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***Santiago Rusiñol in Paris: The Tourist/Travel Writer***  
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## SANTIAGO RUSIÑOL IN PARIS: THE TOURIST/TRAVEL WRITER

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From March 2001 to January 2002, a series of three expositions held in Paris under the title "Une année catalane à Paris" celebrated the special artistic exchange that has linked Catalonia and the French capital for over a century. The culmination of the activities was a mega-exhibition entitled "Paris-Barcelone" that traced the foundational moment of this association through art and architecture produced between the end of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>1</sup> The exhibition, which later traveled to Barcelona, highlighted a relationship of parallels, rather than influences, in the presentation of works by artists who lived and created in one or both of these cities.<sup>2</sup> Such events, stressing the interaction between the two capitals, make evident the relevance of studying a full range of intellectual activities, beyond the visual arts, that engaged artists from Barcelona who participated in the cosmopolitan activity of the first avant-garde in Paris. The journalistic work of painter and writer Santiago Rusiñol is one such case.

In Rusiñol's *Obres Completes*, non-fictional writings are lumped together in the second volume under the very imprecise label: "Records, impressions, viatges, pensaments, obra castellana." The description indicates not only a certain difficulty in classifying the writings under a specific genre heading and the problem of distinguishing them in terms of language, but also positions these works as secondary in importance to his novels and plays.<sup>3</sup> Despite these divisions, the value of Rusiñol's non-fictional narratives is indisputable. His early writings in Paris form part of a life-long inclination towards narratives based on the experiences of travel. This trajectory began with Rusiñol's impressions of day trips around Catalonia in the 1880s ("Una excursió al Taga, Sant Joan de les Aba-

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<sup>1</sup> The other two expositions in this series are dedicated to Antoni Tàpies at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and to Pablo Gargallo at the Hôtel de la Monnaie. The final show (cited here) is dedicated to various other artists who worked in France and Catalonia. Different entities from both countries participate in the organization. It should also be noted that during the summer of 2001 Paris was also the site of another exhibit dedicated to photography from the period of the Spanish Civil War organized by the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

<sup>2</sup> The exposition was transferred to the Museu Picasso and was on display between February 28 and May 26, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The quotations from Rusiñol's works are taken from the third edition (1976).

deses i Ripoll" (1882) or "De Vich a Barcelona en bicicleta" (1889) and later expanded to include journeys through other regions of Spain (La Mancha, Castilla, Andalucía, and Mallorca, to which he dedicates the book *L'Illa de la calma*). Finally Rusiñol writes of his ventures abroad, first to Europe and later to America (as recorded in *Del Born al Plata* in 1910).

The essays on Paris are interesting because they represent the author's effort to associate his experiences with those of the active and sensitive traveler in the incipient age of tourist culture in Europe. Rusiñol's narratives can be appreciated as a literary exercise and also as a document that mirrors, and dialogues with, the social practice of travel. Taking into account that the consolidation of travel and tourism as practices and industries coincides with a period of artistic opulence in both Paris and Barcelona, one can appreciate the complexity of two activities that at once interfere with and enrich literary and journalistic communication between the two cities.

Rusiñol's writings appear at a time when leisure travel becomes generalized as an activity for a growing European bourgeoisie and when tourism emerges as a structure through which travel takes shape. James Buzard, whose book *The Beaten Track* offers one of the most complete studies on the subject of tourism and literature from a socio-cultural perspective, describes tourism "as a phenomenon of determinate historical origin in the modern industrializing and democratizing nations of Northern Europe and, later, America" (4). The industrial revolution gives rise to new modes of transportation allowing for new practices of space and bringing about a new distribution of leisure time for the wealthy in many countries, including Spain. By the turn-of-the twentieth century a practice long conceived as a privilege of the few is democratized. The standards and patterns that the phenomenon of tourism acquires as an organized industry very soon attracts criticism and the practice comes to be regarded as negative. The word "tourist", originally used to designate the young wealthy man making the so-called "Grand Tour" of European cities as part of his general adult education, becomes by the end of the nineteenth century a term used to describe a member of a common tour group. From this moment forward, the word "traveler" gains an affirmative and distinctive meaning. To be identified as a traveler is a desired distinction through which one could differentiate himself from the ordinary tourist. The traveler becomes an avatar of the true explorer, the one who discovers and understands new places and new cultures. While not divested of an association with leisure, the traveler also takes on the allure of the rebel and the anti-social loner, a kind of innovator who opens the path for future tourists, who, as passive spectators, will turn the

experience or the sight into conventional and banal entertainment. The negative image of tourism as an activity that supplants real perceptions of culture and replaces them with clichés emerges in society and literature at the same time that the tourist industry is in full expansion. In recent years, historians such as James Buzard and John Urry, among others, have traced the development of the phenomenon of travel as a cultural experience and as an industry. They see the development of planned travel and the emergence of the figure of the tourist as a significant element of modern culture that, as Buzard puts it, becomes "a rhetorical instrument that is determined by and in turn helps to determine the way nations represent culture and acculturation to themselves" (4).

Travel literature, in its diverse manifestations, offers a broad field in which to study the ways the activity of travel engaged individuals both socially and intellectually at different moments in its evolution. Most analyses focus on the British and American novel, limited to high narrative forms. However, studies like Buzard's include a broader range of texts such as guidebooks and periodicals. Rusiñol's writings on Paris, journalistic in origin, invite analysis as travel writings that offer further evidence of the role of the French capital in Barcelona's cultural development at the end of the nineteenth century.

During his lifetime Santiago Rusiñol traveled numerous times to Paris, but it was the experience of his two longest stays, between 1889 and 1893, that inspired most of his early writings in both Catalan and Castilian. The most noteworthy were a group of short essays describing episodes of daily life in the French capital, published under the title *Desde el molino*. They were commissioned by *La Vanguardia* and periodically sent from Paris to Barcelona between 1890 and 1892. In this series, the thirty year old Rusiñol wrote of his experiences and recorded his observations while living in Montmartre with his friends Miquel Utrillo, Ramon Canudas, and Enric Clarassó. The group rented an apartment above the famous Moulin de la Galette, the location that inspired the title of the series. A second stay in Paris, a year and a half later, produced another group of essays, collected in the first part of *Impresiones de arte*. On this occasion the author and his mates, the Catalan Josep M. Jordà and the Basques Pablo Uranga and Ignacio Zuloaga, rented a luxurious apartment in the much less Bohemian setting of the Île de Saint Louis. The accounts of the French capital in *Impresiones* extend beyond the limits of Montmartre to include many other sites in and around the city as well as a trip to Italy. The popularity of both of these collections prompted the editors of *La Vanguardia* to publish selections of the episodes in book form as a gift for its

subscribers.<sup>4</sup> The first series of articles, which included original illustrations by Ramon Casas, was published in 1894 under the title *Desde el molino: Impresiones de un viaje a Paris. Impresiones de arte* followed in 1896 with illustrations by the author, Zuloaga, Mas i Fontdevilla, Utrillo, and Oller.<sup>5</sup> Rusiñol's impressions of his early visits to France are also remembered in some of his first collections of essays written in Catalan, *Anant pel món* (1896) and *Fulls de la vida* (1898).

One of Rusiñol's initial encounters with Paris occurs a year before his first extended stay in the city in 1889. On a short visit made with his friend Enric Clarassó, following the Barcelona World's Fair in 1888, the artist admires for the first time the streets and museums of Paris and makes the obligatory visit to the annual fine arts *Salon*. By the late 1880s, this sort of trip, which provided a sampling of the intense artistic activity of the French capital, is a common practice among wealthy young Catalan men and is an integral part of the bourgeois tourist experience in general. Before traveling to Paris, Rusiñol had already decided to dedicate his life to painting, and his motivations to return to France, to remain there for an extended period of time, can be seen as a logical step forward in his career. In terms of Rusiñol's career as a writer, the trip is also a means through which the young artist attempts to identify himself as a superior type of observer and as a traveler. On his first visit he adopts the guise of the Bohemian artist in Montmartre and on the second, that of the leisurely dandy.

In both collections of essays, Rusiñol's insistence on describing in detail the characteristics of the apartments in which he lives and the process of acquiring them underscores the importance of establishing an address in Paris and hence of rejecting the transience of the tourist. The very title, *Desde el molino*, probes the writer's fixation with the character of his lodgings. In "La casa de Paris" in *Fulls de la vida*, which is a reworking of the first episode of *Desde el molino*, "Artistes catalanes en París," the residence in Montmartre is described as the place where the artists "hi guardàvem tal provisió d'il·lusions i tal rebost d'esperances, que no podien les neus ni les pluges, ni els veïns ni les esclertes, ni tot el poder dels homes" (110). *Impresiones de arte* begins in a similar manner with an article entitled "El alojamiento" that is followed by two episodes that describe the Île de Saint Louis

<sup>4</sup> The most recent edition of *Desde el molino* was published by Ediciones Parsifal in 1999, with an introduction by Josep M. Cadena, as a facsimile reproduction of the one published in 1945.

<sup>5</sup> In the 1890s *La Vanguardia* offered several books on Paris by artist/writers. Apart from the titles named here (numbers 9 and 11 respectively) the work by painter/illustrator Josep Lluís Pellicer *Notas y dibujos de Barcelona a Paris* is also germane.

and the fabulous perspectives that it offers its tenants. In this collection, as in the first, details of location are followed by the "pormenores biográficos del personal que puebla nuestras habitaciones" that stress their individual qualities as artists, "cuatro personas distintas, cuatro naturalezas [. . .] reunidas por los vínculos del arte" (717).

The paintings that Rusiñol produced while living in Paris are generally better known than his writings since painting was the activity that he shared with his Catalan contemporaries in the French capital. It has been generally assumed that writing was a secondary endeavor for Rusiñol during this period of his life. However, if we look again to the artist's biography, we find that the young intellectual did not have a clear purpose in mind at the time he set off for Paris for the second time. Josep Pla transcribes the following anecdote: "Nos fuimos a París, a Montmartre, a hacer un poco la vida bohemia—ha escrito Rusiñol—, antes de que se nos acabara la primera juventud y tuviéramos que sentar la cabeza como los maridos serios y laboriosos" (102-03).

By the 1890's, leisure travel had reached a peak as the glamour of Paris was disseminated throughout Europe and the innovations of its early avant-garde character were appropriated by middle-class culture. To play the Bohemian, as Rusiñol admits to have done, soon became a commonplace activity as the figure was transformed into a recognizable type and Montmartre's marginality became fashionable. Like most of his companions, Rusiñol hardly conformed to the image of the poor artist associated with the Parisian neighborhood. Nevertheless, by adopting the aloof, antisocial perspective of the Bohemian, he tried to create for himself an interesting and unconventional image that, even at the time, was not entirely believable. Joan Cortès i Vidal, in the introduction to the *Obres Completes*, refers to an 1890s song that marks Bohemia as a bourgeois construction: "Costa poc de fer el bohemí tenint un bon passament [. . .]" (XXV).<sup>6</sup>

Josep Pla's cynical attitude towards Rusiñol's Bohemianism makes it difficult to accept the artist's writings from Paris as wholly based on observation and experience and thus free of fictional elements. Certain details of the artist's life, such as his being married and having a young daughter, contradict the image of himself that he projects in his articles. At the same time, the omission of personal details is essential to his self-fashioning as an independent traveler and as an "insoumis"

<sup>6</sup> It would be a mistake to assume that all Catalan artists who settled in Paris came from wealth. Younger artists like Pablo Picasso, Isidre Nonell or Manolo Hugué had more humble origins and their lives in Paris (and in Barcelona) were marked by a certain degree of hardship.

'unsubmissive' who desires to escape state, family, marriage, conventions, and national taboos by leaving home (Morand 13).

In Rusiñol's attempt to portray himself as a real traveler, the obvious falseness of his Bohemian persona is not an obstacle. This is observed when he abandons his mask in *Impresiones de arte*, after the popularity of *Desde el molino* had legitimized his authority as a writer. It is the activity of writing itself, as an alternative to painting, which ultimately provides Rusiñol the platform from which to escape the image of the bourgeois tourist. His becoming a writer is compatible with the allure and attitude he chooses to create in the idealized character that he employs to narrate his adventures. The newspaper is the venue through which his writings find their way to a reading public that is not necessarily conscious of the game, but that nevertheless validates his otherwise mundane experiences.

By combining Bohemianism, tourism, and journalism, Rusiñol quickly elevates his position and approximates the image of the traveler. Jean-Marc Moura, interested in the idea of cultural memory linked to travel narrative, explains how, from the middle of the nineteenth century on, writing increasingly offered a way to escape the negative image of the ordinary tourist by claiming for oneself the status of the traveler. Prior to this time, the designation was reserved for those individuals who undertook exploratory journeys of far away continents. Literature "sauve, certes, le touriste à condition qu'il soit indépendant, distingué, cultivé," and thus able to show a special sensibility towards a place, even when the place in question had already been discovered and accepted as a tourist destination (Moura 275). Such a superior type of tourist, writing for newspapers, magazines, and other publications aimed at a mass readership, did not need to go to "exotic" lands or unknown territories to be considered a traveler. To this day, many authors find a place as respected travelers without leaving Europe or North America by engaging in urban anthropology and by approaching the everyday changes and routines of their own societies. Such writers, however, attempt to point out the marginal or less obvious, often by going to the outskirts of the city where they have to make an additional effort to penetrate reality.

Rusiñol becomes exactly this type of travel writer. He writes about a well-known location, heavily visited by groups, but he emphasizes his personal participation in the episodes that take place there on an everyday basis. He insists on the idea of sincere and direct observation of real Parisian life, without attempting to advertise or to provide practical information or a detailed account of the city, its architecture, and its history. By focusing on Montmartre, and later on the Île de Saint Louis, Rusiñol establishes a perspective from the

marginal territories into which the transitory visitor would not easily or readily venture.<sup>7</sup>

Recognition of Rusiñol as a travel writer also has to do with the structure and tone of his narratives. If a need for distinction appears to separate travelers from the growing class of common tourists, writings based on or inspired by an experience of travel aim to distinguish themselves from tourist guides. By the mid-nineteenth century, among the proliferation of narratives related to travel, a distinction appears between "the objective, informative 'guidebook' on the one hand, and the impressionistic 'travel book' (or the more tentative 'travel sketch') on the other" (Buzard 67).<sup>8</sup> Rusiñol adopts the second formula with success. His "Impresiones de un viaje a París" gained popularity separately as articles as well as in book format, always escaping the character of a reference publication.<sup>9</sup> The distinction is reinforced in the narratives themselves, which include passages in which the author as traveler alludes to the informative guidebook, criticizing it and the industry that it serves.

The occasions on which the author most directly attempts to distance his writings from those that seek to provide tourist information are found in the episodes in which he leaves the city. In "Una excursión a Rouan," the artist and his friends, full of expectations about medieval history and literary echoes of Rabelais and Flaubert, leave Paris by train to visit the city in Normandy. He begins by commenting on the standardized way to travel by train "sumiso al camino que le trazan las vías de acero" (854). Disappointment comes when the group discovers that the city of their dreams is undergoing a process of modernization and standardization as well, with "[c]alles empedradas con cordura [. . .]. Faroles de todos sistemas y dimensiones alineados con la eterna monotonía de siempre" (855). Rusiñol's attitude reflects a general disdain for the improvements of modern transportation and urbanism that altered the landscape and destroyed true character of spontaneous and free travel. Throughout the nineteenth century, Buzard explains, "the

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7 Rusiñol was not the only Catalan author to undertake this sort of project. Before him, his friend and companion Miquel Utrillo published his impressions of Paris in *La Vanguardia* under various titles and on a variety of topics. The writings of both of these painters are not unique: throughout the nineteenth century the impressions of correspondents in Paris could be found in almost every major newspaper in Spain.

8 John Ruskin's *Mornings in Florence: Being Simple Studies of Christian Art for English Travelers* is the most emblematic and widely read example. By 1889, when Rusiñol first travels to Paris, it was already in its third edition in England.

9 It is significant to note that in May 1890, several months before *Desde el Molino* began to appear, an advertisement in *La Vanguardia* announced the publication of the first travel guide to Paris written in Castilian: *Guía de París y sus cercanías*, by the Catalan Francisco Solé.



voices raised against 'mere tourism' were those raised also the spread of technology and machinery" (32). Indeed, Rusiñol's criticism of the processes of modernization includes an allusion to a parallel systematization of the tourist industry and its literature, "con esa riqueza de detalles, datos y fechas que tan del agrado son de los ingleses viajeros, amantes de saber por el sistema decimal la medida, objeto y proporción de toda obra de arte" (857). The text continues in a poetic way, filling in and pointing to what is missing in the objective and insensitive tourist guide, describing "esos rincones armonizados por la lenta sucesión del tiempo; esos conjuntos visitados por los siglos, delante de cuyas huellas tiembla el lápiz como movido por un resorte misterioso" (858). On the way back from the excursion, the author notes the construction of modern mills along the canal "que a tantos artistas ha inspirado," and whose perfect and utilitarian machinery is not preferable to the old mill in which he and his friends live, "que si no muele pan para el cuerpo alimenta de otro modo nuestro espíritu" (858).

During his visit to Italy, recorded in *Impresiones de arte*, Rusiñol comments, in similar frame of mind, on the systematization of people as tourists:

Esa manada de ingleses que viajan de turistas. Triste de la tristeza gris del norte, se les ve siguiendo las calles acompañados de su sempiterno guía, paseando el spleen por las ruinas, siempre serios, como viajando por fuerza, severos siempre, gozando de la belleza como por obligación, y apuntando los datos y fechas de entradas y salidas, de goces y sensaciones en sus libritos de memorias, para rumiar lo visto bajo su cielo de plomo. (744)

Interestingly, the author never mentions the presence of tourists in Paris. In doing so, he reinforces the impression that his life in the city has nothing in common with this other class of visitors. The passage cited above continues with a description of his visit to Italy during which he does come into contact with tourists. In his reflections on the tour group he finds it necessary to differentiate himself and his companion Zuloaga when they find themselves in the same locations, engaged in a similar activity of admiring the foreign land. Rusiñol distances himself from the organized group by creating the illusion that he is traveling alone and by presenting his experiences and observations as individual and unmediated. John Urry studies the position of "anti-tourism" by outlining a description of it as "a 'romantic' form of the tourist gaze in which emphasis is on solitude, privacy and personal semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze" (45). For Urry, the romantic observer and critic of the tourist crowd requires the existence of the group he shuns to build his identity in opposition. In a rather snobbish fashion, Rusiñol assumes

the position by identifying himself as hailing from Paris, and not Barcelona, as he recalls "la vivida soledad de nuestra isla, de aquel rinconcito entre nieblas que dejamos en el Sena" (744). Identification with the expatriate artist allows the commentator to avoid seeing the French capital as a site of the spectacular and the unique and permits him to focus on the simple and the ordinary.

Urry's emphasis on the gaze also points to the quality of the visual artist that provides the base for Rusiñol's activities abroad. In her global study of Rusiñol's artistic production in Paris, María Alejandra Zanetta analyses his paintings in the light of the prose of *Desde el Molino*. She describes his aesthetic approach during the 1890s as "naturalist decadent," that is a "part of the artist's determination to represent reality's most negative side, and not as mere objective reproduction of what he sees" (159). From this aesthetic standpoint, the urban landscapes and its people are portrayed on canvas and in print in their most miserable and depressing aspects, with emphasis on death and deterioration caused by the passing of time, human vulnerability, anonymity, and lack of communication. Expanding on Zanetta's observations, we could say that the simultaneous production of image and text adds a theatrical dimension, a holistic portrayal of a space that the author creates to accentuate the image of himself as an active spectator. Rusiñol's naturalist outlook comes across most clearly in the pessimistic tone that he frequently employs and in the several episodes in which he describes funerals, burials, or cemetery visits by the humble classes of Paris. The episode "Un entierro," from the collection *Anant pel món*, depicts Paris in somber terms:

[...] fera apocalíptica de centenars de mils de goles; crits de nit d'un poble que vol viure, remar fet d'esgarriances de fred, d'extremituds de goig, de cants d'angúnia i badalls d'una alegria macabre; crits de vida abocats sobre aquell mort que la ciutat escopia. (50)

The gray and pessimistic tones that Rusiñol uses to reflect on his Parisian experience help him to validate it as unusual and different from that of the ordinary tourist, whose visit to the city is part of a program of leisure and relaxation. To the average middle-class readers of *La Vanguardia*, who were more likely to visit Paris as ordinary tourists than as Bohemians or dandies, Rusiñol's grimy pictures would have been appealing because they seemed to offer an authentic vision unavailable to them as uninitiated visitors.

The persona that Rusiñol constructs in his articles shares many of the characteristics associated with the Parisian flâneur. The author adopts the stance of the flâneur, and of the bohemian artist, in order

to take advantage of the fact that both are highly recognizable stereotypes to 1890s readers. Curiously, he does so even though both had come to be dispossessed of their original intellectual aura and had come to be classified as average individuals in a temporary and fashionable state of irresponsibility. The Catalan author is different from the flâneur principally in terms of the solitude and anonymity professed by a person for whom "[c]ompanionship of any sort is undesirable" (Ferguson 28). Although Rusiñol omits reference to his wife, he does not identify himself as a complete loner, nor does he disappear anonymously from the scenes that he describes. Most of the episodes in the collections are framed by a narration in the first person plural that includes his travel companions, often indicated by their names in a manner that reinforces their quality as witnesses and/or co-participants. In "El estudio de un puntillista," as well as in several other instances in *Desde el Molino*, Rusiñol recalls the contacts he makes with other artistic types residing in Montmartre. The author's biographers often comment on Rusiñol's open character and the ease with which he made friends with foreigners, most famously the musician Erik Satie.

In the case of the writings studied here the idle observer is included in the narration of his observations, causing him to become "a literary figure thus observed by the reader" and "[c]onsumed as a spectacle" (Shields 65-7). Rob Shields notes that the flâneur is a mythical ideal, immortalized by literature, a species more commonly found in discourse than in real life. The mythical quality of Rusiñol as both protagonist and author contributes not only to the solidification of his status as a respectable type of tourist, but also to the overall success of his essays. The reader enjoys not only his impressions for their unquestionable literary quality and documentary character, but also the adventures of the young Catalans abroad.

Rusiñol approximates the flâneur's dual status as an individual who is at once familiar with urban culture and aloof from its most mundane features. Here, the establishment of emotional and critical distance is facilitated by his status as a foreigner. His gaze over the city is that of an outsider who shares his impressions with other outsiders: his readers at home. In his study of Rusiñol's paintings of Paris, art historian Gabriel P. Weisberg observes that "[i]t is as if Rusiñol is seeing [Paris and his colleagues] with a melancholic, intellectual detachment, an air similar to the ways in which these Spanish artists were viewing their experiences in Paris in the early 1890s" (259-63). On the other hand, his ability to integrate himself into the urban structures of Paris and to read and interpret them is understandable given that he is a cultivated individual from a large cosmopolitan city. We should not forget that Rusiñol also writes and comments on Barcelona in the

capacity of a genuine flâneur in *Notas barcelonesas* (written between 1889 and 1890 and contemporary to *Desde el Molino*, *Anant pel món* and *Fulls de la vida*), in which he dedicates many pages to the present and past of his life in his native city. The subject's double position of proximity and distance can be seen as paralleling the direction of Barcelona as a city and as a culture that flourishes on its own terms but which measures its prosperity according to the standards set by the City of Lights. One can understand the identification by observing Barcelona's economic growth, its ambitious urban planning and its cultural and entertainment offerings. At a moment when the intellectual weight of Paris was felt throughout Europe, Barcelona was one of its most vibrant receptors, one of the first centers able to cater to, and identify with, the innovative developments that were taking place in the artistic arena.

As Dennis Potter explains in *Haunted Journeys*, the importance of travel writing lies in the way that it serves as a cultural vehicle through which the knowledge of things foreign is mediated. He writes that it "brings into sharp focus that illuminating moment when two cultures are brought to sudden proximity" and he notes that it is most interesting when the writer manages to combine exploration of the world with self-exploration (3-5). The activities of the Catalan intellectuals who directly experienced the Parisian avant-garde were a significant part of the process of assimilation of its innovations in Barcelona. Cristina and Eduardo Mendoza have pointed out the influence that *Desde el Molino* had among the students of Barcelona's school of Bellas Artes (101). For the greater part of the nineteenth century, Rome had traditionally been the foreign destination for young artists from Spain. However, by the 1880's Paris had begun to supplant the Italian capital, and the Catalan group (Casas, Utrillo and Rusiñol) figured prominently among the painters and sculptors who brought about the shift. According to the Mendozas, it was by way of Rusiñol's proselytism that supplementary studies in Paris came to be seen as almost a mandatory part of the education of young artists (101). With respect to literature, critics disagree about the impact that Rusiñol's experience abroad had on his later production. While Pla downplays the influence of the French avant-garde on the Catalan as a writer and intellectual, insisting on the superficial nature of his attraction to Bohemian life, Margarita Casacuberta, author of the most recent comprehensive study of Rusiñol's dramatic literature, offers a different perspective and describes how the author was impressed by French and Belgian symbolist theater. The quantity and quality of the Parisian theater scene would make Rusiñol realize the limitations of contemporary theater in Barcelona. For dramatists and producers at home, it would be very difficult to experiment to such

an extent with text and actors "ja que, simplement, la societat en la qual s'emmirallava el teatre català no havia estat capaç de produir uns tals espècimens ni el luxe que els envoltava" (Casacuberta 24).

Potter explains that the travel writer who establishes cultural links is driven by an interest to analyze the peculiar emotional investments made in his chosen journeys and the tensions focused on reconciling the call for pleasure in the foreign land with the demands and duties emanating from home, which ultimately produce feelings of guilt and homesickness. The tension between the satisfaction of pleasures denied at home and a feeling of national identity and duty is evident in the way Rusiñol balances admiration and nostalgia in his writings. In the episode "Impresiones de llegada" the Parisian people's disposition towards entertainment is compensated by a reminder of the natural, easy-going Mediterranean attitude, "aquella calma hija del sol y de un clima bondadoso, aquella placidez en el andar, gozada y adquirida bajo los plátanos de nuestra frondosa rambla, aquella indolencia soñadora que se cría de ese lado del Pirineo" (864). In the episode "Canciones de Montmartre," also from *Desde el molino*, the international character of the music in the cafés is downplayed when Rusiñol notes the uprootedness and lack of authenticity of some of the performers after meeting a Spaniard who works at a cabaret as a flamenco singer.

Rusiñol's essays invite us to think about how the avant-garde in Paris, from its turn-of-the-century origins, owes more to the international influence on its activities than is normally thought. The phenomenon, in its early stages, is easily thought of as something that was purely French, and that foreigners merely assimilated and appropriated, without making any significant contributions. It was only in the first decades of the twentieth century, once artistic circles moved to the Left Bank neighborhood of Montparnasse, that the foreign element became more evident. At the Museum of Montmartre, very little is mentioned about the expatriates who gathered there during its heyday. The only traces of the Catalan artists who lived there is found in a poster reproducing one of Rusiñol's portraits of Erik Satie, that is sold in the museum shop because it features the famous musician. Reference is also made to Miquel Utrillo, however not in recognition of his art or writings, but because of his relationship with Suzanne Valladon and because he was the father of painter Maurice Utrillo. A fresh approach to the play of cultural influences that shaped modern art would take into greater account the importance of the Catalan presence. At the same time, it would not devalue the artistic production of those who created outside of the focal points of the avant-garde but were nevertheless strongly inspired by what was going on there.

In turn-of-the-century Catalonia, admiration for the artistic and literary achievements of Paris very often translated into the intelligent and creative accommodation of foreign forms to regional sensibilities. Rusiñol kept in touch with intellectual developments in the decade following his initial stays in Paris, through short, regular visits and introduced some of what he admired into Barcelona's artistic life. To refer only to the most relevant, we have to mention the discovery of Maurice Maeterlinck's dramas and the presentation of one of them, *L'intruse*, at one of the festivals organized by Rusiñol himself at Sitges in 1893. In 1897, Rusiñol, along with Casas, Utrillo and Romeu, founded Els Quatre Gats, modeled on the famous Montmartre cabaret Le Chat Noir that the four friends had frequented only some years before. Els Quatre Gats offered an artistic forum for Catalan culture in which painters, writers, and musicians gathered, discussed and presented their works. The goings-on at the locale "replicated" some of the most popular activities of the Parisian cabaret including its highly popular shadow plays (described in the episode "El reino de las sombras" in *Desde el Molino*). The Barcelona tavern was also a venue to showcase traditional dramatic forms from Catalonia, like the Putxinel·lis.

The mark left by Rusiñol and his compatriots on the avant-garde in Paris is, however, decidedly less visible. Nonetheless it does exist, as the exhibition in the winter of 2001-2002 clearly sought to demonstrate. The flow of influences was not unidirectional, and it is worthwhile to stop and ponder how images of Paris, at the height of its fin-de-siècle opulence, emanated from those who traveled there and desired, in one way or another, to take part in the life of the city. Rusiñol's travel writings are part of a broader process through which Barcelona defined its own identity by using the splendors and innovations of Paris to measure its success. By presenting the reader with images that inspire curiosity and admiration for a foreign land, these texts, at the same time, contribute to the consolidation of a sense of national and regional pride. In their aesthetic and cultural value, they constitute a unique example in Castilian and Catalan of a literary genre otherwise dominated by Anglo-Saxon and French "experiences" of modernity.

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