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“VERGÜENZA Y LUDIBRIO DE LAS CIUDADES MODERNAS”: LOS NACIONALISTAS ANTE EL FLAMENCO EN BARCELONA, 1900-1936

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"'Vergüenza y ludibrio de las ciudades modernas': los nacionalistas ante el flamenco en Barcelona, 1900-1936".¹

Around 1900, City Councillor Guillermo López chronicled the many sins and hazards of life particular to Barcelona in the aptly titled, *Barcelona Sucia*. Besides the usual complaints lodged historically by urban critics of industrialized cities---that streets spewed with sewage, that drunks and prostitutes slunk unabashedly down dark alleyways---López saved his ire for one foe in particular. For him, “La despoblación por falta de matrimonios, or aumento de tuberculosos, cancerosos, sifilíticos y alcohólicos, tiene su primordial fuente en esos cafés cantantes, vergüenza y ludibrio de las ciudades modernas.” These “dens of vice” shocked López to his very foundations. The very fact that seemingly upstanding citizens participated in the life of the cafés cantantes dishonored them and “llegan algunos hasta la muerte civil, obcecados con ese flamenquismo tan exótico en nuestra querida tierra catalana”.²

He was certainly not alone in his reactions. The cafés cantantes and flamenco, the music most often performed in them, aggravated social critics throughout Spain and in Barcelona in particular. By the last third of the nineteenth century, the café cantante had achieved a mass following throughout the urban areas of southern Spain, Madrid, and Barcelona. And no one was more visibly perturbed by these developments than the Catalanistas who worked aggressively to cultivate a Catalan cultural nationalism into Catalans’ consciousness. For anti-flamenquistas of all stripes, flamenco represented a backward Spain, too readily willing to fall into vice and laziness, and too out-of-step with the modernizing, industrializing tendencies of western Europe. For Catalan anti-flamenquistas, flamenco was all this and more: it embodied the decaying, corrupt, and vice-ridden qualities of the incompetent and over-powerful centralizing state. Promoting the sardana and choral societies (orfeóns and cants corals) became one of the ways to inoculate against the flamenco virus.

The debates over musical forms, musical spaces, and their relation to national identity accelerated in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Barcelona. Perhaps that is to be expected, given that Catalan nationalism had increased in its intensity after the turbulence following the Revolution of 1868 and “El Desastre” of 1898. The meaning of these debates, however, has scarcely been explored by historians. Scholars have written some about the popularity of the café cantante in Barcelona,³ and others have written about the sardana and the choral groups as important avenues for creating a

1 A version of this paper is in press. Please do not quote from it without getting the author’s written permission.

² Guillermo López, *Barcelona sucia* (Barcelona: Registro de Hygiene), 55. Paco Villar attributes this quote to articles published in *La Publicidad* on 26 October and 9 September 1901. Paco Villar, *Historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino, 1900-1992* (Barcelona, 1996), 42.

³ Eugenio Cobo, "Los escritores catalanes del siglo XIX ante el flamenco," *Candil* 129 (2001): 3935-3951. Francisco Hidalgo Gómez, *Sebastià Gasch: El flamenco y Barcelona* (Barcelona: Editorial Carena, 1998).

Catalan national identity in opposition to a Castilian national identity⁴, but little has been said about the interplay between the two identities and what they tell us about social relations and anxieties about the modern city from the point of view of Barcelona's elites. Add to the mix foreign accounts of popular culture in Barcelona, and webs of identity become even more tangled.

Historians have generally been unwilling to tackle the relationship between music, history, and national identity because music is ephemeral, not adequately explained through documents and archival evidence. "Music is," as geographers John Connell and Chris Gibson write, "inherently mobile," and yet, it is also linked with place.⁵ How can historians capture and analyze something that moves both in waves (sound) and through the body (dance)? In some ways, they cannot. But they must, for music and dance are fundamental human activities that need to be historicized, even if traditional archival methods cannot adequately answer the questions historians usually pose.

This work, then, will situate flamenco, anti-flamenquismo, and national identities in Barcelona during the three decades leading up to the Civil War and unravel what the contested musical spaces meant for Catalan nationalists as they tried to solidify their identity in an increasingly polarized Spain. Through their attacks on cafés cantantes and their promotion of the sardana and choral societies, I argue, Catalan nationalists actively posited an identity that denied the industrial system that Catalans themselves created and that effaced the problems that came with it, namely, immigration, poverty, and worker unrest.⁶ The problems of flamenco were those of modernity; and they were necessarily cordoned off into specific, undesirable spaces of the city. In the end, however, the Catalan nationalists' attempts to render flamenco performers and their performances obsolete failed because foreigners and profit-seeking Catalans and Andalusians kept stoking the flames of an exoticized Barcelona. Flamenco became an entrenched part of the Barcelona land- and soundscape, so much so, that by the 1920s, Barcelona could boast of cultivating an indigenous flamenco tradition.

A Brief History of Modern Barcelona

With its mix of industrial grit, labor revolts that often led to violence, and splendid boulevards in the newer parts of the city, with its terrible beauty of *modernisme* architecture⁷ on the one hand, and shantytown slums on the other, *Fin de Siglo* Barcelona rivaled other world class cities of the industrial era. Sometimes called

⁴ Joan-Lluís Marfany, *La cultura del catalanisme : El nacionalisme català en els seus inicis* (Barcelona: Editorial Empúries, 1995).

⁵ J Connell and C Gibson, "Sound Tracks: Popular Music," *Identity and Place*. (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁶ I am not saying that immigration is a problem, but certainly Catalan industrialists and Catalan nationalists perceived it as such.

⁷ *Modernisme*, not to be confused with Modernism, was the Catalan equivalent of *art nouveau*.

“the Manchester of the Mediterranean,” or “the Paris of the South,” Barcelona was the most industrial, most modern, and, some thought, the most “European” city in Spain. And, as everywhere else, the path to modernity took a great social toll on its population.

When industrialization took off in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Barcelona’s population skyrocketed within the confines of a walled medieval city. Its population density was the greatest in Europe, and there was nowhere to expand until the walls were destroyed in 1854. Industrialists set up factories in the area known historically as “El Raval,” bureaucratically as “District V,” and later, more colorfully, as “El Barrio Chino.”⁸ The boundaries for El Raval were said to be between the Ramblas to the Carrer Pelai, the Ronda de Sant Antoni and Sant Pau, and the Parallel and the Port. The working classes clustered in El Raval, as well as in the neighboring areas of Pueblo Seco and Sants . After 1846, factory construction was forbidden in El Raval, and when the walls were destroyed in 1854, El Raval ceased being the industrial center of the city.

Following the demolition of the walls in 1854, Barcelona underwent its own form of Haussmannization. Ildefons Cerdà designed the Eixample, a potentially infinite grid of wide city blocks fanning out north from the Plaza de Catalunya and broken up by thoroughfares such as the Passeig de Gràcia and the Diagonal. Although Cerdà had designed his Eixample as a means to ameliorate the overcrowding, poor sanitation, and urban poverty of the medieval city by creating a series of blocks that furnished Barcelona with multi-class housing, the area became the dwelling place of “official Barcelona,” the segregating line between bourgeoisie and working class. Barcelona’s best-dressed set strolled the Passeig de Gràcia, while the working classes inhabited the medieval sections of the city. And thus, like Paris, London, and Vienna, Barcelona became more visibly segregated after the urban expansion projects of the late nineteenth century.⁹

Even after industry moved out of El Raval, the place remained a working-class neighborhood--even as the working classes expanded their presence in neighboring areas. Barcelona’s population more than doubled its size between 1887 and 1920, from 272,000 to 710,000, respectively, and surpassed the million mark after 1930.¹⁰ The majority of people who had migrated to Barcelona in the early and mid-nineteenth century had arrived from the Catalan countryside, but by 1900, nearly 27% of Barcelona’s population was non-Catalan, and by the 1920s, the steady migration of people outside Catalonia swelled the non-Catalan ranks to around 35%.¹¹ Thus from the

⁸ Villar, *historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino, 1900-1992*, 18.

⁹ David P Jordan, *Transforming Paris : The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995). Donald J Olsen, *The City As a Work of Art : London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Carl E Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna : Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf : distributed by Random House, 1979). Arturo Soria y Puig and Ildefonso Cerdà, *Cerdà : The Five Bases of the General Theory of Urbanization* (Madrid: Electa, 1999).

¹⁰ Pere Gabriel, "La Barcelona obrera y proletaria," in *Barcelona, 1888-1929 : Modernidad, ambición y conflictos de una ciudad soñada* , ed. Alejandro Sánchez Suárez (Madrid : Alianza Editorial, 1994), 96.

¹¹ Chris Ealham, *Class, Culture, and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898-1937* (London and NY:Routledge, 2005), 5. Temma Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona* (University of California Press, 1992), 7. M Tatjer, "Els barris obrers del centre històric de Barcelona. A: Oyón, JL," *Vida obrera en la Barcelona de entreguerras, 1918-1936* (1998): 13-45.

turn of the century onward, at least one-quarter of the urban population was distinctly Castilian, and the majority of the Castilian immigrants came from Murcia and Andalusia, the heart of flamenco country. It was this stream of non-Catalan immigrants into the working-class neighborhoods that heightened the Catalanistas' anxiety about the changing character of their city.

And its character had changed, as all cities do when rapid industrialization and urbanization take hold. Immigrants carried with them their cultural traditions from the countryside and from other urban areas in Spain. They brought their language (Castilian) and their music, and their numbers added noise to the growing din of the city. To come back to the voice of our social critic from above, Guillermo López, “El nervio acústico de los barceloneses sufre, constantemente, la traidora agresión de esos insolentes vociferadores y musiqueros que invaden todos los ámbitos de la ciudad con grave daño del sosiego y de la salud del vecindario.”¹² If it were only noise the immigrants brought with them, then perhaps social critics would have little to complain about. But with industrialization and urbanization came the usual problems: squalid living conditions for the poor and working classes, crime, prostitution, and, most important, violence, coming from and directed toward the working classes.

While European cities outside of Spain contended with class conflict and, inevitably, violence, between 1870-1936, Barcelona had the reputation of being one of the most revolutionary cities in Europe--no doubt fueled by the numerous bombings and exchange of gunfire between anarchists and the *pistoleros* hired by industrialists. Barcelona's other well-known nicknames, “la rosa de fuego” or “la ciudad de las bombas,” attest to that violence. Unlike other European countries such as Germany, France, and even Britain, that had begun ever-so-slowly to incorporate the working classes into their political systems, Spain had excluded most of its population from the political process through the Restoration System designed by Antonio Cánovas del Castillo in 1876. Based on the concept of the *turno pacífico*, Liberals and Conservatives would alternate power in the Cortes while excluding special interests--those not part of the Liberal-Conservative oligarchy--from the reins of power. Although Spain established universal manhood suffrage by 1890, universal participation in the political process was chimerical, due to the rigging of elections from Madrid via the practice of machine politics known as *caciquismo*. Not only were the working classes excluded from this system, but so were the majority of Catalan nationalists. But Catalan nationalists, at least the more powerful and wealthier ones, had one distinct advantage: if they quieted their calls for Catalan autonomy or independence, they could rely on the Spanish military to quell revolutionary strikes in Barcelona. Therefore, Catalan nationalists struck an uneasy bargain with the central government in order to keep commerce running as smoothly as possible under tumultuous circumstances. The threat and real use of anarchist violence, always on or just below the surface of Barcelona's day-to-day life, brought great anxiety to official Barcelona, an anxiety which, at its worst, resulted in violent repression against the working classes and, at its best,

¹² López, *Barcelona sucia*, 17.

manifested itself in diatribes against the vice-ridden lives of those in El Raval and against those who partook of the life in cafés cantantes.

Growth of Entertainment and Leisure in Industrialized Europe and Spain

Despite the real hardships created by industrialization and urbanization in major European cities, other transformations occurred that one could view more positively, namely, the rise of leisure for both the middle and working classes and the creation of cheap and plentiful entertainment to occupy those hours of leisure.¹³ During the late-nineteenth century, cafés, bars, taverns, opera houses, and theaters dotted the European urban landscape, and by the early-twentieth century tango houses, dance-halls, music halls, cabarets, and movie palaces crowded into entertainment zones of various cities, and sporting events like boxing, soccer, and bullfighting became popular draws. Finally, in the interwar period, jazz halls dominated much of the landscape although the other leisured pastimes did not disappear altogether. In Spain itself, similar recreational pursuits cropped up in urban areas in the nineteenth century, although certain entertainments remained particularly Spanish, like the bullfight, the zarzuela, and the café cantante.

In early-nineteenth-century Spain, taverns and cafés were spaces of urban sociability, and as cafés became more popular over the course of the century, they began to specialize in particular types of performances. Although some were places for men to congregate and engage in *tertulias*, the others became sites for spectacles: cafés conciertos (usually cafés with short piano numbers and singing), cafés líricos (cafés for musical theater) and then, cafés cantantes (originally begun as venues for a variety of musical numbers, but then became spaces where flamenco performances predominated, although other varietal numbers could be included).¹⁴ By the mid-nineteenth century, the café cantante emerged and began to flourish all around Spain, beginning in Sevilla, and then moving up to Madrid, Barcelona, and other urban centers around the country.¹⁵ What we would now call the flamenco performance, moved away from the private celebrations in peoples' homes and small taverns to the more public space of the café cantante, where it could be enjoyed by a greater variety of people. In other words, whereas earlier in the century a señorito might hire a group of Gypsies to entertain his

¹³ I realize that many of the "entertainments" that I am about to discuss were off limits for most of the female population, that leisure was primarily a part of masculine privilege, but by the 1920s, Spanish women of the middle and working classes did attend at least some of the spectacles that had once been off limits to them. For a discussion of the relationship between modernity, modernism, and gender, see Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁴ M G García, *Diccionario del teatro* (Akal Ediciones, 1998), 130-131. Mercedes Gómez-García Plata, "Culture populaire et loisir citadin: Les cafés cantantes de 1850 a 1900" (Paris), 111.

¹⁵ Flamencologists generally credit the cantaor, Franconetti Silverio (1831-1889) as the creator of the commercial café cantante that specialized in flamenco performances only. See, for example, José Blas Vega, *Los cafés cantantes de Sevilla [Colección Telethusa], 1* (Madrid: Cinterco, 1987). Gómez-García Plata ."

friends in a private *juerga*, by the late-nineteenth century, the performances could be enjoyed by those who could pay the (generally inexpensive) entry fee. And by the early-twentieth century, the *café cantante* had flourished so successfully, that many social critics set their sights on eliminating what they saw as this cancer on Spanish society. In Barcelona, social critics often highlighted the *café cantante* as antithetical to the Catalan character.

Entertainment zones in Barcelona (1900-1936)

With the influx of workers into the Raval in the nineteenth century came places for workers to socialize and enjoy various forms of recreation. As early as the 1840s, numerous *café*s, taverns, and other forms of entertainment clustered around Hospital, Sant Pau, Unió and Nou de la Rambla streets.¹⁶ The construction boom preceding the 1888 Exposition also contributed to the growing number of entertainment venues in the area, and the *café cantantes* became the most popular form of entertainment, heralding the “beginning of the Golden Age of flamenco in Catalonia.”¹⁷ The spaces for entertainment expanded around 1900 into the region that would be known as the Parallel, Barcelona’s major entertainment artery,¹⁸ bounded by the streets of Pueblo Seco, reaching to Montjuich, to the walls of the Port, through the streets of El Raval to the Ronda de Sant Antoni, and reaching the end near the palaces of the (1929) Exposition palaces in front of Cruz Cubierta.¹⁹ According to Pere Gabriel, “fue en 1903-1914 cuando se produjo la verdadera configuración de la calle como un importante elemento urbano para la unificación moral y cultural de la nueva Barcelona.” (It was between 1903-1914 when the street’s true configuration emerged as an important urban element for the moral and cultural unification of the new Barcelona.)

Known by some as the Montmartre of Barcelona, the Parallel was abuzz with entertainment at all hours of the day.²⁰ Sailors on leave, workers on break, even the middle classes looking for adventure, took in the various forms of entertainment available. From 1900-1936, it became the place to go to experience the *café cantantes*, zarzuelas, cabarets, and jazz performances, or to practice one’s Charleston, cake-walk, tango--or whatever the latest dance craze-- in the newly built dance halls. One working-class man remembers the Parallel in its heyday of the 1920s:

¹⁶ Villar, *Historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino, 1900-1992*, 23-25.

¹⁷ Francisco Hidalgo Gómez, *Carmen Amaya cuando duermo sueño que estoy bailando* (Barcelona: Libros PM), 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁹ Luis Cabañas Guevara, *Biografía del Paralelo, 1894-1934; Recuerdos de la vida teatral, mundana y pintoresco del barrio más jaranero y bellicoso de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Ediciones Memphis, 1945), 7..

²⁰ Cabañas Guevara disagreed with this characterization, saying that Montmartre was a moribund place, whereas the Parallel teemed with life. The Montmartre had a distinctly artistic and bohemian character, the Parallel an industrial and working-class one. *Ibid.*, 89-91.

Cada local tenía su orquesta. Subiendo por la acera derecha había un frontón llamado “El Frontón Nuevo,” después estaban los cabarets Casablanca y Arnau, después (sic) el Tropezón, una sala de baile de mujeres donde los clientes compraban cinco tickets por una peseta y podían bailar con las mujeres que quisieran. Más abajo se encontraban el Teatro Español, el Café Español, el Café Victoria, el Café Rosales, el cabaret Concierto de Sevilla (...). Más abajo estaba el Café Chicago, el Teatro Talía y más arriba el cine Mistral. En la izquierda del Paralelo estaba el Bataclán, el Teatro Apolo, dentro las Atracciones Apolo y Frontón Apolo, y después el Teatro Nuevo, el café Barcelona y el cine Barcelona, con atracciones y varietés. Más arriba nos encontrábamos el cine Victoria, el Molino, el Teatro Cómico, el cine Condal que tenía jardines detrás para ir de refrescos y por último el Cine América.²¹

Although this region of Barcelona had at its core a distinctly working-class character, the Parallel became un espacio, interclasista pero con una significación popular clara, unificador y creador de una cultura urbana nueva.” According to Pere Gabriel, the Parallel’s new urban culture had at least two distinct audiences, those who “combinaba la existencia de un público atraído por la bohemia y el espectáculo trepidante con la presencia, mayoritaria a la postre, de otro público que unía el flamenco, el vino y la bebida con el teatro y la reflexión de interés social.”²²

The forms of entertainment changed over the decades leading up to the civil war, but the Parallel remained *the place* to visit for locals and tourists alike. Jazz may have replaced the tango or the Charleston, but flamenco remained one of the few steady entertainments over the first three decades of the twentieth century. The location of the cafés cantantes were more limited, however, to the Barrio Chino section of the Parallel.

The Flamenco Zone, or Little Andalusia

By the time of Barcelona’s 1888 World’s Exposition, the Barrio Chino began to have what some would call an Andalusian flavor. Cafés Cantantes sprung up throughout this working-class district, and by the early twentieth century, foreigners visiting Barcelona would request to be shown the Barrio Chino and to visit a café cantante. The sites of flamenco were pretty well circumscribed by three streets in the rough shape of a triangle: Starting at the Plaza de Pau, and going up north to the Rambla de Santa Monica and the Rambla de Capuchinos until the Carrer de Sant Pau; then heading west on Carrer de Sant Pau to the Carrer de Marqués del Duero (also known as the Carrer del Paral.lel); then south on the Paral.lel and back to the Plaza de Pau.²³ And within the

21 José Luis Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular: Espacio urbano, inmigración y anarquismo en la Barcelona de entreguerras, 1914-1936*. (Barcelona: Ediciones del Serbal, 2008), 339.

22 Gabriel, "La Barcelona obrera y proletaria," 100-101.

23 Hidalgo Gómez, *Carmen Amaya cuando duermo sueño que estoy bailando*, 63.

greater triangle, the Carrer Cid was considered the heart of the Barrio Chino.²⁴ Within this relatively small space, flamenco flourished and the barrio began to be seen as a “little Andalusia.” Some have even made the claim that there were more flamenco shows, and more authentic ones at that, in this section of Barcelona than there were in the neighborhoods of El Perchel in Málaga, Triana in Seville, or the Sacromonte caves of Granada.²⁵

Despite being a local source of flamenco, the Barrio Chino, also called los Bajos Fondos, was best known for being Barcelona’s center of vice.²⁶ Prostitution flourished here, especially on the Carrer El Cid, and across the Ramblas on the Carrer de Escudillers. Cafés camareras, where men could purchase drinks, food, and waitresses for assignations were plentiful by 1900; and meublées, places where unmarried couples could rent a room for illicit purposes cropped up around dance halls and cabarets. Those who preferred their entertainment a little more “gay” could attend La Criolla or El Sacristán, clubs and cabarets aimed at and performed by homosexuals and transvestites. Some establishments, like El Manco, were, in fact, two places owned by the same person; one was a café cantante, and the other, a house of prostitution, and people were sometimes warned not to confuse the two entertainments.²⁷ In fact, social critics such as Francisco Madrid were both fascinated and appalled by the numerous juxtapositions of vice and virtue in “los bajos fondos”: “Se juntan aquí de una manera absurda y única, la casa de lenocinio y la lechería para los obreros de la madrugada; . . . cal Manco y la ‘Casa del Pueblo Radica’; el Hospital de la Santa Cruz y la taberna de La Mina; el cuartel de Atarazanas y la pequeña feria de libros viejos . . . Lo bueno y lo malo; la civilización y el ‘hurdismo’ . . . ”²⁸ And because of the proximity and sometimes interchangeability of musical entertainment with vice, citizens of Barcelona viewed the cafés cantantes as the “private meeting places of prostitutes, Gypsies, bull fighters of little importance” among other figures of the underworld.²⁹ Given the atmosphere of the Barrio Chino, with its illicit underworld inhabited by a working-class population perceived to be among the most violent in the industrial world, it is no wonder that official Barcelona in general, and Catalan nationalists in particular, conflated the vices, corruption, and supposed decline of Barcelona with the cafés cantantes. Soon they would take steps to battle this scourge.

²⁴ Francisco Madrid, *Sangre en Atarazanas*, 67. Villar, *historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino, 1900-1992*, 128.

²⁵ I am not going to enter the debate on the “authenticity” of any particular music, as that term is pretty meaningless for scholars. Aficionados of the day, however, constantly referred to the authenticity or lack of authenticity of a particular place. See, for example, *Ibid.*, 98.; Sebastià Gasch, *Barcelona de nit* (Barcelona: Editorial Selecta, 1957), 69-70.; Francisco Hidalgo Gómez, *Como en pocos lugares : Noticias del flamenco en Barcelona* (Barcelona: Carena, 2000).

²⁶ For a particularly good discussion of the cultural geography of the Barrio Chino, see C Ealham, "An Imagined Geography: Ideology, Urban Space, and Protest in the Creation of Barcelona's “Chinatown”, C. 1835--1936," *International Review of Social History* 50, no. 03 (2005): 373-397.

²⁷ Adolfo Bueso, *Recuerdos de un cenetista* (Ariel, 1976), 80-81.

²⁸ Francisco Madrid, "Los bajos fondos de Barcelona," *El Escándalo*, 22 Oct., 1925.

²⁹ Villar, *Historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino, 1900-1992*, 42.

But, first, what was it that made Catalanistes so despise the *café cantante* and flamenco? Certainly, there were plenty of attacks against the zarzuela and its subset, the *género chico*, the most popular theatrical genre in late-nineteenth century Spain, including Barcelona. No one can deny that complaints against the zarzuela such as this one, “Nada tan opuesto a nuestra manera de ser y sentir, nada tan contrario al espíritu catalán, como esas obrillas groseras y achulapadas que a granel vienen ofreciéndose al público barcelonés,”³⁰ were any different from the ones lodged against flamenco in the region. But the condemnation against the zarzuela really came from all quarters of Spain after “El desastre” of 1898. Regenerationists across Spain seized on the *género chico*’s nationalistic lyrics as a symptom of Spain’s degeneration and ultimate defeat at the hands of the United States. Therefore, it does not take a great leap of imagination to realize that Catalanistas would seize on the zarzuela’s nationalistic lyrics and plots to distance themselves from the state that had failed everybody in 1898. As zarzuela scholar Clinton Young argues, “The explicit link between the *género chico* and the nation further dwindled the popularity of lyric theater in Spain.” Also, given new laws regulating the Spanish theater in the early-twentieth century, popular audiences could no longer afford to attend zarzuela performances and, therefore, the zarzuela became relegated to bourgeois audiences. The dwindling audiences for zarzuela performances led to a serious decline in this genre after 1909.³¹

One could even understand the Catalanistas’ complaints about the penetration of the *género chico* into the soundscape of Barcelona as a protest against the cultural imperialism of the capital, but the vilification of flamenco performances and the *café cantantes* that housed them seemed more anxious and more focused on the moral makeup of the owners, performers and the audiences than the polemics against the zarzuela. As mentioned earlier, in Barcelona, flamenco performances occupied the same spaces as the transgressive Barrio Chino, and unlike the zarzuela after 1909, flamenco attracted both popular and bourgeois audiences. So, morality, population, and genre became inextricably intertwined.

Nationality and class status also came into play. For one thing, most of Barcelona’s *café cantantes* had originally been founded by Andalusians, Castilian speakers who were already denigrated for their outsider status. The owners, performers, and some of the audiences came from the uncontrollable working classes, and the establishments themselves gave off the air of complete disorder and vice: the spectacle of the *café cantante*, with its *bailaoras* and *cantaoras* included women of uncertain moral status; clients and performers often drank too much wine, and drunkenness often led to brawls, broken furniture, and broken noses; these spaces of entertainment were hidden in dark alleyways, limited to interior spaces, and access to these performances came

³⁰ J. Roca y Roca, “La semana en Barcelona,” *La Vanguardia*, 16 July 1899. Cited in J L Marfany, “Al damunt dels nostres cants...”: Nacionalisme, modernisme i cant coral a la Barcelona del final de segle,” *Recerques*, no. 19 (1987): 85.

³¹ Clinton D. Young, “Theatrical Reforms and the Emergence of Mass Culture in Spain,” *Sport in Society* 11, no. 6 :630-642. See also S Salaün, *El cuplé (1900-1936)* (Espasa Calpe, 1990) for a discussion of the zarzuela, the cuplé, and other forms of musical entertainment in early 20th-century Spain.

only at the very late hours of the night, after the cabarets, films, and other theatrical performances finished off for the night. All of these characteristics of the *café cantante* appeared to many Catalanistas as incompatible with the Catalan character and needed to be extirpated. According to noted Catalanista Torras i Bages, the Castilian songs that arrived in Barcelona were the “the Castilians’ waste material . . .,” and although he complained about the numerous Castilian genres that had invaded Catalunya, he nonetheless saved his greatest disdain for flamenco: “But still it is more important to raise the cry against the performances, the songs and dances that commonly belong to the flamenco genre. There is nothing more antithetical than [flamenco] to the Catalan character, nor can one find another thing that is more destructive to the strictness and steadfastness of our race.”³² Santiago de Russinyol also worried about the Catalans who were growing up hearing artificial and foreign songs sung by “foreign street musicians, by minstrels, by sons of gas with the voice made hoarse by the night, by degraded flamencos, who come to sing the odor of the vine in place of the odor of the fig leaf, changing the green and beautiful vine into a tavern.”³³ Flamenco performances corrupted the natural beauty that the primal land of Catalonia offered up to its people, thus destroying the very essence of Catalan identity.

Catalan Cultural Nationalism: La Sardana and El Orfeo

As studies of nationalism have demonstrated, a major component of creating or reviving nationalism requires an investment of time in cultural projects, i.e., the promotion of hymns, songs, literature, dances, and the creation or revival of distinct languages that are supposed to capture a national spirit or a cultural genius--what is known in the field as “invented traditions.”³⁴ In the case of Catalonia, Catalan nationalists gained prominence in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Certainly, Catalans’ dissatisfaction with Madrid’s incompetence throughout much of this time led to a political movement, embodied in the Lliga Regionalista, that included calls for autonomy within or even independence from the rest of Spain, and by 1914, Catalonia had established the Mancomunitat, its regional assembly. But undergirding

³² Josep Maria Torras i Bages, *La tradició catalana* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1981), 81.

³³ Rusiñol, *Obras completas*, 485-486 (1947) in Cobo, “Los escritores catalanes del siglo XIX ante el flamenco,” 3937.

³⁴ For discussions of nationalism and cultural projects see: Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991). Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995). Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). E J Hobsbawm and T O Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition Past and Present Publications* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998). Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, *Nations and Nationalism: A Reader* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005). This is but a small sample of the works dealing with nationalism and cultural projects in a broad sense.

the political Catalanism was a cultural one. The influx of Spaniards from the south to work in Catalan factories and the spread of entertainment from Madrid and Andalusia in the forms of zarzuela and flamenco, respectively, made a number of Catalan elites fearful that Catalan culture was disappearing under the weight of Castilian culture.³⁵ Josep Torras i Bages decried that all one heard in Catalonia were Castilian songs, “on the streets, in the schools, in the homes. You don’t hear anything else, and all the beautiful and honest Catalan songs are forgotten.”³⁶ Worse yet, the influx of flamenco could eventually kill Catalonia: “For all peoples, the public and social decline of morals that bring about the degeneration and death of a country have come from outside: the way that the outsider has introduced the seed of decadence: the loss of indigenous customs and the adoption of foreigners signal the end of a race”³⁷

To combat Castilian cultural hegemony, Catalan elites, mostly from Barcelona and its surrounding areas worked to solidify Catalans’ ties to a homeland that was distinctly rural and conservative, and they did so by creating numerous cultural projects such as the Jocs Florals, the Excursionist Movement, and the Institute for Catalan Studies, among others. Many of these projects focused on recovering the Catalan language, but for some, dance and music, especially in the form of Orfeóns and the *cants corals*, and the sardana, played a more important role in disseminating the proper patriotic feelings toward the Catalan homeland. Certainly, many have written about the seminal role played by these community oriented musical forms, but I want to look at the relationship between the domination of the *cafés cantantes* in Barcelona with the sudden increase of orfeóns and sardana groups from 1900 on.³⁸

As we already know, certain Catalanistas had been protesting the dominance of the *cafés cantantes* in the Barcelona sound- and landscape. The only way to fight off this foreign intrusion was to solidify Catalans’ commitment to traditional (however illusory that word might be) Catalan songs and dances. But these songs and dances were disappearing, as they had been in much of industrializing Europe, and Catalanistas did what folklorists and composers all over Europe had begun to do in the nineteenth century: they traveled to remote areas to collect songs and dances from peasants, those

³⁵ Catalanistas also attacked zarzuelas and the *genero chico* for their popularity in Catalunya, but the criticism of that genre seems to be linked much more to Castilianization, and the loss of the Catalan language and is not nearly as tied to vice as is flamenco. The criticism is also not nearly as rabid as it is against flamenco and the *cafés cantantes*. See above, also, for the links between the zarzuela and the Spanish-American war. Marfany argues--rightly, I think--that the popularity of the *género chico* and *cafés cantantes* in Catalonia occurred precisely because Barcelona was the most industrialized area in Spain. Barcelona had the best economic resources to bring in commercial entertainment and the infrastructure to support it. Marfany, "Al damunt dels nostres cants...": Nacionalisme, modernisme i cant coral a la Barcelona del final de segle," 98.

³⁶ Torras i Bages, *La tradició catalana*, 81.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁸ Much of my discussion of the sardanas and orfeóns comes from the works of Joan-Lluís Marfany. He convincingly writes about the sardana as an invented tradition and of the orfeóns as a conduit for creating Catalan national identity. He briefly mentions the anti-flamenquismo element of these musical forms, but he does not concentrate on this particular argument. Similarly, Antonio Cobo mentions the rejection of flamenco by Catalan cultural nationalists, but he does not spend much time analyzing why the rejection takes place. Marfany, *La cultura del catalanisme : El nacionalisme català en els seus inicis*. Marfany, "Al damunt dels nostres cants," Cobo, "Los escritores catalanes del siglo XIX . . ."

who still--it was believed-- retained vestiges of an authentic folk culture. After choosing the songs assumed "to represent an essential Catalan identity hidden below a veneer of Castilianization," Catalanistas would write down and standardize these songs, which they would then take to Catalonia's more urbanized, Castilianized, and modern cities to shore up a dying identity. Urban dwellers in places like Barcelona could then repossess and reaffirm their Catalan identity, and transform themselves, however metaphorically, into embodiments of the values of rural Catalonia, values that included seriousness, hard work, simple tastes, and purity of body and spirit. The process for dispersing the songs to the Catalan masses, came first through the orfeónes and cants corals, and later through the sardana.³⁹

The orfeón movement, that is, the establishment of choirs, was, as scholar Joan-Lluís Marfany claims, "not derived from nationalism, but rather, to the contrary, it was a fundamental, active element in the genesis of Catalanisme and, above all, inseparable from its birth."⁴⁰ The birth of Orfeónes, as with most cultural Catalan cultural projects, began in Barcelona. First came the Orfeó Català (1891), followed by the Catalunya Nova (1895), and the Institució Catalana de Música (1896), and in them, choirs sang liturgic music from the Renaissance and traditional Catalan songs. Over the next few years, orfeóns sprang up all over Barcelona and Catalunya. As the number of these institutions grew, many Catalanista social gatherings and meetings began with cants corals, and numerous organizations founded their own choruses, including sporting groups and Catalan workers' ateneos.⁴¹ The songs themselves included a standard repertoire; usually a rendition of what would become the Catalan national anthem, *Els Segadors*, commemorating the Catalan peasants' Reapers War against Philip IV, and a sprinkling of reworked traditional folk songs that referenced the Catalan manse, the countryside, the heartiness of the peasant. The songs linked history and landscape, evoking what Anthony Smith calls "poetic spaces" in order to "integrate the homeland into a romantic drama of the progress of the nation."⁴² Nowhere is this more noticeable than in Santiago Russinyol's paean to Catalan folk songs: "Those of us who were born in Catalunya sing in Catalan. We sing and we have present within us that the integrity of Greece and the French Revolution were created with only one song."⁴³

Catalan composers and dramatists collaborated in creating a proliferation of Catalan-language versions of popular Spanish zarzuelas as well as original Catalan-language zarzuelas. They also translated foreign (non-Castilian) chorale productions into Catalan. The Teatre Líric Català, founded in 1900, hosted its first performance in 1901 and specialized in Catalan-language productions only, written mostly by the most famous purveyors of *modernisme*-- Serafí Pitarra, Àngel Guimerà, Santiago Rusiñol,

³⁹ I am using the terms orfeo and cants corals almost interchangeably. Orfeóns tended to be the places for choirs, and cants corals tends to refer to the kinds of songs, that is, songs sung in a chorus.

⁴⁰ Marfany, *La cultura del catalanisme : El nacionalisme català en els seus inicis*, 307.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 308-310.

⁴² Anthony Smith, "The Origins of Nations," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. G Eley and R G Suny (Oxford University Press, USA, 1996), 120.

⁴³ Santiago Russinyol, "Cançons del poble," cited in Cobo, "Los escritores catalanes del siglo XIX ante el flamenco," 3937.

Adrià Gual, Mn. Cinto Verdaguer, and Apel·les Mestres--and whose themes centered on such things as pastoralism and the glorious Catalan past.⁴⁴ All of these creations became important as a way to link language to narrative, to replace Spanish popular tunes with Catalan ones, to make Catalans feel the language in their bones. One of the founders of the Orfeo Català, Jascinto E. Tort y Daniel, understood this link between language, song, and human intimacy, and, by extension, nationalism, and the need to develop indigenous Catalan music when he said, “by means of a song from one’s land, the individual Catalan will produce his own personal connection to the common acts of his life.”⁴⁵

At around the same time that the orfeóns popped up around Barcelona, the sardana began to be integrated into the Catalanistas’ nationalist program. The sardana, a dance that is now celebrated as the national dance of Catalunya, certainly belongs to that body of cultural projects known as invented traditions. In the scheme of things, it is a recent dance that dates back to around 1850. As late as the turn of the twentieth century, the sardana was hardly popular. In fact, the esteemed poet Jacinto Verdaguer had seen it performed only once in 1884, and before 1900, most Barcelonans had not seen the sardana performed, except maybe in a bastardized version in the opera *Garín*. But slowly, around 1902, Catalanistes began to embrace the sardana, and by 1906 they hailed it as the national dance of Catalunya.⁴⁶

So, what did the sardana and the cants corals offer to Catalanistes that cafés cantantes did not? For one thing, the sardana was a communal dance--some would even call it democratic--whereby the dancers formed a ring, and passers-by could join or leave the circle as desired. Unlike flamenco, which had to be hidden away in the dark recesses of the city, sardana dancers performed outdoors, in public squares, and without the need for special costumes. Those who joined the sardana circle displayed their desire to be part of a group that celebrated its Catalan identity. As the poet Joan Maragall said, “All of my patriotism fits in this ring.” Similarly, a critic of the sardana wrote, “Catalanistas have brought their patriotism down to their feet.”⁴⁷ Although distinctly modern, the performative nature of the sardana appeared pre-modern, and thus blotted out the industrial nature of much of Catalunya. In contrast, the café cantante was commercialized leisure at its best, performed for a paying audience. The Sardana was “spontaneous” and open to all Catalans without money trading hands. The modern flamenco performance traded in the bodies of sexualized women and men; the sardana radiated purity and innocence, and women of all classes could participate in the dance without fear of scandal. Like the sardana, the orfeóns and cants corals provided the means to display one’s patriotism. The choirs sang in groups (as choirs do) and they

⁴⁴ Xosé Aviñoa, "El Teatre Líric Català antecedents, desenvolupament i epígons (1894-1908). L'aportació musical, plàstica i literària," *Anales de Literatura Española* 15 (2002): 223-229.

⁴⁵ Jascinto E. Tort y Daniel, “Algunas consideracions sobre la música popular,” *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Catalunya* (Jul-Sept. 1881), 155. Cited in Marfany, "Al damunt dels nostres cants...": nacionalisme, modernisme i cant coral a la Barcelona del dinal de segle," 101.

⁴⁶ Marfany, *La cultura del catalanisme : El nacionalisme català en els seus inicis*, 325.

⁴⁷ Joan Maragall, “La sardana,” *Visions i Cants*, 66. Cited in *Ibid.*, 322.; “Rotos y descosidos, *El Diluvio*, II, 52 (1-VI-1907). Cited in *Ibid.*, 322.

chose patriotic songs that most often reinforced their Catalan identity, especially their ties to rural Catalonia. Whereas flamenco singers might wail about their personal pain--a lover's rejection, a life of poverty, a spate in jail--Catalans sang about fresh air, harvests, mountains, the vine. As we can see, the themes embraced by these regional performers served antithetical functions. Flamenco singers and dancers performed cathartically by expressing the pain of urban life through song and dance; Catalan choir singers and sardana dancers conveyed joy in the values of rural Catalonia, thus negating the urban life that Catalans themselves had created. One form was entertainment, the other, spiritual succor.

But catalanistas had their work cut out for them. While the sardana dancers may have had patriotism at their feet, most Catalans used their feet to head out to the entertainment zones to catch the cabarets and cafés cantantes.⁴⁸ And so began the difficult process of catalanization through the sardana, the orfeónes. As one Catalaniste so succinctly declared, "The beautiful songs of the earth have to be the principal arm to combat flamenquismo."⁴⁹ The Centre Català Vilafranquí also began a campaign against what it saw as immorality by focusing on denouncing prostitution, and flamenco song and dance.⁵⁰ But more than censoring flamenco and increasing the number of spaces outside the Barrio Chino for singing and dancing the "traditional" Catalan folk songs, Catalanistes raised their visibility through journals dedicated specifically to educate the populace about these Catalan musical forms.

Lluís Millet, the editor of one of the earliest and more prominent of these journals, *La Revista Musical Catalana*, the monthly bulletin of the Orfeó Català, carefully laid out the journal's program to its readers: "to engender the love and feeling of music and the love and feeling of the things of the land . . .", as a "gloss" of Catalan songs, to "liven up music from the archives," to introduce readers to music from other countries, and, most especially, "to give an account of the movement of the Catalan choral societies, above all, the most modern of those that follow the footsteps of the Orfeó Català . . . to make noble and Catalan art for Catalonia."⁵¹

Instilling Catalan nationalism was never far away from the thoughts of the writers in these magazines. Millet, again, in an article on the sardana muses over the idea of regional or national music/dance in contrast with "universal" dance. He claims that dances that are now considered universal were once regional and that they "reflected the expressions of a race's characteristics," but that the process of universalizing these dances made them "discolored," and that they had lost their "healthy sincerity." Asking whether or not the sardana will ever become a universal dance, he proclaims a loud, "No, it must be ours and no one else's"; otherwise the dance

⁴⁸ Ibid., 313.; Pere Gabriel, "Sociabilitat de les classes treballadores a la Barcelona d'entreguerres, 1918-1936," in *Vida obrera en la Barcelona de entreguerres, 1918-1936*, ed. José Luis Oyón (Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, 1998), 103-104.

⁴⁹ Bon Jan, "Purificació," *La Renaixensa*, May 14, 1899. Cited in Marfany, "Al damunt dels nostres cants...": Nacionalisme, modernisme i cant coral a la Barcelona del final de segle," 99.

⁵⁰ Hidalgo Gómez, *Carmen Amaya cuando duermo sueño que estoy bailando*, 32.

⁵¹ Lluís Millet, "Per què," *Revista Musical Catalana* 1, no. 1 :1-2.

will be made “undignified.” In fact, in what appears to be a slam against flamenco or flamenco-like dancing, he proclaims, “We must be willing to fight a war against the clumsy and sensual dance, to conserve the health of our youth and the happiness of our aged.” The sardana’s “flexibility of rhythms” and other great qualities provides it with “a primitiveness and strength that recovers from modern decadence.” Finally, for him, the sardana was a bulwark against modern decadent society: “Catalan musicians, new singers of the splendid renaissance of our land, make of the sardana a favored form of your inspiration; thus, in that glass there will be made fortified wine, as new wine in old skins, and it will take on the taste and smell of your land and [which] will be protected from the sourness of modern decadence.”⁵²

Almost twenty years later, the fight to make the sardana *the* national dance continued. Other music journals such as *Ritme* explicitly set out their nationalistic goals: “to encourage the youth and even to all Catalans who feel the longing for brotherhood and the desire to revitalize the feelings of Catalanism . . . the contact of the Catalan blood spiritually binds them and to display always the conscious debt of citizenship.”⁵³ In fact, the period between 1900-1936 saw a proliferation of magazines designed to cultivate a love of Catalan song and dance. A sample of titles attests to this devotion: *La Aurora: Organo de la Asociación de los Coros de Clavé*; *Catalunya Nova*; *Resorgiment* Ñ *Portanveu de la 'Unión de Sociedades Corales y Orfeones de Clavé'*; *Bulletí de l'Orfeó de Sants*; *Orfeó Levant*; *Revista Catalana de Música*; *La Sardana*.⁵⁴

As shown below, the numbers of journals devoted to sardanas, orfeóns, and cants corals increased dramatically between 1900-1930.⁵⁵

	1900	1910	1920	1930
Music periodicals dedicated to sardanas and orfeóns	4	4	38	25

⁵² Lluís Millet, "La Sardana," *Revista Músical Catalana* (1905). I would like to thank Montserrat Miller for helping me translate this particular passage from the Catalan into English.

⁵³ *Ritme*, num. 1, May 2, 1923, 3.

⁵⁴ Claudi Fuster i Sobrepere, *Catàleg de la premsa musical barcelonina des dels seus orígens fins el final de la Guerra Civil (1817-1939)* ([Barcelona: Arxiu Municipal, 2002). There were six journals named *La Sardana*, of varying duration, between 1821-1926. Jacinto Torres Mulas, *Las publicaciones periódicas musicales en España : (1812 - 1990) : Estudio crítico-bibliográfico ; Repertorio general* (Madrid: Inst. de Bibliografía Musical, 1991), 733-736.

⁵⁵ Table reconstructed from *Ibid.*, 836. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get circulation statistics for these journals.

	1900	1910	1920	1930
Music periodicals dedicated to other forms of music	6	13	19	15

The Role of Foreigners in the Flamenco Boom

While the efforts of Catalanistas to foster a cultural Catalanism through coros and orfeones achieved some great successes and did manage to imbue the Catalan population in Barcelona and the greater Catalunya with a strong Catalan identity (among other cultural practices not discussed here), Barcelona's Andalusian identity did not die away either. In fact, it was probably made stronger by the increased immigration of Andalusians and foreigners to Catalunya during the Great War and by the installation of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923.⁵⁶ This confluence of peoples and events led to a Barcelona with a multi-faceted identity: one that identified proudly as Catalan, but one that also maintained an ambivalent and sometimes humorously resigned connection to flamenco.

The advent of WWI signaled another great transformation in Barcelona's character. Spain's neutrality during the war, coupled with Barcelona's location as a refuge for warring nations' displaced citizens, enabled many of Barcelona's inhabitants to enjoy relative economic prosperity and to participate in new cosmopolitan forms of entertainment. Because Barcelona was the most industrialized city in Spain, it profited most by trade with the warring nations. Similarly, Barcelona became the city for European artists and performers to inhabit because it was one of the non-belligerent cities closest to Paris, the cultural capital of Europe. The influx of foreigners brought new performers, novel forms of entertainment, and numerous cultural critics who would report their findings about Barcelona to their respective countries in fictional and non-fictional accounts that proliferated in the 1920s. And it was this contact with foreigners and the growth of different entertainment sectors that would highlight the various tensions in Catalan national identity. Catalan nationalists may have denigrated flamenco as too Spanish, too degenerate, and most un-Catalan, but the spectacles arriving from

⁵⁶ Péré Gabriel argues that Barcelona veered off the path of Castilianization because of the influx of foreigners during and after WWI. Their migration created a cosmopolitan city. Additionally, the repression of Catalan nationalism under Primo bred a resistant Catalan culture that also helped to weaken Castilian culture, especially in the Paralelo. I would make the finer distinction that cosmopolitanism weakened *both* Catalan and Castilian national identity, that one of the signal traits of modernity is the triumph of cosmopolitan identities over more national or regional ones. Gabriel, "La Barcelona obrera y proletaria," 101.

such places as Paris and the United States--cabarets, dance-halls, jazz clubs, etc. . . , certainly outdid cafés cantantes in terms of lewd displays. Perhaps it was because Barcelonans viewed themselves as more European than Spaniards that they were more willing to accept the “cosmopolitan” nature of cabarets and jazz clubs as distinctly urbane and forward-looking, whereas cafés cantantes distinctly belonged to a degenerate, backward-looking Spain.

The interplay between foreigners, Catalans, Castilians, and Andalusians in Barcelona during the interwar period created a kind of “feedback loop” with respect to flamenco. In other words, Catalan nationalists tried to cultivate and maintain a distinct national identity in opposition to the Castilianizing and Andalusianizing forces at work during the Primo regime.⁵⁷ At the same time, foreigners, especially the English and the French, whose fertile imaginations had been primed by years of reading accounts both of Andalusian culture and the Bajos Fondos of Barcelona, visited Barcelona envisioning it to be Andalusia, and expected to participate (at least superficially) in the life of the Barrio Chino. Then they would write accounts detailing the spectacles of vice they encountered during their stay; others would read their accounts and come to Barcelona searching the same experiences and ignoring anything that might counter their pre-conceived narratives about the city. The citizens of Barcelona, at least those with an eye toward profits, would then create spectacles to reinforce foreigners’ conceptions of the Rosa de Fuego.⁵⁸ The anarchist Adolfo Bueso recounts taking some friends to the Barrio Chino because they felt, “la morbosa curiosidad que sienten las personas llamadas decentes por saber cómo viven las ‘gentes maleantes.’” His friend, Alfredo, “sabía bien que, en general, todo aquel barrio estaba montado como un teatro para ‘epatar’ a los incautos”⁵⁹

Catalan writers in the 1920s and 1930s complained about the damage done by foreign visitors/writers to Barcelona who focused solely on the vice of the city and/or some Andalusian stereotype of the place.⁶⁰ The Catalan journalist Andreu Avelí Artís recounted a story about a man who had planned out a wonderful itinerary for a French friend who was visiting Barcelona. It included some of the great sights of the city, including churches, gardens, and Gaudí buildings, but all his friend wanted to do was go to La Criolla, the bar in the Barrio Chino that specialized in acts by homosexuals and transvestites. The journalist writes, “We understood perfectly how this civilized Barcelonan’s pride was wounded in seeing how a foreigner preferred to breathe in the atmosphere of a bar in the bajos fondos more than he did in being entranced in the

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the Primo de Rivera’s “authoritarian nationalist project” and his turn toward Andalusia as a symbol of “joyful Spain,” see Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). See esp., pp. 172-173.

⁵⁸ In fact, one could draw humorous parallels between the staging of “Little Andalusia” in 1920s and 1930s Barcelona with Luis García Berlanga’s 1953 film, *Bienvenido, Mister Marshall*.

⁵⁹ Bueso and García, *Recuerdos de un cenetista*, 74.

⁶⁰ One of the first and most famous of these chroniclers of Barcelona, Alfred de Musset, had never even been to Barcelona. That did not prevent him from writing “Avez-vous vu dans Barcelone une andalouse au teint bruni?” (from the poem, *L’Andalouse*, 1830). Several Catalan critics found de Musset’s words annoying, at the very least. One ventured to say, “de Musset’s Andalusian in Barcelona has done more damage than a hailstorm.” Andreu Avelí Artís, “La llegenda de Barcelona,” *L’Opinió* (1933): 1,4.

contemplation of our romanesque paintings.” Avelí Artís goes on to explain that in addition to the flamenco shows that catered to tourists, writers such as René Bizet (*Avez-vous dans Barcelone*), Paul Morand, (“Catalan Night”), and Francis Carco, (*Printemps d’Espagne*), Henry de Montherland, (*La petite Infante de Castille*) contributed immensely to the foreigners’ thirst for exotic Barcelona. He cites Paul Morand as the author who best makes “this famous ‘Barcelona cocktail’ in the quaint European bar . . . : A few drops of Andalusian local color and a few drops of anarchism mixed with the turbid liquid of the port’s bajos fondos. Shake well, and it is now ready to serve.”⁶¹ Obviously he was not too far off the mark, as seen by this passage from Morand’s “Catalan Night”: “The detonations finally stopped . . . Barcelona was once more what you see there, a city of money, and vice, the town of brothels full of girls underage, of obscene photographs, instruments of orthopedic pleasure, hiding her old inquisitionist soul behind illuminated advertisements, with her convents and her banks fortified, with doors on her apartment buildings such as you’d find on a safe, with her fireproof cellars, her confessionals defended from the poor by the same gilded gratings.”⁶²

Despite journalists’ complaints about foreigners’ attitudes toward Barcelona--and there were certainly other lamenters⁶³--enterprising Andalusians and Catalans counted on foreigners’ thirst for Barcelona’s “Andalusian mystique” and their desire to “slum it” to build entertainment palaces for the paying tourist. The most famous of them all was La Villa Rosa, a large establishment founded by a Catalan flamenco guitarist, Miguel Borrull, and located on Calle Arco de Teatro 3, a liminal space between the Barrio Chino and the more respectable Ramblas. Before 1915, the place was known as Can Maciá, a refuge for bullfighters and their entourages who lived in Barcelona. It was owned by a Gypsy⁶⁴ who did not contract artists, but who let those of his clients who were “aficionados of flamenco song” go up to the stage and sing. Borrull, or as one writer called him, “also a Gypsy, but completely commercialized,” bought the place in 1915, and transformed it into a large café cantante for flamenco.⁶⁵ It reached its greatest heights in the 1920s and 1930s by hiring big-name talent from flamenco’s commercialized theatrical circuit that was now becoming extremely popular in Spain and Latin America.⁶⁶ In fact, many journalists noted that La Villa Rosa had become a

⁶¹ Ibid., 4.

⁶² Paul Morand, "Catalan Night," in *Fancy Goods ; Open All Night* , trans. Ezra Pound (New York : New Directions, 1984), 89-90. Originally published as *Ouvert la nuit* (1922)

⁶³ J. Aiguader i Miró, "La perversitat del Districte Cinquè," *Mirador* , no. 17 (1929): 3. Gasch, *Barcelona De Nit*. Josep M Planes i Martí, *Nits de Barcelona perfils*, 25 (Barcelona: Proa, 2001).

⁶⁴ I understand the problematic nature of the term “Gypsy” as an ethnic slur. But because the literature of the period always refers to the Roma people as *gitanos* or *gitanas* and because even today within the flamenco genre, the performers almost always refer to themselves as *gitanos*, I am choosing to retain that usage.

⁶⁵ Bueso, *Recuerdos de un cenetista*, 76-77.

⁶⁶ This was the era of *Opera Flamenca*, a flamenco that began to move away from the cafés cantantes and into bigger arenas such as theaters and bullrings. Contemporary critics (of the 1920s and 1930s) as well as many flamencologists today view the professionalization and “massification” of *Opera Flamenca* as indicators of flamenco’s decline. See, for example, José Blas Vega, "Recorrido por la Barcelona de los cafés cantantes y colmaos flamencos," *Caña Revista de Flamenco* 25 :5-20. Mercedes Gómez-García Plata, "El género flamenco estampa finisecular de la España de pandareta," in *La escena española en la*

stop on every tourist's itinerary : "Tibidabo, Montserrat, the Sagrada Família, Montjuic, the Milà House . . . and Villa Rosa."⁶⁷ La Villa Rosa housed some of the greatest flamenco stars of the day, such as Juana la "Macarrona" and La Niña de los Peines, but for those who despised commercialism, or for those who wished that flamenco, its performers, and the tourists that came with it would just go away, La Villa Rosa was one giant joke.

According to those contemporaries who wrote about La Villa Rosa, the appeal of the place lay in its safety and commercialism. Although it was located right at the edge of the Raval, and housed enough local color for tourists and members of "official Barcelona"--the street came with its share of darkness, dirty buildings, sidewalks redolent of urine, prostitutes soliciting their services, mangy dogs and cats--it remained close enough to the Ramblas for any scared tourist to escape quickly if need be. Villa Rosa "Villa Rosa is Barcelona's magnificent concession to foreigners. It possesses all of the mystery, all the discomfort and lack of cleanliness for the typical tourist not to feel defrauded" ⁶⁸

The critics who wrote about La Villa Rosa noted its staged quality, in two literal ways; that is, the performance took place on a stage, and, secondly, certain scenarios were staged by Borrull and his family to make the tourists feel as if they had enjoyed an authentic experience of the Barrio Chino.⁶⁹ The best illustration of La Villa Rosa's performative function comes from A. Bueso's account of "A Picturesque Interlude." Bueso sets up the *bronca* (fight) scene meant for wealthy foreigners: Usually a regular to the Villa Rosa who wanted to show a tourist a good time would pay a deposit ahead of time for the staged quarrel and for whatever damage might occur in the process. The person who paid for the set-up had to be prepared to look surprised by the whole event. The set-up always occurred in the last performance of the show, around 2 a.m., because this was the most expensive one of the night. A dancer, usually a Gypsy who worked there, would sit down at the table of the "dazzled" (male) tourist and begin to talk, flirt, etc.. The tourist might touch her, and then she'd protest because her "man was jealous and might get really angry." But the client still might continue to touch her. Then a Gypsy male would approach the table and begin yelling at his "girlfriend," ordering her to leave the table. She would then protest and tell him to calm down, that these gentlemen were doing no harm. He repeated his "request". More shouts. The foreigners

encrucijada, 1890-1910 (Editorial Fundamentos, 2005), 21.. Gómez García Plata does not necessarily view flamenco's flight into mass culture as necessarily a bad thing, since it was the commercialization of the genre that made it possible for it to remain widely popular, even today. La Villa Rosa also seems to have become even more commercialized after Borrull's death in 1926.

⁶⁷ Planes i Martí, *Nits de Barcelona perfils*, 25, 69.. The essay from which this is taken was originally published in *Mirador*, 28 March 1929, p.2. This sentiment is repeated in "Las informaciones de actualidad Un rincón de Andalucía en Barcelona," *El Escándalo*, 4 Mar. 1926: 4-5. Bueso, *Recuerdos de un cenetista*. Gasch, *Barcelona de nit*.

⁶⁸ Planes i Martí, *Nits de Barcelona perfils*, 25, 70.

⁶⁹ For discussions of how tourism is staged, see, for example Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist : A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976). John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2002). Gasch tells people who want an authentic flamenco experience to bypass the Villa Rosa because it is really a cabaret organized for tourists and turns everything into a kitschy españolada. Gasch, *Barcelona de nit*, 70.

now begin to understand what the quarrel is about, and the gentleman tries to be gallant and says that the Gypsy woman can have his seat. Then the fight begins. The Gypsy “boyfriend” takes the gentleman by the jacket. Lots of chairs and tables are overturned, glasses and bottles broken. “Suddenly, a knife might come out, and the women begin to scream, ‘Por Dios, Manué, no nos pierdas a todos; Piensa en tus hijos; No te pierdas por culpa de una mala mujer;’” Think about your kids. Don’t get killed on Once the scene has run its course, Borrull comes out, places himself between the fighters and orders them, “Basta ya; . . . Tú, Manuel, a guardar ese arma y a marcharte a casa. . .” Then he tells the customers that they must beg his pardon, but that one can’t play with the emotions of the calés (the Gypsies). He offers to refund their money: “Go home. Nothing happened here.” This usually ends all hostilities, and then they often share a drink together: “no siendo raro que los franceses, ingleses o americanos, se sintieran fraternales y bearan en las mejillas a todos los gitanos y gitanas, acabando todo de la mejor manera.” Sometimes this approach failed. The client would get upset, and Borrull would have to call the police from the Cuartel de Atarazanas. Borrull would tell the cops not to be “too severe” with these clients after they paid up, so as not to sully the place’s reputation. The police would let the clients go, as long as they had paid, and the clients felt that they have been let off pretty easily. Afterwards, Borrull, the cops, and the performers would share a drink after the clients departed, and then Borrull would slip some money into the cops’ hands as they left, thus ending that night’s performance.⁷⁰ Tourists and members of official Barcelona who visited these prominent cafés cantantes left these establishments with stories of “authentic”--but not too dangerous-- experiences of life in the rugged corners of Barcelona to share with other people. And, thus, stereotypes of an Andalusian Barcelona continued to be perpetuated, despite Catalan nationalists’ efforts to eradicate them.

The final step in the Andalusianization of Barcelona occurred with its hosting the 1929 World Exposition and the establishment of the Pueblo Español,⁷¹ a simulacra of Spain’s rural regions, wherein each region displayed its crafts, songs, and, food for the tourist who could now visit all of Spain without having to actually *visit* the entire country.⁷² The Exposition had already been planned for 1917, but World War I forced organizers to jettison that idea for awhile. Planners for the pre-1917 Exposition had already conceived of a type of Pueblo Español, but one that had emphasized Catalan architecture over other Spanish traditions. But when the Exposition was reconceived

⁷⁰ Bueso, *Recuerdos de un cenetista*, 77-79. These kinds of “performances” could also be seen in La Bodega Andaluza and Un Rincón de Andalucía.

⁷¹ The Pueblo Español displayed “115 interconnected examples of Spanish vernacular and monumental architecture,” Jordana Mendelson, *Documenting Spain : Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*, Refiguring modernism ; (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 4.

⁷² The Pueblo Español still stands today at the former site of the 1929 Exposition.

during Primo's dictatorship, Spanish nationalism came to the forefront⁷³: "Todos los elogios llegan a la cumbre frente al 'Pueblo Español'. . . todos están de acuerdo en afirmar su categoría extraordinaria. . . Pero hay algo más. Algo que satisface plenamente a turistas y no turistas, a cultos e incultos a nacionales y extranjeros. Es el culto al detalle"⁷⁴ Although the numerous regions in Spain were represented in stereotypical form and with stunning detail, it was the Andalusian section of the display that seemed to get the most press.

The revised plans for the Pueblo Español originally lacked an Andalusian section because many on the planning commission feared that it would detract from the concurrent Sevillian Ibero-American Exposition. King Alfonso XIII insisted, however, that Andalusia be represented in the picturesque tableau of Spanish regionalism.⁷⁵ Luckily for Spanish and Catalan tourism, the organizers obeyed the king's wishes and catered to the *españolada* tastes of domestic and foreign visitors. The Andalusian section included the Patio del Farolillo which, according to the ironically amused journalist Josep Planes i Martí, played a brilliant role in the Expo: "It contained all of the black and red legend of Carmen, guitars, manzanilla, flamenco dancers and caped aficionados of the bullfight."⁷⁶ The Andalusian pavilion had a tablao on the inside for flamenco performances, and not surprisingly, it was the Borrull family of La Villa Rosa fame who had contracted the tablao and the talent within it. Borrull hired numerous Gypsies from the Somorrostro neighborhood of Barcelona (now destroyed), the up-and-coming Catalan flamenco dancer, Carmen Amaya, and many of her relatives, to perform to excited crowds.⁷⁷ Some critics, even those Catalans who viewed themselves as flamenco aficionados, complained that the flamenco performances were merely kitschy enterprises for those tourists "who paid and who paid well," and that these performers were, well, performers, not like the singers and dancers in the dives--unknown to tourists--"who sing and dance for themselves, not for others".⁷⁸ But the Andalusian Pavilion seemed to be one of the most popular, leading Planes i Martí to comment that people in Barcelona should be extremely pleased with this folkloric and stereotypical pavilion. He saw cash aplenty coming from the exploitation of the *españolada*. It was, as he said, "good business." He admired Spain and Spaniards for doing this part of the pavilion correctly and he saw nothing wrong with exploiting a stereotype if it filled the proper coffers.⁷⁹

And fill the coffers it did. Not only did the Andalusian pavilion and the tablao within it generate publicity and income for Catalans and Spaniards alike, it achieved its

⁷³ For discussions of how plans changed for the Pueblo Español and how competing discourses of Spanish and Catalan nationalisms were hashed out, see Robert A., 1970 Davidson, *Jazz Age Barcelona* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2009). Mendelson, *Documenting Spain : Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*, 1-37. Silvio Martínez and Oriol Bohigas, *El Pueblo Español* (Lunewerg Editoriales, 1989).

⁷⁴ "El Pueblo Español," *Diario Oficial de la Exposición Internacional, Barcelona 1928*, no. 9 (1929).

⁷⁵ Mendelson, *Documenting Spain : Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*, 17.

⁷⁶ Planes i Martí, *Nits de Barcelona perfils*, 25, 141.

⁷⁷ Mario Bois, *Carmen Amaya o la danza del fuego* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994), 38.

⁷⁸ Gasch, *Barcelona de nit*, 70.

⁷⁹ Planes i Martí, *Nits de Barcelona perfils*, 25, 141.

success during a time when Spain entered yet another phase of political turmoil, the transition from Primo's dictatorship to the Second Republic. Not only that, it also launched one of the most skilled and prominent flamenco dancers ever, Carmen Amaya, onto the international stage. After her stint at the International Exposition, she toured internationally and starred in numerous films that displayed her talent to the wider world, leaving international audiences hungering for yet more flamenco performances. And because Amaya always identified herself as both a gitana with familial roots in Andalusia and as a citizen of Barcelona, she closed the gap between Andalusia and Catalonia.⁸⁰ Flamenco became fully integrated into the Barcelona land- and soundscape. Although the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath would change the entertainment landscape of Spain completely, on the eve of the the war it was clear that baile and cante flamenco were just as at home in Barcelona as in Andalusia and more importantly, it resided as comfortably in Barcelona as the sardana.

⁸⁰ For more discussion of Carmen Amaya, see Bois, *Carmen Amaya o la danza del fuego*. Sebastián Gasch and Pere, Pruna, *De la danza* (Barcelona: Editorial Barna, s.a., 1946). Gasch, *Barcelona de nit*. Hidalgo Gómez, *Sebastià Gasch: El flamenco y Barcelona*. Hidalgo Gómez, *Carmen Amaya cuando duermo sueño que estoy bailando*.