic training from the Catalan painter Joan Vicens Cots (1830-1886). However, this was short lived, as he left Barcelona for Paris in October of 1881 to receive further instruction from the French Salon portrait painter Emile Carolus-Duran (1838-1917). From January to June of 1882, Casas trained in Carolus-Duran’s atelier, where he was taught to refine and expand his portrait painting techniques in accordance with those of the artist his instructor most admired, Diego Velazquez (1599-1660). This is evident in the first painting Casas exhibited at the Salon de Champs-Élysées in Paris in 1883, his Autorretrato (Self-Portrait) (Figure 1) of the same year, in which the young artist is depicted seated on a bench, holding a wine skin, and dressed in an Andalusian costume that includes a bolero, red sash and round cap. Casas is shown in profile view with his face illuminated against a dark, monochromatic,  

---

7 "Modernisme" refers to a distinctly Catalan literary, artistic and cultural movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The term Modernisme was first deployed in the January 17, 1884 issue of the Barcelona magazine L’Avenç (1881-1893). The publication adopted the term to connote a “reformist commitment to all that was modern and innovative.” The poet Joan Maragall, art critic Raimon Casellas and Rusiñol deployed the term in their writings to connote all that was “youthful, contemporary and modern.” Carmen Belen-Lord, “The New Art: Modernisme,” in Barcelona and Modernity (see note 3), 35. The related term “Modernismo” first appeared in Spanish dictionaries in 1899, but it had been in use in Spain since the 1870s. Joseph Phillip Cervera, Modernismo: The Catalan Renaissance of the Arts, PhD diss. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), 2-6. Modernismo was used in Madrid at this time to describe a Castilian literary movement. Furthermore, in 1888, the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío deployed the term Modernismo to describe the commonalities between Spanish-American writers active during the late nineteenth century. Cathy L. Jrade, Modernismo, Modernity and the Development of Spanish American Literature (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 1. A great deal of academic scholarship focuses on Spanish and Catalan Modernismo literature while Spanish-American Modernismo literature has received far less critical attention in comparison, until the last decade or so. For a discussion of this see, Alejandro Mejías-López, The Inverted Conquest: The Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009). While a comparative analysis of the three is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that Catalan Modernisme, and Castilian and Spanish American Modernismo, all, in various ways, connote literary, cultural and artistic productions that have been interpreted as each culture’s promotion and embrace of “modernity.”

8 Isabel Coll i Mirabent, Ramon Casas, 1866-1932: una vida dedicada al arte, catálogo razonado (Murcia: De la Cierva Editores, 2002), 14.
Velazquesque background. For added effect, the young artist paraded in front of this painting at the Salon dressed in the very same costume. Casá’s choice to represent himself in a stereotypical Andalusian costume, both pictorially and physically, is interesting considering his close geographic and cultural association with Spain. This suggests the young, unknown artist was conscious of the Andalusian type as an appealing representation that would satisfy some of his French critics’ Romanticized views of Spanish people.

Many of Casá’s paintings of the 1880s depict scenes of everyday Hispanic life, or costumbrismo, which scholars often mark as a symptom of the artist’s exposure to Carolus-Duran’s and other French artists’ hispanism. Spanish subject matter frequently appeared in the French Salons from the 1830s on, as seen in Édouard Manet’s (1832-1883) works, which Casá likely viewed during his stay in Paris. Casá likewise represented Spanish subjects in an uncritical manner, as scenes of spectacle and color that played into the Romantic fantasy of an exotic, Oriental Spain. He painted the Spanish bullfight numerous times, a cultural activity that to hispanists was the epitome of “Romantic” Spain. Casá depicted this event using a range of colors and light to highlight the sheer spectacle of this activity, as seen in his La corrida de toros (The Bullfight) (Figure 2) of 1884. His predilection for costumbrismo may have been motivated not only by his internalization of this as desirable subject matter to his French critics, but also by his trip to Granada in September 1883 with fellow painter Laureá Barrau i Buñol (1864-1957).

Casá’s interest in representing Spanish, particularly Andalusian, subjects extends well into his later works, in which he painted series of “chulas” (Figure 3) and “manolas” (Figure 4). These works are characterized by a single female figure depicted in either half or full-length

---

10 Manet travelled to Spain in the 1860s and he painted a number of Spanish-themed works based on his experiences, as well as the works of Francisco Goya and Diego Velazquez. For more on this, see Gary Tinterow, Geneviève Lacambre, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003).
view and against a monochromatic, non-descript background. The emphasis is primarily on the texture, color and design of the chula’s and manola’s colorful and often ornately designed costumes. Moreover, the women are typically attractive and smiling, this being a common feature in Casas’ portraits of women. These works certainly would have satisfied a growing taste for Spanish “types” at the time, particularly in Paris, which shows the artist’s willingness to deploy a formulaic stereotype to gain the praise of his audience and critics. However, Casas’ preference for ethnographic types, particularly those that represent nationality through costume and setting, was not restricted to Andalusian ones. Notably, in a series produced in c. 1914, Casas depicts a single model, in full length, in five different costumes, each representing a different nationality: Italian, English, American, Parisian and Spanish (Figures 5-9). The setting is the same in each canvas: a non-descript, solid background that is somewhat enlivened by bloomed roses located behind the woman at the center of the composition. Like his paintings of manolas and chulas, the emphasis is on clothing and cloth as well as the face and attitudes of the sitter. Clothing functions as the primary identifier of the sitter’s nationality in this series; however, the model’s pose is slightly different in each painting. La italiana and La española appear in poses that are notably more seductive and they are less conservatively dressed in comparison to the other three representations. It is significant, moreover, that the artist chose the same model for all five paintings, which illuminates the power of dress, rather than physiognomy, as the identifier of nationality in Casas’ paintings. Nationality as an ethnographic absolute is thereby destabilized in these works.

Rusiñol first studied painting at the Academia de Bellas Artes at La Lonja under the instruction of the Spanish draughtsman and watercolorist Tomás Moragas (1837-1906) from
1877 to 1878, where he painted mostly Orientalist and history paintings. After this initial training and throughout the 1880s, Rusiñol shifted his focus to urban and landscape scenes of Olot and Barcelona that are characterized by a sense of calmness and solitude, which, as we shall see, continues to typify the works he produced in Paris during the 1890s. His earliest landscapes resemble those of the Catalan Olot School painters, with whom he exhibited his paintings during the late 1870s and early 1880s in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{11} The Olot School artists had gained recognition as the most talented and progressive painters in Catalonia during this time. Known for their paintings of the Catalan landscape, they deployed some of the techniques and approaches commonly associated with the French Barbizon School painters, particularly painting \textit{en plein-air}. In 1890, J.M. Tamburini, an artist and critic in Catalonia, described the Olot School as such:

> A regular colony of artists, for the most part from Barcelona, get together there every year in the summertime. They scatter about in search of notes and color and themes to develop. Each one takes a little box of colors in one hand and a canvas in the other, and ferrets out a point of view or takes possession of a place appropriate for making a sketch or beginning a painting. It reminds us of the classic example of the Barbizon – the meeting place for artists who fled from Paris in order to study a nature full of rigor and poetry in the foliage of Fontainebleau.\textsuperscript{12}

Unlike the Barbizon painters, however, the Olot School painters’ and Rusiñol’s representations of the Catalan landscape, in some instances, include laborers, as seen in Rusiñol’s \textit{Cantera de Montjuïc} (Montjuïc Quarry) (Figure 10) of c. 1886-1887. In this image, Rusiñol focuses on a stone quarry located on Barcelona’s Montjuïc hill. Within this immense landscape, workers trek forward as they engage in a laborious routine. The figures are not the primary focus, however, as they are hazily defined and small in scale in comparison to the dominant landscape setting.

Here, Rusiñol transforms what may be typically considered rather prosaic, a stone quarry, into a somewhat picturesque natural setting through his use of natural light and his concentration on the

\textsuperscript{11} Cervera, \textit{Modernismo}, 69.
texture and terrain of the quarry. Nevertheless, this scenic representation of a stone quarry is somewhat counterpointed by the inclusion of workers in the scene, despite their small scale, which gives this work a sense of realism and sobriety that manifests deeper in his paintings of the early 1890s.

Scholars posit that Rusiñol’s initial knowledge of “modern” French painting was primarily received through his exposure to the Olot School artists’ works and their interest in the Barbizon school. Rusiñol’s interest in French art was ultimately fulfilled by short trips that the artist took to Paris in the late 1880s. While in Paris, he toured the city; viewed works in the Salons; and during a six-month stay in 1889, received further instruction in painting at the Société de la Palette. At the academy, Rusiñol trained under the French academic realist painter Henri Gervex (1852-1929), although little is written about his training at this time. His most formidable and active years as a painter, moreover, occurred during the early 1890s when he and Casas established residency in the Parisian neighborhood of Montmartre.

In the winter of 1890, Rusiñol, Casas and the painter and art critic Miguel Utrillo (1883-1955), departed from Barcelona for Paris to reside in an apartment located on the top floor of Montmartre’s famous dancehall, the Moulin de la Galette. Casas and Rusiñol remained here, with the occasional interruption, until 1892. During this stay in Montmartre, the two artists were active in local artistic circles; they frequented night classes at the Société de la Palette, where Eugène Carrière (1849-1906) and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) occasionally gave lectures; they exhibited their works at the French Salons; and they subsequently established respectable reputations among French critics.

13 Mark Roglán claims Rusiñol made his first trip to Paris in 1886 for a honeymoon with his then wife, Luisa Denis. See Roglán, “Cosmopolitanism and Modernity,” 30. According to Elena Cueto Asín, he was in Paris again in 1888 for a brief amount of time with his friend Enric Clarassó. See Cueto Asín, “Santiago Rusiñol in Paris,” 92.
While in Paris, Casas and Rusiñol constructed an active social life that was focused in the artistic circles of Montmartre. They befriended the painters Hynais, Brozik, Marold, and became members of the *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, to which painters like Ernst, Lecompte, Enge, Dagnaux, Dulac, Urban and Signac, among others, also belonged. They also became close with Rodolphe Salis, the director of *Le Chat Noir*, the establishment that provided the inspiration for Barcelona’s *Els Quatre Gats* café. They made connections with art dealers, such as Siegfried Bing, who exhibited Rusiñol’s works at his *Galerie d’Art Nouveau* in 1899. One of the most lasting relationships was formed between the two artists and the composer Erik Satie, who both artists depicted on several occasions (Figure 11) (Figure 12). In these portraits, Satie is represented as the quintessential “bohemian” artist, which is not only evident in the title of each work, but also in his appearance and in the settings. In Casas’ portrait, Satie is depicted in full bohemian regalia – a long black coat and top hat – and standing on a boulevard in Montmartre in front of the iconic windmill of the *Moulin de la Galette*. Satie gazes out into the distance with a contemplative, dream-like expression that alludes to his inner-creativity and comfort in this bohemian atmosphere. The lifelessness and cold gray of the Parisian winter, which characterize many of Casas and Rusiñol’s portrayals of Paris, is reinforced by the lack of other figures as well as the eerie stillness of the landscape. In Rusiñol’s portrait, he likewise represents Satie as an isolated figure in a quiet interior setting. Here, Satie is positioned in the corner of a rather tidy room, hunched over and wrapped in a blanket, a common feature in representations of “miserable” bohemian artists. In a charcoal drawing of Satie (Figure 13) by Rusiñol, the musician is again adorned in bohemian garb (shaggy hair, top hat and cigarette in his mouth). Although, here Satie is depicted in a public setting and as a performer, as he is shown playing the

---

14 Coll, *catálogo razonado*, 32.
harmonium at *Le Chat Noir*. As we shall see, representations of bohemian artists not only manifest in Casas and Rusiñol’s paintings from this period, but bohemianism also played a significant role in Casas and Rusiñol’s philosophical views of art and society.

Casas and Rusiñol prolifically painted the people they encountered as well as the sites that they frequented in Montmartre. Many of their paintings of this period, in title and appearance, directly reference specific sites and the popular establishments of the Butte. Rusiñol primarily represented Montmartre in a “Naturalist” manner, as most of these works are characterized by a melancholic mood that is reinforced by pale colors and a significant lack of light. The *Laboratorio de la Galette* (Kitchen of the Moulin de la Galette) (Figure 14) of 1890-1891, like his painting of Satie in an interior cited above, conveys a sense of stillness and isolation, not only through the pale colors and deep shadows, but also through the setting and lack of human activity. An old woman, the only figure in the composition, is seated on the steps of the doorway and draped in shadow, which reinforces this sense of solitude in the image. Further, it is interesting that Rusiñol chose to focus on the kitchen, a place of work, rather than the more commonly represented dancehall of the Moulin de la Galette. This differs from the nightlife scenes of the Moulin de la Galette represented by Casas, which will be discussed in a moment, and especially those of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), another resident of Montmartre. In Lautrec’s *Moulin de la Galette* of 1889 (The Art Institute of Chicago) (Figure 15), he, like Rusiñol, offers the perspective of the spectator, yet at a much closer and more engaged distance. Moreover, Lautrec’s work testifies to the active nightlife, entertainment and decadence that typified representations of the famous dancehall during the late nineteenth century. Rusiñol chooses an entirely different aspect of the Galette as his focus, the workday

---

16 This work won a prize at Barcelona’s Primera Exposición General de Bellas Artes in 1891. Prize mentioned in Cristina Mendoza, “Painting,” in *Modernisme in the MNAC Collections* (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya and Lunwerg, 2009), 37.
view, to convey a sense of stillness, quiet and isolation that typifies even his later paintings of Spanish gardens. Thus, while Rusiñol’s work references a Parisian establishment commonly depicted by his contemporaries in Montmartre, it depicts this site from a completely different perspective and using pictorial devices that are significantly darker in tone, visually and conceptually.

Art historian Maria Alejandra Zanetta describes these depressing, gray views of Montmartre as emblematic of Rusiñol’s “naturalist decadent period,” as they are characterized by inactivity, the “passage of time and human vulnerability.” Indeed, many of these works, particularly his interior ones, consist of a solitary figure placed in the corner of the composition, metaphysically reacting to their “unpleasant surroundings.” The unsettling expressions and position of the figures in the compositions along with the harsh environments, such as cold weather and worn furniture, suggests their unease or maladjustment to their surroundings. This is seen, not only in Rusiñol’s interior portrait of Satie cited above, but also in his Retrato de Ramón Canudas enfermo (Portrait of an ill Ramón Canudas) (Figure 16) of 1890-1891, in which the figure’s slouched posture and downcast eyes, among other things, communicate his poor physical health and social isolation. Rusiñol also painted landscapes and exterior scenes of Montmartre in a “Naturalist” manner, as seen in his En Campaña (On Campaign) (Figure 17) of 1891, which features Miguel Utrillo and his then lover Suzanne Valadon, relaxing on the Butte. Here, the Montmartre landscape is characterized as a desolate sort of wasteland, quiet and somewhat sordid. The buildings and structures in the background are in poor condition and the ground is dry and barren. This work certainly contrasts with many contemporaneous artistic representations of the Butte as a cheerful and lively locus of Parisian popular culture.

---

The French realist painter Jean-François Raffaëlli (1850-1924), who also represented Paris’ marginal areas, is often cited as the thematic source for Rusiñol’s “Naturalist” paintings of Montmartre. Rusiñol’s predilection for Naturalism, however, was not solely inspired by his exposure to French artworks of this nature. Naturalism, as a philosophical and literary movement, had become increasingly popular among Catalan artists and writers, mostly due to the dissemination of literature by the French writer and exemplar of literary Naturalism, Émile François Zola (1840-1902), in Barcelona during this time. Catalan critics, however, expressed their dissatisfaction with Catalan painters’ and writers’ vulgar “mistranslation” of Naturalism in their works. Art critic Federico Rahola, like many literary critics in Barcelona, advocated art that was realistic without being idealistic or crude and he criticized the Catalan “zolistas,” for their inappropriate or vulgar interpretations of Naturalism. Despite the unwelcome critical reception of some Naturalist works in Barcelona, it is important to note that Rusiñol’s Naturalist approach to his paintings testifies to his awareness of and participation in a growing tendency towards Naturalism not only in France, but also among his contemporaries in Barcelona, who adapted these ideas and formulas in their own works.

Casas also painted exterior and landscape scenes of Montmartre in a somewhat similar, Naturalist manner, but his paintings are focused primarily on the Butte’s nightlife and popular culture, as seen in the dance-scene he captured in Bal du Moulin de la Galette (Dance at the Moulin de la Galette) (Figure 18) of 1890-1891. Art historians have described this work, as well as those of Rusiñol from this period, as “Impressionist” due to its subject matter and formal elements. Here, Casas shows a scene of modern-life and demonstrates a keen ability to capture specific, although dark, light and the effects of it through shadow and painterly brushstrokes. Art

---

18 For a discussion of Rahola’s responses to Catalan Naturalism, see Belen-Lord, Point and Counterpoint, 57-60.
historian Enric Jardí posits that both Casas and Rusiñol learned of Impressionism second-handedly through Miquel Utrillo, who had befriended the Venetian painter Federico Zandomeneghi (1841-1917) while in Paris, who knew Pissarro, Sisley, Renoir, Degas and Monet. Thus, as the French Impressionist exhibitions had reached their finality by 1886, Utrillo is likely the source who explained the Impressionists concerns and work to Casas and Rusiñol. However, it is probable that Casas and Rusiñol were able to view some of the French Impressionist works in person during their stays in Paris in the 1880s.

Despite the inability to pinpoint exactly how Casas and Rusiñol were aware of the Impressionists, which is perhaps a futile endeavor, both artists deploy Impressionist elements in their works of this period, notably, quickened brushstrokes, natural light effects and “modern” themes. However, they depicted the darkened, gray light of a winter sky rather than the vibrant, colorful and varied effects of daylight that characterize many Impressionist works. Indeed, many scholars posit that Casas and Rusiñol combined their predilection for Impressionist subject matter and painterly brushstrokes with a gray tonality that they assimilated from Degas and the American expatriate artist James Abbot McNeil Whistler (1834-1903).

Casas’ “Impressionist” paintings of Montmartre certainly diverge from that of other Impressionist artists in terms of color and mood, which becomes evident when comparing his Bal du Moulin de la Galette to Renoir’s Bal du moulin de la Galette (Dance at the Moulin de la Galette) (Figure 19) of 1876 (Musée d’Orsay). While both artists portray the same site using

---

20 Casas would have seen the works of Monet, Pissarro and Renoir in an exhibition held at the Durand-Ruel gallery in March 1882. The following year, while Casas was still in Paris, Monet exhibited his works in the same gallery. In 1885, when Casas was again in Paris for a brief period, Renoir and Monet’s works were exhibited at the Georges Petit gallery. Antonio Urrutia, “Influèncias franceses en la pintura de Ramon Casas,” in Ramon Casas: Exposició Desembre 1982, Centre Cultural del Palau de la Virreina (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, Serveis de Cultura, 1982), 29. Rusiñol likely viewed some of the Impressionists work at the 1899 Exposition Universelle in Paris.
painterly brushstrokes, Casas’ work is strikingly different than Renoir’s in terms of perspective, color, light and mood. First, Casas represents the interior, rather than the exterior, of the dancehall from the distant perspective of the balcony, which differs from the frontal and central position of the viewer in Renoir’s work. Second, Renoir portrays a lively crowd-scene that is composed of bright, warm colors and bathed by specks of natural and artificial light. Casas instead shows the Moulin de la Galette at a time when it is nearly vacant and in deep shadows. His use of a cold, monochromatic palette works to reinforce an eerie, melancholic mood that is further conveyed through the physical disconnection between the figures in the scene. Renoir, on the contrary, portrays the Moulin de la Galette as a place that fosters social interaction between jubilant individuals. One might suggest that Casas’ work is a more truthful representation than Renoir’s as well as other Impressionists’ colorful, dynamic and joyous portrayals of the Butte’s most popular establishment. Moreover, the differences between Casas’ and Renoir’s portrayal of the Moulin de la Galette emphasizes the fact that the former artist selected and adapted, rather than completely adopted and deployed quintessential Impressionistic techniques in his works. This reveals Casas’ agency as an artist who made decisions, rather than simply followed his Impressionist predecessors and contemporaries without the intervention of his own creativity.

Casas’ well-known painting of Montmartre’s social atmosphere, *En el Moulin de la Galette* (At the Moulin de la Galette) (Figure 20) of c. 1892, also known as Madeleine or Absinth, is also commonly described as Impressionist for its compositional arrangement and thematic content. Madeleine, which was exhibited at the Indépendants show of 1892, features a young woman\(^{21}\) seated at a table with an extinguished cigar in her hand and a drink in front of

\(^{21}\) The young woman is Madeleine de Boisguillame, who also posed for Toulouse-Lautrec.
her. She is gazing into the center of the dancehall, which is also hazily reflected in the mirror behind her, a device utilized by Manet in his *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* of 1882 (Courtauld Institute of Art, London). Madeline’s negative reaction to her surroundings is suggested by her twisted posture, distraught expression and clenched hand. This work, particularly in the mirrored reflection, demonstrates Casas’ predilection for dark colors and atmospheric moodiness. In contrast to the mirrored reflection, however, the woman is composed of bolder, clearer colors and more fluid brushstrokes. This work has been compositionally and thematically tied to Manet’s *Plum Brandy* of 1877 (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.), Degas’ *L’Absinthe* of c. 1875-1876 (Musée d’Orsay) and works by Toulouse-Lautrec, such as his *The Hangover* of 1888 (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums). The connection between Casas’ work and these French Impressionist paintings is evident through the theme of the single, decadent modern woman seated in a bar; although, it is important to emphasize that his painting diverges from these works in terms of technique. In short, Casas’ painting, in color and mood, is more characteristic of his idiosyncratic representations of Montmartre using dark tones and melancholic mood rather than the representations of women seated at Parisian cafés by these three artists.

Rusiñol’s *Aquarium (Interior of a Café)* (Figure 21) of 1892 and his *Café de Montmartre* (Montmartre Café) (Figure 22) of 1890 are often described as Impressionist in terms of the motif, namely, one that is related to everyday social life in a “modern” city. In both works, Rusiñol captures an immediate moment and the scene extends beyond the borders of the canvas, both features being characteristic of Impressionist painting. Both paintings also demonstrate Rusiñol’s tendency to depict detached, lonely figures, which scholars liken to Degas’ paintings of Parisian cafés, particularly his *L’Absinthe*, which likewise represents a psychological
disconnect between the figures. Unlike other paintings of Parisian cafés by French Impressionist artists, however, such as Manet’s *Plum Brandy*, Rusiñol’s works are significantly darker in both mood and color to reinforce the malaise and loneliness of modern life in these works.

Casas’ and Rusiñol’s paintings from this period received warm reception from their French critics, as evident in the responses to the works they exhibited at the *Société des Artistes Indépendants* and the *Salon du Champ de Mars* in 1891. One French critic lauded Casas and Rusiñol’s paintings of Montmartre and placed them on par with those of Toulouse Lautrec:

> Alongside Mr. Toulouse-Lautrec one must place Mr. Casas and Mr. Rusiñol. The first in a rather grey tonality, the second in a warmer range, giving us some very pretty snapshots of neighborhood landscapes. Mr. Casas’ *Moulin de la Galette* is a gem.\(^{22}\)

Despite their reputable reputations among critics and their contemporaries in Paris, Casas and Rusiñol left Montmartre in 1892. Casas returned to Barcelona; Rusiñol, however, returned to Paris in November of 1892 after a brief stay in Barcelona and Sitges to reside in an apartment in Île Saint-Louis. The paintings Rusiñol produced during and after his stay in the Île Saint-Louis have been described as a “Symbolist,” as they show a transition from his earlier, Naturalist/realistic types to more idealistic and mystical types, as seen in his work *Alegoría de la Poesía* (*Allegory of Poetry*) (Figure 23) of c. 1894-1895, which shows a young, slender woman in a landscape setting, who holds her paper and pen, as if waiting for inspiration from her dream-like natural surroundings. This work, which belongs to a triad of allegorical scenes, the other two representing painting and music, is perhaps the most essentially Symbolist painting in Rusiñol’s oeuvre. In comparison to his dreary, grey paintings of Montmartre, the color has brightened and the subject matter has shifted from somewhat depressing depictions of modern life to mystical and spiritual representations of nature. Rusiñol’s interest in Symbolism, which

manifests in his writings as well, may have been piqued by the courses he took at the Société de la Palette, where, as mentioned, the Symbolist artists Puvis de Chavannes and Carrière occasionally gave lectures and critiques. Rusiñol was also an admirer of Symbolist literature, particularly the works of Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) and Émile Verhaeren (1855-1916). Furthermore, reproductions of Symbolist artworks were disseminated in Catalan publications during the 1890s. The August 2, 1896 edition of the Barcelona publication La Renaixensa (1871-1898) featured an article on the works of Rossetti, Puvis and other Symbolist artists. Notably, the author stated that Rusiñol was the most successful and progressive artist among them.

For the following years, Rusiñol continued to travel, but his time in the Île Saint-Louis marks his final extended stay in Paris. The paintings he produced in the latter part of the 1890s and later consist mostly of Spanish landscapes and gardens (Figure 24), which increased in number after his trip to Granada in 1895. Critics today comment that Rusiñol’s latest renditions of Spanish courtyards and gardens are the weakest of his paintings and evidence that his severe arthritis had affected his ability to paint well. Critics and viewers of Rusiñol’s time, however, celebrated these works as visual metaphors for the repercussions of the “Disaster of 1898” in Spain, which refers to the economic, political and social consequences of the country’s defeat in the Spanish-American War. A younger generation commented that Rusiñol’s gardens symbolized the desolation and ruination that the country was experiencing. However, it is not certain if these paintings were intended to function as explicit commentary on the Disaster of 1898. Moreover, Rusiñol painted them a few years before and well after the upheaval associated with the Disaster until his death in 1931. Nevertheless, Rusiñol’s melancholic garden paintings,

---

23 Cervera, and others, evaluates his garden paintings as his weakest works due to this condition. He wrote, “These last feeble canvases reflect a definite decline in his ability as a painter.” Cervera, Modernismo, 92.
24 Ibid., 96.
characterized by the quietude of human absence, resonated with some of Spain’s leftist thinkers, who believed that the country was in need of radical social and governmental change, which, in turn, gives these works’ reception a politically-charged sentiment, coincidental or not.

The works Casas produced after his Parisian residencies continued to be dominated by figures, mostly women, and scenes of urban and social life. His monumental work, Corpus Salida de la procesión de la iglesia de Santa María (The Corpus Christi Procession Leaving the Church of Santa Maria del Mar) (Figure 25), c. 1896-1898, reveals Casas’ interest in documenting social life in Barcelona, as well as crowd-scenes, such as those captured in his Spanish bullfight paintings of the 1880s. Here, Casas depicts a religious procession; however, unlike Symbolist artists, he integrates this religious event into the social milieu of Barcelona, as the crowd functions as the real protagonist. This painting has been situated as a representation of the immediate moment before the infamous anarchist bombings of the Corpus Christi procession in Barcelona in June of 1896. The bombing was aimed at officials, yet ended in the deaths of eleven and the wounding of forty citizens.25 The attack resulted in the arrest and subsequently, the infamous torturing of the anarchist bombers in their prison cells in Montjuic, which sparked protests throughout Europe.26 When read in this context, as Robert Lubar points out, the crowd in this image, appearing as a homogenous mass, functions as an appeal to public solidarity after a violent attack on the city had created social unrest and fear, which critics in Barcelona admired.27

Casas established himself not only as a painter who was willing to tackle contemporary, and sometimes controversial, subject matter, but also as a sought-after society portraitist. In addition to paintings, he created hundreds of charcoal portraits of important personages in

---

26 Ibid.
Barcelona, such as artists, writers, politicians, musicians, and more. He was also one of the most successful commercial poster artists in Barcelona. Most of Casas’ advertising posters are focused on women. He often reproduced the popular manola and chula types seen in his paintings; in other posters, however, he aimed for a more sophisticated representation of the female figure, who is elegantly dressed, yet no less seductive. In his poster Sifils (Syphilis) (Figure 26) of 1900, Casas diverges from these formulas as he presents a woman suffering from syphilis, as referenced in the caption as well as her green skin. The disease is certainly a symptom of her inappropriate sexual behavior, to which her exposed shoulder and breast attest. Discourse over what was considered appropriate and deviant sexual behavior, particularly for women, was prominent in Restoration Spain (1874-1931). Fear of the spread and control of syphilis certainly was a serious concern, and artworks such as Casas’ testify to the pervasiveness of this. However, Casas’ poster, rather than perpetuate fear, offers hope that this physical and social disease may be kept under control, as the caption announces an “absolute and radical cure” and the woman holds a flower as a symbol of hope and renewed health.

In addition to painting and producing advertising posters, Casas acted as the primary illustrator and artistic director for the regional illustrated magazines, Quatre Gats (1899) and Pél & Ploma (1899-1903), in which his illustrations, like his posters, are typically focused on representations of female figures against monochromatic backgrounds. His illustrations of women in lethargic and somewhat provocative poses, as seen in the frontispiece for Pél & Ploma (Figure 27), in which a woman appears overwhelmed by the seemingly daunting task of writing, certainly would have satisfied a fin-de-siècle taste for images of women engaged in everyday activities and in interior settings.
Casas’ poster art and illustrations for regional magazines, to which Rusiñol also contributed a few illustrations, testifies to his engagement with mediums that had recently emerged and quickly flourished in Barcelona thanks to technological advances in photomechanical reproduction. Moreover, the illustrated magazines and posters that Casas created, such as the two cited above, demonstrate his awareness of European Art Nouveau, as they include the natural forms and flowing lines that are commonly associated with the movement. It is often stated, although not widely accepted among scholars, that because of the similarities in the design aspect of Catalan illustrated journals and posters, the word Modernisme is synonymous with Art Nouveau.

It should be emphasized that while Casas and Rusiñol were in Paris, they travelled to Barcelona on an annual, if not more frequent, basis to exhibit their paintings at Barcelona’s first official art gallery, the Sala Parés. Unlike the positive reception Casas and Rusiñol received from their French critics, their paintings, particularly those of Montmartre, were initially met with negative critical reception in Barcelona. They were criticized as being “unfinished,” crude and banal representations of common people that diverged from the more pleasant landscape and historical paintings that had dominated official exhibitions in the city. Catalan art critic Alfred Opisso (1880-1966) described their works as “frenchified” and labeled the two artists as “plein-airistes.” As Cervera points out, this criticism certainly contrasted with that received by artists who worked in Barcelona and continued to depict Catalan subjects, such as the painter Joan Llimona i Bruguera (1860-1926), who received the praiseworthy title of “catalanista.” However, art historians have unanimously interpreted the negative criticism that Rusiñol and

28 Cervera, Modernismo, 73.
29 Ibid.
Casas initially received in Barcelona during the early 1890s not necessarily as a reaction against their “non-Catalan” subject matter, but as a symptom of the ultraconservative critical and artistic climate of the time. Cervera situates this in a rather negative light, as he writes, “Rusiñol’s paintings and drawings of this period do not appear to us today as innovative. That they should have been found offensive or innovative is merely an indication of the retrogressive nature of painting and criticism in Barcelona at the time” (71).

The negative criticism towards Casas and Rusiñol’s works quickly disappeared as Catalan critics, particularly Raimon Casellas, celebrated their works as innovative, modern and revolutionary to Catalan art. Casas and Rusiñol became widely recognized as progressive artists and the spokespersons of modernista painting. Their paintings were celebrated as the catalysts for the “nova scola” (new school) of art in Barcelona, as they diverged from the most commonly exhibited paintings that preceded them in terms of their “modern” subject matter and painterly techniques. Critics deployed the word “naturalismo,” to describe Casas and Rusiñol’s Parisian paintings, which they evaluated as direct and truthful interpretations of reality. In response to a painting Casas exhibited at the Sala Parés in 1890, one critic wrote:

The artist clearly demonstrates his intentions: to paint nature, adjusting color and line to their maximum expression, without strain, without resource to bad effects. And his eye is so perfect and so well educated in the new school, that his works are the negation of the old esthetics which lead to conventional art, to a false sentiment of beauty. At first sight we almost believed that photography had aided Casas’ two most important works… This naturalistic tendency in painting has been in the process of initiation for some time, and in it Rusiñol is strongly distinguished…[along with] Casas. All the better that both maintain a high standard and incline those of talent towards modern currents!

As Casas and Rusiñol established permanent residencies and respectable reputations in Catalonia, the two artists became increasingly active as the leaders of their local artistic

30 Antonio Garcia Llansó, “Pintura y escultura,” La Ilustración, October 19, 1890, 41.
31 McCully, Els Quatre Gats and Modernista Painting in Catalonia in the 1890s, 144.
community. In addition to their works, which caused a shift in how paintings were judged by Catalan critics and audiences, the artists’ most significant contributions to Catalonia’s artistic scene was Rusiñol’s *Festes Modernistes* and his and Casas’ involvement in *Els Quatre Gats* café, which were the hubs of *modernista* artistic activity in fin-de-siglo Barcelona.

Between 1892 and 1899, Rusiñol hosted five *Festes Modernistes* (Modernist Festivals) at his residency in the Catalan town of Sitges, just a few miles from Barcelona. He had established a home there in 1892, appropriately named *El Cau Ferrat*, or the Iron Den, as it houses his collection of Catalan metal work and other antiques. Rusiñol was an ardent collector; thus, *El Cau Ferrat* also houses his collection of glasswork and paintings, drawings, and sculptures created by his contemporaries in Barcelona, such as the works of Casas, Picasso and Hermen Anglada i Camarasa (1872-1959). Each modernist festival featured artwork and performances by local as well as international artists, musicians and writers. A festival held on November 9, 1894 included a procession led by Pere Romeu (c. 1862-1908), who waved a Catalan flag while riding on horseback. The residents of Sitges prepared for the procession by decorating their balconies and windows. The event was a celebration of Rusiñol’s recent acquisition of two El Greco paintings, which were carried by Catalan artists in the procession. Rusiñol had developed a passionate interest in El Greco during the mid 1890s, not because of his Spanish nationality (which was assumed, even though he was born in Crete), but because of the painter’s mysticism, which aligned with Rusiñol’s Symbolist leanings.

---

33 The first exhibition, held in 1892, featured paintings by artists of Sitges. The festival in 1893 centered on the Symbolist work of Maurice Maeterlinck and a performance by musicians César Franck and Enric Morera. In 1894, the exhibition featured a literary competition and a procession took place through Sitges, which celebrated Rusiñol’s purchase of two El Greco paintings. Catalan writer Jaume Massó presented two works during a musical and theatrical themed exhibition of 1897. Last, in 1899, Joaquim Nin held a piano concert, writer Ignasi Iglesias featured his work, and Rusiñol presented his own literary work, titled “Happiness that Passes.” Cristina Mendoza, “Casas and Rusiñol: The Allure of Montmartre,” in *Barcelona and Modernity* (see note 3), 53.

34 *El Cau Ferrat* to this day functions as a public museum. It is important to note that Rusiñol’s interest in Catalan metalwork correlates with and ran concurrent with the Catalan Renaixença promotion of looking to Catalonia’s artistic and cultural heritage as a source for art-making and nationalist pride, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.
Overall, the *Festes Modernistes* were celebrations of Catalan art and culture that allowed Rusiñol a platform to speak of his ideological views of art making. By this point, like many Symbolists, Rusiñol espoused the importance of art making as a spiritual endeavor that could unite society and remove the ails caused by modern life, such as materialism, which he claimed “will destroy artistic sensibility unless artists and writers take up the challenge and substitute the worship of art for religion and science.”\(^{35}\) Rusiñol was indeed a “prophet” of the arts who denounced modern social problems and elevated art making to a religion. To him, the artist was the ultimate facilitator for social change and unity.

As mentioned, the Parisian cabaret, *Le Chat Noir*, which Casas and Rusiñol frequented during their stays in Montmartre, provided the inspiration for *Els Quatre Gats*\(^{36}\) café in Barcelona. Designed by Catalan architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956) and founded in 1897 by Rusiñol, Casas, Utrillo and Romeu, the café/tavern featured the works of local artists, a music hall, a shadow puppet theater, and it was a gathering place for artists and writers. The café was the locus of *modernista* artistic activity in Barcelona, as it was the place for young artists and intellectuals to exchange ideas. It also offered lesser-known artists at the time, such as the *Noucentisme* painter Isidre Nonell i Monturiol (1873-1911) and Picasso, a place to exhibit their works.

Having actively assimilated elements from their exposure to French Impressionism and Symbolism, Casas and Rusiñol established themselves as the progressive leaders of Barcelona’s *modernista* art scene during the 1890s, which was not, however, merely derivative of Paris. Rather, they created idiosyncratic works that were relevant to their socio-cultural environment and diverged in appearance from those of their contemporaries and predecessors in Paris and

\(^{35}\) Quoted in Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period*, 41.
\(^{36}\) “*Els Quatre Gats*” is a colloquial Catalan expression for “just a few of us.”
elsewhere in Europe. Further, they constructed a vibrant artistic community that was the greatest
promoter of the development of the arts in Catalonia. Yet, Casas and Rusiñol’s artistic
production, and that of many of their contemporaries in Barcelona, remains a topic of concern
primarily for scholars in Spain and Catalonia. The dearth of studies of their works in the
international scope of art historical scholarship is perhaps due to the limiting critical frameworks
used to discuss them in some of the extant scholarship. Thus, it is necessary that we explore and
contextualize these frameworks in order to expose the ideological assumptions on which they rely.
Chapter 1: Negative Criticism of the Artwork of Casas and Rusiñol and the Stigma of Spanish “Backwardness”

Adequate critical attention has not been given to the negative framing of Casas and Rusiñol’s works, particularly the implications in the pejorative responses to their assimilation of predominant European artistic currents. As stated, in response to these two artists’ adoption of certain elements of international, particularly French, artistic styles, some scholars have expressed views of their works as being of lesser quality, unoriginal or derivative of other artists and art movements. Such statements may be read as subjective value judgments of the aesthetic or formal aspects of their paintings, but it is significant that this criticism is directed toward the lack of novelty or originality in their work, which is seemingly a result of their “second-rate” utilization of techniques and themes characteristic of preexisting and concurrent art movements. It is necessary to cite a few, although not all, of the negative statements made by contemporary art historians in response to Casas and Rusiñol’s artistic output in order to contextualize this commentary.

I: Negative Responses to Casas’ and Rusiñol’s Artwork in Recent Scholarship

One of the earliest critics of the “foreign influences” in Casas and Rusiñol’s paintings is James Johnson Sweeney, who candidly stated his distaste for their work in his 1960 catalog essay for the exhibition, Before Picasso; After Miró. In this short essay, Sweeney lauds Casas

---

37 One exception is Belen-Lord’s brief statement in her PhD thesis on Ramon Casas, in which she writes, “In the course of this scholarship, the work of Ramon Casas, the principle Modernista painter and an acknowledged influence on Picasso’s early development, is usually dismissed as symptomatic of the artistic provincialism of Spain at the end of the nineteenth century, almost immediately superseded by Picasso.” See Belen-Lord, Point and Counterpoint, 253.

38 Before Picasso; After Miró took place at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York from June 21 to October 20, 1960. Casas and Rusiñol’s works were not included in this exhibition, which is telling considering the period and geographical focus of the exhibition.
and Rusiñol’s younger contemporary, the painter Isidre Nonell, describing his work as a clear contrast to “the confused and indeterminate expression that had grown up in Catalan painting under the influence of French Impressionism…” Further, he writes that Nonell’s “independence of foreign influence was one of the features for which his art was admired,” even in his own time; thus, he is praiseworthy for his “pride of independence from alien influence.”

While Sweeney does not explicitly implicate Casas and Rusiñol in these statements, he does list the two artists as Nonell’s contemporaries in the preceding paragraph, and his negative views towards the “foreign influences” in Catalan painting are without a doubt a reference to their work.

Indeed, Sweeney, writing in 1960, was of an older generation of art historians unlike today’s scholars who strive to challenge the notion that art necessarily reflects an artist’s cultural and/or national identity in a deterministic way. Today, most art historians believe that identity is in flux, negotiable and constructed, and we are aware that art is not a transparent reflection of the geographic region in which an artist originated or resides. Sweeney’s criticism of Casas and Rusiñol’s paintings was grounded in the romantic, Modernist notion that in order to be worthy of appreciation and recognition, artists must create works that are original and innovative. Thus, to Sweeney, Nonell is notable as an artist who invented an artistic language that was original and expressive of his Catalan roots, while Casas and Rusiñol’s embrace of French Impressionism inevitably devalues their work.

---

40 Ibid.
Broader knowledge of Casas and Rusiñol’s artistic output is largely a result of their mention in English-language studies on their younger contemporary, Pablo Picasso. Picasso came from a younger generation of artists working and living in Barcelona at the turn of the nineteenth century; thus, he inevitably interacted with, exhibited with, and befriended the two artists, who introduced him to the cultural and artistic spheres of the city. Art historian John Richardson wrote extensive biographies on Picasso that necessarily include sections on Picasso’s relationship with Casas and Rusiñol. Richardson’s statements on the two older painters’ works are further evidence of the pejorative views of their deployment of techniques associated with predominant French artistic styles. In Volume I of *A Life of Picasso*, he writes,

…Rusiñol and his friends were sufficiently progressive to realize the need for French modernity as an antidote to Spanish *retraso* (backwardness). Unfortunately they did not understand what modern French art was about. They reacted to impressionism with wonder, to most of post-impressionism with alarm, and played for safety by opting for the timed classicism of Puvis de Chavannes and the drab realism of Raffaëlli. Despite their good intentions and contributions to Catalan culture, Rusiñol and Casas ended up owing too much to too many different styles. Richardson continues, “Alas, neither Rusiñol nor Casas nor any other modernista painters had sufficient skill, originality, or imagination to live up to them.”

While Richardson does balance his negative view of Casas and Rusiñol’s (and other modernista artists’) work with a slight nod toward their “good intentions and contributions to Catalan culture,” he ultimately positions them not only as imitators of other artists and styles, but also as second-rate imitators, at best. Further, his use of the term “retraso,” which connotes the

---

43 Ibid., 113.
44 Ibid.
45 Andrew Ginger defines *retraso* as the common assumption that Spain was/is backward or overwhelmingly conservative, that its revolutions were weak and flawed, and that its modernity is thus characterized by a need to
seemingly “backward” nature of Spanish culture, society and politics in relation to other parts of Europe, reveals that his criticism of their work is more than a mere aesthetic judgment; it shows that his evaluation of their work is conditioned by the commonly held assumption that Spain was an inferior, premodern country that was in need of foreign influence in order to “modernize” itself. This latter point is crucial to an understanding of some contemporary interpretations of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s work and activities; thus, it will be addressed further later in this chapter.

A less lengthy yet more recent example of the negative views of Casas and Rusiñol’s assimilation of international artistic currents is Mark Roglán’s catalog essay for the 2005 exhibition, Prelude to Spanish Modernism: Fortuny to Picasso. Roglán writes, “Although important historically, neither artists’ work was particularly innovative nor as Beruete defines it ‘of a particular character.’ Again, the emphasis on a lack of “innovation” implicates Casas and Rusiñol as mere followers of other artists and art movements.

Rather than consider Casas and Rusiñol’s engagement with and deployment of international aesthetic currents as a meaningful and creative activity, the aforementioned writers frame it as a process that resulted in unoriginal and/or derivative artworks. In the context of art history, assimilation and other similar terms, such as adoption, appropriation and so forth, tend to carry along with them the notion that this implies a mere transfer of forms from one context into another. Of course, this is not always the case; however, this is particularly problematic in situations in which artists import artistic and/or cultural expressions from a “center” to a


46 Aureliano de Beruete y Moret (1845–1912) was a painter from Madrid known for his “Impressionist” landscapes. He was also the director of the Prado Museum and he published writings on contemporary artists in Spain.

“periphery” or “province.” It is often thought that the forms or ideas being transferred actually lose significance or value during this process and by their distance from a seemingly hegemonic center. As we shall see, this is an issue that seems to inform how Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works are evaluated, as the two artists have been identified as members of a peripheral or provincial region in comparison to Paris, the “center” of the nineteenth-century Western art world.

While the negative critical reception of Casas and Rusiñol’s work, particularly the commentary cited above, is perhaps informed by and reinforces the concept of artistic centers (France) and peripheries/provinces (Spain), which will be addressed further at later points, it is my contention that this dichotomous construct has deeper roots in the common assumption that nineteenth-century Spain was retraso (backward) or premodern in comparison to the hegemonic nations of Europe and their canonical art. According to this ideology, Spain was a declining, peripheral country in Europe dependent on foreign, specifically French, guidance to redeem and modernize itself. Casas and Rusiñol both looked to France as an avenue for artistic

---

48 The term “provincial” is commonly deployed to describe the Barcelona-Paris connection of the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, and Casas and Rusiñol’s engagement with Parisian art and culture, which, will of course be addressed in this thesis. Peripheral is typically deployed in discussions of Spanish economics, politics, technology, modernity, and so forth, which the following discussion will explore. Periphery and province have very similar connotations; however, there are slight differences between the two, particularly in the context of their utilization in the discipline of art history. Thomas Dacosta Kauffman outlines these differences in his text, Toward a Geography of Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 233-235. Kauffman cites George Kubler’s theory of artistic provincialism presented in his 1962 seminal text, The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things, in which Kubler postulated that there is a measurable contrast between urban settings “which are actual centers of cultural happening, and the tedium of provincial city life” (233). Kubler then distinguished between a province, which is dependent on one center, and a periphery, where influences from more than one center may be located (Ibid). Kauffman then refers to art historian Jan Bialostocki’s essay “Some Values of Artistic Periphery,” in which he extends Kubler’s argument to state that a provincial region is “situated in the neighborhood of a strong center and is completely dependent on its impact” (Ibid). For the original essay, see Jan Bialostocki, “Some Values of Artistic Periphery,” World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity, Acts of the XXVIth International Congress of the History of Art (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 49-54. In contrast, a periphery refers to “areas situated far away from the powerful center, and not dependent on the influences coming from one place, but which receive inspirations from many regions and centers.” Kauffman, Toward a Geography of Art, 233. This suggests that artists of the periphery have more autonomy than those in the province, as they are able to select elements from multiple influences to construct original, rather than derivative, artworks.

49 See note 1. Because of the acceptance of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works as “Spanish” by many scholars, it is necessary to address the manner in which the connotations of and views of “Spain” have perhaps informed art historical scholarship on these two artists.
and professional advancement, which seems to function for some scholars as support for the common assumption that Spain, considered regressive in the realm of European modernity, had no choice but to be receptive to Northern influence in order to progress beyond its inferior, peripheral position in Europe. This, in effect, distorts our perception of the Catalan artists’ engagement with French art and culture as one in which members of a minority culture inevitably assimilate the dominant artistic and cultural expressions of a far superior, metropolitan center.

Traditionally, historians of European modernity have treated Spain as a socially, economically and politically premodern, recalcitrant country. Franco’s oppressive dictatorial regime (1939-1975) is often interpreted as a primary cause for the country’s supposedly delayed entrance into a consolidated modern democratic Western Europe. However, Spain was marginalized within Europe long before the Franco regime.

It is necessary briefly to trace the presence of this ideology of Spanish backwardness and marginality in prominent Western discourse and literature on Spain. This analysis will reveal the

---

50 In the following discussion, definitions of modernization, modernism and modernity change according to the period, writer, and so forth. In an attempt to avoid such confusion, one may broadly interpret these three terms as follows: Modernization is commonly interpreted as a transition from a “pre-modern” or traditional society to a modern one. The traditional markings of modern society include industrialization, urbanization, capitalism and rationalism. See Peter Wagner, *Modernity as Experience and Interpretation: A New Sociology of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008). Modernity is often understood as the social relationships and experiences tied to modernization. See Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). Modernism, as Charles Harrison states, “...is the distinguishing characteristics of Western culture from the mid-nineteenth century until at least the mid-twentieth: a culture in which processes of industrialization and urbanization are conceived of as the principle mechanisms of transformation in the human experience.” (189) He continues, “modernism is regarded as both a condition consequent upon certain broad economic, technological, and political tendencies and as a set of attitudes towards those tendencies.” (189) Further, Harrison references the use of the term “modernism” to connote “modern art,” or a tradition of high art that is distinguishable from conservative, traditional forms of art as well as popular or “kitsch” art. The American critic Clement Greenberg popularized this particular and more specialized concept of modernism. See Charles Harrison, “Modernism,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Nelson, Robert S. and Richard Shiff (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 188-201.

51 Burguera and Schmidt-Nowara, “Backwardness and its Discontents,” 279. Andrew Ginger posits that the Spanish Civil War and the oppressiveness of the Franco regime have served as evidence for the assumption that Spain must have been corrupt and backward in the first place in order for these political events and struggles to occur. See Ginger, “Spanish Modernity Revisited,” 122.
common occurrence of the view of Spain as premodern and \textit{retraso} in historiography, philosophical writings, political discourse as well as novels and travel literature, and it manifests in recent studies on the development of European modernity and nineteenth-century Spanish history. It is one of the contentions of this thesis that this framework conditions the manner in which modern Spanish artistic production, particularly the work of Casas and Rusiñol, is evaluated and received, if at all. This is most evident in art historian John Richardson’s downgrading of the \textit{modernista} painters, who he identifies, along with Spain, as in need of redemption from \textit{retraso}. I do not intend to point out the pervasiveness of this ideology in order to attack it. Rather, I aim to illuminate the power it exercises in determining the responses to Casas’ and Rusiñol’s assimilation of French artistic currents and perhaps the significant lack of scholarship on their work outside of Spain. Thus, a central goal of this thesis is to examine the constructs and categories that make up the unfortunate critical responses to their paintings. It is my hope that by illuminating the presence of and consequences of these reductive critical constructs we might determine more appropriate frameworks within which to discuss Casas and Rusiñol’s engagement with French art. Such frameworks do/should not rely on or perpetuate the hierarchical, dichotomous models of center and periphery/province, as well as that of modern and premodern.

\textbf{II: Historicizing Spanish “Backwardness:” From Imperial Power to Other in Europe}

“The Black Legend” or \textit{La leyenda negra} of Spain is perhaps the earliest literature to enforce stereotypical perceptions of Spaniards as not only backward and uncivilized, but tyrannical. This notorious discourse against the Spanish Empire, which was popularized by
English and Dutch writers in the sixteenth century and was rewritten in racial terms in the nineteenth century, fixed broader views of Spain as an oppressive and backward nation.\(^52\) “The Black Legend” constructed an essentially “dark” character of Spain’s colonial history and subsequently, Spanish people, that was based on accounts of Spain’s imperial sway, Inquisition, and treatment of indigenous peoples of the Americas.\(^53\) As Michael Iarocci points out, conflating “Spain” with religious intolerance, barbarism and a violent image of the Inquisition was an ideological tool deployed by Protestant Europe to illuminate the “goodness” of Protestantism in comparison to the evil of Spain’s fanatical “Catholicism.”\(^54\)

Perceptions of Spain’s violent imperial past and the decline of the Spanish Empire certainly contributed to the notion of Spain as retraso. Numerous histories of Spain, particularly in the English-language, relate the decline of Spain’s prominence in Europe with the progressive loss of empire. This notion, coined by historian Richard Kagan as “Prescott’s Paradigm,” is prevalent in nineteenth-century Spanish historiography, traces of which still manifest in scholarship today.\(^55\) Kagan credits William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859), “a scholar who shaped both the character and direction of historical research in Spanish studies for well over a century,” as the first historian to popularize this view.\(^56\) In *Ferdinand and Isabel* (1843), Prescott argued that Spain “had suffered from the evil effects of both monarchical absolutism and Roman Catholicism;” thus, the country’s imperial decline and loss of political and economic status within Europe were inevitable.\(^57\) Mónica Burguera and Christopher Schmidt-Nolan argue

---

\(^53\) Ibid., 4. DeGuzmán further explicates the racial implications of “The Black Legend,” particularly in the context of U.S. representations of Spanish culture in the nineteenth century and later.
\(^56\) Ibid., 425.
\(^57\) Ibid., 427.
that this “‘cliché’ erased Spain’s nineteenth and twentieth-centuries from post-war European scholarship,” as it was assumed that Spanish politics, culture and society had failed to and could not make progress or modernize after the fall of the Spanish Empire.\footnote{Burguera and Schmidt-Nowara, “Backwardness and its Discontents,” 279.}

Michael Iarocci’s 2006 study on Spanish Romantic literature likewise addresses the idea that Spain’s marginal position within Europe is in part due to the notion that loss of imperial power had led to the country’s failure to properly modernize.\footnote{Iarocci, \textit{Properties of Modernity} (see note 5).} Iarocci argues that as the Spanish Empire unraveled under the Hapsburg Dynasty (1506-1700), the vilification of Spain by competing nations and political leaders in the North became “sufficiently widespread as to take on the appearance and function of a common truth” (15). In effect, Spain became the epitome of uncivilized backwardness in Europe:

Within the West’s emergent symbolic self-understanding, Spain had become the image of everything modern Europe was not, and this Manichean logic was integral to the rhetoric of modern colonialism: If Spain was barbaric, oppressive, fanatical, ignorant, bigoted, violent and superstitious, modern European imperialism would imagine itself as civilized, liberating, tolerant, educated, fair-minded, peaceful and rational (15).

Iarocci’s study illuminates the implications of Spain’s imperial decline in political discourse during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. In effect, historiography on Spain, such as Prescott’s \textit{Ferdinand and Isabel}, inherited the views articulated by political leaders and writers responding to Spain’s loss of imperial power in the centuries before them.

Claims of Spain’s declining, marginal position within Europe are manifested in early nineteenth-century political and philosophical writings, notably, the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). In his writings, Hegel authoritatively stated that Southern Europe was incapable of contributing to European progress, progress being the epitome of Enlightenment ideals, and was now to look to the North for guidance. He writes, “Germany,
France, Denmark, and the Scandinavian countries are the heart of Europe.” He then prescribes an African identity to Spain, which is in marked contrast to the rest of Europe:

When one is in Spain, one is already in Africa. This part of the world…forms a niche which is limited to sharing the destiny of the great ones, a destiny which is decided in other parts. It is not called upon to acquire its own proper figure.

Progress is not possible in Southern Europe according to Hegel; thus, the Iberian Peninsula was to look to the North as the “center” of Europe and the model by which other countries should follow. Not only does Hegel clearly define Spain as the antithesis of European progress, he also further segregates the country from “Europe” through conceptions of foreignness and race.

Notions of Spanish people as a distinct racial type frequently appear in literature and political discourse in early nineteenth-century Europe. Spain’s adjacency to Africa and separation from Northern Europe by way of the Pyrenees mountains seemed to implicate the country as foreign, not only racially, but also culturally. In 1823, France’s Foreign minister Chateaubriand stated, “Nothing happens in Spain as elsewhere: the blood of the Moors, mixed with that of the Visigoths, has produced a half-European, half-African race of men which upsets all predictions.” Spain, coined the “doorway to the Orient,” was the Other in Europe, as Spaniards were portrayed as a primitive race that had retained the ancient character of their country.

---


63 Ibid.

64 “Other” is a term popularized by Edward Said that refers to the concept that the self requires the other in order to define itself. Hegel first deployed this concept in his master-slave dialectic. According to Said’s definition, the dominant group (the West/Occident) marginalizes the other (the East/Orient) so that the former may define itself as a contrasting image, idea, or personality. See Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
Racist sentiments eventually transformed into Romanticized perceptions of Spain as an exotic, premodern country. In effect, Spain became a desirable destination for foreign travelers, as it was thought to be a haven from the industrialization that had plagued other regions of Europe and America. Travellers went to Spain in search of relief from the metaphysical anguish caused by modern, urban life, as it was expected to be the antithesis of modernization and industrialization. As Arden Reed states, “…Parisians viewed Spain as the alluring Other, as if crossing the Pyrenees meant leaving Europe for colorful, exotic, racy, slightly dangerous places.”

Reed highlights a common sentiment expressed in nineteenth-century European and American travelogues, fine art books and voyages pittoresques, which were ubiquitous and major sources for foreign exposure to Spanish culture. This literature, some of which was written by authors who had never even travelled to Spain, shaped and reinforced Romanticized perceptions of Spain as un-European country locked in its medieval past and still conditioned by Moorish influences. In Voyage en Espagne (1845), Théophile Gautier characterized Spain as picturesque, primitive and exciting. Spanish people, particularly gypsy women, are described in his text as exotic, dark-skinned creatures with fanciful clothing. Literature such as Victor Hugo’s Les Orientales (1828-1829) and Cervantes Don Quixote (1605-1615) also portrayed Spain as a mysterious, alien country and were immensely popular in Europe during the nineteenth century. In the widely read travelogue, Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home (1845), Richard Ford expresses a blatantly Orientalized perception of Spain and Spanish people:

Test her, therefore, and her natives by an Oriental standard, how analogous does much appear that is strange and repugnant, if compared with European usages! This land and people of routine and habit are also potted for antiquarians, for here Pagan, Roman, and

---

Eastern customs long obsolete elsewhere, turn up at every step in church and house, in cabinet and campaign, as we shall carefully point out. These texts enjoyed immense popularity and helped to perpetuate the Orientalist notion that Spain was frozen in time, primitive and exotic, which, in turn, seemed to amplify the progression and modernization of the more industrialized regions in Europe and United States. Moreover, and most important, this fixed stereotype occluded the formation of more varying conceptions and interests in Spain and Spanish culture among foreigners.

Stereotypical representations of a barbaric and uncivilized race combined with the allure of an exotic country untouched by capitalism and industrialism created a myth of Spain as a nation that was inherently premodern and thus unlike the hegemonic centers of Europe. As Hegel’s text illustrates, modernity was more closely associated with the Anglo-Saxon, which seemed to carry with it a “mark of distinction and prestige.” Moreover, contemporary writing on Spanish history and modernity continue to adopt this view of Spain as a periphery and anomaly in Europe. In the recently published literary history The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism, the chapter “Spain” is listed in the “Contents” under a section titled “Peripheral Modernisms.” Thus, before the reader even begins this chapter, the term “peripheral” has already determined what kind of view the reader should adopt. Here, Spain’s modernity is not to be confused with the hegemonic modernities of France, Germany, Great Britain and Russia, which are all listed under the preceding section titled, “Core Modernisms.”

This framing is symptomatic of macro-studies of European modernism, which often either neglect to mention Spain or merely define it as “peripheral,” thereby reinforcing the

---

67 Mejías-Lopez, The Inverted Conquest, 47.
hegemony of Northern Europe. Traditionally, scholars have situated Spain’s peripheral position in the development of European modernity as the result of the country’s (or “her”) “failure” to develop “modern” ideas during the nineteenth century, such as industrialism. The French invasion in 1808, the Carlist wars, and decades of political and economic instability that culminated with the country’s defeat in the Spanish-American war and the subsequent loss of its remaining colonies in 1898 have been interpreted as “failures” and justification for views of the country’s seemingly inherent “backwardness.” Moreover, fervent nationalist movements were centered in areas outside of Madrid, primarily in Catalonia and in the Basque country, which seemed to highlight the weakness of the central government. The strong anarchist movements and violent terrorist attacks in Spain further reinforced notions of retraso. As these aspects of nineteenth-century Spanish history and society are emphasized and narrowly interpreted by historians as proof that the country was socially and politically regressive in relation to the core regions of Europe, Spain has been subsequently marginalized from and in surveys of European modernity and history.

In recent years, some historians have challenged the notion of Spanish modernity as inferior or peripheral in regards to politics, history, literature, social change and culture. As

---

69 A few noteworthy revisionary studies: In Properties of Modernity, Iarocci argues that Northern Europe denied Spain any agency during the nineteenth century, as it projected its Romanticized gaze on the country. However, instead of completely rejecting or challenging the idea of peripheral modernities, Iarocci examines Spain’s “peripheral” position in European modernity as an actual advantage to or creative inspiration for Romantic literature in this country. He argues that Spanish writers were cognizant of their peripheral position and were able to perceive of European modernity from a unique perspective that was unavailable to the “core” regions. See Iarocci, Properties of Modernity. The essays in the anthology Modernism and its Margins, explore the modernity of Spain and Latin America through the various lenses of the “periphery” rather than that of the mainstream, hegemonic view of modernity. In the introduction, the authors argue that “peripheral” modernisms are integral rather than anomalous aspects of European modernity. See Anthony Geist and José Monleón, Modernism and its Margins: Reinscribing Cultural Modernity from Spain and Latin America (New York: Garland, 1999). The contributors to the anthology, Spain Beyond Spain, illuminate the research and critical agendas that have informed approaches to the study of Hispanic literature in attempts to define nuanced approaches. See Brad Epps and Luis Fernández Cifuentes, eds., Spain Beyond Spain: Modernity, Literary History, and National Identity (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005). In Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction: The Struggle for Modernity, the editors posit that there is a curious absence of cultural theories used to study modern Spanish history and culture. The essays compiled for this
Andrew Ginger claims, most of these revisionary studies explicate that the “relationship between Spain and European modernity has been badly misstated in the idea of fracaso.” Further, they question whether comparisons between Spain and other countries have been made in appropriate ways. Ginger posits that the marginalization of Spain in dominant accounts of the emergence of European modernity is flawed because it overstates the importance of “cultural difference over a transnational dynamic” (124). He calls for a view modernity that considers local factors as parts of a series of worldwide connections and interrelations (124). This dialogue is crucial to the construction of more nuanced approaches to the study of Spanish history, culture and politics; however, it has yet to be directed toward scholarship (or the lack thereof) on the visuals arts of nineteenth-century Spain, which is one of the goals of this thesis.

III. Spain’s Self-Reflexivity

The common perception of Spain as markedly different from the celebrated centers of Europe was so pervasive that it seemingly affected Spain’s own self-image. Historians claim that the country’s drive to modernize stemmed from a critical self-reflexivity that surfaced among Spanish intellectuals and social activists after Spain’s defeat in the Spanish-American War and loss of the remaining colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines in 1898. Dissatisfaction with and a loss of faith in the Restoration system of government caused many intellectuals, most notably the writers, poets and artists associated with the “Generation of 1898,” to question why and how Spain had failed to maintain a dominant political and economic

---


71 Ibid., 24.
position in Europe. Writers and activists scrutinized Spain’s social and political course of action over the preceding centuries in an effort to determine which facets of Spanish society, culture and government should be overturned or improved. Coined the “Regenerationist” movement, this was a collective effort by middle-class intellectuals and social activists to expose the manner in which the Spanish public had been deceived and wronged by political, religious and other authoritative figures and institutions. However, desires to reform political legislation and cultural and social institutions have been framed largely as an articulation of social and nationalist causes in the decades before 1898, especially in Catalonia. As Raymond Carr writes in his seminal text, *Modern Spain*,

> The Disaster merely heightened the tone as critics, in search of a wider audience, assumed the grandiloquent title of Regenerators. The Regenerator, wrote a satirist, ‘a tonic for weak nations. Recommended by the best doctors, apostles, and saviors.’

Sebastian Balfour also points out that several of the best-known literary works criticizing Restoration society were published before the “Disaster” of 1898.

During the mid to late nineteenth century, many intellectuals and social activists expressed concerns that Spain was regressive in the realm of culture, politics, economics, military and imperial power, religion, and social issues such as morality, education and gender rights. Spanish “backwardness” was seen as the ultimate impediment to progress and modernization. For example, Concepción Arenal (1820-1893), a prolific writer and social activist, wrote of the dismal quality of the education system as an obstacle to national progress. It is notable that much of her criticism of the education system was articulated through comparisons with other European countries. Arenal deployed comparisons between Spain’s

---


literacy rate and educational facilities with those in Britain, Germany and France as a clear sign that Spain was indeed regressive and in need of reform.\textsuperscript{75} Thus, binary notions of Spain as \textit{retraso} and the hegemonic countries of Western Europe, particularly France, as the loci and models of a perfect modernization process were not characteristic solely of the gaze cast down from the North, but emerged from within Spain, as well.

Historians claim that Spain’s internalization of itself as backward and inferior in comparison with the “core” European nations was a driving force for social and political change in the country during the nineteenth century. Thus, appeals to improve the country’s social and civil institutions were grounding for the country’s modernization and regeneration programs. However, desires to modernize were not felt unanimously among Spain’s population. The debate over modernization is often understood in terms of the dominant trope of the “two Spains.” Victoria Enders and Pamela Radcliffe explain this trope as a binary opposition between traditionalizers and modernizers:

Over the course of the nineteenth-century, an increasing minority of secular Spaniards set themselves in opposition to the traditional society dominated by the Church, the Bourbon Monarchy, and the large landowners, calling instead for the adoption of “European” ideals of democracy, liberalism, socialism, secularization, and economic modernization. For the modernizers, the old Spain was backward, “African,” an antediluvian monster, while for the traditionalist, their opponents were not simply misguided, but anti-Spanish.\textsuperscript{76}

While this trope lends value to an historical understanding of the shift and tension in greater perceptions of the social, political and religious institutions in Spain during the nineteenth century, it ultimately limits our understanding of Spanish modernization as an internal dispute between two homogenous sectors of society.

\textsuperscript{75} Arenal also deployed comparisons between Spain and the “more advanced countries” of Europe in order to advocate better educational and professional opportunities for women. See Concepción Arenal, “Spain,” in \textit{The Woman Question in Europe}, ed. Theodore Stanton (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1884), 337-353.

Modernization discourse in nineteenth-century Spain was seemingly more complex than the “two Spains” dichotomy. Reasons to “modernize” varied by region and were dependent on different motivations. For example, the Catalan *Renaixença* (Renaissance) has been interpreted as a move toward modernization in a nationalist effort to revitalize the Catalan culture and to distinguish Catalonia from a hegemonic “Spanish” one. Economic gain, industrial and technological innovations, regional cultural expression and involvement in international movements – philosophical and aesthetic – were attempts to not only “modernize” but to build a distinction between Catalonia and Spain that would ultimately allow the Catalan culture, especially the language, to collectively flourish after years of suppression.\(^\text{77}\)

Modernization discourse in Spain was further complicated, as Jo Labanyi and Helen Graham point out, by the fact that many Spanish intellectuals were divided as to whether or not Spain should follow the European modernizing model and as to whether the “problem” in Spain’s case was modernity or the absence of modernization.\(^\text{78}\) Thus, the modernizer versus traditionalist dichotomy fails to acknowledge the often ambivalent nature of this debate.

Resonating throughout primary and secondary accounts of the debate over Spain’s desire to modernize and regenerate itself is the notion that the country needed to “catch up” with the rest of Europe. This shows the power that concepts of center and periphery, modern and premodern, and *retraso*, exercised in this debate. Spain was on the periphery of modernization, according to these accounts, and modernization was a “European” form of progress that the country had not yet achieved. Historian Alejandro Mejías-Lopez argues that this legacy, which

\(^{77}\) Catalonia lost independent control of its home territory in 1716 when Philip the Fifth enforced the *Nueva Plata*. During this period, Castilian was enforced as the official language of the territory and was the only tongue taught in schools. Catalan did not emerge as the official language of the educated urban population until the period of the Catalan *Renaixença* in the mid nineteenth century. See Alexander Jr. Alland, and Sonia Alland, *Catalunya: One nation, Two States: An Ethnographic Study of Nonviolent Resistance to Assimilation*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 45-46. The *Renaixença* will be discussed further in the succeeding chapter.

inevitably positions Spain (as well as Spanish America) as subordinate or premodern in comparison to Northern Europe, affected the way that Spaniards perceived themselves. Thus, the myth of modernity – the idea that a perfect modernity existed “somewhere else” – was so pervasive that it not only influenced foreigners’ perceptions of Spain, but Spain’s own self-image.

IV. Retraso’s Legacy

As demonstrated, the commonly held assumption that Spain’s modernity was radically different from or behind the rest of Europe is a pervasive and historically constructed ideology grounded in racist and Orientalist perceptions that continues to shape scholarship on nineteenth-century Spain today. I propose that the inherited perception of Spanish modernity as peripheral, late to arrive and flimsy in its adoption of Northern models has perhaps conditioned the manner in which artistic production from this region and period is analyzed, if at all. Moreover, this ideology helps to maintain Britain, France and Germany as the capitals of European modernity in the nineteenth century. As Iarocci states, the “symbolic amputation of Spain from “modernity,” “Europe” and the “West” was arguably among the most profound historical determinants in defining modern Spanish culture.” In other words, the pervasive conceptual dichotomy between “modern Europe” and “premodern Spain” occluded scholars from forming new views and narratives about Spanish culture, history, politics and society.

How do conceptions of center versus periphery and Spanish backwardness inform scholarship on the visual arts of nineteenth-century Spain, specifically, that of Casas and Mejías-López,

---

Rusiñol? For starters, notions of an imperfect or distinct Spanish modernity pervade discussions of Catalonia’s Modernisme movement, as they are often accompanied with the disclaimer that Modernisme is not “Modernism.” Catalan art historian Francesc Fontbana, a prolific author of studies on the fin-de-siglo art of Barcelona, writes:

Whenever we Catalans discuss Modernism before an international audience, the first thing we must do is to point out that the concept is untranslatable: it must on no account be confused with what the Anglo-Saxon world calls ‘Modernism’…”

Fontbana’s claim that Catalan Modernisme is by no means relatable to the hegemonic Modernism of Anglo-Saxon Europe is illustrative of Spain’s seemingly necessary exclusion from the wider discourse on European Modernism. Further, there is ambiguity or tension between a reading of Fontbana’s statement as either a celebratory remark on the uniqueness and particularity of Catalan modernism or as a statement that ultimately reinscribes Spain’s distinct and inferior position within the development of European modernity. This ambiguity is present in many studies on Spanish modernism, which attempt to situate it as either unique or marginal in comparison to that in France, Germany and Britain. In both cases, Spanish modernity is not “European.” However, Modernisme certainly was/is characterized by notions of anti-conventionalism, freedom of artistic expression, representations of urban social life, and so forth, which seem to place it closer to traditional conceptions of artistic modernism than further away from it.

This uneven mapping of modernity, particularly the privileging of certain centers of modernization and the marginalization of Spain within this construct, fixes Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works and activities within the framework of artists of the periphery/province who unsuccessfully, although necessarily, transposed the dominant artistic expressions of the Western

---

capital of the art world, Paris, to their native region. Because of Casas and Rusiñol’s association with a periphery/province, and that which these terms connote, and more importantly, because they assimilated artistic and cultural expressions from a “center,” their works are predetermined to lack the originality, inventiveness and skill of their French predecessors and contemporaries. As such, the negative commentators cited above, especially Richardson, draw from and perpetuate the idea of Spanish modernity, particularly in the arts, as an unremarkable and unoriginal application of that of the North.

As we shall see, this method of interpretation is also deployed in academic writing on the Barcelona-Paris connection of the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. During this time, members of the Catalan bourgeoisie, for varying reasons, articulated a desire to align and connect Barcelona with “Europe.” This involved a fashionable taste for all things Parisian, which some scholars have narrowly interpreted as evidence for Barcelona’s provincialism and Paris’ centrality in modern Europe. This thesis will engage further with this dichotomous concept in hopes that by exposing the prevalence of this lens in academic scholarship and the limitations it imposes, we might determine other critical positions in our interpretations of Casas and Rusiñol’s as well as Barcelona’s engagement with Parisian art and culture. Thus, a question that this thesis determines to answer is, what are other, more appropriate critical constructs that move beyond and perhaps challenge this limiting framework.
Chapter 2: Barcelona: “The Paris of the South”

A series of exhibitions held in Paris under the title “Une année catalane à paris,” from October, 11 2001 to January 14, 2002, illuminated the artistic exchanges between the city and Barcelona during the years of 1888 to 1937, the former marking the year of the Exposición Universal in Barcelona, which historians distinguish as the pinnacle moment in which the city presented itself as a “modern” industrial metropolis, and the latter is the year in which Picasso featured Guernica at the International Exhibition in Paris. The exhibition, which eventually traveled to Barcelona, highlighted the presence of Catalan artists, including Casas and Rusiñol, in the city during these historical years. Moreover, it explored intellectual and literary exchanges as well as parallels between the social and political spheres of the two cities.

The exhibition emphasized the dynamic between the two cities; however, this was primarily in the sense that Paris was an attractive destination for Catalan artists while Barcelona seemingly held little to no interest to the intellectuals and artists of Paris. This image of Paris as a seductive city for foreign artists and intellectuals, the pivotal example of all that was new and fashionable, looms large in historical discussions of Barcelona’s development as a “modern” city, in which fin-de-siècle Parisian art and culture is considered the guiding force for cultural and artistic renovation in Catalonia during the late nineteenth century.

This chapter will focus on Barcelona’s embrace of international art and culture, particularly that of Paris during the mid to late nineteenth century, as this is the most pertinent historical information for contextualizing Casas and Rusiñol’s interest in and engagement with

---

83 For more on this exhibition see Paris-Barcelone: de Gaudí à Miró (see note 3). Another exhibition with a similar theme, Catalani a parigi = Catalans in Paris (see note 3), had a broader chronological scope than Paris-Barcelone, as it explored Catalan artists working in Paris from the entire second-half of the nineteenth-century to the early twentieth.
French art and culture. The following discussion, which draws from recent historical and art historical scholarship, will in part reveal that some contemporary historians deploy similar critical constructs that make up traditional, macro-historical studies of nineteenth-century Spain, in that they claim Barcelona’s interest in and assimilation of Parisian art and culture ultimately helped to illuminate the apparent provincialism of the former and thus the hegemony and authenticity of the latter. This correlates with the negative framing of Casas and Rusiñol’s paintings as being derivative or second-rate in comparison to their Parisian sources, which further illustrates the pervasiveness of this lens and thus the necessity to respond to and remove the ideological construct of center and periphery/province in historical and art historical scholarship on late nineteenth-century Spain.

I: Barcelona In and On the International Stage

During the mid to the late nineteenth century, Barcelona experienced transformations such as industrial and economic growth; an exponential population increase; urban expansion; and fervent labor, anarchist and nationalist movements that altered the social and political landscapes of the city. Economically the most prosperous city in Spain during this time thanks to the burgeoning grain and textile industries, Barcelona also experienced the effects of mechanized means of transportation and communication, as the first railroad in Spain was built between the city and Mataró in 1854. The active literary and artistic production in the city, notably, the heterogeneous Renaixença and Modernisme movements, has been interpreted as the visual expression of Barcelona’s transformation into a “modern,” “cosmopolitan” city. Because

---

84 From 1862 to 1900, Barcelona’s population grew from 100,639 inhabitants to 533,000. Joan Ramon Resina, *Barcelona’s Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008), 28.
of industrial growth and the budding social and artistic climate in the city, historians distinguish Barcelona as the most “modern” city in Spain during the nineteenth century. Barcelona’s modernization process, however, is commonly described as significant only in comparison to the rest of Spain. As one scholar states, it was “peculiar and actually quite limited with respect to the model of the hegemonic industrial nations.”

The demolition of the city’s Citadel walls beginning in 1854 was perhaps the most prominent visual articulation of Barcelona’s initial transition to a “modern” society. Urban planners and architects envisioned the destruction of the Citadel as means to bring “unfettered progress” to Barcelona that would allow for better opportunities and prosperity for the city’s inhabitants. This vision manifested in the city’s new grid-plan devised by Ildefons Cerdà i Sunyer (1815-1876) in 1859. Cerdà’s plan, known as the Eixample, represented his desire to bring Barcelona “up to date,” as the new, expanded city stood against the anachronistic medieval one. In the following decades, Modernisme architecture, spearheaded by Gaudí, Puig and Lluis Domènech i Montaner (1850-1923), further illustrated the contrast between the past and the present (or the future), as these new buildings flourished in and enlivened the Eixample.

Historian Brad Epps posits that Cerdà’s transformation of Barcelona’s built environment articulated the Renaixença desire to “revive” the Catalan people after years of enduring the suppression of their language, history and culture. As stated in the preceding chapter, the Renaixença was a mid nineteenth-century movement to revitalize the Catalan culture, history and

---

87 Traditionally, scholars claimed that Cerdà looked to Eugene Haussmann’s 1848 plan for Paris’ urban transformation as a model; however, recently, historians, such as Brad Epps, have argued that this is an unwarranted comparison, as the two plans differed in context and application. See Brad Epps, “Modern Spaces: Building Barcelona,” in Iberian Cities, edited by Joan Ramon Resina (New York: Routledge, 2001), 154-156.
88 Eixample comes from the Catalan word eixample, which means expansion or extension.
89 Epps, “Modern Spaces: Building Barcelona,” 150.
90 Ibid., 161.
especially the language, which was motivated by nationalist aspirations to overcome threats by
two main forces: the “cultural uniformity” of the Enlightenment, and the Spanish crown, which
sought to impose a homogenous view of Spanish culture on Catalonia.\footnote{Francesc Fontbana, “The Renaixença in Art,” in \textit{Barcelona and Modernity} (see note 3), 22.} The \textit{Renaixença} was, in
a sense, a form of identity formation that was strengthened by interests in and homages to
Catalonia’s cultural heritage, notably, its medieval past. This cultural renaissance spurred
responses by Catalan writers and poets, who rejuvenated Catalan literature after years of
suppression. Most literature produced during this period was written in the Catalan language,
which, along with teaching it in some schools, constituted a form of nationalist pride.

Periodicals associated with the movement, such as \textit{La Renaixensa} and \textit{L’Avenc}, represented the
Catalanist “awakening.”\footnote{Ibid., 27.} Further, artists looked to Catalonia’s artistic past as a source for their
own works and they painted scenes of local landscapes, the works of the Olot School\footnote{As mentioned in the introduction, the Olot School painters looked to the Barbizon school in France as a model for
painting outdoors and experimenting with light and color. However, as Marilyn McCully claims, the Olot School
was/is valued as a particularly Catalan form of artistic expression, as it was as a celebration of the Catalan
landscape, or “\textit{la terra catalana}.” Yet, McCully also claims that although the Olot School painters were the first
artists in Catalonia to experiment with local landscape painting and thus innovative to Catalan painting at the time,
they were a “late phenomenon” in comparison to the French Barbizon School. While McCully’s statement was not
intended to deride the Olot School, it unavoidably helps to perpetuate the notion that Spain’s modernity, specifically
in the arts, was late to arrive in comparison to the North. See Marilyn McCully, “Introduction” to \textit{Homage to
Barcelona} (see note 3), 23.} and the
Sitges Luminists being representative of the latter. Critics revered these works as authentic
representations and celebrations of the Catalan landscape. Art critic Frederic Rahola, for
example, lauded the artists associated with the Olot School, such as Joaquim Vayreda i Vila
(1843-1894), for their “paintings of characteristic landscapes, which said more to the soul than
those fantastic lakes and imaginary valleys of other eras.”\footnote{Belen-Lord, \textit{Point and Counterpoint}, 52.} Most of the artistic production from
this period, however, went ignored by audiences outside of Catalonia with the exception of that
of Marià Fortuny, who gained international recognition. Yet, Fortuny’s connection to Catalonia
and the *Renaixença* is only through his early training under Claudio Lorenzale, after which he permanently settled in Rome.

While the *Renaixença* espoused the importance of cultural awareness and regional expression in the arts and literature, paradoxically, the “revival” of the Catalan people and culture was further achieved by transcending the borders of the Peninsula. Bonaventura Carles Aribau’ 1833 poem, “*La pàtria*” (The Fatherland), in which the author looks beyond Spain to reference the Limousin region in France, is perhaps one of the earliest literary works to promote this international outlook.⁹⁵ As Epps points out, this tendency towards internationalization in combination with the Catalanist appeal to re-invigorate Catalan culture also characterizes the complex “cosmopolitanism” of *modernista* painters such as Casas and Rusiñol and architects such as Puig and Domènech, whose works he describes as engagements with the local environment that are at the same time situated in an international frame.⁹⁶

Barcelona’s *Exposición Universal* of 1888 was emblematic of the openness of the city to international currents during this time. Commonly interpreted as the organizers’ determination to present Barcelona as a “European capital,”⁹⁷ the exhibition not only helped to stimulate the local economy after a brief economic recession, but more importantly, it served as a showcase for the technological innovations and artistic currents of the city. As historian Joan Ramon Resina claims, the *Exposición* was a “rite of passage” that showed Barcelona’s status as a burgeoning, industrial city.⁹⁸ Furthermore, like many state sponsored expositions in Europe at this time, the exhibition allowed for an exchange of different artistic and cultural traditions. It offered the city the opportunity to exhibit the work of regional artists such as Aexandre de

---

⁹⁶ Ibid., 162.
⁹⁷ Isidre Molas, “Barcelona: A European City,” in *Homage to Barcelona* (see note 3), 79.
Riquer i Anglada (1851-1920), Anglada-Camarasa, Josep Maria Tamburini (1856-1932) and Rusiñol, to an international audience. In turn, audiences in Barcelona were exposed to the works of a few European artists from outside of Spain.

The exhibition certainly announced Barcelona’s pride of its transformative technological, economic and artistic environment, which may be interpreted as a positive contribution to Catalanist causes as it further distanced the city, the capital of Catalonia, from “pre-industrial” Spain. As Belen-Lord writes, “…the exhibition stimulated an outlook that was self-aware, even self-critical, and at the same time more Europeanized and progressively less oriented towards the central government in Madrid.”99 Belen-Lord’s statement illustrates that to Catalanists, Barcelona’s embrace of international trends and industrialism connected it to “modern Europe,” which was markedly more favorable than identification with “Spain,” a seemingly regressive country that posed a threat to Catalonia’s hope for a more individualized cultural and political identity. Moreover, the location of the fair on the grounds of the recently destructed Citadel symbolized Catalonia’s conquest over Madrid’s domination of the region and expressed “aspirations for progress and autonomy.”100

Art historians have consistently used the date of the exhibition to mark the emergence of Barcelona’s Modernisme movement. Promoted and supported by the growing bourgeoisie in the city, the artists and intellectuals associated with the movement continued to support some of the major nationalist tenets of the Renaixença, in that the development and celebration of the Catalan culture remained a primary concern for many, especially Rusiñol. However, the modernistas rejected the conservatism of the Renaixença and its “romantic” concentration upon the medieval

99 Belen Lord, Point and Counterpoint, 51.
past. Creative production during this period was diverse in appearance and content; yet, it is commonly stated that the modernistas were united by their desire for modernity, openness to European trends, and a break with the past, which were the ideological tenets required for constructing a new, “modern” art in Catalonia. Thus, Modernisme is defined largely as a response to a collective awareness among Catalan artists and intellectuals that Barcelona had not yet reached its potential in the realm of modernity, specifically in the arts. It is important to note the correlation between this and the Spanish Regenerationists, who voiced concerns that Spain’s modernity was impending, rather than concurrent with that which was taking place in the North.

Like the thinkers associated with the Renaixença, the modernistas also professed a cosmopolitan attitude, as they were and are largely defined by their interest in looking beyond the borders of Spain for everything “modern.” In response to this, a critic for a satirical fin-de-siglo Catalan magazine wrote: «La intención, en definitiva, es presentar a los «modernistas» como a un grupo de extravagantes excéntricos, esclavos de la obsesión por la novedad y por todo aquello que venga de más allá de la frontera.» (“The intention, ultimately, is to introduce the 'modernistas' as a group of quirky eccentrics, slaves to the obsession with novelty and all that which comes from beyond the border.”) Despite ambivalent responses to this, Casas and Rusiñol, as well as others, transcended Spain’s geographic borders to engage with other countries and cities, which, in effect, satisfied a growing interest among the Catalan bourgeoisie to connect Barcelona to a broader network of international currents.

---

102 Ibid.
II: Barcelona as a Conduit of Modern Parisian Culture

Historians commonly interpret the Catalan bourgeoisie’s aspiration to modernize Barcelona – artistically, politically, technologically and socially – as a goal to synchronize the city with the vanguard ones of Northern Europe, particularly Paris. Paris was/is considered by many to be the most distinguished city in Europe during the second-half of the nineteenth century. Paris meant modern; as Walter Benjamin writes, it was the “capital of the nineteenth century.”

Considered the locus of modern artistic and literary production, Paris provided the “standard against which people judged everything that was daring and new.” Thus, discussions of Barcelona’s new identity as a modern city, characterized by industrialism and an embrace of international aesthetic and intellectual movements, is often understood as, in part, achieved and characterized by an assimilation of all that was Parisian.

Indeed, Barcelona was receptive to and interested in Parisian culture during the late nineteenth century. Barcelona newspapers, such as the Castilian-language publication *La Vanguardia* (founded 1881), featured articles on Parisian life and cultural events on a monthly, sometimes weekly, basis, such as those written by Rusiñol during his residencies in Montmartre. In the articles written by Rusiñol, which were also illustrated by Casas, he described, in a mostly subjective, poetic manner, everything from the mundane details of daily life in Montmartre to the artistic circles and exhibitions he frequented. The articles read as Rusiñol’s personal and thus seemingly “authentic” experience of the cultural manifestations of

---

105 Resina, *Barcelona’s Vocation of Modernity*, 41.
106 This is not unique to Barcelona, however, as many newspapers across the Iberian Peninsula dedicated space to Parisian culture on a regular basis. See Cueto Asín, “Santiago Rusiñol in Paris,” 95. Rusiñol’s articles were published into book form in 1894 under the title *Desde el Molino* (From the Mill) by the Barcelona publisher *L’Avenc*. See Santiago Rusiñol, *Desde el molino: impresiones de un viaje a París, 1894* (Barcelona: Parsifal Ediciones, 1999). Rusiñol wrote in both Castilian and Catalan.
Paris. Moreover, Casas’ illustrations are sketch-like, adding to the immediacy of the sites and experiences described by Rusiñol and thus reinforcing the believability of the text as an accurate and personal representation of Parisian life (Figure 28). In the articles, Rusiñol expressed his admiration for the works of his French contemporaries, most notably, Edmond François Aman-Jean, Émile Bernard, Eugène Carrière, and Jean-Charles Cazin. He also stated his opinions of the artworks he viewed and the studios he visited, which, in effect, suggests that his articles were partially intended to educate his readers on the artistic currents in Paris, or, perhaps to present Rusiñol as an informed critic and observant of Parisian culture.

Literary historians Elena Cueto Asín and David R. George argue that Spanish travel writing on Paris satisfied a desire to comprehend both the local and the global, in which readers in Barcelona could connect to the everyday realities, events and trends of Europe’s major metropolitan cities. In relation to this, Spanish travel correspondence from Paris would have supported the idea that Barcelona’s ascendancy to “modernity” was thought to manifest itself by aligning and connecting the city with the vanguard ones of Europe. Further, Cueto Asín and George argue that these articles “equipped the city with a lens through which to view and to document the structures of modernity at home and abroad and as a way to situate itself in space (north/south) and time (pre-modern/modern).” In other words, readers in Barcelona could perceive the differences between the modernity of Barcelona and that of Paris through the descriptions provided in Rusiñol’s, as well as other correspondents,’ travel writings. Thus, the historians suggest that these writings promoted a comparison between the two cities that would have urged readers to critically assess Barcelona’s modernity as not yet on par with that of Paris.

107 Rusiñol, Desde el Molino, 5.
108 Elena Cueto Asín and David R. George, Jr., “Looking to France from Barcelona: Correspondence and Travel Writing in La Vanguardia (1890-1900),” Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies 9, no. 3 (Nov. 2008), 265.
109 Ibid., 268.
However, it is not certain that readers in Barcelona would have interpreted these texts through such a strict binary comprehension of their own city and Paris; most importantly, this assessment further illustrates the power of the concept of central and peripheral or uneven modernities as a framework in which the meaning and/or value of Spanish cultural and artistic production is determined.

Although it is not certain if Catalans interpreted the Barcelona-Paris connection as one in which the former was deemed inferior or drastically different through comparisons with the latter, Parisian culture was undoubtedly a popular theme in literature and art. Various literary works of the period espoused the high standards that Paris seemed to set for the bourgeoisie in Barcelona. Catalan author Narcís Oller i Moragas’ novel *La febre d’or* (Gold Fever), published between 1889-1892, for example, features the character Emília, who envisioned herself as ‘a transplanted boulevardière’ who idealized and longed for Paris.\(^\text{110}\) Another character in the novel, Bernat, adamantly explains to his friend and artist Francesç, “Any prize, a mere mention in the Salon, would bring you more fame and profit than a great medal in Spain. Paris leads a modern art movement, and today there is no universal celebrity who has not been baptized with water from Seine.”\(^\text{111}\)

Bernat’s exaltation of the Parisian art scene supports the fact that Paris was a popular destination for artists, as many Catalan and Spanish artists travelled to the city in the second half of the century to receive training, sell their work, and participate in the French salons.\(^\text{112}\) At this time, Paris had replaced Rome as the most desirable destination for contemporary painters from

---

\(^\text{110}\) Resina, *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity*, 42.

\(^\text{111}\) Quoted and translated in Resina, *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity*, 42.

\(^\text{112}\) For an exhaustive list of Spanish and Catalan artists who travelled to Paris at this time, see Carlos González and Montse Martí, *Spanish Painters in Paris, 1850-1900* (London: Sammer, 1989).
Barcelona, the latter connoting the traditionalism of historical and Orientalist painting that the modernistas rejected. As Belen-Lord writes:

> The modernista enthusiasm for the arts, architecture, and artistic freedom of other European capitals, particularly Paris, is in pointed contrast to the Madrid’s alignment with the conservative royal academy and its investment of the older traditions of Rome…

Thus, Parisian art became popular in Barcelona not only through its presence in international exhibitions and reproductions in magazines, but also via the Catalan artists, such as Casas and Rusiñol, who trained and lived in the city and returned to Barcelona. As we shall see, this constituted more than a mere admiration for Parisian art, as this activity contributed to a Catalan nationalist goal to connect Barcelona to broader European currents.

A few landmarks in Barcelona appropriated French names and directly quoted famous Parisian establishments. The 1867 inauguration of running water in Barcelona was given the name of Compagnie des Eaux de Barcelone. The first public music hall to open and operate in the 1890s was named Folies Bergère. As mentioned, the Parisian cabaret, Le Chat Noir, provided the inspiration for Els Quatre Gats café. While Els Quatre Gats provided a lively atmosphere and catered to a larger clientele than the French café, the idea for the Barcelona establishment as well as some the performances held there, such as the shadow puppet coined sombras artísticas, was directly inspired by Le Chat Noir. In addition, like Le Chat Noir, the café featured its own publication appropriately titled Quatre Gats, which was supplanted by Pèl & Ploma in 1899. In response to their French precedent, Eliseu Trenc describes these journals as

---

114 Resina, Barcelona’s Vocation of Modernity, 42.
115 Ibid.
116 McCully, Art in Barcelona around 1900, 20. The shadow puppet theater was modeled off the ombres japonaises of Le Chat Noir.
“montmartraises.” Further, Cristina Mendoza writes, “It (Quatre Gats) was a hub for those who sought to turn Barcelona into a modern city open to Europe.” Thus, as the modernista artists and intellectuals who founded and frequented Els Quatre Gats promoted bohemian lifestyles and espoused the importance of embracing “the modern,” the café functioned, in part, as a conduit of Parisian art and intellectual currents to the city.

During the mid century to the fin-de-siglo, intellectuals and artists in Barcelona absorbed international art, philosophy and politics. For example, Joan Maragall, modernista poet and prolific defender of Catalan nationalism, translated the works of Nietzsche into Castilian and Catalan and subsequently disseminated his philosophy in La Vanguardia. Zola, Schopenhauer, Bergson, Baudelaire, Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau, Debussy, Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, Ibsen, Wagner, Ruskin, D’Annunzio, Satie, Poe, Whistler and Whitman were also immensely popular during this period. Art historian Joan Lluis Marfany, however, postulates that knowledge of foreign artists and writers in Barcelona was achieved solely through awareness of their popularity in Paris. In other words, international art and literature was transmitted directly to Barcelona from Paris, via French magazines and publications, rather than through a broader network of exchanges. Marfany partially attributes this to the Catalan bourgeoisie’s lack of knowledge of foreign languages other than French, which further illustrates the predilection for Parisian culture in Barcelona.

117 Eliseu Trenc, “Modernista Illustrated Magazines,” in Barcelona and Modernity (see note 3), 65.
118 Cristina Mendoza, “Quatre Gats and the Origins of Picasso’s Career,” in Barcelona and Modernity (see note 3), 82.
Coined “the Paris of the South,” nineteenth-century travel writers characterized Barcelona as an international city that was a stark contrast to other Spanish cities, as they noted the industrialism, and of course, the Parisian “influence” on the city. Ford, who derided the Catalan language and customs in his writings, grudgingly stated in 1845, “Barcelona possesses more European establishments than most Spanish cities, and they are better conducted.” He continues:

(The Catalans) are neither French nor Spanish, but *sui generis* both in language, costume and habits; indeed the rudeness, activity, and manufacturing industry of the districts near Barcelona, are enough to warn the traveler that he is no longer in high-bred, indolent Spain.

Hans Christian Anderson wrote in 1862, “Here I felt that Barcelona was the Paris of Spain.” Italian writer Edmondo De Amicis observed in 1881 that Barcelona was “the least Spanish city in Spain.” Thus, to travellers, Barcelona had established an urban identity that was “modern” and on par with that of “Paris” rather than “Spain.”

**III: Reconciling Catalanisme and “Cosmopolitanism”**

References to Paris in Barcelona’s artistic and urban spheres certainly developed from larger Catalanist aspirations to connect and identify the city with a broader network of technological, industrial, economic, social, artistic and intellectual currents in Europe. This

---

122 It is unclear as to whether or not this phrase was retroactively applied to characterize Barcelona at the *fin-de-siglo* or if it was coined in contemporary times. Today, it is deployed frequently by historians in their discussion of Barcelona’s transformation into an industrial, urban metropolis in Spain during the mid to late nineteenth century.


“cosmopolitan” attitude helped to shape the major Catalan cultural and artistic movements during the nineteenth century: the *Renaixença* and *Modernisme*. It may seem paradoxical that the key ideological components of Barcelona’s cultural and artistic environment were in part characterized by both nationalism and cosmopolitanism, as the former is an emphasis on the local while the latter connotes transcendence of the local in favor of the global. Both terms are problematic and difficult to define in an absolute manner; however, Catalan nationalism, or *Catalanisme*, of the mid to late nineteenth century, is commonly understood as a middle-class movement in Catalonia to construct a national identity that was autonomous from the central government in Madrid, Madrid\textsuperscript{127} being the location of an “insufficient” administrative center that had previously thwarted the usage of the Catalan language and the forging of a regional, Catalan culture.\textsuperscript{128} Equally important to Catalanists at this time was the goal to reconstruct the

---

\textsuperscript{127} Martí-López argues that traditional models of “capital” have been uncritically applied to discussions of Madrid’s relation to the rest of Spain during the nineteenth century. She claims that Madrid was not a capital in the same sense that Paris was a capital of cultural production and recognition in France. She argues that Madrid was “just another province among many provinces” and that scholars have wrongly framed it as a center of artistic and cultural production in Spain. Thus, scholars should be cautious or resist framing Catalan nationalist resistance to Spanish culture as a reaction against Madrid in particular, as it did not exert much influence on the rest of Spain. See Martí-Lopez, “Autochthonous Conflicts, Foreign Fictions,” 155-159. While this is valid, it is necessary to also understand Catalan nationalism, especially that of the *Renaixença*, as an effort to forge regional cultural and linguistic expressions that were previously thwarted from development by the central government in Madrid. See note 77. Thus, while Catalan nationalism was not necessarily a reaction against the cultural expressions that existed in Madrid, it was an effort to act against the opposition and suppression of their language and culture by the central government so that it might flourish.

\textsuperscript{128} The literature on Catalan nationalism has grown significantly over the past twenty years, and thus spurred different scholarly interpretations. While most scholars frame *Catalanisme* as a reaction against the central government in Madrid through the formation of a collective Catalan identity and appeals for an autonomous government, some scholars offer different interpretations that emphasize the ambivalence of the political and economic relationship between Spain and Catalonia during the second-half of the nineteenth century. Enric Ucelay Da Cal, for example, argues that Catalan nationalism in the nineteenth century sought a “bi-lingual” partnership with the central state, rather than a complete separation from it. Thus, the construction of a national Catalan identity was not clear-cut in a political sense, or uniformly dependent on separation from the Spanish government. See Enric Ucelay Da Cal, “The Nationalisms on the Periphery: Culture and Politics in the Construction of a National Identity,” *Spanish Cultural Studies* (see note 69), 37. Albert Bacells posits that the Catalan bourgeoisie, while in favor of linguistic and cultural separation from Spain, did not accept a politicized, separatist Catalan nationalism until the Disaster of 1898, with the loss of the colonies in Cuba and the Philippines. Until this point, it would have been viewed as hypocritical for the bourgeoisie to argue for political autonomy from Spain while the colonies were being denied this. See Albert Bacells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present*, trans. Jacqueline Hall (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 43. Art historians of *Modernisme* reference Catalan nationalism as the construction of a regional, collective identity that was forged through linguistic and cultural separation from Spain, which seem to be
educational system and other cultural and civic institutions in Catalonia, as well as the aim to transform Barcelona into a fully industrial, “modern” society.

Art historians commonly deploy the term “cosmopolitanism” in their discussions of the Modernisme movement, as it helps to define the activities of artists and writers, such as Casas and Rusiñol, who travelled abroad and looked to international aesthetic and intellectual currents as inspiration for their own creative productions. Thus, in regards to Modernisme, cosmopolitanism may be understood as openness to foreign art and cultures as well as the initiative to leave one’s immediate environment in an effort to engage with new modes of artistic and cultural production. However, from this point on I prefer to use the word interculturalism, which traditionally connotes interactions between two cultures, to describe Casas and Rusiñol’s engagement with Parisian art and culture. Interculturalism is a more applicable term, as the Catalan bourgeoisie were mostly interested in and connected with the dominant artistic, intellectual and cultural currents of Europe, especially Paris. This term is not meant to imply that Paris and Barcelona were two seemingly holistic and divergent cultures; rather, it is meant to refer to the meaningful interrelationship, rather than the distinctions, between the two.

Cosmopolitanism, while appropriate to define an open “attitude” towards other cultural productions, seems to be more applicable to worldviews, interests or activities that are commonly defined as being transnational or global in scope rather than strictly international or situated within a primarily “European” framework.¹²⁹

---

¹²⁹ Craig Calhoun writes, “Cosmopolitanism means focusing on the world as a whole rather than on a particular locality or group within it. It also means being at home with diversity. Its main meanings refer in this sense to an orientation or capacity of individuals.” See Craig Calhoun, “Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism,” Nations and Nationalism 14, no. 3 (2008): 427.
The difficulty remains in reconciling Catalan nationalism with interculturalism. How were Catalanist efforts in Barcelona strengthened by interculturalism, or by an interest in looking and travelling beyond the geographic borders of Spain? As stated, much of the discourse on Spanish “regeneration” during the late nineteenth century perpetuated the notion that the North provided a comparative model to aid the country in its redemptive modernization project. Likewise, historians often claim that Barcelona’s reception of ideas and art from the North, particularly Paris, was motivated partially by the notion that it provided the standard for a seemingly perfect modernity that could aid in the construction of a distinctly “modern” Catalan culture and society. Yet, this interpretation cannot help but perpetuate the hierarchical notion that Northern Europe was considered more advanced or modern than Catalonia (and Spain). It is necessary that we break down this binary between Paris and Barcelona, North and South, center and periphery/province, as the intercultural/cosmopolitan aspirations of the Catalan bourgeoisie were seemingly more complex.

Unlike Spanish regenerationism, the Catalanist cultural revitalization goal of the *Renaixença* and *Modernisme* was not primarily defined by the urge to “catch up” with the North. It was equally if not more motivated by the desire to distinguish Catalonia as an autonomous nation – culturally, linguistically and somewhat politically – from “Spain.” Thus, an intercultural attitude contributed to a complex Catalanist view that was both inward looking, in that the persistence of the Catalan language and the construction of regional artistic and cultural expressions were major concerns for many, and outward looking, in that interculturalism disconnected Catalans from the homogenized label of “Spain,” which seemingly connoted backwardness and threatened the individuality of the Catalan culture. An intercultural outlook instead connected Barcelona to “Europe” and allowed for an active re-construction of the city as
an integral part of a “progressive” international dynamic. Rather than emphasize the centrality or hegemony of Parisian modernity as the primary motivation for Barcelona’s interest in the city, this interpretation instead reinserts human agency into the equation, as it frames Barcelona’s interest in engaging with international, particularly Parisian, art and culture, as a conscious one with grounding in specific, nationalistic aspirations.

IV: Barcelona’s Uneven Application of Parisian Modernity

The Catalan bourgeoisie, particularly the modernista artists and intellectuals, were receptive to Parisian art and culture, and this openness and response, not Paris itself, helped to forge Barcelona’s dynamic cultural and artistic expressions during the fin-de-siglo. It is imperative that historians frame this not as proof that Barcelona’s artistic and cultural environment was inherently dependent upon Paris for artistic and social change and thus imply that it was inferior or undeveloped in comparison to their French counterpart. Nevertheless, some scholars narrowly interpret Barcelona’s receptivity to Paris as the former’s desire to overcome its provincial status by becoming a “Parisian enclave in Spain.”

Historian Joan Ramon Resina, who explores the Barcelona-Paris connection with more depth than other scholars, writes:

By enthusiastically espousing modernity, the nineteenth-century Catalan bourgeoisie thought it possible to leap over the history that separated their provincial constriction from the splendors of Paris. (Paris) administered the tempo characteristic of modernity; other cities were more or less modern according to their relative standing in a chronological map. By turning toward this model, Barcelona was waking from centuries of slumber in the shadow of a decadent civilization.

130 Resina, Barcelona’s Vocation of Modernity, 43.
131 Ibid., 43.
Here, like Hegel’s conception of the Iberian Peninsula’s dependency on the North, Resina positions Paris as the antidote to Barcelona’s “provincial” identity, a source that awakened the city after “centuries of slumber.” He continues, “The extreme idealization of Paris, which made this class feel like an outpost of progress south of Pyrenees, was a form of exile” (42). In other words, Resina argues that to the Catalan bourgeoisie, Paris simultaneously highlighted and served as an escape from Catalonia’s provincialism.

Later, Resina writes that the comparison between the city and its Northern counterpart by foreigners and Catalans alike “threw into relief the exaggeration of the claim, for to be a petit Paris was to be a Paris manqué” (43). This statement suggests that looking to Paris for urban and artistic renewal will inevitably end in failure, because the act of assimilating particular elements of Parisian culture, whether they are artistic styles or names of famous music-halls, will weaken those signs and characteristics in the process. Thus, references to Paris, the center, are deemed inauthentic when placed in the province, Barcelona, or by the distance from their origin. As such, these references serve to highlight Barcelona’s supposed inferiority and flimsy adoption of Paris’ authentic, superior modern cultural expressions. This suggests that moving from one cultural context to another, particularly from center to province, no matter what the intention or motivation, will ultimately distort that which is being assimilated and in effect, illuminate the “provincialism” of the assimilating culture. Resina’s statements certainly echo negative views of Casas and Rusiñol’s works as derivative or as John Richardson claimed, evidence that the modernistas had realized “the need for French modernity as an antidote to Spanish retraso.” Because of the hierarchical lens of the center/province relationship, their works are inevitably deemed mere shadows of their French precedents.
Resina’s statement that Parisian modernity was an antidote to Barcelona’s self-apparent provincialism serves to perpetuate the hierarchical, imperialistic notion that certain regions were/are more modern, developed or progressive than others. This rests on the assumption that modernization is objective, measurable and characteristic of the more “civilized” nations. It would be likewise problematic to argue that Barcelona was equally if not more modern than Paris. This would only invert the formula and reinforce the power of the construct of center versus periphery/province as a tool that labels everything outside of the “center” as inherently less valuable, inauthentic or marginal in comparison. Cities, nations, regions, states, cultures, individuals and so forth, should be understood on their own terms and according to the historical factors that informed their situations, rather than as more or less modern according to how they measure against the hegemonic capitals of the “West.”

Most importantly, the construct of center and province/periphery limits our perception of the interaction that took place between Paris and Barcelona as one in which the latter was not only indebted to the former but also never able to live up to its model. Barcelona emerged in the mid to late nineteenth century as a locus of industrial and economic expansion as well as intellectual and artistic vitality in Spain, which was in part due to an active interest among the bourgeoisie to connect the city to an international network of ideas. Nevertheless, some historians interpret Barcelona’s modernity as a late arrival that was dependent on Northern models. A notable example of this is found in Robert Hughes’s seminal text, *Barcelona*, in which he writes, “…the effects of industrialization in Catalunya seemed less radical than in Northern Europe. The Catalans got industry without getting an industrial revolution.”¹³² He continues, “Like ideas, technology had been slow in crossing the Pyrenees…”¹³³ Hughes’

¹³³ Ibid., 256.
comments perpetuate notions of centers and peripheries, in that he positions Catalonia as a passive receptor of Northern, hegemonic forms of modernization.

It is my contention that this notion of Barcelona as indebted to the North, particularly Paris, for artistic and cultural modernization has conditioned the negative reception of Casas and Rusiñol’s work. This construct fosters comparative, hierarchical views in which Barcelona is situated as a second-rate follower of the dominant expressions of Paris. Moreover, it has perhaps helped to marginalize Casas and Rusiñol in the international scope of art historical scholarship, as they have received extremely limited attention outside of Spain. This issue may equally apply to the lack of scholarship on or awareness of the many painters who worked and lived in Spain between the period in which Goya passed away and Picasso rose to fame in Paris.
Chapter 3: Framing Casas and Rusiñol's Relationship with French Art and Culture

Casas and Rusiñol’s residencies in Paris during the 1880s and 1890s ran concurrent with a fashionable interest in Parisian life and art among the Catalan bourgeoisie. As demonstrated, an engagement with the international contributed to a complex Catalanist interest, in which an intercultural and/or cosmopolitan attitude was a means to align Barcelona with the revered cities of “Europe,” rather than the seemingly homogenous, pejorative identifier of “Spain.” The bourgeoisie in Barcelona desired to position the city on the international stage as a technological and industrial metropolis and many artists contributed to this cause, consciously or not, by participating in international expositions and engaging in a broader network of artistic exchanges. This relationship between the local and the international was, of course, not a homogenous and collective effort. It was certainly more complex and artists and intellectuals perhaps had varying reasons for their interest in and engagement with Parisian culture and art.

Casas and Rusiñol embarked to Paris during the 1880s and 1890s to receive training, view artworks at the French Salons, and to exhibit their works to a broader audience. They took the initiative to transcend their immediate situations in Barcelona in order to broaden their knowledge of and approaches toward art making. They were receptive to and engaged with their surroundings in Paris, which manifests in their artworks as well as Rusiñol’s travel writings. As discussed in the introduction, the paintings Casas and Rusiñol produced during their stays in Paris reveal that they were not only interested in recording their immediate surroundings, but they were also actively learning some of the characteristics of the major artistic movements of fin-de-siècle Paris, most notably, those of Impressionism and Symbolism. This reveals their willingness to experiment and expand their artistic vocabulary; all the while, they remained devoted to their exhibition schedules in Barcelona.
A panoramic view of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s paintings and the more detailed studies of them in Castilian and Catalan language art historical scholarship reveals that they looked well beyond artists and artworks in Paris to those of Italy, England, the United States, Japan, Sweden, and elsewhere. Their works also demonstrate that they had selected certain elements from other artists and art movements, through first or second-hand knowledge, and often combined them to make idiosyncratic artworks that referenced their current interests and immediate surroundings. Nevertheless, and most pertinent to this thesis, French art and artists hold center stage in discussions of Casas and Rusiñol’s artistic production.

I: Recent Literature on the French “Influences” in Casas and Rusiñol’s Work: Artistic Centers and Provinces

Much has been written about the French sources of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s paintings and their residencies in Paris during the 1890s. The sheer prevalence of discussions of this in art

---

134 See Coll, *Rusiñol i la pintura europea*, 17-196, for a lengthy discussion of the artist’s expansive artistic sources. She positions Rusiñol as an artist that was in tune with not only modern artistic currents in France, but also those in Sweden, England, Japan and elsewhere. Further, Coll argues that Rusiñol’s work often involved a concern for tradition, as evident in his interest in artists such as El Greco. Coll’s catalogue raisonné on Casas is also an excellent source for a more comprehensive overview of Casas’ artistic production that also includes primary documents, such as the artist’s personal letters and writings. Coll, *catálogo razonado* (see note 8).

135 Also see note 137 and 138. In “The Catalan Painters and Paris,” Fontbana cites and briefly discusses Catalan painters that trained and exhibited in Paris during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. He claims that Casas and Rusiñol took from their Parisian stays the gray-tonality of Whistler and Degas. Further, he, like most art historians, explicates that they valued Paris for its modern artistic currents, rather than its outdated academic ones. In effect, their works, being products of their responsiveness to Parisian artistic modernity, helped to revolutionize Catalan painting (22). Francesc Fontbana, “The Catalan Painters and Paris,” in *Catalans in Paris* (see note 3), 18-29. In Fontbana’s “Pròleg,” in *Viaje a París*, he describes Casas and Rusiñol’s attraction to the artistic and bohemian environment of Montmartre, which he qualifies with statements such as, Paris was the “mecca” of the art-world (7). Fontbana posits that although Casas and Rusiñol revolutionized Catalan painting via their deployment of “modern” French artistic styles, mostly that of Degas, they were fifteen-years behind with respect to their contemporaries in France (8). Further, he claims that they were “followers” of a “gran categoria” (large category) and thus lacked originality; however, they did not lack sensibility in their art (8). The remainder of this short essay is focused on Rusiñol’s travel correspondence writing for *La Vanguardia*. Francesc Fontbana, “Pròleg,” in *Viaje a París* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Magrana, 1980), 7-10. In the “Allure of Montmartre,” Mendoza situates Casas and Rusiñol as innovators of Catalan painting and receptors of Parisian artistic modernity. She outlines the biographical details of their early artistic careers and residencies in
historical scholarship, alone suggests that no other country impacted the work of these two artists more than France, not even their own. Traditionally, art historians claim that Casas and Rusiñol’s “import” of Parisian art to Barcelona was the light in a seemingly dark history of Catalan painting. Josep Pla, writing in 1970, states, “…from Casas first trip to Paris may be dated all the transformations of our art in the past seventy-years.”\(^\text{136}\) The connection between Casas and Rusiñol, as well as other Catalan artists, and Paris, as mentioned, was also the focus of two recent exhibitions, *Paris-Barcelone* and *Catalani a Parigi = Catalans in Paris*, which explored the “influence” of Parisian art and culture on the Catalan artists who trained, exhibited and/or lived in the city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

---

Most analyses of Casas and Rusiñol’s engagement with Parisian culture and nineteenth-century French art are limited to anecdotal information and debates over which artists and art movements exerted the most influence on their works at different points in their artistic careers. Thus, theoretically and critically engaged discussions of this aspect of their artistic production are mostly lacking in art historical scholarship. One scholar who does move beyond a stylistic debate in a discussion of the French sources in the Catalan painters’ oeuvres, is the highly regarded Catalan art historian Eliseu Trenc, previously cited in this thesis, who has contributed articles on Casas’ and Rusiñol’s engagement with French art to major exhibition catalogues. His commentary on their French sources is revealing, particularly the framework he deploys to study this relationship. In a catalogue essay for the seminal 1990 exhibition El Modernismo, Trenc defends the idea that Casas, Rusiñol as well as most of their contemporaries in Barcelona, were “provincial” in comparison to the artists of Paris. This claim is, in typical fashion, followed with the disclaimer that Goya and Gaudí were the two nineteenth-century Spanish artists that escaped provincialism to create innovative, original works of modern art. Trenc writes:

---


138 Trenc also uses this exact framework, to be outlined in the next few pages, in his essay “La peinture catalane entre Barcelone et Paris,” in Paris-Barcelone. His essay for Santiago Rusiñol 1861-1931 is a lengthy discussion of the possible and more probable influences on the paintings Rusiñol produced during his residencies in Montmartre from 1889-1892 and those created during his stay on the Île Saint-Louis from 1893-1894. Trenc responds to the likelihood of the influences on his work posited by other scholars, such as those cited by art historian Josep C. Laplana. He argues that Laplana wrongly interpreted the paintings Rusiñol produced in Paris as the artist’s willingness to follow the stylistic tendencies of Impressionism and Symbolism so to please or fit in with his contemporaries in France. Rather, Trenc posits that they are Rusiñol’s inner personal expressions that indeed align with the Symbolist characteristics of the paintings of Puvis de Chavannes and Gustave Moreau (55). He also argues that Isabel Coll overemphasized the influence of Whistler on Rusiñol’s Symbolist paintings (55). In sum, Trenc claims that the loneliness, isolation and melancholy that characterize Rusiñol’s works of this period are personal, poetic and “peculiar” (57). See Trenc, “Rusiñol y la pintura francesa de su tiempo,” in Santiago Rusiñol: 1861-1931, 47-57

139 Trenc, “La influencia de la pintura francesa,” 195.
La única forma de tratar el problema es partir de la relación artística entre París y Barcelona, a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX, y admitir que París es realmente la metrópoli mundial de la pintura en este periodo, mientras que Barcelona no es más que un centro provinciano… 

(The only way to treat the problem of the artistic relationship between Paris and Barcelona, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is to admit that Paris really was the world metropolis of painting in this period, while Barcelona was no more than a provincial center…)

He continues:

…que estas novedades artísticas se difunden del centro metropolitano a la periferia, o bien a través de las reproducciones en las revistas, las exposiciones de bellas artes, o gracias a los artistas extranjeros que asimilan estas novedades en sus estancias parisienses de aprendizaje y después las importan a su país cuando regresan. 

(…these artistic innovations diffuse from the metropolitan center to the periphery, either through reproductions in magazines, exhibitions of fine art, or through the foreign artists who embraced these new developments in their Parisian stays and then import them to their country when they return.)

Trenc grounds his methodology in art historian Kenneth Clark’s 1981 essay, “Provincialism,” from his book Moments of Vision. He argues that Clark’s theory is a valuable formula for exploring the Paris-Barcelona relationship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; therefore, it is necessary for us to understand Clark’s methodology.

In his essay, Clark defines the history of European art as a “history of centres, from each of which radiated a style.” He continues, “For a shorter or longer period that style dominated the art of the time, became in fact an international style, which was metropolitan at its center and became more and more provincial as it reached the periphery” (50). Clark describes “metropolitan art” as the measure and excess of a dominant international style that is “formidable and destructive” to those artists from the “periphery” who employ the metropolitan style in their own works (52). Provincial artists, according to Clark, have to come to terms with the advanced skill of those artists associated with the center. Citing artists who worked in England during the

---

140 Ibid. My translation.  
141 Ibid. My translation.  
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Clark demonstrates how each one dealt with their
provincialism, not by ignoring or simply *emulating* the styles of the metropolis, but by creating
lyrical, poetical paintings or by grounding their work in their own unique experiences. Despite
his claim that artists and styles in the metropolitan center are powerful and incomparable, Clark
ultimately argues that provincial artists are not always inferior to those of the center;
nevertheless, he also claims that it would be a mistake to call them “great artists,” which to him,
is itself a mark of provincialism (59).

It is important to note the dichotomy that informs this center/province relationship in art
history, and elsewhere. Like Edward Said’s conception of the “Other,” the center is defined not
only by its artistic, cultural and social activity, but also by its contrasting identity with the
province(s), which is defined as “peripheral,” “marginal,” and so forth. Neither center nor
province exists without recognition of its differences in comparison to the other, which is a
Hegelian, dialectical way of studying art. It is important to further analyze the implications of
Clark’s center/province argument, as it is the starting point of Trenc’s analysis, whose writings
comprise a great deal of the published essays on Casas and Rusiñol’s responsiveness to French
art.

First, Clark does not explicitly define the term provincial beyond his statement that in the
simplest understanding of the concept, it refers to geographic distance from the metropolis (51).
For Clark, the metropolis is Greece in the fifth century BCE, Constantinople from the sixth to the
twelfth centuries, Rome in the seventeenth century and Paris in the nineteenth to the early
twentieth centuries (51). Besides distance from a center, it is not clear as to which external
factors determine provinciality. It seems as if what makes artists provincial is their *assimilation*
of preexisting artistic styles in combination with their geographic distance from the center.
Because of these factors, according to Clark’s reasoning, their works are less representative of the assimilated style and less successful than those of the metropolitan center. This qualification is, however, based on the biases and subjectivity of the person making this judgment. Moreover, as the ability to utilize the characteristics of an artistic style depends on artists’ geographical location or cultural affiliation, one does not even need to view their works to make this judgment.

Second, it is not clear how artists are determined to be part of the center. Perhaps the unstated principle in determining artists’ identification with the center is whether they have been identified as the originating artists of the metropolis’ dominant artistic style(s), which is not necessarily dependent on nationality. The objects produced by the originators of a style are inherently the most representative of or exude the purity or essence of a style while artists from the province, or those who assimilated rather than contributed to the construction of a dominant style, create works that are less accomplished, derivative, and so forth. This reasoning is echoed in Resina’s discussion of the Barcelona-Paris connection cited in the preceding chapter, in which it is argued that those in the province who assimilate artistic and/or cultural expressions from a “center” inevitably produce derivative, second-rate works that are less accomplished, both technically and conceptually, than that of the artists and intellectuals identified with the originating region or culture of these expressions. Thus, to Clark, Resina and others who adopt

143 Nationality does not seem to imply whether or not an artist is part of a center as much as their involvement in the creation of an artistic style does. For example, Vincent Van Gogh was a Dutch artist, yet he has been canonized as a representative figure of Post-Impressionism, a style typically associated with French art. The same case could be made for the expatriate American artist Mary Cassatt, who has been studied alongside the canonical artists associated with French Impressionism. Picasso, moreover, was a Spanish artist living in Paris, yet, his status as one of the most famous modern artists of all time certainly argues against the idea that nationality determines whether artists are included in the “center.” In the case of “provincialism,” nationality seems to play a greater role, as geographic and cultural distance from the location in which a style originated is one of the greatest implications, next to involvement in the original construction of the style, of an artist’s disassociation with an artistic style. The geographic borders of artistic styles are inherent in traditional studies of art history, to which labels such as “Northern Renaissance,” “Spanish Baroque,” and so forth, certainly attest.
this view, the works of artists who assimilate rather than invent an artistic and/or cultural
expression serve to highlight their provinciality and inferiority rather than their creativity or
connectedness to broader artistic exchanges.

The overarching principle or law at work in Clark’s theory is that the import of an artistic
style from a center to a province will likely weaken the assimilating artists’ work. Yet, it is
certainly possible that artists who did not “invent” a style or who are not affiliated with the
“center” could create successful works using the characteristics of a dominant style.
Nevertheless, Clark’s concept of provincialism does not allow for close interpretations of a
dominant artistic style by an artist from outside of the center. He argues that provincial artists
must distance their work from that of the center, and instead deploy unique characteristics in
their work in order to resist being labeled as derivative of those in the center.

Trenc, who after citing Clark’s theory of provincialism as a successful lens for studying
the artistic aspects of the Barcelona-Paris relationship, goes on to list the elements of French art
that were adopted by modern Catalan painters, including Casas and Rusiñol, and the similarities,
although not the equality, between their works and those of the French Impressionists, Naturalist,
Symbolists, and Post-Impressionists. According to Trenc’s analysis, the inequality between
modern French and Catalan painters is the result of the Catalan artists’ lack of innovation and
personality, or that they did not transform their understanding of French artistic currents into
anything original, with the exception of Picasso, of course. Moreover, Trenc argues that the
French “roots” of modern Catalan painting are intentionally obvious in these works, as Catalan
painters understood that “French,” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was
synonymous with artistic revolution and modernism and thus an antidote to artistic
According to Trenc, the exception to this rule is Joaquim Mir i Trinxet (1873-1940), whose paintings he evaluates as products of the artist’s original, personal style rather than any French influence (203). In accordance with Clark’s methodology, he argues that Mir, who never travelled to Paris, “was saved by the isolation of provincialism;” as such, his works were not tainted by foreign sources, allowing them to appear as original and personal.\footnote{Trenc, “La influencia de la pintura francesa,” 203.}

It is perhaps plausible to state that the French sources in modern Catalan painting may be interpreted as the Catalan artists’ active decision to project an image of their art and culture as “modern” or in tune with the major artistic currents in Paris and elsewhere in Europe. This would have aligned with contemporaneous Catalanist aspirations to project the city as part of an international dynamic. Therefore, this interpretation inserts agency into the Catalan artists’ assimilation of French art, as it involves a self-reflexive and critical approach to art making in which artists were conscious of the connotations and reception of particular stylistic modes as “modern.” Yet, in retrospect, Trenc evaluates their assimilation of French art as a somewhat unsuccessful endeavor, as it seemingly serves to highlight the unoriginality and provincialism of modern Catalan painters as well as the inequality between their works and their French sources.

Trenc concludes his essay with the claim that the Catalan painters’ provincialism and dependency on French artists does not necessarily mean that their works hold no value or significance.\footnote{Trenc, “La influencia de la pintura francesa,” 204.} However, he argues that their works, being the products of provincial artists, have not nor never will receive the type of attention and praise that is given to works that are associated with the metropolitan center (204). Here, Trenc recognizes the unfortunate consequences of being labeled an artistic province; yet, it is evident that this concept is not

\footnote{Trenc argues that some provincial artists were/are able to “flourish in isolation.” Clark, “Provincialism,” 55.}

\footnote{Trenc, “La influencia de la pintura francesa,” 203.}

\footnote{Trenc, La influencia de la pintura francesa,” 204.}
necessarily problematic or arguable to him. Instead, it is simply unavoidable or a natural fact.

As such, rather than argue for a view of the French sources in modern Catalan painting through a different framework than center and province, he deploys this formula to evaluate the relationship between the artists of Barcelona and the art of Paris as one in which the former, with a few exceptions, was dependent on the latter for artistic modernization and never able to live up its model.

The construct of artistic centers and provinces is imbedded in art history, and is perhaps taken to be a “natural” occurrence in the grand, teleological narrative of the history of art. For some scholars, it seems to hold value for the study of the “dissemination” of a dominant artistic and/or cultural expression from one location to another. Indeed, certain locations at certain points in history have been a locus of artistic production and the “origin” of a popular mode of art making, in that they provided more exhibition spaces, art academies and dealers, which attracted foreign artists. One might argue that the terms province and peripheral are useful in the sense that they at least imply a connection or an interrelationship between different cultures and/or regions with/within a “center.” Yet, do the negative connotations of these terms, particularly when used in reference to Spanish art, undercut the significance of these relationships and the cultural and artistic productions that emerged from them? Should we follow Clark and Trenc’s lead, and evaluate Casas and Rusiñol’s, as well as other Catalan painters,’ artworks according to the idea that they originated from a province or a periphery in relation to Paris? Is there value to be gained from this framework, or does it merely limit our perception of the artistic activity of any given region that exists outside of a seemingly hegemonic center as inherently dependent on or less accomplished than the artists and artworks of the metropolis?
As demonstrated in chapter one, the economic, social, cultural and political context of Spain’s position in nineteenth-century Europe has traditionally been described as “peripheral.” This view is not isolated to the nineteenth century, as it developed from a trajectory of ideological views of Spain and Spanish people that initially appeared in the fifteenth century and continues to manifest in recent scholarship on the country. Peripheral, backward, premodern, uncivilized and other similar terms developed from racist, and later, Romanticized and Orientalist perceptions of Spain as the most “un-European” country in Europe. Thus, are the implications of the terms peripheral and provincial too heavily loaded to offer any insight on Casas and Rusiñol’s, as well as Barcelona’s, connection with Paris during the nineteenth century? Do these terms perpetuate a discourse that conscious scholars of Spanish culture and history are attempting to challenge?

Yes. It is imperative that we look beyond the reductive, dichotomous construct of center versus the periphery/province to evaluate the Barcelona-Paris relationship using a methodology that acknowledges the agency and inventiveness of the individuals involved. In the context of nineteenth-century Spanish art, which is a relatively unexplored area in international scholarship, the concept of artistic centers and provinces/peripheries closes off many possible avenues for interpretation, as it fosters hierarchical views of artistic superiority and inferiority that are mostly predetermined by geographic and cultural origin. Furthermore, it segregates artistic circulation and reception as a simple transfer from one culture to another, neglecting the notion of artistic production as a continuum of ideas and forms between multiple locations, cultures, individuals and so forth.

There are perhaps more responsible ways to describe the relationship between the “center” and those outside of and in communication with it without the implications and/or
assumptions that art/artists of the province/periphery are inherently less accomplished or second-rate in comparison to those of the center. Art historian Thomas Dacosta Kauffman proposes that studies of the relationship between an artistic center and province/periphery should take into consideration the notion that the latter’s assimilation of the artistic or cultural expressions of the center is/was part of an exchange rather than a unidirectional “diffusion” of a hegemonic style to the periphery. 147 Kauffman argues that diffusion theory, which traditionally connotes the “spread of ideas or knowledge from their origin to areas where they are adopted,” like the concept of “influence,” instead situates this as a passive process. 148 Thus, “diffusion,” the term deployed by Trenc to describe the Barcelona-Paris connection, implies that the process in which dominant modes of cultural and artistic expression are “diffused” to different locations is so overwhelming that the receiving party has no choice but to accept and assimilate what is being diffused. In other words, the periphery or province has no agency. Thus, scholars should avoid framing Casas and Rusiñol’s Parisian residencies and interests in French art as a romanticized narrative in which Paris’ allure captivated the Catalan artists, as suggested by the title of the introductory essay in the Paris-Barcelone exhibition catalogue, “Histoire d’une Séduction” (History of a Seduction) and a chapter on Casas and Rusiñol in Barcelona and Modernity titled, “The Allure of Montmartre.” 149 Instead, it is important to emphasize the agency and willingness of Catalan artists, such as Casas and Rusiñol, who decidedly travelled to Paris to learn and to actively assimilate so as to expand their artistic vocabulary and to exhibit and sell their works.

148 Ibid.
II. Artistic Translation: An Attempt to Look Beyond the Center versus the Province/Periphery Model

Despite the negative implications inherent in some of the extant scholarship, some art historians have situated Casas and Rusiñol’s works not as pale reflections of their French “influences,” but as *translations* of international artistic styles that were made relevant to their cultural and social environments in Catalonia. Art historians often describe the works of the *modernista* artists and architects in Barcelona as *adaptations* of their international sources into a Catalan context, giving their work a sense of authenticity and local particularity. Joseph Cervera writes, “In truth, Modernismo could be said to have been a summation of a series of foreign trends which were made to serve a point of view deemed appropriate to Cataluña.”

Nevertheless, in reference to Casas and Rusiñol, this discussion is relatively undeveloped as it consists mostly of one to two sentence remarks on the “Catalan” quality of their works without further explanation. Trenc, for example, to conclude his 2006 catalogue essay on *modernista* graphic art writes:

> A consideration of the style of drawing of Steinlen (the great illustrator of *Gil Bas*), of Toulouse-Lautrec, or Forain immediately reveals the influences on Casas’ art. His (Casas’) innovation was in adapting the modern art of Paris to the climate in Barcelona and thereby modernizing the panorama of Catalan graphic art.

While an admirable nod towards Casas’ contributions to Catalan art, the idea to *conclude* an essay with this statement is to leave the reader to wonder how exactly his works were adapted to Barcelona, despite the obvious assumption that the hand of a Catalan artist created them. It is necessary to articulate explicitly how Casas and Rusiñol went beyond simply emulating or transposing French modern art to Barcelona. It is crucial that scholars do not misinterpret or convey that the Catalan artists simply adopted elements of French artistic styles without the...

---

150 Cervera, *Modernismo*, 221.
intervention of their own agency and creativity. Thus, at the close of this chapter, following my analysis of the critical framing, I will demonstrate how one might expand this discussion through comparisons of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works with that of their European contemporaries to illustrate the inventiveness of the Catalan artists as well as the relevance of their works to the socio-cultural environments in which they lived.

Despite the brevity of the claims that Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works are translations or adaptations of dominant French artistic styles into a local context, these statements at least reference the artists’ agency. However, it is revealing that some of these statements situate Casas and Rusiñol’s artistic output as relevant to or only significant to local, Catalan interests. Of course, I am not suggesting that Casas and Rusiñol, who were cultural activists and catalysts for artistic change, were not relevant to Catalonia. Rather, I take issue with claims that their works were primarily of significance to Catalonia, as this notion, in effect, divorces them from the fact that their works also reveal the artists’ receptiveness to ideas and approaches to art making that were circulated through artists, reproductions of artworks in print publications, Universal Expositions as well as the tastes of their critics and bourgeois patrons during the late nineteenth century. Instead, Casas and Rusiñol are framed as primarily important to Catalonia and the acknowledgement of their decision to participate in a broader network of artistic activity and exchanges in late nineteenth-century Europe is significantly downplayed (or misinterpreted as a derivative process). There is no reason why Casas and Rusiñol’s translation and adaptation of artistic techniques into a context that was relevant to their socio-cultural environment in Catalonia should not be wedded to the notion of a broader interchange and network or continuum of artistic activity in the late nineteenth century, rather than isolated as a phenomenon that was significant to or impacted Catalonia only.
This is particularly salient in discussions in which Casas and Rusiñol’s works are evaluated as innovative only in the sense that they helped to forge artistic change in Catalonia, but in comparison to their French sources, they are less accomplished or demonstrate inferior technical skill. American art historian Marilyn McCully in her introductory essay for the exhibition catalogue, *Homage to Barcelona*, writes:

Rusiñol and Casas were the outstanding painters of their period, and while today their canvases still look less advanced than works by their French contemporaries, they were understood in the 1890s by the Catalan public as new and up to date…

Here, McCully’s acknowledgment of Casas and Rusiñol’s esteemed status as innovative painters in Catalonia is immediately undercut by the idea that they could never live up to their French contemporaries. This directly relates to the idea that Spain’s and, as discussed in the previous chapter, Barcelona’s modernity, was an uneven application of their Northern, particularly French, sources, France being the location of a seemingly perfect modernity. Furthermore, statements such as this, in which writers deem it necessary to distinguish Casas and Rusiñol’s works as being of lesser quality than their French sources, but, nevertheless, significant to Catalonia, reveal a tension among scholars attempting to situate their works as relevant or important to anything but Catalan art history. Art historian Shelly Errington, in her “Afterword” for James Elkin’s *Is Art History Global?*, explains the prevalence of this type of narrative in traditional, or “normal art history.” She writes:

Other artists of the colonies and peripheries, especially those of the Europeanized elites, traveled to the metropoles and studied art and went back to the colonies and created regional schools and styles, based on European art’s media, conventions and standards. From the point of view of the metropoles, these styles and artists were presumably considered at best of mainly local interest – perhaps worthy in their own way, but a dead

---

152 McCully, “Introduction” to *Homage to Barcelona*, 23. For another example of this, see Fontbana’s comments in *Viatge a París*, cited in note 135.
end in the universal story of art. At worst, they were probably considered poor imitations or dismissed as skillful but derivative.\textsuperscript{153}

Here, Errington situates this as an issue that was common in art historical narratives of the first half of the twentieth century and mostly in reference to artists of the “non-West;” however, nineteenth-century Spain’s peripheral position in the narrative of European modernity makes Casas and Rusiñol’s situation germane. Moreover, this framework is still operative in scholarship on Casas and Rusiñol’s works today, as illustrated. Scholars have evaluated their works as derivative, unoriginal, and unskilled in comparison to their French predecessors and contemporaries. At the same time, their significance to Catalonia is emphasized and deployed as a redeeming factor. Thus, as scholars stress Casas and Rusiñol’s, as well as other \textit{modernista} artists’, \textit{debt} to preexisting and concurrent French art movements, their achievements and innovations are subsequently undermined.

Errington’s statement is part of the growing debate on the historiography and critique of the traditional discipline of art history. These studies\textsuperscript{154} reveal that art history has traditionally operated as teleological narrative of art, in which art may be studied as a progression of styles, from the Eurocentric perspective of the Western scholar. Imbedded in this narrative is the notion of artistic centers and peripheries/provinces, which, as discussed, tend to limit our understanding of the dynamic of artistic and cultural exchange as one in which a dominant culture disseminates their material productions, in various ways, to peripheral locations, which are inevitably never able to live up to the artistic standards of the “center.”

Art history’s recent self-reflexivity has helped to challenge these constructs and in effect, transition the discipline. As a result, the artistic and cultural productions of what were


previously considered the “periphery” are gaining critical attention from scholars in ways that challenge biased, predetermined notions of “provincialism,” as well as other prescribed views. It is imperative that art history expands its recent revision of studies of “non-Western,” colonial, postcolonial, and other marginalized regions/cultures to consider how the artistic productions of nineteenth-century Spain have perhaps been affected by notions of this country as a “periphery,” in the art historical and political sense of the word. Conceptions of Spain as a provincial, premodern country dependent on Northern influence certainly seem to condition how Casas and Rusiñol’s works have been evaluated. Spain’s former status as an imperial power and geographic inclusion in Europe have perhaps made some scholars reluctant to acknowledge and challenge the idea that Spain is/was considered a periphery. Yet, it is evident that certain stereotypes and ideologies continue to occlude nuanced views of and broader interests in nineteenth-century Spanish art; thus, this area certainly deserves a revision. It is not my intention to heroically defend nineteenth-century Spanish artists, particularly Casas and Rusiñol, as some of the “forgotten” ones. Nor do I intend to offer an extensive or complete revisionary analysis of Casas and Rusiñol’s work here. Instead, this is a call to scholars to consider the possibilities and avenues of interpretation that might open up if we re-consider their works, and that of other Spanish artists, without the binary constructs of modern/premodern, center/periphery, and artistic center/province.

III. A Consideration of Casas and Rusiñol’s Relationship with French Art and Culture as Intercultural Appropriation

My intention thus far has been to contextualize and theorize the manner in which Casas and Rusiñol’s relationship with French art has been studied and framed by scholars. This
analysis reveals some of the primary constructs that inform the extant scholarship and it is now evident that some of the major contributors to the field deploy the binary constructs of center/province and modern/retraso in their evaluation of Casas and Rusiñol’s work; therefore, it operates in a similar manner to traditional academic writing on Spain that constructed and perpetuated these dichotomous notions. This has occluded nuanced approaches to Casas and Rusiñol’s works and perhaps explains the dearth of international attention to their work. The same stories and frameworks are consistently deployed by scholars, which do little to expand our views or offer new perspectives on their works. Thus, I will close this chapter with a proposal.

Instead of relying on and perpetuating the binary model of center versus periphery/province in our evaluations of Casas and Rusiñol’s works and their connection to French art and culture, we might instead situate them not only components of a broader network of artistic exchanges in late-nineteenth century Europe, but also as artists who appropriated artistic techniques and cultural expressions from Paris (and elsewhere). I propose that we consider Casas and Rusiñol’s intercultural outlooks and activities, that is, their initiatives to transcend their immediate situations so as to learn and adopt some of the artistic and cultural expressions of late nineteenth-century Paris, as acts of appropriation, in the complex, unfixed sense of the term. Arnd Schneider defines appropriation, in the context of art history, as “the taking – from a culture that is not one’s own – of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge.”¹⁵⁵ He proposes, however, that we might extend this definition to consider artists who appropriate from cultures that at the same time “are and are not” regarded as their own.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.
This is an appropriate framework to study Casas and Rusiñol’s absorption, adoption, and translation of French art and culture, as it is evident that they considered themselves as active participants of both Catalan and Parisian culture. Casas and Rusiñol frequently travelled and lived abroad in cities other than Barcelona throughout the 1880s and 1890s, which shows their willingness to engage with and learn different cultural and artistic expressions. As previously stated, Rusiñol and Casas returned to Barcelona every year during their stays in Paris in the early 1890s to exhibit their works at the Sala Parés, which also shows their dedication to their artistic and social community in Catalonia. This back and forth relationship between the local and the international, as stated, constituted a a contemporaneous desire, largely articulated by Catalanists, to project Barcelona as a part of a network of international currents, connected to and on par with “Europe” rather than “Spain.”

Casas and Rusiñol’s relationship with the both the local and the international defies the notion of fixed cultural identities, a concept that cultural theorists recognize as an essentializing concept. The artists embraced the cultural manifestations of Paris, particularly “modern” artistic techniques and bohemianism, yet simultaneously celebrated and espoused the development of a vibrant artistic and cultural community in Catalonia. Thus, they creatively wedded the idea of participating in the hegemonic sphere of “modern” art with the construction and celebration of a regional sphere of art, Modernisme.

Casas and Rusiñol decidedly appropriated the bohemia of Montmartre, particularly notions of anti-conventionalism and freedom of artistic expression. In Paris and Barcelona, they identified themselves as “bohemian” artists and they promoted the principal ideologies connected with this stance. Casas captured the bohemian appearance of Rusiñol and Utrillo, notably their long hair, beards and eccentric dress, in an illustration that also functioned as a
record of the artists’ arrival in Paris, titled *Montmartre 3 Enero 91* (Figure 29). The artists’ embrace of bohemia may seem paradoxical considering their privileged and bourgeois backgrounds that allowed them to travel and work as they pleased. Nevertheless, they *self-fashioned* themselves as bohemian artists who promoted anti-conventional views of society and art, which they then successfully implemented into their own community so as to foster artistic and social change. In Barcelona, Casas and especially Rusiñol espoused the importance of individuality and artistic and creative freedom as the basis for an anti-conventional attitude towards not only artistic tradition, but also bourgeois society. In effect, establishments such as *Els Quatre Gats*, the locus of *modernista* artistic activity, promoted anti-elitist/aristocratic views of art, in which distinctions between high and craft art, for example, were dissolved through activities such as shadow-puppet theaters, the display of antiques and craft objects, and more.

Bohemia was particularly conducive to the socio-political climate of Barcelona at the *fin-de-siglo*, as industrialization had, as in other parts of Europe, brought with it fervent anarchist and labor strikes. Thus, Casas and Rusiñol, while not direct participants in riots and protests, but certainly up to speed on the revolutionary climate in which they lived, appropriately adapted Montmartre’s bohemia, particularly concepts such as freedom of artistic expression, to a city that was open to ideologies of social change and anti-establishment sentiments.

Casas and Rusiñol also took from Paris a wealth of artistic knowledge, mostly in the form of styles, themes and other building blocks of artistic expression. They actively learned and appropriated elements of “modern” French artistic styles, which signaled their desire to participate in a broader exchange of artistic currents, particularly those that referenced and critiqued urban life. Casas and Rusiñol’s depictions of Montmartre, as demonstrated in the introduction, are pessimistic representations of modern life, in which somber colors and dark
shadows symbolize the malaise of modernity. This approach extended into Rusiñol’s exploration of the Spanish countryside and gardens as uninhabited sites that could be read as deliberately marked contrasts to the hustle of urban, industrial life, which Rusiñol also denounced in his speeches and writings. Casas was able to apply and adapt the ideas and artistic techniques that he appropriated from his Parisian residencies to his later works, particularly those that addressed some of Barcelona’s most provocative social problems, notably industrialization and anarchist attacks. Thus, his unabashedly “realistic” representations of Montmartre’s urban landscape developed into politically charged artworks that attested to the volatile socio-political environment of fin-de-siglo Barcelona. These points will be addressed further at the close of this essay.

Casas and Rusiñol embraced the cultural and artistic spheres of Paris in a manner that demonstrated their desire to establish themselves as both informed observers of and participants in Parisian life. In Montmartre, they painted the sites and people they encountered in the city and, as mentioned, Rusiñol wrote about Paris in explicit detail. As Zanetta also points out, some of Rusiñol’s perceptions of Paris in these writings are similar to those that characterize his Naturalist paintings, in which urban life is defined by an isolated and grim human existence. For example, in an article he sent to La Vanguardia from Paris, titled, “Artistes Catalanes en Paris: Montmartre por la noche” (Catalan artists in Paris: Montmartre for the Night), he described sites associated with sickness and death, such as the Père Lachaise cemetery, a hospital, and finally, the población miserable (miserable population) of Ménilmontant. Further, as did Casas in the letters he sent to his family from Paris, he wrote of the extreme cold weather in Paris as a negative contrast to the warm, Mediterranean climate of Barcelona.

---

158 Rusiñol, Desde el Molino, 88
159 Letters reproduced in Coll, catálogo razonado, 466-472.
As Pla pointed out, despite Rusiñol’s negativity towards some aspects of Parisian life, he conveys a sense of familiarity and comfort with the city in these writings, as if he were a Parisian himself. Furthermore, travel correspondence allowed Rusiñol and Casas to construct an image of Paris based on their personal experiences that was then immediately transmitted to readers in Barcelona. In effect, they projected images of themselves to their readers as educated artists, worldly travellers and informed observers, fully emerged in and capable of judging Parisian life.

I propose that we adopt Schneider’s approach toward appropriation in our consideration of Casas and Rusiñol’s intercultural artistic activities, as, like Kauffman’s approach, it does not imply intercultural transfers as interactions between two uneven, essentialized cultures nor does it perpetuate the notion of simple *diffusions* or transposals of artistic and cultural expressions from one location to another. Instead, Schneider promotes an understanding of the *individual* practices of appropriation, the effects of this practice on the actors involved, and the resulting changes induced by these artists into their society. When viewed through this lens, Casas and Rusiñol’s appropriation of French painting techniques and bohemian personas is given greater significance as an active and meaningful process. This activity in itself helped to shape Casas and Rusiñol’s approaches toward art making, which they then implemented into Barcelona’s artistic sphere in order to establish a local artistic community that was more accepting of the individuality of artistic expression and new modes of representing reality in art. In effect, their contemporaries, especially of the younger generation, such as Nonell, were offered a foundation in which to creatively represent “modern” life. Thus, Casas and Rusiñol, not Paris itself, were some of the primary catalysts for the dynamic, transformative artistic activity of *fin-de-siglo* Barcelona.

160 Josep Pla, *Obra Completa*, vol. 4 (Barcelona, Destino, 1971).
162 Ibid.
Casas and Rusiñol’s appropriation of some elements of late nineteenth-century French art and culture was not an inferior practice that constituted a mere direct transposal of the dominant artistic expressions of Paris (the location of the “originating genius” creators) to “provincial” Barcelona. Instead, this involved individual actors who were receptive and desired to engage in an intercultural activity, which resulted in artworks that, instead of being derivative, demonstrate their own inventiveness and created a marked impact on their local artistic scene. Using this framework of intercultural appropriation, the undeveloped discussion of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s translation of their artistic sources into meaningful, culturally relevant contexts may be expanded to more than a passing remark. Here, I will offer readers and future scholars an example of how one might examine Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works as translations rather than derivative emulations of the artistic techniques and methods that they learned in Paris (and elsewhere) into creative, idiosyncratic works that reference the socio-cultural environments in which they lived.

Rusiñol, instead of simply emulating his contemporaries and predecessors in France, translated his sources into personal works that point to his growing interest in poetically representing the Spanish landscape after years of traveling throughout Southern Spain and Catalonia. These paintings, which number in the hundreds, are dominated by the gardens of Mallorca, Granada and Aranjuez. Oscar Enrique Vázquez briefly commented in his 1983 Master’s thesis that Rusiñol’s garden paintings, when placed next to the works of the Claude Monet, particularly Monet’s waterlily gardens, reveal that Rusiñol’s treatment of the landscape involves completely different concerns than the French painter, as his focus is primarily on the garden itself as a subject rather than, as was the major concern for Monet, the ranging effects of light, water and atmosphere. Vázquez goes on to claim that Rusiñol’s gardens differ not only

---

163 Oscar Enrique Vázquez, Santiago Rusiñol’s “Jardins d’Espanya” and Aspects of Late Nineteenth Century Painting in Cataluna, Master’s Thesis (Riverside: University of California at Riverside, 1983), 63.
from Monet’s works, but also from those of Puvis de Chavannes, for the reason that Puvis’ landscapes function not as the subject, but as the backdrop for the dream-like actors in his compositions. Vázquez, writing nearly 30 years ago, deploys a comparative framework, although brief and located in a thesis of limited circulation, which helps to debunk the notion of Rusiñol’s relationship with French art as one in which he merely assimilated stylistic techniques without the intervention of his own creativity, as Vázquez points to the elements in his work that explicitly show how he diverged from his French contemporaries and predecessors. Pointing out the differences, rather than the similarities, illuminates how Rusiñol successfully translated his sources. Here, I will expand Vázquez’s concise statement on the differences between the depiction of nature in Rusiñol’s and Puvis’ works through a comparison of their paintings, in order to offer scholars an appropriate case study and framework for assessing the artist’s intercultural development of his understanding of French artistic currents.

In Rusiñol’s painting, Jardines de Aranjuez (Gardens at Aranjuez) (Figure 30) of c. 1911-1931, the artist depicts one of the royal gardens at Aranjuez. Rusiñol describes the garden using a geometrically designed maze, intensely dark grays, browns and greens as well as melancholic, subdued light. Located in the center of the symmetrical composition, symmetry being typical in Rusiñol’s garden paintings, is a Spanish cypress tree that is, however, not accessible via the path. The cypress tree is a deeply symbolic element that appears ubiquitously in Rusiñol’s works. Rusiñol wrote of the cypress as a symbol of death in his text, Oracions, “When the last (man) has died, when the world becomes a desert, when the earth revolves as an immense cemetery, only the cypress will remember those who died.” The foliage of the

---

164 Ibid., 65.
165 King Alfonso XIII had given Rusiñol permission to enter the gardens as he pleased. Ibid., 60.
166 Text reproduced and translated in Vázquez, Santiago Rusiñol’s “Jardins d’Espanya,” 61. Vincent Van Gogh also deployed the cypress tree as a symbol of death; however, Rusiñol’s interest in the cypress tree as a morbid
garden encloses the composition and limits visual depth, while almost completely obstructing any sunlight from peeking through. This, along with the morbid connotations of the cypress, illustrates Rusiñol’s “Symbolist” treatment of nature, particularly the garden, as a melancholic site in which to contemplate mortality. The morbid connotations in this painting are further reinforced by the notable absence of human life.

Puvis de Chavannes’s works, as mentioned, are frequently cited as the visual sources of Rusiñol’s predilection for melancholic scenes and Symbolist subject matter. Rusiñol, while he spoke highly of Puvis, went well beyond simply adopting the isolation and mysticism that characterizes the French painter’s work. While not well known for his landscape scenes, the landscape functions as the primary setting for Puvis’ figural works, in which, as Aimée Brown Price states, “figure and landscape are interdependent, taut but free of tension as they are locked rhythmically into position.” The landscape certainly works to reinforce an expressionistic, melancholic mood in Puvis’ *L’Enfant prodigue* (The Prodigal Son) (Figure 31) of 1879. Here, Puvis represents a single figure, seated amongst pigs in a landscape setting comprised of mostly gray tones. At this point, Puvis’ works had moved away from direct representations of religious subject matter to ones that only hinted at spirituality through “secularized religious iconography.” Here, the shepherd-like tattered clothing and staff as well as the position of the figure’s hands crossed over his chest allude to the figure’s spirituality and repentance.

Like Rusiñol’s *Jardines de Aranjuez*, Puvis’ landscape functions as a site of contemplation, characterized by quietude. Moreover, it likewise may allude to death, although

---

167 Rusiñol wrote of Erik Satie’s music as the equivalent to Puvis de Chavannes’ paintings, in that both “carry the ultimate expression of simplicity and brevity.” My translation. Rusiñol, “El Réveillon,” in *Desde el Molino*, 60.
169 Ibid., 95.
not through the cypress tree, but through gray-tones and subdued, unnatural light. However, the most significant difference is that Puvis’ landscape reinforces the contemplative expression of the figure, who is positioned away from the viewer, and the icon of the repentant, suffering human to convey a melancholic mood. As Vázquez states, Puvis’ works emphasize the figure as the primary subject of the composition, while Rusiñol completely abandons the use of figures in his garden paintings to achieve an equally penetrating effect of human isolation and the mysticism of nature. The absence of human life in Rusiñol’s work is so resonant that it seems to long for human presence. Further, Puvis offers a glimpse toward distant trees and a body of water, opening up the composition, while Rusiñol encloses the viewer in a rigidly symmetrical garden landscape.

Rusiñol achieves his expressionistic effects entirely through the iconography of the garden landscape, which, as Vázquez points out, is the subject, not the setting of his painting, as in Puvis.’ As previously mentioned, critics and audiences in Spain, particularly those associated with regenerationist thought, interpreted Rusiñol’s garden paintings as visual metaphors for the country’s desolation following its defeat in the Spanish-American War. While this connection may be coincidental, these works nevertheless resonated with his audiences. Despite the placid and orderly symmetry that characterizes many of Rusiñol’s garden paintings, their dark tonalities, melancholic moods, and morbid symbolism seemed to offer visual support for notions of Spain’s political, economic, and social instability. Moreover, the painting discussed here references a garden located on the grounds of King Alfonso’s estate, which makes it suggestive of political undertones. It is plausible that Rusiñol’s explorations of the Spanish garden are not completely untainted by socio-political connotations. Rusiñol articulated his belief that art was a vehicle for correcting the ails of urban life. Likewise, his garden paintings refer to that which
transcends “modern” human existence: the mystical, the spiritual and the natural. In effect, the absence of any allusion to modern industrial society seems deliberate and thus perhaps paradoxically points to that which is not depicted. A younger generation viewed these works not as escapes from the uncertainties of Spain’s modern socio-political dilemmas, but as symbolic of them, particularly through their dark, morbid iconographical connotations. In sum, although much of Rusiñol’s later work resembles that of his Symbolist contemporaries in that they reference nature as a site of contemplation, he achieved this effect entirely through the evocative iconography of the paradoxically verdant yet lifeless garden. To his viewers, these works alluded not to their similarity with French Symbolist currents, but to the fin-de-siglo malaise of modern, particularly Spanish, life.

Casas likewise created works that resonated with his audiences; however, his paintings are less elusive in their political commentary. Measuring an impressive 298 x 470.5 cm, Casas’ 1899 painting La Carga (The Charge) (Figure 32) shows a conflict between the Civil Guardia and a crowd of protesting laborers. Often violent and sometimes conflated with anarchist protests against the central government in Madrid, labor protests were numerous in Barcelona at the fin-de-siglo. With the rise of industrialization came an increase in the number of working-class citizens and a growing dissatisfaction among laborers with industrialists, who argued for shorter workdays, increased wages, safer working conditions and even fair wages for women and the abolition of child laborers. Although painted in 1899, Casas retroactively titled this work “Barcelona, 1902!!” on the occasion of its inclusion in the Exposition Nationale des Beaux-Arts of 1903 in order to situate it as a direct reference to an infamous weeklong strike lead by 80,000 laborers in Barcelona during February of 1902, which was tragically ended by the violent
intervention of the Civil Guardia and the army.\textsuperscript{170} Despite the fact that Casas intended the work to reference a specific and historical strike, labor protests continued to pervade the city at the time of the Exposition, making this painting germane to contemporary issues.

Art historian Patricia Leighten describes this work as a “history painting with a vengeance,”\textsuperscript{171} as Casas presents an intense although unequal battle scene on a monumental scale. Here, the viewer is situated front and center, facing a guardsmen with a sword over his right shoulder who rampantly and unapologetically charges toward an unarmed worker whose raised left leg signals his vulnerability. Casas captures the immediate moment before the mounted guardsman tramples the fallen protestor, whose helplessness disturbingly contrasts with the confident posture and placid, unaffected expression of the guardsmen. Two guardsmen to the right of this confrontation are in the act of controlling the crowd. Behind and to the left of the charging guardsmen are two more guardsmen, who, with swords drawn, maintain the border of the frantic and fleeing crowd. A large portion of the canvas is opened up to evoke the sense of the guardia’s forceful pushing away and policing of the crowd. Rather than describe the individual members of the crowd, Casas deployed broad brushstrokes to suggest the unified and frantic movement of the protestors away from the mounted guardia.

The red collar of the charging guardsman in the center obscures the lower portion of the figure’s face, and along with the white of the horses’ spats and the white horse to the right, stands in contrast to the mostly gray and somber-toned colors of the sky and cityscape. The smokestack buildings in the background symbolically reference the cause of the conflict between the crowd and the guard: the tension created by industrialism and class-warfare. Further, the backdrop of the cityscape echoes the shape of the fleeing crowd, acting as a form of social

\textsuperscript{170} The inclusion of this work in the exhibition cited in Belen-Lord, \textit{Point and Counterpoint}, 229.
\textsuperscript{171} Leighten, “The Proper Subject of Art,” 24.
control, or as Richard Thomson states in his study of depictions of crowd-scenes in *fin-de-siècle* France, “the city serves as a metaphor for order, the moral authority of which is embodied by the police.”

The viewer’s vantage point is in direct opposition to that of the charging guard, which suggests that Casas intended his viewers to experience the fear and panic that ensued among the helpless crowd. There is no doubt that this work was meant to implicate the viewer directly in the scene, and in turn inspire sympathy as well as empathy with the unarmed laborers, who, despite their number and what might have been considered an unruly and threatening demonstration in a public space in Barcelona, were clearly no match to the Civil Guardia. Thus, Casas represented them as helpless victims rather than aggressive, outspoken protesters that threatened social peace.

A comparison of Casas’ monumental work with a contemporaneous representation of the conflict ensued between the police and the crowd in Paris provides a revealing case study of how the Catalan artist perhaps went further than his foreign contemporaries, rather than simply assimilating their techniques, in his representation of this politically charged subject matter. Casas certainly would have known of the works of the painter, graphic artist, and self-professed anarchist Félix Vallotton, who was also a member of the *Les Nabis*, a group with whom Casas and Rusiñol exhibited their paintings at the *Salon des Indépendants* in 1891. In Vallotton’s 1893 woodcut print *La Manifestation* (The Demonstration) (Figure 33), he likewise represents a scene in which a frantic crowd flees from charging policeman, with whom, as Richard Thomson points out, the viewers share an elevated vantage point positioned above the fleeing crowd.

---

173 Exhibition referenced in McCully, *Els Quatre Gats*, 70.
174 Thomson, “Picturing and Policing the Crowd,” 110.
While both Casas and Vallotton’s works illustrate the oppression and violent nature of policing the crowds in the street rather than the crowds themselves, the dissimilarities between their works are marked.

First, Casas, as stated, positions the viewer within the center of the composition and in front of the charging guard; thus, implicating the viewer directly in the scene as another vulnerable victim, experiencing the fear that would have ensued at an immediate moment. Vallotton, on the contrary, positions the viewer with the heightened vantage point of the French gendarmes, whose targets are the “elderly bourgeois, chic young women, prolos, pastry-cook, and nursemaid.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, in Vallotton’s work, the viewer is offered distance as an observer, rather than a participant in this chaotic scene, which differentiates individuals by costume and class rather than presenting crowd unity as in Casas’ work. Further, Vallotton’s gendarmes are not directly represented, but only suggested as the cause of the crowd’s flight. With the exception of the fallen protestor, with whom the viewer might identify, Casas presents the gendarmerie as the dominant figures in his painting in terms of scale and color, and also as the only figures with explicitly defined faces in the composition. This may suggest that Casas intended the crowd to appear as an unremarkable mass in comparison to the individualized, heroic representation of the guardia; however, his positioning of the viewer directly in front of the violent confrontation between a mounted guardsman and a vulnerable, unarmed and fallen protestor speaks much louder to which side Casas supported. Last, it is notable that Vallotton’s setting is a non-descript/unidentified street scene, whereas Casas directly situates his work in an urban landscape, likely Barcelona,¹⁷⁶ marked by smokestack buildings and a hazy, ominous sky.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
¹⁷⁶ The title of the work, although retroactively applied, suggests that Casas intended this to be read as a representation of an industrial suburb in Barcelona. McCully suggests that it may be an “idealized” representation
In effect, Casas’ work directly spoke to his audiences in Catalonia, through an identifiable cityscape that implicates industrialization as the root of some of the region’s most volatile social problems.

In sum, Vallotton, whose work measures a notably smaller scale of 127 x 152 centimeters in contrast to Casas monumental painting, successfully achieves his message, although through a much different perspective, and most importantly, a less engaged and implicating position than Casas. Vallotton’s viewers may empathize with the helpless crowd; Casas’ viewers are part of the crowd, giving his work a resonance that would have shaken his audiences, on the left and the right, during the politically tumultuous years of fin-de-siglo Barcelona.

As case studies, these comparisons illustrate how Rusiñol and Casas translated their artistic sources, technically and conceptually. These paintings are creative products of intercultural appropriation that signal the artists’ awareness of, participation in, and translation of major international artistic currents. Their works operate as much more than manifestations or derivative emulations of the hegemonic category of “modern French art.” At closer examination and through in-depth comparisons between Casas and Rusiñol’s works and those produced in Paris (and elsewhere), their works signal their inventiveness and the agency of artists who selected and adapted elements of international aesthetic currents to create artworks that were well-received by and relevant to their audiences and critics in Catalonia and Spain. Thus, John Richardson and others who have remarked that their works lack the originality or the skill of their foreign predecessors and contemporaries should perhaps reexamine this material without the reductive framework of modern/retraso or center and province/periphery, to see the idiosyncrasies and socio-cultural significances of their works.

of Barcelona or Manresa, an industrial town located in the center of Catalonia. McCully, Els Quatre Gats and Modernista Painting in Catalonia in the 1890s, 253.
Conclusion

If we do not privilege the dichotomous ideological constructs of center and periphery/province, modern and retraso, and so forth, and reject the notion of Spain as a late-comer to European modernity as a framework for assessing some of the country’s artistic production, then we may situate Casas and Rusiñol’s relationship with Parisian art and culture as a meaningful, intercultural activity that allowed for critical self-distance and a process of learning, appropriating, and translating different forms of promoting and making art. It is imperative that scholars do not privilege the reductive critical lens of center and province in their evaluation of Casas’ and Rusiñol’s works, as it neglects to acknowledge the artists’ agency and inventiveness, and most importantly, it perpetuates the ideological conception of Spain as inherently inferior to, dependent on, and never able to live up to Northern models of modernity.

As we adopt different criteria for assessing Casas and Rusiñol’s work, it is also necessary to reexamine how the view of Spain as a backward, premodern country as well as art history’s acceptance of centers and peripheries/provinces have perhaps thwarted broader interest in other nineteenth-century Spanish artists, or even affected how contemporary artists of Spain are received in a globalized art world today. Finally, instead of comprehending Casas and Rusiñol’s appropriation of the artistic currents of France as a process that resulted in second-rate, unoriginal artworks that signal Barcelona, and Spain’s, provincialism, we might consider their work as contributions to a dynamic process of circulation and reception among artists working in France, Spain and elsewhere at the end of the nineteenth century, and most importantly, to a nuanced manner of representing the realities, or perhaps the anxieties, of modern life in fin-de-siglo Spain.
Figures:

Figure 1. Ramon Casas, Autorretrato, (Self Portrait), 1883, oil on canvas, 115.5 x 96 cm
Reproduced in Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya Online Collection, Art Modern Collection:
http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html;jsessionid=e3da6e929cf3354d1fb5a44b46051af067ce82454517ef251de4fd9c769129cd?inventoryNumber=004037-000
Figure 2. Ramon Casas, *Corrida de toros* (Bullfight), oil on canvas, 53.7 x 72.4 cm., Museu de Montserrat. Reproduced in Coll i Mirabent, Isabel. *Ramon Casas, 1866-1932: una vida dedicada al arte, catálogo razonado.* Murcia: De la Cierva Editores, 2002, p. 145, cat. no. 039.
Figure 3. Ramon Casas, *Chula con pañuelo amarillo mostrando una flor*, (Chula with a Yellow Shawl Showing a Flower) c. 1898, oil on canvas, measurement not available, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 274, cat. no. 314.
Figure 4. Ramon Casas, *Manola con mantilla blanca* (Manola with a white veil), c. 1915, oil on canvas, 99 x 72 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 405, cat. no. 560.
Figure 5 (left). Ramon Casas, *La italiana* (The Italian), c. 1914, oil on canvas, 165 x 54 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 400, cat. no. 549.

Figure 6 (right). Ramon Casas, *La inglesa* (The English), c. 1914, oil on canvas, 165 x 54 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 400, cat. no. 520.
Figure 7 (left). Ramon Casas, *La Americana* (The American), c. 1914, oil on canvas, 165 x 54 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 401, cat. no. 551.

Figure 8 (center). Ramon Casas, *La parisina* (The Parisian), c. 1914, oil on canvas, 165 x 54 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 401, cat. no. 552.

Figure 9 (right). Ramon Casas, *La española* (The Spanish), c. 1914, oil on canvas, 165 x 54 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 401, cat. no. 553.
Figure 11. Ramon Casas, *Retrato de Erik Satié (El Bohemio)* (Portrait of Erik Satie (The Bohemian)), 1891, oil on canvas, 198.8 x 99.7 cm, Northwestern University Library. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 196, cat. no. 163.
Figure 12. Santiago Rusiñol, *Estudio de Erik Satie (El Bohemio)* (Studio of Erik Satie (A Bohemian)), 1891, oil on canvas, 85 x 67 cm, Generalitat de Catalunya, Department de Cultura, Aixiu Joan Maragall. Reproduced in Coll, Isabel. *S. Rusiñol*. Barcelona: Editorial AUSA, 1992, p. 239.
Figure 13. Santiago Rusiñol, *Retrato de Erik Satie tocando el armonio* (Portrait of Erik Satie Playing the Harmonium) 1891, conté pencil on paper 29.2 x 19.7 cm. Museu d’Art Modern, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Reproduced in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya online collection, Art Modern Collection: http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html?sessionid=e0770d8e2f21f546749998e4502abe62d3fd943b0b1d660f4893c8426fcb67b7?inventoryNumber=026792-D&lang=en
Figure 14. Santiago Rusiñol, *Laboratorio de la Galette*, (Kitchen at the Galette), 1890-1891, oil on canvas, 97.5 x 130.5 cm, Museu d’Art Modern, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Reproduced in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya online collection, Art Modern Collection: http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html?jsessionid=c7ec3915307ede8b38512a9c38204b6c5f530d712622b55c9be675d1542e21f5?inventoryNumber=010897-000
Figure 15. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Moulin de la Galette, 1889, oil on canvas, 88.5 x 101.3 cm. Reproduced in the Art Institute of Chicago Online Impressionism and Postimpressionism Collection: http://www.artic.edu/artexplorer/search.php?tab=1&resource=14664
Figure 16. Santiago Rusiñol, Retrato de Ramon Canudas enfermo. (Portrait of Ramon Canudas ill), c. 1890-1891, oil on canvas, 54 x 45.5 cm, Museu Cau Ferrat. Reproduced in Coll, S. Rusiñol, 252.
Figure 17. Santiago Rusiñol, *En Campaña* (On Campaign), 1891, oil on canvas, 48.5 x 72 cm, Museu d’Art Modern, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Reproduced in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya online collection, Art Modern Collection: http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html;jsessionid=c7ec3915307ede8b38512a9e38204b6c5f530d712622b55c9be675d1542e21f5?inventoryNumber=040094-000
Figure 18. Ramon Casas, *Bal du Moulin de la Galette* (Dance at the Moulin de la Galette), c. 1891, oil on canvas, 131 x 134 cm, Museu Cau Ferrat. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 198, cat. no. 165.
Figure 19. Auguste Renoir, *Bal du moulin de la Galette* (Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette), 1876, oil on canvas, 131 x 175 cm, Musée d'Orsay.
Figure 20. Ramon Casas, *En el Moulin de la Galette*, (At the Moulin de la Galette) c. 1892, oil on canvas, 117 x 90 cm, Museu de Montserrat. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 218, cat. no. 218.
Figure 21. Santiago Rusiñol, *Aquarium* (Interior of a Café), 1892, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 81.3 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Reproduced in Philadelphia Museum of Art Permanent Collection Online: http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/101761.html
Figure 22. Santiago Rusiñol, Café de Montmartre (Montmartre Café), 1890, oil on canvas, 80 x 116 cm., Museu de Montserrat. Reproduced in Belen-Lord, Carmen, Jordi Falgas and William H. Robinson, eds. Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, and Dalí. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2006, 44.
Figure 24. Santiago Rusiñol, *Sauces llornes, Jardí del Pirata, II (Mallorca)* (Weeping Willows, Pirata Garden II (Mallorca)). 1901-1902, oil on canvas, 86 x 107 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Coll. *Rusiñol i la pintura europea*, 279.
Figure 25. Ramon Casas, *Corpus Salida de la procesión de la iglesia de Santa María* (The Corpus Christi Procession Leaving the Church of Santa Maria del Mar), c. 1896 -1898, oil on canvas, 115.5 x 196 cm, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Reproduced in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya online collection, Art Modern Collection: http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html;jsessionid=fd893ec5d80fbf667641da4df4d5901898b1683fb2320eb4795859a5e5e96158?inventoryNumber=010903-000&lang=es
Figure 26. Ramon Casas, *Sífilis*, (Syphilis), 1900, Color lithograph on paper, 80 x 34.3 cm, Museu d’Art Modern, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Reproduced in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya online collection, Art Modern Collection: http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html;jsessionid=fd893ec5d80fbbf667641da4df4d5901898b1683fb2320eb4795859a5e5e96158?inventoryNumber=000360-C&lang=en
Figure 27. Ramon Casas, *Cabecera para la revista Pèl & Ploma* (Headpiece for the magazine Pèl & Ploma), 1899, Charcoal, conté stick and brushwork ink on paper, 25.7 x 47.8 cm. Museu d’Art Modern, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. Reproduced in Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya online collection, Art Modern Collection: http://art.mnac.cat/fitxatecnica.html?sessionid=1321dce722faf3899c0fe4e770874e7504c5aa145f
b47b82f0b656ee5e418e67?inventoryNumber=041257-D&lang=en
**Figure 30.** Santiago Rusiñol, *Jardines de Aranjuez* (Gardens of Aranjuez), c. 1911-1931, 89 x 109 cm. Reproduced in Coll, *S. Rusiñol*, 394.
Figure 32. Ramon Casas, *La Carga* (The Charge), c. 1899, oil on canvas, 298 x 470.5 cm., Museu Comarcal de la Garrotxa. Reproduced in Coll, *catálogo razonado*, p. 302, cat. no. 370.
Figure 33. Félix Vallotton, *La Manifestation* (The Demonstration), 1893, woodcut, 8 x 12 9/16 inches. Reproduced in gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6951664j
Bibliography


Beruete y Moret, A De. *Historia de la pintura española en el siglo XIX: elementos nacionales y extranjeros que han influido en ella*. Madrid: Ruiz Hermanos, 1926.


