

# Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, Dalí

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# Barcelona and Modernity

WILLIAM H. ROBINSON AND CARMEN BELEN LORD

But Barcelona is very different, isn't it? There one finds the Mediterranean, the spirit, the adventure, the elevated dream of perfect love. There are palms, people from every country, surprising advertisements, gothic towers and rich urban high tide created by typewriters. How I enjoy being there, with that air and that passion! . . . Besides, I, who am a ferocious Catalanist, identified greatly with those people, so fed up with Castile, and so creative.

—Federico García Lorca, 1926

This is the first exhibition in North America to examine a remarkable, 71-year period (1868–1939), when Barcelona ascended from a city of provincial culture into one of the most dynamic centers of modernist art and architecture in Europe. In the decades between the September Revolution of 1868 and the fall of the Second Spanish Republic in 1939, Barcelona experienced an astonishing transformation, finally arriving at full integration with the international avant-garde through the emergence of an innovative school of rationalist architecture and an array of surrealist artists led by Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí. The city's meteoric rise in the visual arts came to a crashing halt with General Francisco Franco's victory in the Spanish civil

war in April 1939, an event that brought a right-wing dictatorship to power. Because Barcelona had served as a center of antifascist resistance and regional separatism, Franco imposed measures to erase the city's Catalan character and history as a leader of progressive political and artistic movements. Although democracy would return to Spain after Franco's death in 1975, 36 years of cultural repression, censorship, and revisionist histories have left the world with a fractured view of Iberian civilizations, a confusion reflected in the popular adage and advertising slogan: "Spain is different."

Perceptual ambiguity about Spain is not a recent invention. Since the birth in the 16th century of the Black Legend—a tradition of vilification by



Fig. 1 (cat. 13). Alfred Guesdon, *Bird's Eye View of Spain, Barcelona*, 1860.



Spain's enemies—the country's complex history and character have been flattened by inaccurate stereotypes circulated in foreign newspapers and books. The modern tourist and film industries have promoted simplistic notions of Spain as an excessively conservative, homogeneous society populated by macho toreadors, flamenco dancers, religious zealots, corrupt aristocrats, ignorant peasants, and cruel despots.<sup>1</sup> This exhibition, focusing on Barcelona's modernist culture during a period when its artists became fully engaged with the international avant-garde, seeks to dispel any lingering perceptions of Spain as an exotic "other," a distant and insular country more oriental than European, a nation tethered to its medieval and Moorish past, a society untouched by the liberal reforms that swept the rest of Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Certainly, any understanding of modernist culture in Spain must begin with Barcelona (fig. 1), a

bustling Mediterranean seaport located in the north-east corner of the Iberian Peninsula. Situated barely 95 miles from the French border, Barcelona has historically served as the crucial point of interchange between Spain and northern Europe. By the end of the 19th century, Barcelona had become the most industrialized, populous, and culturally advanced city in Spain. Yet, as the capital and cultural heart of Catalonia (fig. 2), a region with its own language and artistic traditions, Barcelona also stood apart. During the 19th century Barcelona's cultural life became closely entwined with rising Catalan nationalism and aspirations for autonomy. The toppling of the Spanish monarchy in the September Revolution of 1868 ignited hopes for the passage of the liberal reforms so urgently desired in Catalonia, but which encountered stiff resistance from reactionary forces. The collapse of the First Republic (1873–74) and the restoration of the Spanish monarchy in 1874 con-

Fig. 2. Catalonia and the cities important to this catalogue.



vinced many Catalans that progress would only be achieved by redefining their relationship with the central government in Madrid. During this period Catalans of all social classes increasingly regarded themselves as different from the rest of Spain, a unique culture rooted in its own history, but constantly driven forward by an energetic striving for integration with the modern world. Many Catalans dreamed of transforming Barcelona into a world-class city rivaling Paris and London, an ambition they knew could only be achieved through an enduring commitment to modernization and progress.

#### *The City of Bombs: A Brief History*

Today, Barcelona is Spain's leading seaport and second largest city.<sup>2</sup> It is the capital of Catalonia, a triangular-shaped region bordered by France to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the east, the province of Aragon to the west, and Valencia to the south (fig. 3). Like Aragon, Catalonia is one of Spain's 17 "autonomous communities," each with its own parliament and president. The autonomous communities share various powers with the central government in Madrid, while other matters are reserved for the

regional parliaments, creating a political structure roughly comparable to the federal-state relationship in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Catalonia's regional government consists of a parliament and the Generalitat, an executive branch directed by the president. The city of Barcelona is governed by the Ajuntament, a legislative council, and the Comissió de Govern, an executive arm led by the mayor.

Barcelona's exact origins remain shrouded in mystery. It is widely believed that the city dates to 230 BC, when Hamilcar Barca, the father of Hannibal, established the Carthaginian settlement of Barcino on a small plateau rising from the sea. The Romans invaded Iberia in 218 BC, landing first at the Greek colony of Emporiae (Empúries today) north of Barcino, then conquering and transforming the entire peninsula into a major province of the empire called Hispania. Under the Romans, Barcino developed into a city of modest size centered around a forum located at the site of the current plaça de Sant Jaume, the square where the offices of the Generalitat and the Ajuntament now face each other.<sup>4</sup> Remnants of the city's Roman temple and fortified walls survive today. Visigoths conquered Barcelona in AD 415 and

Fig. 3. The autonomous regions of Spain today.

ruled until 717, when the Moors subjugated the city, six short years after crossing into Iberia from North Africa. In 801 Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, drove the Moors from the region and established the Marca Hispanica (Spanish March), a military buffer zone in the northeast corner of the peninsula, a region that formed the early footprint for modern Catalonia.

The origins of Catalonia as a political entity are often traced to Wilfred the Hairy (d. 897), who is credited with uniting various fiefdoms of the region and establishing the 500-year reign of the Counts of Barcelona, a hereditary line that lasted until 1410.<sup>5</sup> Wilfred is also associated with the origins of the Catalan flag. According to legend (several variations exist), as Wilfred lay wounded on a battlefield, the Frankish king dipped his hand into Wilfred's blood and wiped his fingers down the count's golden shield, creating an emblem of four red bars set against a yellow background.

The emergence of the Catalan language in the ninth century undoubtedly contributed more to the birth of a new national identity than the invention of a flag or a coat of arms. Contrary to popular perception, Catalan is not a dialect of Castilian Spanish, but a distinct Romance language that developed independently from vernacular Latin. Catalan most closely resembles Provençal and the ancient languages of southern France. Today, as many as 12 million people speak Catalan, more than Danish or Bulgarian, and fluency in the language remains the most defining feature of Catalan national identity.<sup>6</sup>

During the Middle Ages, Catalonia developed into a major Mediterranean sea power with illustrious political and cultural traditions. Barcelona's rise to power moved significantly forward when Catalonia was united by marriage with neighboring Aragon in 1137. Afterward, the Catalan-Aragonese federation embarked on a period of conquest and expansion, at times incorporating Roussillon, Provence, Montpellier, Majorca and the Balearic Islands, Valencia, Sicily, the duchy of Athens, Sardinia, and the kingdom of Naples. Major political strides were made with the establishment of the Catalan Corts in Barcelona in 1282, one of the oldest parliaments in Europe. Catalan literature, architecture, and painting flourished during this "golden age,"

when Barcelona reigned as the economic center of a vast Mediterranean empire, the rival of Genoa and Venice. Politicians, writers, and architects of the 19th century would invoke the memory of this golden age as the historical precedent for the rebirth of Catalan national identity and the restoration of an autonomous state.

After reaching the peak of its geographic expansion in 1443, the Catalan-Aragonese federation entered into a troubled period.<sup>7</sup> Barcelona's economy, already in decline, suffered a severe blow in the late 15th century when the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand of Aragon-Catalonia and Isabella of Castile, united their kingdoms and awarded a monopoly on trade with the Americas to the cities of Seville and Cádiz.<sup>8</sup> In coming years, power would shift dramatically to Castile and its newly created capital of Madrid (est. 1619). Barcelona suffered yet another setback during the Reaper's War (1640–52), a struggle for independence ignited by Catalan peasants in response to Madrid's demands for money and troops to support its campaign in Flanders. After a prolonged siege, Barcelona surrendered to a Castilian army and Catalonia was forced to cede its territories north of the Pyrenees to France. Yet the struggle of Catalan peasants against a powerful invader was not forgotten, as their courageous resistance is still celebrated in the Catalan national anthem "Els Segadors" (The Reapers), and the resonance of their mythic defiance became embedded in Julio González's sculptures of Catalan peasants and Joan Miró's *The Reaper (Catalan Peasant in Revolt)*, a large mural created for the Spanish pavilion of the Paris International Exhibition of 1937 (see fig. 3, p. 432).

Disaster again struck Barcelona when Catalonia sided with the Hapsburgs rather than the victorious Bourbons in the War of Spanish Succession (1705–14). After yet another prolonged siege (fig. 4), Barcelona surrendered to a Castilian-Bourbon army on 11 September 1714. Determined to eradicate all resistance to central authority, Philip V placed Barcelona under military law, disbanded the city and regional governments, eliminated Catalonia's historic rights and privileges, closed universities, and repressed the Catalan language. Henceforth, Catalonia would be ruled by a governor or a captain-general appointed in Madrid, usually a non-Catalan. Perhaps the king's



most hated act was constructing the Citadel (fig. 5, far left), a garrisoned fortress on the northern edge of Barcelona designed to insure Madrid's control over the city and its rebellious citizens. Just as determined to resist, Catalans later began celebrating September 11th as their national holiday.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the harsh measures imposed by Madrid, Catalonia's economy began to revive in the 18th century. After the ban on trade with the Americas was lifted in 1778, Barcelona's textile industry exploded, fueled by the importation of cheap cotton from the United States and expanding commerce with Cuba and the Philippines. In 1833 the Bonaplata firm began operating the first steam-powered textile mill in Spain, a significant step forward in Barcelona's

rise as the country's most industrialized city. The first railroad in Spain, a line linking Barcelona with Mataró, opened in 1848. Barcelona also became the first city in Spain connected by rail to Paris, again driving Catalonia's engagement with the modern world forward. Between 1840 and 1860 Catalonia's industrial production tripled, and the region came to control 80% of Spanish textile manufacturing.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1860s Barcelona had become one of the most rapidly growing and densely populated cities in Europe, partly due to waves of peasants migrating from the rural areas searching for work in the factories and mills. In 1863 alone, the rate of urban population growth reached over 27%—three times the national average. Congested slums and miserable,



Fig. 4. *The Siege of Barcelona, 1714*, artist unknown.

Fig. 5 (cat. 1:2). Onofre Alsamora, *Bird's Eye View of Barcelona, 1860*, with the Citadel at the far left.

unregulated working conditions led to repeated epidemics and labor unrest. To relieve the overcrowding, in 1854 Madrid finally granted Barcelona permission to tear down the medieval walls that had stifled the city's growth for centuries. In 1860 Madrid approved Ildefons Cerdà's plan (see fig. 3, p. 24) for urban expansion beyond the medieval walls, a design linking the city (the dark roughly hexagonal shape in the lower center of the plan) with surrounding communities through an area of proposed new growth called the Eixample (Expansion) (fig. 6). Organized in a grid pattern bisected by broad boulevards, this

vast district became the site for some of the most celebrated building projects of the modernista era, including Antoni Gaudí's Expiatory Temple of the Sagrada Família (begun 1882–83) and Casa Milà (1906–10). Since these structures, along with other art and events from the period covered by this exhibition, are examined more fully in subsequent essays in this catalogue, they will be mentioned only briefly here.

The destruction of Barcelona's medieval walls unleashed a torrent of new construction that transformed the city. In 1880 the Italian travel writer



Fig. 6. Modern Barcelona with the Roman and medieval cities, and the 19th-century expansion.



Edmondo de Amicis observed: “Barcelona is, in appearance, the least Spanish city of Spain. There are large buildings ... long streets, regular squares ... and a continuous coming and going of people. On every side there is manufacturing, transforming and renovating. The people work and prosper.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, in stark contrast to the luxurious homes being constructed in the Eixample for the new middle and upper classes, laborers continued to live in appalling conditions. “I was shocked that human life could even develop in such detestable conditions,” wrote Pedro García Faria in *La insalubridad de las viviendas de Barcelona* (1890).<sup>12</sup> García Faria took particular note of the tiny living spaces, fetid air, and frequently combined toilet and kitchen areas that contributed to recurring outbreaks of tuberculosis, anemia, scrofula, and rickets, a disease that prematurely enfeebled the children who worked in the factories that produced the city’s wealth.

A renewed spirit of Catalan nationalism accompanied Barcelona’s rising economic fortunes. This resurgence of Catalanisme was closely associated with the 19th-century *Renaixença* (Renaissance), initially a political and literary movement that eventually spread to all aspects of Catalan culture, including philosophy, theater, visual arts, and architecture. Elsewhere in this catalogue Francesc Fontbona observes that the birth of the *Renaixença* is often dated to the publication of Bonaventura Carles Aribau’s poem *La Pàtria* (The Fatherland) of 1833. Other literary markers include the revival in 1859 of the *Jocs Florals* (medieval Catalan poetry contests), the po-

ems of Jacint Verdaguer and Víctor Balaguer, the founding of the magazine *La Renaixença* in 1871, and the establishment in 1879 of *Diari Català*, the first daily newspaper published in Catalan.<sup>13</sup>

The city of Barcelona celebrated its new prosperity by organizing the Universal Exposition of 1888, a world’s fair of fine and industrial arts and the physical embodiment of *Renaixença* nationalistic fervor. This ambitious project reflected a growing confidence among Catalans that they had finally arrived as a European economic power. The exposition was the first of several international events staged in Barcelona to draw attention to the city’s economic and cultural vitality (later examples include the International Exposition of 1929 and the Olympic Games of 1992). The fair of 1888 served another purpose as well: erected on the grounds of the recently demolished Citadel, a despised symbol of Madrid’s domination over Catalonia, the exposition expressed Barcelona’s aspirations for progress and autonomy through the concrete, physical reality of bricks, mortar, and stone (fig. 7).

The spirit of national revival, often expressed through references to Catalonia’s glorious medieval past, became a leitmotif of *Renaixença* architecture. Overt medievalism appears in Elies Rogent’s University of Barcelona (1862–73), Josep Puig i Cadafalch’s Casa Martí (1895–96), and Lluís Domènech i Montaner’s *Cafè-Restaurant* (1887–88) of the Universal Exposition of 1888. Domènech, head of the Barcelona school of architecture, articulated a theoretical justification for expressing Catalan na-

Fig. 7. Triumphant arch for the Barcelona Universal Exposition, 1888, designed by Josep Vilaseca i Casanovas.





tionalism through the arts with his influential essay, “In Search of a National Architecture,” published in *La Renaixença* in 1878.

As the century drew to a close, Barcelona architects increasingly abandoned historical revivalism in favor of original invention, often using the traditional Catalan building materials of brick, iron, ceramic, and stained glass in daring new ways. The leaders of this new tendency—Domènech, Gaudí, and Josep Jujol—are sometimes too closely associated with Art Nouveau, a style invented in northern Europe. This misguided interpretation of Catalan architecture may derive from a shared predilection with Art Nouveau for creating fantastic forms inspired by nature. But the comparison is largely superficial, as Domènech, Gaudí, and Jujol worked independently from their northern counterparts to create some of the most original works in the entire history of art, most notably Gaudí’s Casa Milà (fig. 8), Parc Güell (1900–1914), Casa Batlló (1905–7), Colònia Güell chapel (1908–16), and the Expiatory Temple of the Sagrada Família (1883–1926). It should not go unnoticed that Gaudí’s Casa Vicens (1883–85), with its remarkable ceramic surfaces and iron fence decorated with palmetto motifs, predates the invention of Art Nouveau in northern Europe.<sup>14</sup> Domènech also achieved a level of extreme originality independent of northern influences with his Palau de la Música Catalana (1905–8), perhaps the epitome of nationalistic expression in Catalan architecture.<sup>15</sup> While Catalan architecture developed largely along its own path, Art Nouveau did have a strong impact on

Catalan graphic arts and other disciplines, issues that are examined by other authors in this catalogue.

Catalan architecture of this period has become associated in critical and public discourse with Modernisme, a term referring not to “modernism” in general, but to a broad cultural movement that emerged in Catalonia in the 1880s and 1890s. Described as a “breath of fresh air” that swept away stagnant traditions, Modernisme found expression in literature, theater, music, painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and architecture.<sup>16</sup> The term first appeared in an article published in the journal *L’Avenç* in 1884 to describe a tendency to embrace radically new ideas and all things “modern,” from the Naturalism of Émile Zola to anarchist politics. Modernisme originally implied a vehement denunciation of *Renaixença* revivalism and the conservative politics of the Catalan bourgeoisie. Countering Catalan nationalism with a new openness to foreign influences and radical ideas, the modernistes were especially attracted to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, the music of Richard Wagner, and the plays of Maurice Maeterlinck and Henrik Ibsen.

Catalan visual artists also came under a barrage of foreign influences during the final decades of the 19th century. Rather than Madrid or Rome, Paris and its private academies became the favored destination for foreign study. Ramon Casas, Santiago Rusiñol, Miquel Utrillo, and Enric Clarasó were among the artists who encountered the most recent currents in international modernism while studying in Paris during the 1880s. When Casas and Rusiñol began ex-

Fig. 8. Casa Milà, 1905–10 designed by Antoni Gaudí.

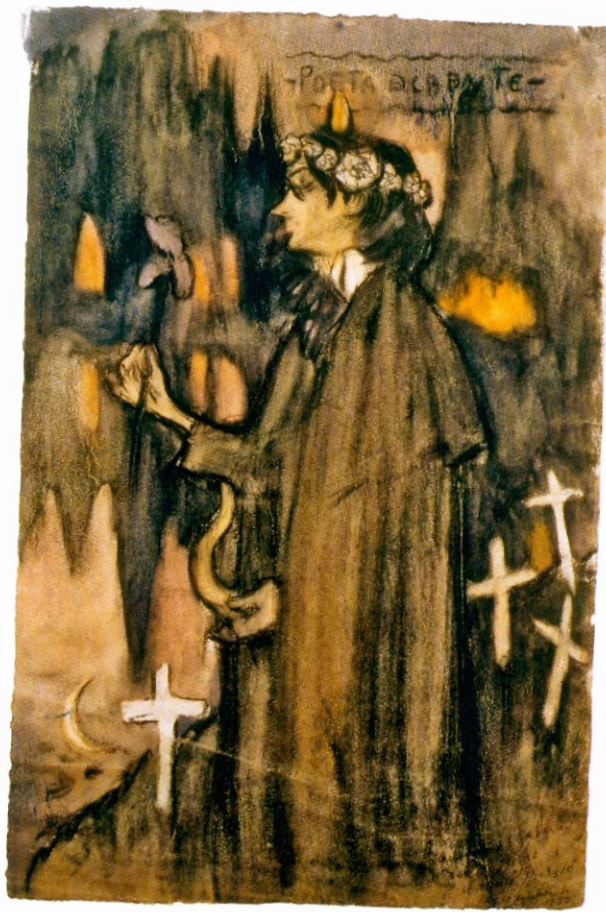


hibiting together at the Sala Parés in Barcelona in 1890, art critics identified them as the founders of a new movement of Modernisme in painting. They enhanced their reputation as the leaders of this new tendency by initiating a series of modernista festivals at nearby Sitges (1892–99) and cofounding the Barcelona artist’s café Quatre Gats (Four Cats) in 1897. Picasso, at age 18, became a regular at Quatre Gats, the site of his first solo exhibition (February 1900). Bohemian artists and disaffected youth with anarchist leanings gathered at this legendary café for meetings, exhibitions, poetry readings, and puppet theater performances. They developed a morbid obsession with themes of death, suicide, and drugs, evident in Rusiñol’s painting *Morphine*, 1894 (fig. 9), a poignant image by an artist who was addicted to the narcotic. The modernista penchant for flamboyant costumes, long hair, and late-night meetings—as portrayed in Picasso’s *Decadent Poet (Sabartés)*, 1900 (fig. 10)—made the movement synonymous in the public mind with perverse affectations, excessive emotionalism, antisocial behavior, an unhealthy obsession with novelty, and bizarre distortions of form and color.

It is crucial to note that meaning of the term “Modernisme” has shifted since its origin in 19th-century literary discourse. Art historian Judith Rohrer observes that the designation was posthumously misapplied to Domènech, Puig, and Gaudí, even though these architects of the “new Catalan school” never entirely abandoned their nationalist ambitions of renewing Catalan civilization through associations with time-honored themes and medieval craft traditions.<sup>17</sup> Others argue that by moving away from historical revivalism toward more original styles based on personal invention and direct engagement with nature, these architects developed their own unique forms of Catalan Modernisme. Although they held vastly different political views from the bohemian painters of the Quatre Gats, they did share a common disdain for the stagnant academic traditions and neoclassical styles promoted by the Royal Academy in Madrid. Hence, many historians view Modernisme as a broad current that took a variety of disparate paths.

During the final decades of the 19th century, art became increasingly entwined with rising Catalan nationalism. The key political issue was centralism

Fig. 9 (cat. 2:8). Santiago Rusiñol, *Morphine*, 1894.



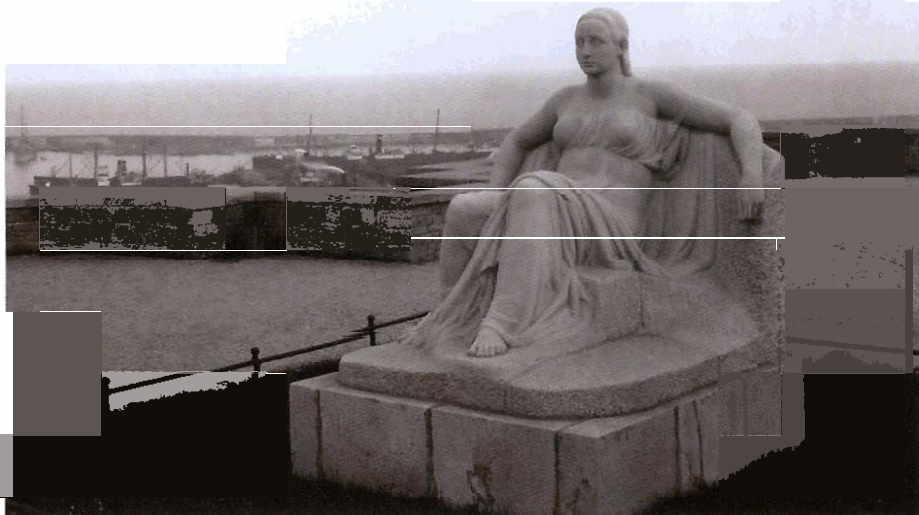
versus federalism. Since the September Revolution of 1868, the Catalan politician Valentí Almirall had advocated the creation of a federal republic in which Madrid would share power with autonomous regional governments, each exercising sovereign control over its internal affairs. In 1880 Almirall organized the First Catalan Congress to promote this idea, and his influential book, *Lo catalanisme* (1886), justified the creation of an autonomous Catalan state based on the idea that a nation, rather than being defined by mere geography, consists of a people sharing a unique language, culture, and heritage. He considered Spain, by contrast, an artificial political entity comprising many nations or nationalities who might voluntarily join together to form a confederation or republic, but not one under the absolute control of an unrestrained, centralized monarchy. Almirall buttressed this point by vehemently denouncing Madrid for treating Catalans like slaves and forcing them to speak a foreign language as a “constant reminder of our subjection.”<sup>18</sup> Enric Prat de la Riba’s equally influential book, *La Nacionalitat Catalana* (1906), also advanced this concept of Catalonia as a nation rather than a mere geographic region. To hasten the

movement toward autonomy and to defend the use of their language, Catalans formed a series of organizations and political parties, including the Lliga de Catalunya (est. 1887), Unió Catalanista (est. 1891), the Lliga Regionalista (est. 1901), Solidaritat Catalana (est. 1906), and Estat Català (est. 1922).

Nationalist political organizations and associated cultural institutions drew support not only from politicians, but also from prominent members of the art community. Domènech was elected president of the Lliga de Catalunya in 1888, president of the Unió Catalanista in 1891, and president of the Lliga Regionalista in 1901. Puig organized the restoration of Catalan Romanesque churches in the Pyrenees, transported paintings back to Barcelona for installation in the museum of Catalan art, and directed the archaeological excavations of the ancient Greek and Roman settlements at Empúries north of Barcelona. Puig also served as a member of the Lliga de Catalunya, cofounded the Lliga Regionalista in 1901, and directed the Institut d’Estudis Catalans (est. 1907).

In 1914 Madrid partly acceded to rising Catalan nationalism by approving the establishment of the

Fig. 10 (cat. 3:10). Pablo Picasso, *Decadent Poet (Sabartés)*, 1900.



Mancomunitat, a regional government with limited autonomous powers. Under its first president, Prat de la Riba, the Mancomunitat opened the Biblioteca de Catalunya (Catalan national library) and sponsored a program for regularizing Catalan spelling and grammar. Architect Puig succeeded Prat de la Riba as president of the Mancomunitat in 1917. Other authors in this catalogue discuss more fully the Mancomunitat's ambitious programs for supporting the arts and establishing cultural institutions to promote Catalan national identity.

Leftist political parties and working-class labor organizations offered more radical solutions to Barcelona's economic and social problems than mainstream Catalanista institutions. In 1868 Giuseppe Fanelli, an Italian associate of Mikhail Bakunin, in-

troduced anarchism to Spain on visits to Barcelona and Madrid.<sup>19</sup> The PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) was formed in 1879, and the UGT (General Workers Union) at a Barcelona conference in 1888, but the center of socialist power remained in Madrid, Asturias, and the Basque region. Meanwhile, the anarchist movement continued to grow in Barcelona and reached fever pitch during the 1890s, when a wave of labor strikes, bombings, and police repressions shook the city. The bombing of the Liceu theater in 1893, killing 21 people, followed by the bombing of the annual Corpus Christi procession in 1896, inflicting 10 deaths, provoked drastic police reprisals, including the extraction of forced confessions under torture and public executions by medieval garroting. Sensational stories of the trials and executions of ac-

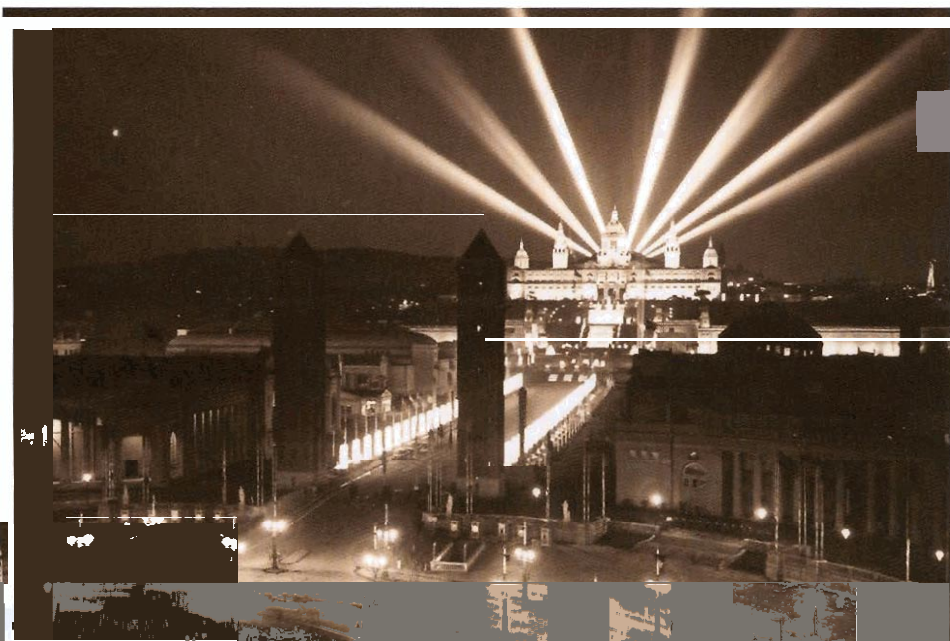


Fig. 11. *Serenity*, 1929, by Josep Clarà, in situ in the Parc de Montjuïc, Gardens of Miramar, Barcelona.

Fig. 12. The plaça d'Espanya, the esplanade, and the National Palace on Montjuïc, Barcelona International Exposition, 1929.

cused anarchists brought international attention to Barcelona, which became known worldwide as the “rose of fire” and the “city of bombs.”

In concert with growing nationalism and political radicalism, new artistic tendencies emerged in Barcelona during the early 20th century. Noucentisme (1900s), the century’s first new cultural movement, developed as a reaction against the emotional excesses of Modernisme. The philosopher and critic Eugeni d’Ors, who coined the term in 1906, advanced its ideology through his “Glosari” column published in *La Veu de Catalunya* (Voice of Catalonia). Although the term “1900-ism” would seem to embrace all artistic tendencies of the new century, in reality, artists associated with the movement focused largely on reconnecting with the roots of Catalan civilization by recovering its ancient classical past and folk traditions. Archaeological excavations of the ancient Greek settlement at Empúries (est. c. 600 BC) helped persuade many Catalans that Modernisme was a foreign aesthetic imported from the north and artificially grafted onto the region’s natural spirit of logic, order, moderation, and *seny* (practicality). In 1913 Joaquín Torres-García painted *Eternal Catalonia*, one of a series of classicizing murals for the Palace of the Mancomunitat in Barcelona, a sign of the growing alignment between Noucentisme and Catalan nationalism. Although sharing certain characteristics with the classicizing “return to order” movement that developed in France and Italy as a reaction against the horrors of World War I, Noucentisme was not merely another classical revival;<sup>20</sup> it also embraced art with archaizing tendencies, nationalistic ambitions, and a concern for Catalan rural culture.

During its crowning years of about 1911–29, the ideology of Noucentisme became deeply ingrained in Catalan philosophy, politics, literature, and the visual arts. Torres-García, Joaquim Sunyer, Xavier Nogués, and Feliu Elias made significant contributions to noucentista painting. Enric Casanovas, Josep Clarà, Apel·les Fenosa, Pablo Gargallo, Manolo Hugué, and Joan Rebull produced sculptures that articulated the noucentista concern for eternal, timeless values (fig. 11). Josep Aragay, Francesc d’A. Galí, Rafael Masó, and Puig explored noucentista principles in architecture and design.<sup>21</sup> Although strictly speaking, Picasso and Dalí may not have been noucentista artists, they did

contribute to the classical revival, and Ors claimed Picasso as a member of the movement. It is important to observe that Noucentisme was a concept, not an organization, so there was never an official roster of artists, and the movement’s scope and nature remains open to interpretation.

Noucentisme reached the peak of its influence just prior to the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona, which featured an open-air Greek theater (1914–29) erected on the slopes of Montjuïc. Planning for an industrial exposition on Montjuïc began as early as 1907, but the date was pushed back to 1917, and eventually to 1929.<sup>22</sup> Preparations were placed under the direction of Puig, who increasingly associated himself with Noucentisme as an instrument for advancing Catalan nationalism. He proposed a rigorously symmetrical design (see fig. 5, p. 389) for the entrance, which progresses from the circular plaça d’Espanya at the foot of Montjuïc, then up a rising esplanade before culminating at the National Palace on the summit (fig. 12). Before the exposition opened in 1929, Puig was dismissed and the project fell prey to a *mélange* of eclectic architectural styles. It must have come as a shock to many that the fair’s most memorable achievement, the pavilion designed by German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (see figs. 2–5, p. 392), refuted the confused and antiquated revival styles of its surroundings with a masterpiece of starkly minimal, rationalist design.

Nearly parallel with the unfolding trajectory of Noucentisme, a series of avant-garde movements emerged in Barcelona that brought the city’s artists into the mainstream of the international art world. The cubist paintings Picasso produced on trips to Barcelona (May 1909), Horta de Sant Joan (summer 1909), and Cadaqués (1910), along with Pablo Gargallo’s early cut-and-soldered metal sculptures of 1907–15, were among the earliest signs of avant-garde activity in Catalonia. However, these largely isolated developments had little immediate impact on artists in Barcelona. An avant-garde “movement” did not develop in the city until 1916–17, when numerous foreign artists arrived and a critical mass of resident artists engaged in radical experimentation. Torres-García’s renunciation of Noucentisme, Rafael Barradas’s invention of the cubo-futurist style of *Vibracionismo*, and the launching of a series



of avant-garde journals, including *Troços* (Pieces) and *Un enemic del Poble* (An Enemy of the People), are key markers of this new wave. Barradas, Torres-García, and the young Joan Miró led the new direction in painting, while Josep M. Junoy, Joan Salvat-Papasseit, Sebastià Gasch, and J.V. Foix distinguished themselves in criticism and poetry.

Avant-garde art in Barcelona reached a new stage of maturity during the 1920s and 1930s, when the city produced a distinguished group of surrealist artists and a significant school of rationalist architecture. Salvador Dalí burst onto the scene in the 1920s with remarkable contributions not only as a painter, but equally as a critical theorist, dramatist, filmmaker, lecturer, and public provocateur. During this period, Barcelona became the nerve center for

Catalan surrealist groups active from Cadaqués to Lleida. Artists and intellectuals also established numerous associations to promote avant-garde art, none more important than ADLAN (Friends of New Art), which in May 1936 sponsored the critically acclaimed *Logicofobista* (Fear of Logic) exhibition. The origins and development of avant-garde art in Barcelona are examined at length in sections six through nine of this catalogue.

In the late 1920s a collective of socially conscious architecture students from Barcelona, led by Josep Lluís Sert and Josep Torres Clavé, opened up yet another avant-garde front when they united to promote experimental forms of rationalist design (figs. 13 and 14). In 1930 they established GATCPAC (Association of Catalan Architects and Technicians

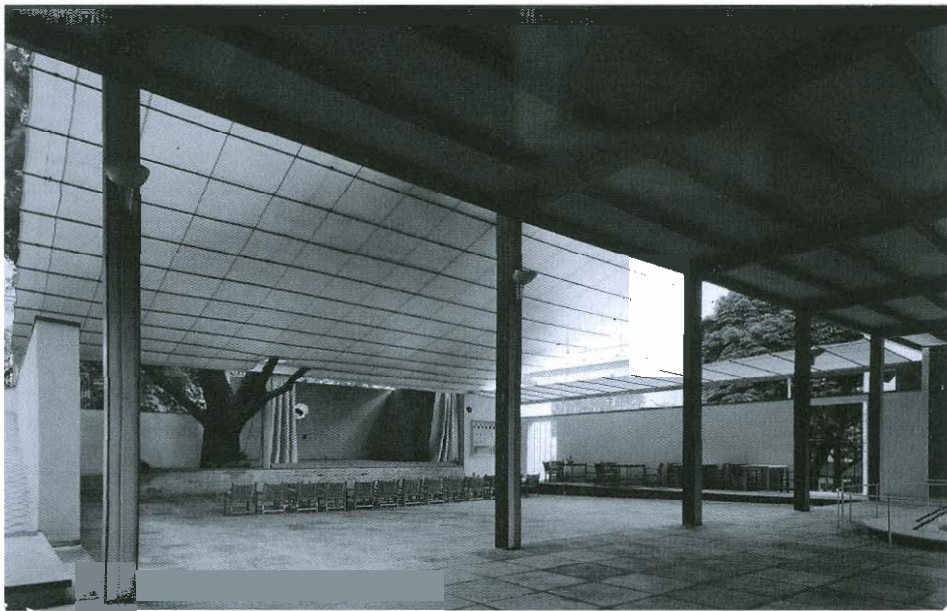


Fig. 13 (cat.8:20). GATCPAC, *Construction of a Dismountable House*, c. 1932, one of eight photographs.

Fig. 14 (cat. 9:20). François Kollar, *Pavilion of the Spanish Republic, Paris International Exposition, 1937, Stage, 1937.*

for Progress in Contemporary Architecture), a group of architects and engineers dedicated to producing inexpensive, mass-produced buildings and furnishings that would relieve social problems, from urban overcrowding to the elimination of epidemic diseases. Section eight of this catalogue is devoted to this phase of rationalist architecture and design.

In retrospect, it seems almost miraculous that avant-garde art developed in Barcelona at a time when cycles of violence repeatedly disrupted the city's economic and social life. One of the most searing outbreaks erupted during the *Setmana Tràgica* (Tragic Week) of July 1909, when Madrid's demand for conscripted troops to fight the colonial war in Spanish Morocco ignited widespread riots in

again. Inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Catalan leftists became increasingly radicalized. In 1917 the anarchist CNT and the socialist UGT labor unions united to organize a national general strike. The government reacted by imposing martial law and using the Civil Guard and army to suppress protests brutally. From 1917 to 1922 Barcelona was racked by waves of street violence, another general strike in 1919, and 809 terrorist assassinations.<sup>24</sup> Anarchists murdered politicians and government officials, and factory owners hired pistoleers to gun down labor leaders in the streets. Thousands were blacklisted, arrested, and sentenced to long prison terms by military tribunals. In 1921 three Catalan anarchists assassinated the prime minister of Spain, Eduardo Dato;



Barcelona. Incensed that the government permitted the affluent to avoid the draft by buying substitutes, rioters attacked trains and vented their wrath against the Catholic Church, widely despised among the working class as a repressive tool of the wealthy. In barely five days mobs burned as many as 56 churches, monasteries, and convents, at times desecrating graves and propping up the mummified corpses of nuns against public buildings (fig. 15). The military responded by shooting hundreds of people in the streets. Scores were arrested and five people executed, including some nonrioters guilty only of espousing radical views.<sup>23</sup> During the decade that followed labor strikes, factory lockouts, assassinations, and reprisal killings erupted time and

two years later the anarchist leader Salvador Seguí was murdered in Barcelona.

Reacting to the chaos, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the captain-general of Catalonia, staged a coup d'état and installed a military dictatorship that ruled Spain from 1923 to 1930. The dictatorship outlawed the anarchist CNT labor union and censored the press. It cracked down on separatist movements by banning the Catalan flag, suppressing the Catalan language, and dissolving Catalonia's autonomous government (the *Mancomunitat*), along with its cultural institutions. Through a combination of political repression and a vast public works program, Primo de Rivera restored enough stability to mount the massive Barcelona International Exposition of 1929.

Fig. 15. Disinterred corpses during the Tragic Week, Barcelona, July 1909, photograph by Branguli.



But only a year later he was forced to resign in the wake of an economic crisis precipitated by escalating federal deficits and the worldwide depression.

In 1930 Spain entered into another turbulent period of unrest and reaction, finally exploding into civil war. After socialists and center-left republicans triumphed in the elections of April 1931, Alfonso XIII, a constitutional monarch allied with the extreme right, tried to persuade army generals to initiate yet another coup d'état, but when they refused, he fled the country.<sup>25</sup> On 14 April the Cortes (national parliament) proclaimed the birth of the Second Spanish Republic, which soon approved a new constitution and controversial measures to redistribute land and reform the military. The new government also restored Catalonia's historic government, the Generalitat, and approved statutes of autonomy for Catalonia and the Basque region. Perhaps the most controversial measures concerned the establishment of strict church-state separation, and by extension, the secularization of education, the recognition of civil marriage, and the legalization of divorce.

The Second Republic's leftward drift set in motion a cycle of increasingly extreme reactions on both the right and left. In July 1936 right-wing military officers staged coordinated mutinies across the country aimed at overthrowing the republic. Led in part by Franco, the rebels, also known as the nationalists, plunged the country into a bloody civil war that ravaged Spain for three years. Throughout the conflict

Barcelona remained a center of ardent, antifascist resistance. Section nine of this catalogue examines how artists affiliated with the city responded to the crisis. By the spring of 1938, Franco and the nationalists had captured most of western Spain and the entire northern coast. In December, Franco launched an offensive against Catalonia, and in January 1939 Barcelona fell to the nationalists, sending half a million refugees across the French border. The heroic resistance in Madrid collapsed in late March, and Franco declared the war over on 1 April 1939.

It is estimated that 500,000 people died in the Spanish civil war, and as many as 300,000 people were driven into permanent exile.<sup>26</sup> After the war, Franco (fig. 16) instituted strict government control over the economy, banned strikes, replaced unions with state-controlled syndicates, prohibited divorce, and made church attendance mandatory. The nationalists censored the press and purged libraries of "incorrect" books. Programs were instituted for "re-Spanishizing" and "re-Christianizing" Catalonia (fig. 17) and the Basque region.<sup>27</sup> Neighbors could report anyone failing to attend Mass. Seeking to crush all separatist movements, Franco abolished the Generalitat and rescinded the Catalan and Basque statutes of autonomy. It became illegal to speak Catalan in public, perform La Sardana (the national dance of Catalonia), or give children Catalan first names. People of all professions, from teachers to priests, were examined and purged for their politi-

Fig. 16. General Franco at a victory parade in Madrid, May 1939.





cal and religious beliefs. Under the Law of Political Responsibilities, enacted by the nationalists in February 1939, it became a crime to have supported the republic, or even to have failed with assisting the nationalists. By the end of 1939 the nationalists had imprisoned more than 270,000 people.<sup>28</sup> Thousands were sentenced by military tribunals and executed—a situation that forced many of Barcelona’s most distinguished artists and intellectuals into exile. The height of the repression lasted into the early 1950s, but censorship and the arrest and torture of political dissidents never disappeared entirely during the “long night” of the Franco dictatorship.<sup>29</sup>

After a period of international condemnation and isolation, Spain began to re-engage with the outside world in the 1950s. In 1953 Franco signed a concordat with the Vatican and an agreement with the United States to provide military bases in exchange for economic aid. The Spanish economy began to revive and grew more rapidly than any other European nation, laying the foundation for the “Spanish miracle” of the 1960s, when industrial production and living standards soared dramatically. Student protests against the dictatorship also erupted, but Franco held tight to reins of power, even after naming the Bourbon heir Juan Carlos his eventual successor.

After Franco’s death in 1975, Juan Carlos ascended the throne and guided the country’s transition to democracy. In 1977 Spain held its first elections in 40 years, and on 11 September of that year Catalans

in Barcelona mounted a massive demonstration for autonomy. A new constitution approved in 1978 recognized the historic rights of the Catalans and Basques, granted Catalonia limited autonomy, and restored the Generalitat. Spain joined the European Community (forerunner of the European Union) in 1986, and the EC recognized Catalan as an official language in 1990.

By the 1990s Barcelona had re-established itself as a thriving industrial and cultural center. Not only was the city’s powerful economy attracting waves of immigrants from rural Spain, but increasingly from other areas of the world. Today, only about 74% of the population speaks and reads Catalan. To assimilate immigrants, the government supports a broad array of programs for teaching and promoting the Catalan language. It is fascinating to compare this solution to the problem of mass immigration with the response of other wealthy, industrialized societies. Yet even while Catalonia embraces immigrants, beneath the surface one senses that “fear of disappearing” prevalent among small nationalities facing an uncertain fate in the age of globalization. By 1996 historian Albert Balcells had already become pessimistic about the European Union’s apparent indifference to the plight of “stateless nations,” that is, nationalities living under the domination of larger, more powerful states. “The solution,” Balcells concludes, “—though it may today appear Utopian—lies in the dissolution of the conventional nation-

Fig. 17. Fascist salute by children at first communion, Barcelona Cathedral, August 1939, photograph by Branguli.



states, nearly all of which are in fact plurinational, and the reconstruction of the historical territories of nations, based on their languages.”<sup>30</sup>

The story of Barcelona’s long, complex relationship with Madrid is far from complete (fig. 18). In 2005 the Catalan parliament approved a measure to revise the statute of autonomy, which, among other things, would increase regional control over taxation and immigration, and require all residents to learn Catalan. A majority in the Catalan parliament now advocate defining Catalonia as a “nation.” Even so, the new legislation does not propose complete separation from Madrid, and the movement for absolute independence remains small and peaceful, bearing little resemblance to the campaign of assassinations and bombings associated with Basque separatism.<sup>31</sup> After heated debate, the statute was approved by the parliament in Madrid, despite fears expressed by some ministers that it will either lead to the dissolution of Spain or revive the old conflicts that gave rise to the civil war.<sup>32</sup> In June 2006 the new statute passed by referendum in Catalonia. Although approved by a margin of 74%, the low turnout of 49% of the electorate has left doubts about the future direction of such movements in Spain.

### *The Future Is the Past*

During the period covered by this exhibition (1868–1939), Barcelona reinvented itself, not merely as a reincarnation of its medieval past, but as a city of immense ambition energized by an insatiable desire for modernity and progress. Today, Barcelona is again that city—dynamic, energetic, open to the world, constantly redefining itself. At the same time, Barcelona remains a place of profound contradictions, where tensions are acutely felt between past and present, northern and Mediterranean attitudes, Catalan *seny* and utopian idealism. No one personified Barcelona’s contradictory spirit more than Gaudí. He was a fervent Catholic and a reactionary Catalan nationalist who built the Expiatory Temple of the Sagrada Família (Holy Family) to atone for the sins of the modern age, yet he created revolutionary architecture of near savage modernity, merging suggestions of primordial nature with designs of indisputable originality that remain controversial to this day. Barcelona’s dynamism seems to spring from this spirit of contradiction, as if the entire culture is imbued with an irresolvable identity crisis: is it a Catalan, Spanish, or European city? And we cannot help but ask, who exactly controls the city’s destiny: the vast working class, the wealthy industrialists, or the intelligentsia?

As Barcelona moves toward a new European and global future, one wonders what will happen to its distinctive Catalan character and language. Will it remain the “elevated dream of perfect love” that García Lorca discovered in the 1920s, a city of “gothic towers and rich urban high tide created by typewriters,” a city of adventuresome spirit and passionate creativity? To an outsider, it appears that the “city of bombs” and the “rose of fire” that was born in the 19th century, while no longer prone to violence, retains its profoundly revolutionary spirit. As Angel Ossorio, the city’s governor during the Tragic Week of 1909, observed: “In Barcelona there is no need to prepare the revolution, simply because it is always ready. It leans out of the window on to the street every day.”<sup>33</sup> Almirall’s proclamation at the First Catalan Congress of 1880 could well be written at the city’s entrance today: “Let our device be ‘Catalonia and Progress’—today, tomorrow, and forever.”<sup>34</sup>

Fig. 18. Demonstration for revising the statute of autonomy, Barcelona, February 2006, photograph by Manu Fernández.

1. During the early decades of the 20th century Americans most commonly associated modern Spanish art with the paintings of Joaquín Sorolla and Ignacio de Zuloaga.
2. The current population of the city of Barcelona is 1.6 million people, the metropolitan area 4.7 million, and Catalonia 7 million.
3. The relationship between each regional government and Madrid varies according to individual agreements made with the central government. "Autonomous" does not mean that the regions are entirely independent of Madrid, only that certain powers are reserved to the regional government. Catalonia is further divided into comarques (roughly equivalent to a county in the U.S.) and municipalities.
4. Barcino never attained the importance of the Roman provincial capital of Tarraco (Tarragona), a seaport about 80 miles south of Barcelona.
5. The exact history of the Counts of Barcelona is a matter of dispute. Some sources cite Sunifred I (d. 848) as the first count of Barcelona and note that Wilfred the Hairy only united a portion of Catalonia. Count Borrell II is credited with breaking the vassalage relationship between the Counts of Barcelona and the Frankish king in 988.
6. Josep Miquel Sobrer observes that there are two ways of defining Catalonia: (1) a narrow definition confined strictly to current, geographical boundaries; and (2) the broader area of the *Països Catalans* (Catalan Countries), consisting of places historically linked to Catalonia and where a significant portion of the residents speak Catalan. The Catalan countries include: Catalonia itself, the Balearic Islands (Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza, Formentera), Valencia, an eastern zone in Aragon, the principality of Andorra, the French region of Languedoc-Rousillon, areas in the French Pyrenees, and part of Sardinia. See Sobrer, *Catalonia: A Self-Portrait* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 4–5.
7. Historians observe that the city's economy had been in decline since the mid 14th century.
8. Ironically, the king and queen greeted Columbus upon his return from America in Barcelona, an event celebrated by the large Columbus monument near the harbor. Although Ferdinand II of Aragon-Catalonia and Isabella of Castile married in 1469 and united their kingdoms in 1479, the regions retained considerable independence. The real blow occurred when Philip V instituted a policy of centralization in 1716 that included abolishing Catalonia's government, along with its historic rights and privileges.
9. E. Allison Peers notes that the 11 September observance dates from 1901; see *Catalonia Infelix* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 142.
10. Juan Diez Medrano, *Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 46–47.
11. Edmondo de Amicis, *Spain and the Spaniards* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1880), 12.
12. Pedro García Faria, *Insalubridad de las viviendas de Barcelona* (Barcelona: J. Balmes Planas, 1890); quoted in Cristina and Eduardo Mendoza's *Barcelona modernista* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1989), 127. All translations by the authors unless otherwise noted.
13. Catalan spelling had not yet been standardized, so variations appear for words such as "Renaixença/Renaixensa."
14. Casa Vicens is dated 1878–85 by Manuel Gausa in Gausa et al., *Barcelona: A Guide to Its Modern Architecture 1860–2002*, trans. Paul Hammon (Barcelona: Actar, 2002), D11; and 1883–88 by H. Kliczkowski in *Gaudi: Complete Works* (Barcelona: Paco Asensio, 2002), 31.
15. One could argue that the Sagrada Família, with its neo-Gothic overtones, is the epitome of Catalan nationalistic architecture.
16. Mercè Doñate and Cristina Mendoza, *Guide, Museu d'Art Modern* (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 1999), 26. It might be argued that Modernisme in painting concluded with Nonell's death in 1911 and in architecture with Gaudí's death in 1926.
17. Judith Campbell Rohrer, "Artistic Regionalism and Architectural Politics in Barcelona, c. 1880–c. 1906" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1984).
18. Valentí Almirall, *Lo catalanisme: motius i solucions científiques y pràctiques* (Barcelona: Llibr. De de Jaume Ballbé y Companyia, 1888), 97, online facsimile through the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes at [www.cervantesvirtual.com](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com).
19. Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth: The Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000; first published 1943), 138.
20. The term, derived from Jean Cocteau's book *Le Rappel à l'ordre* of 1926, describes a classicizing tendency pervasive in French and Italian art of the 1920s that has been interpreted as a reaction of artistic moderation in response to the horrors of World War I.
21. The sculptor Aristides Maillol from Rousillon is often described as a Catalan and a significant precursor to Noucentisme. Around 1902 he began making classicizing sculptures embodying the spirit of ancient Mediterranean civilizations.
22. Gausa et al., *Barcelona: A Guide to Its Modern Architecture*, G:1–13.
23. Different historians record slightly varied statistics for the number of victims and churches burned. See Albert Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 62–63; Brenan, 34–35.
24. Alejandro Sánchez Suarez, ed., *Barcelona, 1888–1929: Modernidad, ambición y conflictos de una ciudad soñada* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2001), 250.
25. Temma Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 166.
26. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Modern Library, 2001; first published 1961), 900–901.
27. Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period*, 189–92.
28. Stanley G. Payne, *The Franco Regime 1936–1975* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 222.
29. According to Balcells, "The military tribunals in Catalonia had 3800 people shot between 1938 and 1953"; see *Catalan Nationalism*, 127. Payne argues that mass executions continued only until 1944; see *The Franco Regime 1936–1975*, 222–23.
30. Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism*, 198.
31. The Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya is the principal party advocating complete independence. Basque separatists of ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom) launched a wave of political assassinations and terrorist violence in the 1960s. The Catalan separatist movement Terra Lliure (Free Land) was established in 1979 and engaged in terrorist tactics for a time, but disbanded in 1995.
32. No Spaniard needs to be reminded that military officers staged a failed coup attempt in 1981. For recent developments see Renwick McLean, "Spain Moves on Law to Give Broad Powers to Catalonia," *New York Times*, 31 March 2006, A: 3 (late edition).
33. Quoted in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Barcelonas*, trans. Andy Robinson (London: Verso, 1992; first published 1990), 87.
34. Translated and quoted in Peers, *Catalonia Infelix*, 128.