

THE ARTISTS OF LES XX: SEEKING AND RESPONDING TO THE LURE OF SPAIN

by

CAROLINE CONZATTI

(Under the Direction of Alisa Luxenberg)

ABSTRACT

The artists' group Les XX existed in Brussels from 1883-1893. An interest in Spain pervaded their member artists, other artists invited to their salons, and the authors associated with the group. This interest manifested itself in a variety of ways, including references to Spanish art and culture in artists' personal letters or writings, in written works such as books on Spanish art or travel and journal articles, and lastly in visual works with overtly Spanish subjects or subjects that exhibited the influence of Spanish art. Many of these examples incorporate stereotypes of Spaniards that had existed for hundreds of years. The work of Goya was particularly interesting to some members of Les XX, as he was a printmaker and an artist who created work containing social commentary.

INDEX WORDS: Les XX, Dario de Regoyos, Henry de Groux, James Ensor, Black Legend, Francisco Lucientes y Goya

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CHAPTER 1

Les XX and Spain: An Introduction

In 1883, a group of twenty Belgian artists created the artist's group, Les XX (Les Vingt or The Twenty) as a forum for their art and beliefs. Over the next ten years, Les XX held annual salons in Brussels that showcased both the work of its members as well as other European and American artists. The members and invited artists ranged from traditional Belgian painters of genre or landscape, such as Jean Delvin, to avant-garde artists whose exhibition with Les XX was their first public display, such as Vincent van Gogh. Les XX professed to be challenging the official triennial Salon in Belgium by having no jury and allowing the artists themselves to plan and install the shows. However, members of the group painted in various artistic styles and held differing political beliefs, making any true cohesive program impossible. Perhaps it is not surprising that in such a diverse group, one that had no dominant artistic style or goal beyond challenging the establishment, disagreements tore asunder the original twenty after only a few years.

The circle of Les XX included not only visual artists, but musicians and writers as well. One of the commonalities between many members of Les XX was their interest in Spanish art and culture. This collective interest in Spain manifested itself in different ways, from books on Spanish art and travel to paintings that reflect the macabre art of Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. Two writers who were part of Les XX's circle were Lucien Solvay and Émile Verhaeren both of whom published books on Spain; Solvay wrote *L'Art Espagnol* (1887) and Verhaeren published *Viaje a la España Negra (Journey to Black Spain)* (1899) with Dario de Regoyos, the one

Spanish Vingtiste. Many of these artists traveled to Spain, created there, and wrote of their experiences. Through the numerous articles on Spain that appeared in *L'Art Moderne*, a periodical that trumpeted Les XX, it is evident that the journal's editors encouraged and fostered this interest.

Spain, whose rulers had once governed Belgium, leading to centuries of political and artistic exchange between the two countries, became a particular source of inspiration for many of the Vingtistes. Little has been written, however, about their collective interest in Spain and Spanish art. The centennial anniversary in 1983 of the group's founding appears to have rekindled interest in Les XX among scholars. The major publications on Les XX, such as Jane Block's *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism, 1868-1894* (1984) and the exhibition catalog *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde Prints, Drawings, and Books ca. 1890* (1992), edited by Stephen Goddard, provide information on the group's formation, including the socio-political environment of the time, its exhibition activities, and selection of members.¹ In these studies, however, there are few, if any references to the group's interest in Spanish art and culture or how it affected their own art.

The most direct link between Les XX and Spain lies with Regoyos, one of the group's founding members, himself a Spaniard, whose presence and practice contributed to his fellow Vingtistes' interest in his native country. As for Regoyos, some scholarship exists, but it primarily discusses the artist's role in Spanish Impressionism and not his role within Les XX.² While some of the Vingtistes and the group's *invités* created canvases depicting stereotypically Spanish subjects, two of the Belgian artists particularly admired Spanish art, specifically that of

¹ Jane Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-gardism, 1868-1894* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1984) and Stephen H. Goddard, ed., *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde Prints, Drawings, and Books ca. 1890* (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1992).

² See for example, *Diario De Regoyos 1857-1913* (Madrid: Fundación Caja de Pensiones, 1986).

Goya, and incorporated it into their own work to create new and exciting pictures. These two Vingtistes, Henry de Groux and James Ensor, deserve study for their appropriations from Goya's prints to create works that reflect their own respective socio-political situations in Brussels.

While the interest in Spanish art and artists of certain Vingtistes is sometimes mentioned in the existing scholarship, it is done so almost exclusively in passing, without in-depth study of the artists' writings or visual work. Little has been written about de Groux and his career, with the exception of a few articles, such as the two by Nancy Davenport.³ In the literature on Ensor, probably the most studied artist of Les XX, most scholars make reference to his imagery as Goyesque or quickly compare his work to Goya's without elaborating, as does Stephen Eisenman.⁴ A few scholars have made more thorough comparisons, such as Françoise Garcia, whose comparison of Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* and Ensor's *Démons me turlupinant* (*Demons teasing me*) will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.⁵ Although Ensor's pictures of skeletons and masks contain imagery similar to that of the Spanish master, no scholar has attempted to discuss these parallels fully.

By examining these writings and works, particularly those of Regoyos, de Groux, and Ensor, we can uncover the Vingtistes' imagery of Spain and how these artists imagined and were inspired by Spanish art and culture. I propose to argue that the historical ties between the two countries and the resonance that the Vingtistes found between their own social and political

³ Nancy Davenport, "Christ aux Outrages by Henry de Groux: Fin de Siècle Religion, Art Criticism, and the Sociology of the Crowd," *Religion and the Arts* 7, no. 3 (September 2003): 275-298 and "Henry De Groux, the Great War and the Apocalypse," *Print Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (June 2002): 147-169.

⁴ In his article, "Allegory and Anarchism in James Ensor's *Apparition: Vision Preceding Futurism*," *Record of the Art Museum (Princeton University)* 46, no. 1 (1987): 15-16, Stephen Eisenman compares Goya's plate 43 of *Los Caprichos*, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, with Ensor's *Apparition*: "Like Goya's capriccio no. 43, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, Ensor's *Apparition* represents the dialectic of imagination in a modern age of reason: his dream of revelation and utopian light appears inseparable from the nightmarish prospect of apocalypse and death."

⁵ Françoise Garcia, "La postérité de Goya au XIX^e siècle et dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle," in *Goya, Hommages*, edited by Francis Ribemont, (Bordeaux: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1998), 135-70.

situations in Belgium and that of Goya in Spain made Spanish subjects and art an attractive and significant artistic source for their own artistic expression.

CHAPTER 2

The Formation and Ideals of Les XX within Its Socio-Political Context

After rule by the Austrian Hapsburgs from 1715-1794, France from 1794 to 1815, and then the Netherlands, Belgium finally became an independent state in 1831 under the constitutional monarchy of Leopold I. Leopold II, who reigned from 1865-1909, faced ever increasing domestic problems, problems that led factions of the populace to engage in socialism, anarchism, and radicalism.⁶ The country's rapid industrialization during the first half of the nineteenth century paid workers low wages and forced them to work long hours. The ruling class in Belgium at the time was not troubled by this exploitation of the working class, many of whom had left their homes in the countryside in search of work in the newly industrial cities.⁷ Workers organized numerous labor strikes in the country between 1886 and 1894. In 1886, "l'année terrible," or "the terrible year," the situation worsened, forcing the government to investigate labor conditions. Three years later, the first labor legislation was passed, which went into effect in 1892. The following year, universal male suffrage was granted, although it was weighted according to class, granting extra votes to the wealthy. At the same time, despite the freedoms afforded to the populace by the liberal government, Belgium experienced *le mouvement flamand*, the Flemish movement, an essentially conservative movement that elevated Flemish to equal importance with the official French language. In 1884, the Catholic party, a

⁶ Alexander Murphy and Carl Strikwerda, "Brussels and the Belgian Avant-Garde in Historical and Geographical Perspective," in Goddard, *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde Prints, Drawings, and Books ca. 1890*, 21.

⁷ Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "Belgium at the Turn of the Century: A Very International Nationalism" in *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe* (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1995), 266.

conservative faction and champion of *le mouvement flamand*, had achieved a majority in parliament over the Liberal party.

It was in this climate of political and social unrest that Les XX formed. Les XX's confrontation with the art establishment parallels the attempt of the working class to fight the government for better treatment from industry. Just as numerous political groups of the 1880s attempted to change all facets of society, Les XX sought to transform the relationship between the various forms of art, such as painting, music, and the decorative arts.⁸

Les XX was not the first such group in Belgium, however; the history of Belgian avant-garde artist groups begins in 1868 with the formation of La Société Libre des Beaux-Arts (The Free Society of Fine Arts).⁹ Constantin Meunier (1831-1905) and Charles de Groux (1825-1870), two Belgian Realist artists, founded the S.L.B.A. as a reaction against the official triennial Salons held in Belgium and the conservative academic artists who were celebrated there.¹⁰ Meunier would become a frequent exhibitor with Les XX, and de Groux's son Henry would become a Vingtiste in 1887. The group's champion, the author and critic Camille Lemonnier (1844-1913), later described its goal "[to] make painting healthy and strong, without striving for effect or using recipes; [to] return to the true meaning of painting, loved not for its subject but for its material elements, rich like some precious substance, like a living organism."¹¹ By the mid-1870s however, their Realist style was accepted in the Salons, rendering them part of the arts establishment, and the loosely-formed S.L.B.A., which had held independent exhibitions, but never published a catalog or a list of members, dissolved after its exhibition of 1872.

⁸ Murphy and Strikwerda, "Brussels and the Belgian Avant-Garde," 22.

⁹ See Block, *Les XX*, for a more detailed discussion of the avant-garde movement in Belgium.

¹⁰ The Triennial Salons in Belgium were held alternately in Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent. Ghent and Antwerp were more interested in celebrating the Flemish artistic past, whereas French-speaking Brussels was home to various international influences where artists sought a new modern art. Block, *Les XX*, xiii.

Many of the S.L.B.A.'s former members then formed La Chrysalide (The Chrysalis, the cocoon stage of a butterfly's development), which existed from 1875 to 1881. This group organized exhibitions of their members' work and published catalogs and a weekly art periodical supporting their cause.¹² Meunier was a member, as were the future Vingtistes Périclès Pantazis (1849-1884) and Félicien Rops (1833-1898). Another group, L'Essor (The Blossoming), also challenged the authority of the Salon at the same time as La Chrysalide. L'Essor had its first show in 1876 and was active until 1891. Although it was avant-garde in that its members were trying to separate themselves from the art establishment, its shows emulated the Salon in their use of a jury to select and hang works, and many of their members were considered too conservative by the more radical members. Like the earlier avant-garde groups, L'Essor also included members who would become Vingtistes, among them Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921) and Willy Finch (1854-1930).

Many of L'Essor's conservative artists were not from Brussels, but from more politically conservative Flemish-speaking areas of Belgium. As a result of the increased political tension in the 1880s between the liberal Francophone camp and the conservative Flemish speaking one that supported *le mouvement flamand*, the artistic division between Flemish-speaking Antwerp and French-speaking Brussels widened. Splintering off from L'Essor, a group of more liberal French-speaking artists formed Les XX in 1883 when they published an announcement of their association and a list of their members. This new association rejected the hierarchy of L'Essor, which was run by an elected committee of twenty members who enforced the group's forty-eight

¹¹ Camille Lemonnier, *L'École Belge de Peinture, 1830-1905* (Brussels: G. Van Oest, 1906), 144, quoted in Philippe Roberts-Jones, "Belgium as a Crossroads" in *Belgian Art, 1880-1914* (Brooklyn: the Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1980), 12.

¹² Block, *Les XX*, 4.

rules.¹³ In Les XX, three members would organize their annual independent exhibitions; each year, these three would be chosen through a lottery and would be assisted by the group's secretary. The first secretary was the art critic Lucien Solvay (1851-1950), although he held the post only briefly. He was replaced by Octave Maus (1856-1919), who would continue to drive the activities of both Les XX and its subsequent organization, La Libre Esthétique, for the next thirty years.¹⁴ In addition to annual salons, Les XX, like L'Essor before it, also held lectures on art and concerts at their exhibitions, enforcing their belief that various arts were interrelated.

Maus was a lawyer, art collector, and critic of the arts, both visual and musical. He was also an amateur piano player and avid follower of Wagner. His law specialty was copyright law and the legal rights of artists; he worked in the Brussels Appeals Court, providing him with close ties to various government officials.¹⁵ He, along with Edmond Picard (1836-1924), another lawyer, collector and critic, founded the weekly art journal *L'Art Moderne* in 1881. This publication became the mouthpiece of Les XX after its formation. Émile Verhaeren (1855-1916) joined Maus and Picard on the journal's editorial committee in 1888. The journal and the artists' group had a symbiotic relationship; Les XX expressed its ideals on the printed page, and the journal publicized the group's activities and garnered support for it.¹⁶

In January 1884, Maus drew up an official charter for Les XX. The twenty original members signed, giving Maus authority as their secretary. All but two of the original members were Belgian; Dario de Regoyos (1857-1913), a Spaniard, was one of those two. The group's structure allowed for the Vingtistes to invite other artists to exhibit with them. Over the years,

¹³ It was with irony that Les XX named themselves after this group of twenty ruling members.

¹⁴ The last exhibition of La Libre Esthétique was in 1914.

¹⁵ Susan M. Canning, "'Soyons Nous': Les XX and the Cultural Discourse of the Belgian Avant-Garde," in Goddard, *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde Prints, Drawings, and Books ca. 1890*, 38.

¹⁶ See chapter four of Block's *Les XX* for a detailed look at the relationship between Les XX and *L'Art Moderne*.

these *invités* included artists from ten European countries (including Belgium) and the United States. Les XX's first exhibition opened in February 1884 and was a success both critically and financially, drawing large crowds. Short but positive reviews appeared in the press until *L'Art Moderne* began publishing its own articles on the show. Its February 10 issue declared that the exhibition was the beginning of a revolution against the official art world. Although the article was unsigned, Picard and Maus are known to have written most of the art criticism for the journal. The article is, in fact, a shortened version of a lecture that Picard had already given to the group, making his authorship of it almost certain.¹⁷ In the article, he criticized the government, the press, and the public's reaction to avant-garde art, and deliberately antagonized other journalists by exaggerating the negative reaction to the first exhibition. After this article's appearance, the mainstream press began to condemn Les XX and countered Picard's characterization of the group as revolutionary by emphasizing that the group and some individual members had received support from the government.¹⁸

Picard was a staunch socialist and at least one twentieth-century scholar has regarded his manifesto on electoral reform of 1866 as the beginning of Belgian socialism.¹⁹ He believed that the arts could be used for social change and that, in order to be truly great, a work of art must reflect the society in which it was created. He wanted art to be simple and real so that the greatest number of people could understand and appreciate it, thereby facilitating positive social change.²⁰ Although a socialist like Picard, Maus was not publicly involved in politics.

Just as Picard and Maus were both socialists, many of the Vingtistes also leaned to the

¹⁷ Block, *Les XX*, 23. Block states that the article "was certainly written by [Picard]."

¹⁸ The exhibition was held in rooms lent by the government and many of the individual artists had won medals at the official Belgian triennial Salon and had their work acquired by national collections.

¹⁹ Alex Pasquier, *Edmond Picard* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1945), 23 cited in Block, *Les XX*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

left politically. Many of them thought of their group and their art as having political and social ramifications. Their attempt at social change through art branded them as *anarchiste* both in the press and by Maus himself.²¹ Although overt political references either in the lectures or in subjects of the work shown at its exhibitions were rare, the group's support of the most controversial artistic styles in Belgium was indicative of their radical political stance. Picard, for example, defended Impressionism in *L'Art Moderne* in 1886 by stating that it was part of human progress and could not be denied.²² Over the years, Les XX supported not only Impressionism, but also Post-Impressionism and Symbolism.

Another way in which the group's socialist leanings manifested themselves was in its embrace of the decorative arts. Following William Morris's criticism of the Industrial Revolution and the need for a return to handmade crafts, many of the Vingtistes began to create and exhibit such art forms.²³ Morris's writings were inspirational to several Vingtistes, including Finch, Khnopff, and Henry Van de Velde (1863-1957).²⁴ An article in *L'Art Moderne* stated that these artists believed, as did Morris, that the incorporation of art into everyday life would break down the existing class system and bring about a "new social order."²⁵

L'Art Moderne insisted that membership itself in Les XX was an act of revolution.²⁶ Not all of the group's members, however, wanted to revolt as Maus and Picard did, and almost as

²¹ Ibid., 37. Block cites two caricatures from *Le Patriote Illustré* of 1892 that satirize works by Vingtistes, underscoring their decadent and socialist content.

²² "It is the last turn of the wheel in this vast mesh of gears, always moving, which no human force can arrest; it is as silly to attack as it is absurd to deny." Edmond Picard, "L'Impressionisme," *L'Art Moderne* (21 February 1886), 57, cited and translated by Block, *Les XX*, 38.

²³ William Morris exhibited his Kelmscott Press books in La Libre Esthétique's exhibition of 1894.

²⁴ Block, *Les XX*, 39. Canning explains that Finch, Khnopff and Georges Lemmen (1865-1916) all had contact with England. Finch traveled to London in 1885, where he met Whistler and suggested him both as an *invité* and for membership. Khnopff began to exhibit in England in 1886 and became familiar with the contemporary British art world. Lemmen was also interested in British art and recommended contemporary British artists as *invités*. Canning, "Soyons Nous," 37.

²⁵ "L'Art et Socialisme," *L'Art Moderne* (30 August 1891), 276 cited by Block, *Les XX*, 39.

²⁶ Ibid., 38.

quickly as the group formed, members began resigning in order to avoid the double-edged sword of criticism by the conservative press for being radical and by fellow Vingtistes for being too conservative. After members resigned, other artists were nominated and elected by the remaining members to fill the vacancies. Les XX attempted to attract artists from all over Belgium, although artists from the Antwerp area tended to be less interested in new artistic movements and hence, generally were not selected.²⁷ In 1886, Jean Delvin (1853-1922), one of the original twenty, resigned after the group rejected one of his paintings for their annual exhibition, claiming that it represented “old-fashioned art.”²⁸ The remaining conservative member also left in 1886, ending Les XX’s diversity of more radical and more conservative artists.

Until 1889, Les XX continued to elect mostly younger Belgian artists, although the thought of creating a national school was antithetical to their concept of an avant-garde.²⁹ In 1889, they elected to membership the French artist Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), who had already twice been an *invité*. Despite their interest in Spanish art, no Spanish artists, other than Regoyos, were invited to exhibit or join.

After ten years, the group held its last exhibition in 1893. It appears that Les XX believed it had accomplished its mission of challenging the official art world and, therefore, no longer needed to exist. Verhaeren wrote in *La Nation* on February 26, 1893, during Les XX’s final exhibition, “The influence of Les XX has been so profound and successful that tomorrow it could cease to exist, without great harm—its goal seems already attained.”³⁰ Rather than risk decline, it was decided that the group should disband at the height of its success. In April, *L’Art*

²⁷ Ibid., 46.

²⁸ “Les Vingt,” *L’Art Moderne* (8 February 1885), 43 cited in translation by Block, *Les XX*, 47.

²⁹ Ibid., 48.

³⁰ Émile Verhaeren, “Les XX,” *La Nation* (26 February 1893) cited and translated by Block, *Les XX*, 75.

Moderne published a list of all the artists who had participated in Les XX and extolled their accomplishments. By July of that year, Maus had moved on and created La Libre Esthétique.

Chapter 3

Hispano-Flemish History and the Nineteenth-Century Interest in Spain and Spanish Art

Artists of Les XX, while innovative in their depictions, were not the first European, or even Belgian artists to portray Spanish subjects or to incorporate their interest in Spanish art into their own work. Such exchanges, at least for Belgium, began almost 400 years earlier, when the two countries became linked politically. The history of the relationship between Spain and Belgium dates back to the early sixteenth century, when Carlos I became the king of Spain in 1516, three years before becoming the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.³¹ As he was born and raised in Ghent, he did not speak Spanish upon taking the throne and made Brussels both his capital and his home. Despite his own Catholic belief, he allowed Protestantism in the lowlands. His son Philip II, who did not hold the same region in such high regard, succeeded him as king in 1556. Soon after Philip's ascent to the throne, economic and Protestant uprisings began in the lowlands, causing him to send 20,000 Spanish troops to quell the disturbances. The invasion of the Spanish troops led to the Council of Troubles, also known as the Council of Blood, during which many people were murdered and even more were banished or had their property confiscated. The Council of Troubles was the beginning of a war between Spain and the lowlands that began in 1568 and raged until 1648. When the war ended, the Southern Low Countries, including Belgium, remained under control of the Spanish Hapsburgs until 1700.

With Spanish authority over Belgium, paintings of the Low Countries were amassed and incorporated into Spanish collections, both royal collections and those belonging to nobles who

³¹ See J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts, eds., *History of the Low Countries*, translated by James C. Kennedy (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999) for more on the history of Belgium.

wished to emulate their king. Charles V employed a Flemish portraitist, Anthonis Mor, and Philip II collected Flemish paintings with fervor, creating the core of the Prado Museum's collection of sixteenth-century Flemish paintings.³² Later Spanish royalty continued to collect paintings by Flemish masters, including works by Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and Peter Paul Rubens. In addition to the works in Madrid, Flemish paintings were commissioned for various churches and collections across the country, including Cádiz, Grenada, Toledo, Segovia, and Seville.

Artistic exchange between Spain and the rest of Europe did not only consist of the Spanish interest in foreign painting, but also in foreigners' interest in the art and culture of this southern land. Although foreigners had been traveling to Spain before the nineteenth century, it was during the 1800s that the number of such travelers and their accounts greatly increased. With the beginning of the Spanish railroad system at mid-century, travel became easier and less expensive, hence more accessible to more people.³³ The conditions for travelers remained notoriously unsatisfactory, and those who braved the journey often complained of exaggeratedly poor food and lodgings.³⁴ For those who did not venture to the country themselves, the nineteenth century also saw an increase in published materials about Spain and its art. In 1816, the first French dictionary of Spanish painters was published, Frédéric Quilliet's *Dictionnaire des peintres espagnols*. The work discussed many Spanish artists of the past and remained the standard French language reference on Spanish painters for most of the nineteenth century.³⁵

³² *Paintings of the Prado* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1994), 352-53. See also *La Peinture Flamande au Prado* (Anvers: Fond Mercator, 1989).

³³ Alisa Luxenberg, "Over the Pyrenees and Through the Looking-Glass: French Culture Reflected in Its Imagery of Spain," in *Spain, Espagne, Spanien: Foreign Artists Discover Spain 1800-1900* (New York: The Equitable Gallery in association with The Spanish Institute, 1993), 13.

³⁴ See Luxenberg's article for details of these conditions. Also see Verhaeren's series of articles in *L'Art Moderne*, 1888 for the benefits of such travel despite its hardships.

³⁵ Ilse Hempel Lipschutz, "Goya and the French Romantics," in Gary Tinterow and Geneviève Lacambre, eds., *Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003),

Alexandre de Laborde's *Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne* (1806-20) was the first illustrated guide to Spain in French.³⁶

Although Belgians, including the artists of Les XX, may very well have had access to these French language publications, numerous books on Spain, both contemporary and historical, also were published in Brussels during the 1800s. Some of these works dealt with the shared history of the two countries, specifically the life and campaigns of Charles V. The interest in Spain was not strictly historical, and as early as the 1830s and 1840s, travelogues of contemporary Spain began to be published in Brussels, including Théophile Gautier's *Un voyage en Espagne: vaudeville en trois actes*, published in 1843 and Alexandre Dumas's *L'Espagne, le Maroc et l'Algérie*, published in 1848.

In tandem with such publications, more artists began to travel to Spain in search of the country of legend. Many of these foreigners sought out only those places and attractions that were well ensconced in the European lore of Spain, such as the Alhambra, and did not attempt to learn about contemporary Spaniards and their country. Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), whose interest in Spain and in Goya in particular has been well established,³⁷ visited Spain briefly in 1832, while on a government mission to Morocco and Algeria. He described one town he visited not through his own observations, but through the filter of Goya's art, writing, "All of Goya was palpitating around me."³⁸ While there, he completed only landscapes and sketches of contemporary costume, scenes that he would use later, when appropriate, in his few Spanish

162. Tinterow stated that the *Dictionnaire* was "little more than a revised translation of Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez's 1800 *Diccionario histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las bellas artes en España*." Gary Tinterow, "Raphael Replaced: The Triumph of Spanish Painting in France," in *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶ Luxenberg, "Over the Pyrenees and Through the Looking-Glass," 15.

³⁷ See Tinterow and Lacambre for a more in-depth discussion of Delacroix and Spain.

³⁸ Eugène Delacroix, *Correspondance générale d'Eugène Delacroix* Volume 5, ed., André Joubin (Paris, 1936-8), 200, quoted in translation by Lipschutz, "Goya and the French Romantics," 167.

subjects.³⁹ Probably the most well-known nineteenth-century French artist to have traveled in Spain was Édouard Manet (1832-1883), who only briefly visited the country in 1865, but was painting Spanish subjects, actors, dancers, and bullfighters, both before and after his trip, though less frequently afterward. In addition to its mention in artists' and authors' voyages to Spain, Spanish art was brought to France in January 1838 when Louis-Philippe opened the Galerie Espagnole in the Louvre museum in Paris. Over four hundred Spanish paintings were on display in the museum until it closed in January 1849. With the Galerie Espagnole, the existence of the Spanish school of painting was no longer debated in France.⁴⁰

Francophone Belgium, however, had no such institutions, making the nineteenth-century Belgian interest in Spanish art more difficult to establish and document. By the 1880s, Spain had become a fairly common travel destination for Belgian artists. For example, Delvin, the conservative Vingtiste mentioned earlier, traveled to Spain during his education tour of Europe, which presumably would have taken place in the 1870s.

One of the most important figures of artistic exchange between the two countries during the nineteenth century is Carlos de Haes (1826-1898). Though Belgian by birth, de Haes moved to Spain with his family around age ten and began his artistic education with the Spanish court painter Luis de la Cruz y Ríos.⁴¹ In 1850, he returned to Belgium and studied with the landscape painter Joseph Quineaux before beginning his travels throughout Europe. He returned to Spain in 1855 and became a naturalized Spaniard. Soon afterward, he began to exhibit his landscapes in his adopted country where they were very well received. These landscapes are generally loosely painted views of the ordinary Spanish countryside. By 1861, he was a teacher at the

³⁹ Luxenberg, "Over the Pyrenees and Through the Looking-Glass," 17.

⁴⁰ Tinterow, "Raphael Replaced," 38.

⁴¹ Oscar E. Vázquez, "Carlos de Haes," *Grove Art Online*, Oxford University Press, <www.groveart.com> (13 May 2005).

national fine arts school, the Academia de San Fernando in Madrid, and incorporated *plein air* painting, the most modern method to date, into his lessons. He depicted the Spanish countryside for the entirety of his career, as seen in *View of Madrid*, c.1855-65 (figure 1). He also continued to teach at the Academia, training a generation of Spanish painters, including Regoyos.

Despite centuries of cultural exchange between the two countries, most nineteenth-century Belgian depictions of Spain remained true to the stereotypes of the Black Legend and took from Spanish art only what were seen as traditional Spanish subjects or its traditionally dark palette. The Black Legend, or *La Leyenda Negra*, that influenced so many depictions of Spain both in the visual arts and literature, was created in the sixteenth century, during the Spanish colonization of the New World. The Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas wrote an account of the treatment of the natives that he saw while in the West Indies as a missionary. He published his work on the subject in 1542, *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (*A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*). De las Casas's text was a plea to Charles V to improve the Spanish treatment of the natives, and that same year reforms were enacted.

Despite the reforms put into place by the Spanish authorities, foreigners began to acquire de las Casas's work and use it as evidence to endorse negative stereotypes of Spaniards as, in the words of modern historian Joseph Sánchez, "uniquely cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, lazy, violent, treacherous and depraved."⁴² The Spanish government was seen as authoritarian and the Spanish people as intolerant Catholic zealots as demonstrated by the Inquisition.⁴³ A French edition of de las Casas's work was published as early as 1620 and new translations were published in other

⁴² Joseph P. Sánchez, *The Spanish Black Legend: Origins of Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: National Park Service, Spanish Colonial Research Center, 1990), 7.

⁴³ Charles Gibson, ed, *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 18-21.

countries during periods of increased anti-Spanish sentiment.⁴⁴ One of the sources of this hostility towards Spain was the Protestant Reformation begun in 1517, which Spain resisted more strongly than other European countries. Spanish Catholicism thus became a target for attack and stereotype, even by people in other primarily Catholic European countries. The Black Legend persisted into the nineteenth century, with contemporary Spain viewed and backward, decadent, and unable to progress with the rest of Europe.⁴⁵

One such artist who propagated the Black Legend in his work was Frans Kaspar Huibrecht Vinck (1827-1903), a Belgian painter known for history paintings, genre scenes, and portraits.⁴⁶ In June 1883, *L'Art Moderne* briefly mentioned an exhibition of paintings of the Spanish Inquisition by Vinck in order to condemn the pictures, which were displayed at a merchant's stall, as "intolerably painted."⁴⁷ The author criticizes both the horrific subject matter and the technique, and suggests that the artist's time may have been better spent working on other projects. Vinck's series consisted of nineteen canvases that spanned the activities of the Inquisition beginning with *Apprehending and House Searching* and ending with *The Auto-de-fé*. Seven of the canvases, such as *The Scourging* (figure 2), included graphic torture scenes.⁴⁸ As

⁴⁴ Sánchez, *The Spanish Black Legend*, 11. Sánchez notes, for example, that an American edition was published in 1898 during the Spanish-American war.

⁴⁵ See Julián Juderías's definition of the Black Legend as quoted in Philip Wayne Powell, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), 11.

⁴⁶ Emmanuel Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs, et graveurs des tous les temps et des tous les pays par une groupe d'écrivains spécialistes français et étrangers*, Volume 14 (Paris: Grund, 1999), 270.

⁴⁷ "odieusement brossées." "L'Inquisition espagnole par M. Vinck," *L'Art Moderne* 3, no. 24 (17 June 1883): 192. All translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁸ J.A. Maloney, *The Inquisition in Spain in the XVIth Century* (New York: Spanish Art Syndicate, 1927). The series was exhibited in 1927 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and another location in New York City, and this pamphlet was published to accompany these exhibitions. The owner of the paintings, J.A. Maloney, stated that the works had been shown in 1883 and that the exhibition was "disastrous because of religious sentiment and was closed after four days." The catalog reproduced each painting and included a description of each activity, including details such as the measurements of the cells of the dungeons where prisoners were kept and detailed descriptions of each torture represented.

the editors of *L'Art Moderne* recognized, these paintings reinforced stereotypes of Spanish cruelty propagated by the Black Legend.

Many Belgian nineteenth-century artists painted historical scenes of Spain, particularly those involving Charles V.⁴⁹ One such painter is Louis Gallait (1810-1887) who completed his monumental canvas, *L'Abdication de Charles Quint (The Abdication of Charles V)* (figure 3) in 1841. The painting was widely admired when first shown that year in the Paris Salon.⁵⁰ Of the more than one hundred figures in Gallait's painting, many are identifiable, as Gallait studied previous depictions of the event from a variety of sources and completed numerous sketches in order to create a convincing scene to the public.⁵¹ Even this peaceful scene supports the Black Legend; Charles V is shown abdicating his throne in order to devote himself to monastic life, enforcing the stereotype of Spaniards as religious zealots.

One Vingtiste whose works reinforce Spanish cultural stereotypes is the *invité* Meunier, the Belgian painter and sculptor, who exhibited with the group four times, in 1885, 1887, 1889, and 1892. While visiting Spain in 1882-83, Meunier painted many pictures of figures and activities then commonly associated with Spain, such as dancers, a cigarette factory, bull fighting, and religious processions.⁵² Two such examples are *Scène de cabaret à Séville/Café del Buzero (Cabaret scene in Seville/Café del Buzero)* 1882-83 (figure 4) and *Procession du silence*,

⁴⁹ See Robert Hoozee, ed., *Mise-en-scène: Keizer Karel en de verbeelding van de negentiende eeuw* (Gent: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1999) for examples beyond that discussed here.

⁵⁰ Baron Serge Le Bailly de Tillegem, *Louis Gallait (1810-1887): La Gloire d'un romantique* (Bruxelles: Crédit Communal, 1987), 118. Chapter 4 in this book deals wholly with Gallait's *L'Abdication de Charles Quint*.

⁵¹ There were both Belgian and foreign historical accounts of the event available to Gallait. As for visual sources, Le Bailly de Tillegem cites five images, including engravings, a tapestry in Brussels City Hall, and a painting that appeared in the Brussels Salon of 1836. Ibid., 124-126.

⁵² The on-line catalog of the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique lists nine paintings with Spanish subjects by Meunier all done during his trip to Seville. "Constantin Meunier," *Catalogue des Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, 2005, <http://www.opac-fabritius.be/fr/F_database.htm> (15 April 2005).

Séville (Silent Procession, Seville) 1882-83 (figure 5). *Scène de cabaret à Séville* shows the gypsy dance, *el jaleo*.⁵³ This dance was clearly one with which Europeans were fascinated and associated with Spain, most likely because it combined two typically Spanish elements—music and gypsies. Americans also expressed interest in this dance, most notably in John Singer Sargent's *El Jaleo* of 1882, shown in the French Salon of the same year. Meunier's other work, *Procession du silence*, depicts a country that is entrenched in Spanish Catholicism and recalls the Inquisition in the hooded costumes of the figures.

Théo van Rysselberghe (1862-1926), a founding member of Les XX, also depicted common Spanish subjects. He made his first trip to Spain and Morocco in 1882 with Regoyos and two other artist friends. He contributed canvases from this trip to the L'Essor exhibition of April 1883 (figure 6), along with Regoyos and Charlet,⁵⁴ and also to a March 1883 solo exhibition held in Ghent of paintings from his trip.⁵⁵ In the *L'Art Moderne* review of the solo exhibition, a partial copy after Velázquez's *Balthazar Carlos à cheval* (*Balthazar Charles on horseback*) is mentioned (figure 7).

Van Rysselberghe reportedly returned from a subsequent trip with Regoyos to the two countries in 1885 with many canvases that he had painted while traveling.⁵⁶ But he adopted Spanish subjects even prior to his travels to the country, as is shown in his 1881 canvas, *Jeune*

⁵³ The *jaleo* is a type of Andalusian dance, most often performed by a single female; it can also refer to the sounds made by the audience to accompany a flamenco performance. Matteo, *The language of Spanish dance: a dictionary and reference manual* 2nd ed. (Hightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Co., 2003), 121.

⁵⁴ "Théo Van Rysselberghe—Franz Charlet—Dario de Regoyos," *L'Art Moderne* 3, no. 14 (8 April 1883): 112. Also included in the L'Essor show were at least six other works by van Rysselberghe, including *Dario de Regoyos de profil*, one landscape, *Paysage près de Madrid*, three Spanish street views, *Rue à Madrid (de mon balcon)*, *Porte à Tolède*, and *Rastro*, *la ruelle de San Juan de Dios à Madrid*, and a painting of a beggar, *Mendiant de Castille*, all of which are reproduced in Feltkamp. Some of these works are visible in figure 6. Ronald Feltkamp, *Théo van Rysselberghe* (Bruxelles: Éditions Racine, 2003), 249.

⁵⁵ "L'Art à Gant, Festival Massenet.—Exposition Van Rysselberghe.—Nouvelles Artistiques," *L'Art Moderne* 3, no. 12 (25 March 1883): 95-97.

⁵⁶ Madeleine Octave Maus, *Trente années de lutte pour l'art, 1884-1914* (Bruxelles: Librairie L'Oiseau blue, 1926), 35.

Gitane de face or *Espagnole* (*Young Gypsy facing the viewer* or *Spanish Woman*) (figure 8), which is his first known work with an overtly Spanish subject.⁵⁷ The work is full of what would have been recognized as Spanish attributes including the *mantilla*, fan, earrings, and flower behind the ear. Van Rysselberghe exhibited *Alhambra de Grénade* (figure 9) in Les XX's Salon of 1884, along with five other works, four of which had orientalist subjects, reflecting his travels in North Africa.⁵⁸ Despite his personal exploration of Spain, many of these works display subjects that were part of the European myth of Spain, a kind of Spanish Orientalism that reflected the stereotypes of the Black Legend.⁵⁹

Although the list of Belgian pictures of Spanish subjects is long, certain Vingtistes moved beyond stereotypical subjects such as Vinck's, or historical subjects like Gallait's. Although those Belgian artworks would have been known to artists such as Ensor and de Groux, they instead chose to incorporate more of their personal experiences with the modern world into their images. Whereas some of their predecessors chose Spanish subjects, these artists were inspired by Spanish art, particularly that of Goya, to configure more modern subjects. Their appropriation of Spanish art in this way expresses a more independent and expressive adoption of a Spanish source than those images that depict already accepted and popular Spanish subjects.

⁵⁷ Van Rysselberghe had completed another painting of a gypsy the year before, in 1880, but did not specify the gypsy's nationality; the same is true of another canvas of a gypsy that he also painted in 1881. Although gypsies were most commonly associated with Spain, they could be found throughout Europe leaving some doubt as to the intended nationality of these depictions.

⁵⁸ In that year's catalog, he listed two addresses, one in Brussels and one in Morocco. Octave Maus, *Les XX Bruxelles, Catalogue des dix expositions annuelles* (Bruxelles: Centre international pour l'étude du XIXe siècle, 1981), 61.

⁵⁹ Spain and Africa were linked in the minds of many Europeans, both for their apparent exoticism and geographic proximity. The Moorish presence in Spain also added to the idea that Spain did not belong to Europe, but that it was "the doorway to the Orient." Gabriel Séailles, *Alfred Dehodencq: Histoire d'une coloriste* (Paris, 1885), 69 quoted in Luxenberg, "Over the Pyrenees and Through the Looking-Glass," 17. Alexandre Dumas, in his travel writings about Spain, wrote, "Africa begins on the other side of the Pyrenees." Quoted in translation by Carrie B. Douglass, *Bulls, Bullfighting, and Spanish Identities* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 105.

Chapter 4

Les XX's Knowledge of and Interaction with Spain and Spanish Art

Just as the artists of Les XX had no one artistic style or no one political ideal that bound them together, nor did they share a common opinion on Spanish art. Although many of the member artists and *invités* completed works that refer to a Spanish source, their choices and expressions vary greatly. Some of the artists created more conventional depictions of stereotypical Spanish subjects, such as bullfighters or musicians. Other artists, while reflecting an interest in Goya or in the Spanish masters, created pictures that are personal, modern, and Belgian in subject. Not only is this variety present in the visual arts, it is also present in the writings associated with Les XX, including many articles published in *L'Art Moderne*. Like the visual works, these writings represent a variety of opinions on both Spain and Spanish art.

The most direct link between Les XX and Spain was certainly Dario de Regoyos, as mentioned earlier, the only Spanish artist to be a member of or to exhibit with Les XX. Regoyos had moved to Brussels in 1879 with two violinist friends and enrolled at the Brussels Académie des Beaux-Arts, where he met Théo van Rysselberghe. It was through van Rysselberghe that Regoyos would become a founding member of Les XX. Before moving to Brussels, Regoyos had studied painting in Madrid at the Academia of San Fernando with the Belgian de Haes since 1878. Regoyos traveled back and forth from Spain to Belgium for much of his life and referred to himself as “hispano-flamand” in an 1885 letter to Maus.⁶⁰ The Vingtistes no doubt considered Regoyos to have a more authentic view of the country because with the exception of 1879-1884

⁶⁰ Maus, *Trente années de lutte*, 37.

when he was in Brussels, Regoyos lived in Spain for all of his life, although he often traveled for lengthy periods.

Not only was Regoyos able to provide a native's perspective on his home country, but to some of his peers, Regoyos himself was a symbol of Spain, resulting in numerous portraits of him. Music plays a large part in many of these works as Regoyos played the guitar, an activity that made him quite popular in Brussels. A passage by Maus from 1914 reinforces the identification of Regoyos with his guitar.

A short, stocky, bearded, dark man, around 1880 or 1881, arrived from Spain hiding a guitar in the pleats of a cloak proudly draped over his torso. In the intimacy of friends' studios or salons ...he conjured up unforgettable nights, a Spain of dance, of love and of joy...⁶¹

The guitar originated in Spain and was associated specifically with Spanish culture, something Manet acknowledged in *The Spanish Singer* from 1860, which shows a Spaniard singing and playing a guitar.⁶²

Music was also an important activity within Les XX,⁶³ and concerts were held to accompany exhibitions, including one in 1888 titled "Musique espagnole."⁶⁴ The editors of *L'Art Moderne* expressed their interest in music, particularly that of Spain, in 1885, in a review of the book *Les Musiciens néerlandais en Espagne du XII^e au XVIII^e siècle* (Netherlandish musicians in

⁶¹ "Un petit homme noir, barbu, trapu, vers 1880 ou 1881, était arrivé d'Espagne cachant dans les plis d'une cape fièrement drapée sur son torse une énorme guitare. Dans l'intimité des ateliers ou des salons amis...il évoquait en d'inoubliables soirs, l'Espagne de la danse, de l'amour et de la joie..." This passage was included in the catalog entry for *Spleen espagnol* in an 1985 catalog. Octave Maus, *Catalogue de la Libre Esthétique*, 1914, quoted in *Dario de Regoyos: Un Espagnol en Belgique* (Bruxelles: Banque Bruxelles Lambert, 1985), 53-54.

⁶² It is possible that certain Vingtistes could have seen Manet's painting in person, as it was shown in his posthumous retrospective exhibition in Paris in 1884 and at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889. Van Rysselberghe, in particular, often traveled to Paris. Denis Rouart and Daniel Wildenstein, *Édouard Manet: catalogue raisonné* Volume 2 (Lausanne: Bibliothèque des arts, 1975), 50.

⁶³ The editors of *L'Art Moderne* displayed their great admiration for Wagner upon his death, when they dedicated the entire February 18, 1883 issue of the journal to him, the first and only one of two times that they would do so. The second was May 25, 1885 when Victor Hugo died. In fact, this article on the front page begins, "À deux ans de distance, Victor Hugo rejoint Richard Wagner au pays des ombres." "Two years apart, Victor Hugo joins Richard Wagner in the land of shadows." *L'Art Moderne*, 25 May 1885.

⁶⁴ Maus, *Trente années de lutte*, 63.

Spain from the 12th to the 18th century) by Edmond Van der Straeten. Maus wrote the majority of the musical criticism for the journal and most likely wrote this article.⁶⁵ In this review of the first volume of Van der Straeten's two-volume oeuvre, the critic emphasized the Belgian influence on Spanish art forms, particularly music. He stressed the many centuries of artistic exchange between the two countries, particularly in the example of *flamencas*, the popular Spanish songs introduced to the country by Flemish minstrels.⁶⁶ But the reviewer seemed more concerned with touting Belgium's achievements in the arts, which he believed deserved more attention from his countrymen than in elaborating upon the Spanish context.⁶⁷

These musical exchanges between Spain and Belgium no doubt added to the Vingties's interest in Spanish music. Nineteenth-century European descriptions of Spain and its people almost always included descriptions of them singing, playing instruments and dancing. Depictions of Regoyos by Meunier, Ensor, and van Rysselberghe are similar in subject although are often different in mood. In their portraits of him, Regoyos's Belgian peers associated him directly with music, in particular, the guitar, which figures prominently in almost all of the works. In Meunier's watercolor, *Portrait of Regoyos* 1884 (figure 10), Regoyos is depicted in a type of historical Spanish costume, not in the modern attire of an artist. With the figure sitting precariously on a table and absorbed in playing his guitar, the represented scene is very informal. A poster behind the figure advertises, in Spanish, a bullfight, the most stereotypical Spanish event. Meunier included the poster and the guitar to identify immediately the figure as a Spaniard, but gave no indication of Regoyos's modern identity, profession, or friendship.

⁶⁵ Block, *Les XX*, 11.

⁶⁶ "Livres Nouveaux," *L'Art Moderne* 5, no. 28 (12 July 1885): 224.

⁶⁷ The author ended the review, "This is a popular work that is addressed to everyone, a history book devoted to the precious memories of our national art. It deserves respect and admiration." "C'est un travail de vulgarisation qui s'adresse à tous, un livre d'histoire consacrant les précieux souvenirs de notre art national. Il mérite respect et admiration." Ibid.

Meunier had himself visited Spain, from October 1882 to April of 1883, when he was in Seville, on assignment from the Belgian government to copy *The Descent from the Cross* (1547) by Brussels-born artist Pieter Kempeneer (1503-1580) in the Seville cathedral.⁶⁸

Van Rysselberghe's depictions of Regoyos are quite different from Meunier's. Unlike Meunier's portrait that includes several Spanish stereotypes, van Rysselberghe's works express various moods or emotional states, in addition to depicting Regoyos playing his Spanish guitar. The earliest of the six pictures of his friend that van Rysselberghe produced is *Spleen español* (*Spanish Melancholy*) (figure 11) of 1881.⁶⁹ The oil painting depicts Regoyos lounging while playing his guitar, his face in lost profile, suggesting a pensive state of mind. The position of the figure also suggests that his identity is not as important as the overall mood evoked by the composition. Unlike Meunier in his costume portrait of Regoyos, van Rysselberghe gave no indication of a particular national setting and represented Regoyos in contemporary, and not specifically Spanish, clothes. The composition places the guitar and Regoyos's hands fretting and plucking the strings close to the center of the canvas. Despite the lengthy friendship between the two artists, including at least one trip to Spain together, van Rysselberghe clearly did not lose his fascination with Regoyos's Spanish identity.

Van Rysselberghe painted two pictures of Regoyos in 1882, *Dario de Regoyos de profil*⁷⁰ (*Dario de Regoyos in profile*) (figure 12) and *Dario de Regoyos de face* (*Dario de Regoyos frontal*) (figure 13). In *Dario de Regoyos de profil*, the figure and his guitar occupy nearly the entire picture space; in fact, the guitar is so large that it appears almost the same size as the torso.

⁶⁸ Kempeneer is known as Pedro de Campaña in Spanish. Pierre Baudson, "Constantin Meunier," in *Belgian Art, 1880-1914*, 128.

⁶⁹ The six works that will be discussed herein are all the works of Regoyos in Feltkamp's catalog raisonné of van Rysselberghe. I have also dated these six works according to Feltkamp's dating, despite the various years given in other sources.

⁷⁰ The work is also sometimes called *Dario de Regoyos tocando la guitarra* (*Dario de Regoyos playing the guitar*) although Feltkamp used *Dario de Regoyos de profil*. All of the titles used here are those in Feltkamp.

The limited palette of the painting focuses attention on the lighter areas of the face, hands, and guitar. Both its light color and its placement at the center of the canvas draw attention to the large ear, visually reminding the viewer of the auditory component of the work. The lightly painted canvas, with lines that seem to have been scratched into the paint, anticipate van Rysselberghe's later drawings of the artist. Regoyos's mouth is depicted slightly open, suggesting that he is also singing. The figure's attire is more formal in the other painting of 1882, *Dario de Regoyos de face*, in which the artist stares straight out at the viewer, the open mouth with visible teeth leaves no doubt that Regoyos is singing along with his own playing. The figure leans slightly to its left, seated in a stiff-backed, historical style chair, the only detail of an environment.

In 1885, van Rysselberghe painted *Le guitariste-Portrait de Dario de Regoyos* (*The Guitar Player-Portrait of Dario de Regoyos*) (figure 14). Regoyos is again depicted not only playing, but also singing, his mouth open to allow the viewer to imagine his song. Here, van Rysselberghe enhanced the suggestion of sound further by including the lyrics at the upper left of the painting, presumably to the song that he is singing, and by blurring the right hand so that it appears to be strumming rapidly. His eyes appear closed and his brow furrowed, suggesting that he is deeply involved in the song, perhaps drawing on his imagination to inspire his playing. The lyrics, the blurred gesture, and the intense facial contortions of the figure engage the viewer as an imagined listener as much as an observer.

The words inscribed on the painting are colloquial Spanish lyrics to a song, "Gitanas en caló Echando en jaleo" (Gypsies in *calo* Flinging themselves about in the *jaleo*).⁷¹ They read, "Gypsies in *calo*/death summoned you/and I didn't want you to come/that even death, oh mother,

⁷¹ *Calo* is a Spanish term for the gypsy dialect.

had you/woe is me/ the love of my life/like the shadow/the farther it goes/the more bodies it takes on/absence is air/that extinguishes the small fire/and ignites the large.”⁷² Not only does the inclusion of lyrics display van Rysselberghe’s interest in contemporary Spanish song,⁷³ but the lyrics are also indicative of the perceived Spanish fascination with death that figures prominently in Verhaeren’s *Viaje a la España Negra*.

Other Vingtistes also made images of musical activity in which the viewer is engaged through visual analogies with sounds, such as Ensor’s *Au Conservatoire (At the Conservatory)* 1902 (figure 15). In Ensor’s work, for example, the painting of Wagner hanging on the wall, blocking his ears, suggests the irritable sounds of the song which the musicians are playing, making the aural component an integral part of the image’s meaning. Ensor also included words in the painting, at the bottom center, presumably lyrics to the group’s song, like Regoyos.

In 1886, van Rysselberghe began drawing *Dario de Regoyos* (figure 16). This drawing stands apart from van Rysselberghe’s other depictions of Regoyos in that it is the only one in which the sitter is not playing the guitar. Although not finished, both hands are visible, though the right hand was only very quickly sketched out. The hands are clearly not in position to be playing the guitar as they are drawn close together. Although there is no guitar present, the figure’s ear seems exaggerated, similar to other of van Rysselberghe’s depictions of Regoyos. It appears that Regoyos is holding something stick-like in his left hand, showing his engagement in some type of activity, though that activity is unclear. The personal nature of van Rysselberghe’s portraits is indicated by their provenance. The unfinished sketch is now in the collection of the

⁷² “Gitanas en caló/¡Llamó la muerte á vose/y no quiere veni/ que hasta la muerte ¡¡ay mare!!/tenelaba, lástima e mí!/Es el amor de mi vida/como la jombra/que cuanto más se aleja/más cuerpo toma/La ausencia es aire/que apaga el fuego chico/y enciende el grande.” *Artistas Pintados: Retratos de Pintores y Escultores del Siglo XIX en el Museo del Prado* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1997), 146.

⁷³ In a letter to Regoyos from 1882, van Rysselberghe wrote about this interest. Ibid. Words were important to many Vingtistes, not only the writers, but also the visual artists, some of whom created posters, book illustrations, or otherwise placed text in their work.

Musée Verhaeren, presumably having been owned by Verhaeren himself. Picard also owned one of these works, *Dario de Regoyos de profil*, which was shown in both of the 1883 exhibitions associated with Les XX.⁷⁴

The most intimate of all the works was apparently a gift to Regoyos, van Rysselberghe's last portrait of the artist, *Dario de Regoyos* (figure 17), done in 1889. In it, van Rysselberghe omitted the background and gave the viewer an up-close, cropped view of Regoyos singing and playing his guitar. The image is cropped more closely than any of the others, excluding even the artist's arms and his right hand. Regoyos is again shown singing, with his eyes partially closed. The drawing served as the basis for a lithograph of 1889 (figure 18). The main difference between the drawing and the lithograph is the print's dedication in the upper left-hand corner. Van Rysselberghe wrote, in Spanish, "a mi amigo Dario de Regoyos recuerdo de Junio de 1889" (to my friend Dario de Regoyos a memory of June 1889).

Ensor also painted a portrait of Regoyos (figure 19), which was not exhibited publicly until La Libre Esthétique's posthumous show of Ensor's work. Ensor completed the work in 1884, while Regoyos was at his home in Ostend. As opposed to van Rysselberghe's informal depictions, this portrait seems staged. Regoyos is portrayed full length, facing and more interested in the viewer than in his guitar, as though performing for an audience, and his nearly closed mouth shows that he is clearly not singing. The dark interior is sketchy, permitting the viewer to imagine Regoyos in a number of locations. These portraits by Meunier, van Rysselberghe, and Ensor depict Regoyos as a Spanish musician, still an artist but not a painter, and are particularly interesting in that none of the other artists of Les XX were portrayed by as many peers or as many times as was Regoyos.⁷⁵ Regoyos then, even as a founding member of

⁷⁴ Feltkamp, *Théo van Rysselberghe*, 253.

⁷⁵ Some group portraits of the Vingtistes do exist, including satirical representations by Ensor.

the group, served as a readily available and typical Spanish subject and remained somewhat exotic.

Whereas his peers depicted him as a Spanish musician, Regoyos's self portrait (figure 20) of 1879 shows a young artist at his canvas, signifying what the artist himself felt was his most important activity. The artist chose to crop his portrait, painting only his upper torso and head, which gazes directly at the viewer. This close-up view enhances the intimacy of the portrait. He depicted himself staring ahead, perhaps looking at a mirror reflection. He is dressed in a modern suit and casual hat that lack any sign of nationality, although his dark hair and well-groomed mustache, often considered typically Spanish, are prominent. The work was apparently done after Regoyos arrived in Belgium; on the reverse, he dedicated it to his new friend, van Rysselberghe.⁷⁶

While Regoyos provided a readily available Spanish subject, some Vingtistes traveled to Spain, to see the country for themselves, or with Regoyos. Numerous works, both literary and visual, resulted from these excursions, as did at least one of L'Essor's lectures. In April 1883, L'Essor sponsored its first lecture; the speaker was Solvay, who spoke about his own recent trip to Spain and Morocco.⁷⁷ As an accompaniment to the lecture, an exhibition of the work of Franz Charlet (1862-1928), van Rysselberghe, and Regoyos was held. These artist members had just recently returned from their own trip to Spain and Morocco.⁷⁸

Solvay would publish his book on Spanish art, *L'Art Espagnol*, just four years later,⁷⁹ and it was reviewed in *L'Art Moderne* in March 1887. The review is, unsurprisingly, positive, given

⁷⁶ *Dario de Regoyos: Un Espagnol en Belgique*, 282.

⁷⁷ Block, *Les XX*, 14. Block states that during the lecture, Regoyos drew sketches to illustrate some of Solvay's subjects, although she gives no further details.

⁷⁸ As for the possibility that Solvay had also traveled with them, none of the sources that discuss the trip or lecture state so, and, in fact, a biography of Regoyos lists only visual artists as the friends who accompanied him. *Dario De Regoyos 1857-1913*, 305.

⁷⁹ Lucien Solvay, *L'Art Espagnol* (Paris and London: Jules Rouam and Gilbert Wood and Company, 1887).

his relationship with the editors and *Les XX*. In Solvay's view, Spanish art was seen as the product of outside influences, an idea also present in Van der Straeten's aforementioned book. The reviewer interpreted this view to mean that Spain was backward, "The prevailing idea of the author [Solvay], the one that flows through the work from one end to the other, is that the greatest art of a people is the one that germinates spontaneously. In Spain, this occurrence is rare. Outside help was needed."⁸⁰ Although Solvay did not write exclusively about nineteenth-century artists, this opinion that the greatest art in Spain did not arise spontaneously reflects the generally negative attitudes about contemporary Spanish artists that permeated *Les XX* and its circle, and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 in relation to Regoyos. The reviewer went on to say that Solvay claimed that all of the great Spanish artists were exceptions and that these exceptions were "vraiment glorieux," or "truly glorious."⁸¹

Verhaeren also traveled to Spain, with Regoyos in 1888, and wrote about it, producing *Viaje a la España Negra*, which Regoyos illustrated. In a previous book, *Les Moines (The Monks)*, published in 1885, Verhaeren wrote about his own Catholic upbringing and Jesuit education. The book contains imagery of Catholic rituals, candlelight, and cloisters, all stereotypical associations with Spain.⁸² During this decade, both of his parents died, and Verhaeren stayed for a time at a monastery in an attempt to treat his mental health. Regoyos suggested that the two travel together to Spain in 1888 to help Verhaeren recover from his father's death.⁸³ Their experiences on this voyage to the Spanish Basque region, Aragon, Navarra, and Castilla led to their collaboration in *Viaje a la España Negra*, in 1899. *España*

⁸⁰ "L'idée dominante de l'auteur [Solvay], celle qui faufile son oeuvre d'un bout à l'autre, c'est que l'art le plus grand pour un peuple, c'est celui qui germe spontanément. En Espagne, le cas fut rare. Il lui fallut l'aide du dehors..." "L'Art Espagnol," *L'Art Moderne* 7, no. 10 (6 March 1887): 75.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Sarah Faunce, "Seurat and 'the Soul of Things'" in *Belgian Art, 1880-1914*, 44.

⁸³ Raymond Trousson, "Carlos V y Felipe II según Verhaeren y Ghelderode" in *La Historia de España en la Literatura Francesca*, edited by Mercee Boixareu and Robin Lefere (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 2002), 617.

Negra gives the reader a firsthand account of contemporary persons and their activities, and focuses on religious rituals. Despite his personal experience of Spain, Verhaeren once wrote, “The Spanish color is black, as blue is the French and red is the Flemish.”⁸⁴ This correlation between Spain and the color black recalls the Black Legend of Spain as does the title of his book.

Verhaeren wrote a set of articles for *L'Art Moderne*, “Impressions d'Artiste,” that appeared from June to August 1888 and were dedicated to Regoyos and chronicled his travels.⁸⁵ The author included vivid portrayals of what he saw in what he referred to as “this devil of a country.”⁸⁶ In one paragraph, he described a church, battered by time, and its surrounding village. After describing the squalor of small villages, he explained that it must be accepted because it will not change,

Thanks to the laziness and the negligence that produce it, one scarcely thinks in Spain either of knocking down the old shacks, or of modernizing, or of restoring anything and so it is that this melancholic poem of truncated turrets, of cracked walls, of worn paving stones and of old hinges still prevails there.⁸⁷

The laziness of the Spanish people was one of the prevalent stereotypes of the Black Legend. Verhaeren then went on to describe aspects of the country that he felt deserved attention, such as the Basque people and the piety of the Spanish, a constant theme throughout all of his writing about Spain, including *Viaje a la España Negra*.

The second article in the series described a religious event in front of a church, down to details of dress and the actions of the crowd.⁸⁸ Verhaeren then described the event that followed,

⁸⁴ “La couleur espagnole c’est le noir, comme le bleu la française et le rouge la flamande.” The line was published in Verhaeren’s *À la Vie qui s’éloigne* in 1924. Jacques Marx, *Verhaeren: Biographie d’une oeuvre* (Bruxelles: Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature Françaises, 1996), 249 quoted in *Ibid.*, 617.

⁸⁵ Goddard, *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde Prints, Drawings, and Books ca. 1890*, 173. Verhaeren’s name does not actually appear on any of the articles although the dedication to Regoyos appears at the beginning of each.

⁸⁶ “ce pays à la diable.” Émile Verhaeren, “Impressions d’Artiste,” *L’Art Moderne* 8, no. 25 (17 June 1888): 196.

⁸⁷ “...grâce à la paresse et à l’incurie qui la produisent, on ne songe guère en Espagne ni à abattre les vieilles bicoques, ni à moderniser, ni à restaurer ce qui tombe, et qu’ainsi la mélancolique poésie des tourelles tronquées, des murailles lézardées, des dalles usées et des gonds fendus y règne encore.” *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Émile Verhaeren, “Impressions d’Artiste,” *L’Art Moderne* 8, no. 28 (8 July 1888): 221.

a *Corrida de novillos* (Running of the Young Bulls), which he specified did not involve bulls, but calves. In reference to the mood of the crowd and their robust energy, he commented, “Spaniards have an unexpected gaiety, intense, rapidly born and extinguished.”⁸⁹ Describing the dancing that took place at twilight, Verhaeren wrote that the entire scene, “maintains the mortuary character that one discovers in all true Spanish celebrations, unadulterated by French modernity.”⁹⁰ This fascination with death and its rites was part of the Black Legend and was central to the next installment of his series, which begins, “In Spain, death blocks the avenue of each thought” and continues on to describe funerals and coffins.⁹¹ Verhaeren called coffin making “une industrie nationale” in Spain. He explained how death permeated every facet of Spanish life, including the talk of lovers. He also spoke of death at the Prado, in the work of Ribera and many other religious paintings. This interest in Spanish death is not surprising given the Symbolist interest in fatalism that was prevalent at the time. Themes such as death, fate, and morbidity were common with Symbolist artists both in and outside of Belgium.⁹²

The last article of Verhaeren’s series begins with the author on a train (to Pamplona) in which he saw a man slumped in his seat. The author described him by many stereotypes of Spaniards, such as smoking, an activity closely associated then with Spain.⁹³ In the story, the man then takes out a guitar and sings a sad song, during which, “his wild face began to take on expressions of immense pain.”⁹⁴ Verhaeren stated that he and his companion, whom he does not

⁸⁹ “Les Espagnoles ont la gaieté soudaine, violente, rapidement née et éteinte.” Ibid., 222.

⁹⁰ “Et tout cela maintient le caractère mortuaire que l’on découvre en toute vraie fête espagnole, non frelatée de modernité française.” Ibid.

⁹¹ “En Espagne, la mort bloque l’avenue de chaque pensée.” Émile Verhaeren, “Impressions d’Artiste,” *L’Art Moderne* 8, no 30 (22 July 1888): 235

⁹² Block, *Les XX*, 72. Block notes that Belgian Symbolists were particularly interested in the theme of isolation, stemming from the separation of Flemish speakers from the francophone government.

⁹³ Luxenberg, “Over the Pyrenees,” 21.

⁹⁴ “sa face sauvage prenait des expressions d’infinie douleur.” Émile Verhaeren, “Impressions d’Artiste,” *L’Art Moderne* 8, no. 32 (5 August 1888): 250.

name in the article (but was Regoyos), ran into the man a few days later at a running of the bulls where he was with “a superb gypsy.”⁹⁵ They watched the man and his gypsy girl friend as they danced during the evening’s festivities. All of these descriptions only reinforce foreigners’ preconceived notions of Spain, notions that Verhaeren, and also Regoyos, through his involvement in *Viaje a la España Negra*, chose to propagate. Apparently, Verhaeren’s personal experience in the country and friendship with Regoyos encouraged his notion of Black Spain, a Spain of piety, death, music, and gypsies.

Vingtistes, such as van Rysselberghe were not only interested in contemporary Spain, but also in the history of Spanish art. In 1913, he returned to Spain for the first time in nearly thirty years, completing a small series of landscapes of Grenada.⁹⁶ He wrote to Maus in April of that year that he had been to Barcelona to visit Regoyos and his family and then went to Madrid where he stayed two days, spent entirely at the Prado. In the letter, he expressed that he was not as enamored with the works of the Spanish artists as he had been thirty years before. Although his enthusiasm had waned at this point, his comments show that he had once greatly admired the works of El Greco, Goya, and Velázquez.⁹⁷ Throughout the course of his career, van Rysselberghe completed at least twenty-five paintings, drawings, or lithographs with overtly Spanish subjects, including the six portraits of his friend Regoyos.

⁹⁵ “une gitana superbe.” Ibid.

⁹⁶ See Feltkamp, 404 for reproductions.

⁹⁷ Maus, *Trente années de lutte*, 460. The letter reads, “J’ai passé quarante-huit heures à Madrid et exclusivement au Musée du Prado. J’y ai revu de vieilles connaissances, de trente ans déjà! et mes préférences ne vont plus là où elles allaient jadis: les Greco restent—je parle des portraits—bien étonnants, vraiment; aussi certains Goya; mais il y a en a tant d’horribles!...et quant à Vélasquez, eh bien! oui, il y en a de très bien, qui ont de l’allure et débordent de talent, mais...eh bien! je déçante tout de même un peu devant l’ensemble...” “I spent forty-eight hours in Madrid, exclusively at the Prado. I saw again my old acquaintances, after thirty years! And my preferences are no longer where they were then: the El Grecos remain—I am speaking of the portraits—rather astonishing, truly; also certain Goyas; but there are so many terrible ones...and as for Velázquez, well! Yes, there are some very good ones, which are elegant and overflow with talent, but...well! I am still a little disillusioned looking at this collection.”

Other Vingtistes made works with other Spanish subjects, sometimes long after their travel to the country. Delvin, for example, who visited Spain in the 1870s, drew at least one picture with a Spanish theme, a picador in the act of spearing a bull entitled *Victime* (figure 21) c.1901, which he exhibited with La Libre Esthétique.⁹⁸ According to Bénézit, Delvin did other such images of bullfighting, recalling the work of Goya.⁹⁹

Although the previously discussed examples all depict subjects readily associated with Spain, some of the artists associated with Les XX made less traditional choices. Among the *invités* who showed work reflecting their interest in Spanish art were the French artist Odilon Redon (1840-1916) and the American expatriate living in London, James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Both of these artists created work that demonstrated the influence of Spanish art, without treating stereotypical Spanish subjects. Whistler exhibited at Les XX's Salon for three years, 1884, 1886, 1888, displaying portraits that reflect his interest in the work of Velázquez, such as *Arrangement in Black: Pablo de Sarasate* (figure 22), done in 1884 and exhibited two years later. Whistler's canvas shares much with paintings of the Spanish master, such as *The Jester Pablo de Valladolid*, including the depiction of a lone figure against an atmospheric background and the limited palette. Although the figure depicted is clearly a Spanish musician, rather than merely reproducing a Spanish scene, Whistler combined his study of Spanish art with his own style, as did Vingtistes like de Groux and Ensor.

Redon showed twice with Les XX, in 1886 and 1890. He was connected to the group through Picard who was his friend, supporter, and patron, and Verhaeren, also a patron, who lent three of the artist's prints from the *Hommage à Goya* series to Les XX's Salon of 1886. The

⁹⁸ *Les XX La Libre Esthétique Cent Ans Apres* (Bruxelles: Musees Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1993), 213.

⁹⁹ Bénézit, *Dictionnaire* Vol. 4, 427. The last of the four sentences describing the artist in this volume is "Ses tauromachies rappellent l'oeuvre de Goya." "His bull fighting pictures recall the work of Goya." I was not able to find reproductions of any of these works.

artist had completed *Hommage à Goya*, a set of six lithographs, in 1885. Although Redon did not borrow imagery directly from that Spanish master, the fantastical world that Redon created recalls that of Goya (figure 23). The *Hommage* series includes captions which, when strung together, form a prose poem. “In my dream, I saw in the Sky a FACE OF MYSTERY/the MARSH FLOWER, a human and sad head/a MADMAN in a bleak landscape./ There were also EMBRYONIC BEINGS/a strange JUGGLER./ On waking, I saw the GODDESS of the INTELLIGIBLE with her severe and hard profile.”¹⁰⁰ Although in his memoir, *À soi-même*, first published in 1922, Redon does not mention Goya a single time, there are clear similarities between the two artists, including their interest in nightmarish imagery and strange, mythical beings.¹⁰¹ Redon, with his work exhibited at Les XX’s salons, served as an intermediary between Goya and the Vingtistes.

Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), the French writer and critic, recognized the similarly nightmarish visions of Redon and Goya in his collection of art criticism *L’Art Moderne*, published in 1883.¹⁰² In comparing the two artists, he noted that Goya’s work was “less raving and more real,”¹⁰³ a quality that led many Vingtistes to the Spaniard’s work. For Huysmans, Redon’s fantastical images represented the Decadent spirit also present in his own literary works. In fact, in February 1885, Huysmans wrote a prose poem based on Redon’s *Hommage* series. An explanatory note at the end of the poem elucidates that the work is based on the print series, a note without which the poem would appear as an autobiographical description of a nightmare.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in translation by Richard Hobbs, *Odilon Redon* (London: Studio Vista, 1977), 45-46. The original French is, “Dans mon rêve, je vis au Ciel un VISAGE DE MYSTÈRE/ la FLEUR de MARECAGE, une tête humaine et triste/Un FOU dans un morne paysage./Il y eut aussi des ÊTRES EMBRYONNAIRES/Un étrange JONGLEUR./Au réveil j’aperçus la DEESSE de l’INTELLIGIBLE au profil sévère et dur.” Ibid., 170.

¹⁰¹ Garcia, “La postérité de Goya,” 152-3.

¹⁰² Hobbs, *Odilon Redon*, 33.

¹⁰³ “...si nous exceptons Goya dont le côté spectral est moins divaquant et plus réel...” J.-K. Huysmans, *L’Art Moderne* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1883), 300.

¹⁰⁴ Annette Kahn, *J.-K. Huysmans: Novelist, Poet, and Art Critic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 117.

These various creations, both visual and literary, show a wide range of interest in Spain by the artists and writers associated with Les XX. Some of them never abandoned their pre-conceived ideas of Spain, which were inspired in part by the Black Legend, even after traveling to Spain, where they sought out scenes that reinforced their stereotypes. These artists expressed their interest in Spain in works that contain typical Spanish subjects, images recognizable at once as “Spanish.” Other artists incorporated their study of Spanish art into their own unique depictions of a variety of subjects. Though several Vingtistes shared prevailing stereotypes of Spain and Spanish culture, some were able to avoid creating stereotypical imagery, either of Spain or in a traditional style associated with Spain.

Chapter 5

Goya's Critical Reception in the Late Nineteenth Century

The artists who show the most unconventional incorporation of Spanish sources, Ensor and de Groux, were specifically drawn to the art of Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828). According to Nigel Glendinning, during Goya's lifetime, even Spaniards had a limited knowledge and understanding of the artist's work, being familiar primarily with his religious paintings and portraits. Some Spaniards who were more knowledgeable in the arts appreciated his three print series that were published during his lifetime: *Los Caprichos*, 1799, *La Tauromaquia*, 1816, and *The Bulls of Bordeaux*, 1825.¹⁰⁵ During the 1860s, the royal art museum in Madrid increased its holdings of Goya's paintings, which had long been overshadowed by the range of his works represented in the Academy of San Fernando, also in Madrid. By the time of the publication of the Prado's 1885 catalogue, fifty-nine Goyas were listed in that museum.¹⁰⁶ These works span the artist's career, including early paintings depicting Spaniards enjoying themselves in the countryside and some of his later work such as *El dos de mayo de 1808* (The Second of May, 1808) 1814.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Goya's reputation outside of Spain was based primarily on his etchings. In particular, *Los Caprichos* had interested foreigners since its brief publication in 1799. These foreigners generally interpreted the prints as a criticism of Spanish society.¹⁰⁷ In France, Goya was not primarily known as a painter, but was recognized

¹⁰⁵ Nigel Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 7-10.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Tomlinson briefly summarizes various critiques of the series. Janis A. Tomlinson, *Graphic Evolutions: The Print Series of Francisco Goya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 11-23.

by artists and writers as a graphic artist and satirist.¹⁰⁸ By the mid-nineteenth century, Spain and the rest of Europe had more access to Goya's work, as a result of the first publication of his print series *Los Desastres de la Guerra* in 1863 and *Los Disparates* one year later in Madrid. In the 1860s, Goya's prints were increasingly sold all over Europe, many of his paintings were leaving his native country, and both his originals and copies after his paintings were being reproduced in various books and magazines.¹⁰⁹ Visitors to the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1878 had an opportunity to view Goya's Black Paintings. These paintings were recognized for their relationship to contemporary art, particularly that of the Impressionists.¹¹⁰ Nigel Glendinning has called attention to the rise in the number of items published on the artist during the 1860s and 1880s, corresponding with the height of the Realist and Impressionist movements.¹¹¹

These various artistic movements in the nineteenth century took Goya's art as inspiration in various ways. During the century, Goya was linked to Realism, Romanticism, Impressionism, and Symbolism.¹¹² His biography also fascinated, for he lived through highly volatile times, including political tumult in Spain, during which the artist served as both a court painter to Spanish royalty and swore an oath of allegiance to the French king of Spain, Joseph Bonaparte. *Espagnolisme*, or the nineteenth-century trend of depicting typical Spanish subjects, was especially popular in artistic circles in mid-century France and contributed to the interest that French artists had in Goya and Velázquez, as was already mentioned in the case of Manet.¹¹³

The writer Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) wrote about Goya in terms of satire and fantasy in the essay "Quelques caricaturistes étrangers," first published in *Le Présent* in 1857.

¹⁰⁸ Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 14-16.

¹¹⁰ Tinterow, "Raphael Replaced," 60-61.

¹¹¹ Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 21. Impressionism did not become popular in Spain for some time, and in November 1901, a group of Spanish Impressionists published a manifesto defending the French movement. One of the signatories was Regoyos.

¹¹² See Glendinning for more information on these different movements' interpretations of Goya.

Although French, Baudelaire had been exiled briefly to Belgium late in his life and his writings would have been available to the francophone Vingtistes. During the 1880s, the avant-garde was cementing Baudelaire's place as one of their greatest literary heroes.¹¹⁴ He stated that Goya's political satires, such as those in *Los Caprichos*, have a timeless and universal quality because of their seemingly fantastical surroundings.¹¹⁵ He interpreted Goya's art as modern, exhibiting qualities that were pivotal to modern times, "a love of the indefinable, a feeling for violent contrasts, for what is terrifying in nature, and for human features which have acquired animal-like qualities as a result of their environment."¹¹⁶ He went on,

Goya's great merit consists in his having created a credible form of the monstrous. His monsters are born viable, harmonious. No one has ventured further than he in the direction of the possible absurd. All those distortions, those bestial faces, those diabolic grimaces of his are impregnated with humanity. Even from the special viewpoint of natural history it would be hard to condemn them, so great is the analogy and harmony between all the parts of their being. In a word, the line of suture, the point of junction between the real and the fantastic is impossible to grasp; it is a vague frontier which not even the subtlest analyst could trace, such is the extent to which the transcendent and the natural concur in his art.¹¹⁷

Baudelaire asserted that even Goya's most grotesque and mystical imagery was rooted in his direct observation of earthy beings and events,¹¹⁸ which could elicit an emotional response.

Goya's use of fantastical imagery was not the only quality that attracted critics. As Impressionism gained acceptance, an increasing number of writers began to comment on Goya's art in terms similar to those used to characterize the Impressionist style. The art critic Paul Mantz wrote in 1868, while discussing the work of Manet, "[Goya] was very resourceful and he knew,

¹¹³ Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁴ Hobbs, *Odilon Redon*, 34.

¹¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* translated by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Publishing, Inc., 1964), 190. The article, "Quelques caricaturistes étrangers," originally appeared in *Le Présent* on October 15, 1857).

¹¹⁶ Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 294.

¹¹⁷ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 192-93.

¹¹⁸ Vibeke Vibolt Knudsen, *Goya's Realism* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2000), 59.

fine printmaker that he was, how blacks and whites set each other off; [Velázquez and Goya] understood, moreover, that color is a language, and they sought hazy, strident, or dramatic effects in order to translate an emotion.”¹¹⁹ In *L’Art Espagnol* of 1887, Solvay included a whole chapter on Goya, in which he discussed Goya’s use of color, his originality, and his modernity. He characterized Goya’s art as conveying “movement and open-air subjects,” which were hallmarks of Impressionist painting.¹²⁰ Solvay also brought out the decadent qualities of Goya’s art, most specifically, the sensuality of his frescoes in San Antonio de la Florida and of his *Majas*, and related the artist’s mystical imagery to the Symbolist movement.¹²¹

More than linking Goya to anyone particular, Solvay saw Goya as a modernist artist. In his description of Goya’s work, Solvay discussed Goya’s originality and suggested that it was the artist’s reliance on nature and on his own experiences that informed his art, rather than the art of the past.¹²² Solvay continued, “Because [Goya] had faith in nature itself and reacted emotionally to its overwhelming beauty, his vigorous and exciting work will endure. His faith was pagan, his emotion modern...”¹²³ Solvay believed this ability to react truthfully to his environment allowed Goya to become a master at capturing Spanish life, quickly sketching what he saw around him in the manner of the Impressionists’ *plein air* practice.¹²⁴ Solvay interpreted the master’s print series to be a complete social commentary on his own epoch, “[Goya] made a tremendous and cheerful massacre of all the vices and scandals of his time, not forgetting any feature of those that he put in the stocks, making them recognizable to everyone, physically and

¹¹⁹ Paul Mantz, “Salon de 1868, II,” *L’Illustration* (6 June 1868): 362, quoted in and translated by Tinterow, “Raphael Replaced,” 51.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122. Glendinning also makes clear that A. De Gubernatis considered Solvay one of the leading art critics in Europe in his *Dictionnaire internationale des écrivains du jour* (Florence, 1891).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Lucien Solvay, *L’Art Espagnol*, 1887, 264 quoted in translation by Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 123.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

morally, underlining each thing with an insolent audacity.”¹²⁵ Like de Groux and Ensor would eventually do, Goya created works that remain true both to the world around him and to his own imagination. To Goya, fact needed to be combined with fantasy in order for the artist to be a true inventor and not simply a copyist.¹²⁶

Like Baudelaire, Solvay emphasized Goya’s modernity,

Goya was ‘modern’ in a very real and precise sense of the term, and not only in his accent, his way of putting things, his subject matter, or that *je ne sais quoi* which brings him so close to us that he seems our contemporary. He was also ‘modern’ in his artistic technique: his new concept of the picturesque, and his experiments with colour and light which are so much to our taste these days.¹²⁷

He went on to assert that Goya’s modernism was a special case and, furthermore, that his modernism was very much connected to that of contemporary artists,

Goya’s modernity—and ours—goes further than the modernity of the great classics. It includes a wider range of subjects, and contains greater quantities of personal feeling, ideas and intentions. It is not so much art for art’s sake, as an art which wants to say more and to say something new, in comic or tragic vein, throwing aside the old conventions and restrictions, and concentrating on what is fleeting and seemingly unimportant. Goya’s art is Modernism: the reality of the world around us; things of the moment.¹²⁸

Again, Solvay’s interpretation of Goya’s work as depicting his contemporary environment imbued with his own emotion and ideas parallels what some of the Vingtistes were doing, in accord with the credo set out for them by Picard and Maus, to paint their country as it was then.

Many authors and critics believed that Goya’s work accurately portrayed the lives and customs of ordinary Spanish people.¹²⁹ This belief was enhanced by Goya’s perceived interest in

¹²⁵ “Il fit de tous les vices et de tous les scandales de son temps une hécatombe formidable et enjouée, n’oubliant aucun trait de ceux qu’il clouait à son pilori, les faisant reconnaissables à tous, physiquement et moralement, soulignant chaque chose avec une insolent audace.” Lucien Solvay, *L’Art Espagnol*, 270.

¹²⁶ Knudsen, *Goya’s Realism*, 12.

¹²⁷ Lucien Solvay, *L’Art Espagnol*, 1887, 264 quoted in translation by Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 123.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 70. In his chapter IV, “Romantics and Realists,” Glendinning discussed these socio-political ideals attributed to Goya by nineteenth-century authors.

bullfights, an interest that particularly linked him to his fellow Spaniards. Glendinning states that even the earliest French study of Goya's work portrayed the artist as a great republican and as "a man of the people."¹³⁰ Goya, who was known particularly for *Los Caprichos*, was seen as a defender of the Spanish, critical of not only artistic conventions, but also of religious fanaticism and oppressive government,¹³¹ and as representing the Spanish people's liberal objectives.¹³²

Solvay included nine reproductions of Goya's work in *L'Art Espagnol*, including a sketch from *La Tauromaquia*, a self portrait, *Le Garroté*, an etching of c.1778-80, *Los Caprichos* No. 43, *Los Desastres* No. 82, and four *Disparates*. He included more illustrations of Goya's work than of any other Spanish artist.¹³³ The four *Disparates* had been published in the French periodical *L'Art* in 1877, but they had not been published with the other eighteen of the series in 1864.¹³⁴ The nine images by Goya that Solvay chose to include in his book display a variety of scenes, ranging from hope to cruelty to fantasy, all no doubt seen as combining the socio-political situation of Goya's time with his own imaginings. *Disparate de Bestia* (Animal Folly) (figure 24) for example, was reproduced with the caption, "Autres lois pour le peuple," or "Other laws for the people." This caption reinforces the divide present in the image between the elephant and the group of men who appear to be showing a tablet to the animal. The whole scene is suggestive of social and class divisions, apparently recognized by Solvay with his caption.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 73-74.

¹³¹ Ibid., 183.

¹³² Ibid., 89.

¹³³ Next comes Velázquez, of whose work Solvay included seven reproductions. Solvay also reproduced numerous Spanish scenes completed by foreign artists, including eleven by French artist Henri Regnault and ten by Dutch artist Franz Meerts.

¹³⁴ Pierre Gassier and Juliet Wilson, *The Life and Complete Work of Francisco Goya, with a catalogue raisonné of the paintings, drawings and engravings* (New York: Reynal & Co., 1971), 325.

Solvay was not the only Belgian author associated with Les XX who discussed Goya or who described him in Impressionist terms. J.-K. Huysmans often contributed art criticism to Belgian periodicals and, although he was not a member of Les XX, he did share mutual friends with its members, most notably Léon Bloy (1846-1917), also a good friend of de Groux. Huysmans asserted that Goya's blobs of paint required that his paintings be viewed from a distance to be read as finished works, although seeing the brushstrokes up-close is also important in order to grasp the vitality of the subject.¹³⁵ Glendinning suggests that some of Huysmans's comments, made in 1889, may refer to the divisionist brushwork developed by Seurat in the mid-1880s,¹³⁶ a style that was very popular with the Vingtistes and also needed to be viewed from afar in order to see fully the intended subject and effect. In *À Rebours*, which caused a sensation when published in 1884 and was seen as a hallmark of the Decadent movement, Huysmans commented that Goya's work was receiving "universal admiration."¹³⁷

These nineteenth-century interpretations of Goya appealed to Les XX's artistic goals, to be modern, independent, and, for some, socially critical. Goya was associated with Impressionist color and pleinairisme and symbolist themes of fantasy, sexuality, and mysticism. Above all, he was seen as capable of portraying the modern condition accurately and with originality, a goal shared by members of Les XX.

¹³⁵ Glendinning, *Goya and his Critics*, 124. For the full passage see J.-K. Huysmans, *L'Art Moderne/Certains* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1975), 421.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹³⁷ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature* translated by Robert Baldick (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 94.

Chapter 6

A Spaniard in Their Midst: Dario de Regoyos and Les XX

The first mention of Dario de Regoyos in *L'Art Moderne* appeared in the spring of 1883 when its editors published a review of van Rysselberghe's solo Ghent exhibition of work from the artists' trip to Spain and Morocco the previous year. In mentioning other artists who had traveled to Spain, the reviewer wrote, "Dario [de Regoyos] interpret[s] reality and adds to it something bizarre, eccentric, and even fantastic that, while making his pictures stand out, gives to them a flavor so artistic, that others ['] works seem] more attached to reality..."¹³⁸ Reality and fantasy were both integral parts of his work and personality. He was recognized for both capturing the reality of Spain and infusing some of his culture's strangeness into his canvases, just as he was seen to do in his own person.

Among the works that Regoyos showed in Brussels in L'Essor's 1882-3 exhibition were paintings of stereotypical Spanish scenes, such as bullfighting. Many of the canvases that Regoyos showed are extant, including *Tendido de Sombra* (*Rows of Seats in Shadow*), *La Diligencia de Segovia* (*The Stagecoach of Segovia*), and *Mendigo* (*Beggar*). Regoyos painted *Tendido de Sombra* in 1882 (figure 25), during his trip to Spain with van Rysselberghe and other artist friends, and it was shown also at the L'Essor exhibition that was accompanied by Solvay's lecture on Spanish art. The image depicts the Plaza de las Ventas in Madrid, the bullfighting arena.¹³⁹ The ring is sharply divided by shadow into two distinct areas; two bullfighters are

¹³⁸ "Dario interprétant la réalité en y ajoutant quelque chose de bizarre, d'extravagant, et même de fantastique qui, tout en singularisant ses tableaux, leur donne une saveur si artistique, les autres s'attachant davantage aux réalités..." "L'Art à Gant, Festival Massenet.—Exposition Van Rysselberghe.—Nouvelles Artistiques," 96.

¹³⁹ *Darío De Regoyos 1857-1913*, 282.

represented walking with their backs towards the viewer from the foreground into the middleground towards their fellow bullfighters, from the brightly lit section of the ring into that which is dark, where an animal lies. Regoyos chose to depict a moment of relative inactivity when the *toreros* are taking a bow. The dead animal in the distance may be a bull, but is more likely a horse that was killed during the bullfight. Although the painting represents a dead animal and a huge crowd in the stands, the overall tenor is very serene. The only suggestion of the violence that has just occurred is the puddle of blood in front of the animal depicted in the distance. The title of the work says nothing about the actual event, but only comments on the effect of the sun, and the shadow stretching over the ring. The title is a reference to class distinctions at the event, for seats in the comfortable shade were more expensive.

Unlike works such as Goya's *La Tauromaquia (The Art of Bullfighting)* 1815-6 or *Suerte de vara (Luck of the pole)* 1824 (figure 26), Regoyos's bullfight is more concerned with the light effects than with details of this national pastime of Spain. Whereas the crowd and arena consume a large part of Regoyos's canvas, they make up only a small section of Goya's painting. In Goya's image the action of the bullfight is front and center. Goya enhanced the violence of the scene, only suggested by Regoyos, by including a dead animal in the background, but also another in the foreground, in between the two live animals. A further sign of violence is depicted in the horse's wound from which bright red blood is flowing. This bright red is repeated in a small wound on the bull's neck and in the clothing of some of the figures. The tense position of the picador suggests the action about to take place, an action that will result in more bloodshed. Regoyos's distant dead animal seems serene in comparison to Goya's taut, violent living creatures. The two artists, however, did share a looseness of technique, seen in both paintings, a quality of Goya's painting that was admired by the Impressionists. Although

Regoyos was depicting a stereotypical Spanish subject, he did so in the most modern Impressionist painting style.

Regoyos produced another image of dead animals related to the bullfight, *Victimas de la Fiesta* (*Victims of the Bullfight*) in 1894 (figure 27). The engraving was included in *Viaje a la España Negra*. The composition is as violent as the title, decapitating the horse form in the right foreground with the edge of the picture. Regoyos seems to be speaking to his non-Spanish, European audience who found the number of horses killed in bullfighting especially abhorrent. Théophile Gautier, in his *Voyage en Espagne* (1840), included in his description of a bullfight not only specifics about the costumes and actions of the *toreros*, but also a vivid description of the goring of a horse during the festivities. After a description of the action, he contemplated the dead animal, stating, “A dead horse is a corpse; all other animals which life has abandoned are mere carrion.”¹⁴⁰ Regoyos captured the horror of the horses’ deaths in *Victimas*, by showing their twisted bodies, open mouths, and at least one open, frightened eye. Gautier emphasized such carnage by writing that “it caused [him] the most painful sensation [he] experienced during the bullfight.”¹⁴¹

Regoyos also painted a series of beggars on sixteen canvases in 1882 while in Spain. *Mendigo I* (figure 28) was also shown in the L’Esson show of 1883. It is here that Regoyos most clearly emulates the great Spanish masters, particularly Velázquez, with whom he would have been familiar from his studies in Madrid. The poor man is shown standing against a blank background, with the wall and floor barely distinguished spatially from each other, just as in Velázquez’s *Portrait of the Jester Pablo de Valladolid* c. 1632-35 (figure 29) on view to him in

¹⁴⁰ Théophile Gautier, *A Romantic in Spain*, translated by Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Interlink Books, 2001), 73.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

the Museo del Prado. The space in *Mendigo* is rendered even more ambiguous by the lack of shadow around the figure. In Regoyos's picture, the figure, although poor, stands proudly, as does Velázquez's jester. In fact, the blank background gives the beggar a dignity and timelessness that would disappear if the man were shown in a more naturalistic setting, that is, surrounded by squalor. As a result, Regoyos offered dignity to even the poorest Spaniard, while remaining true to the beggar's condition.

Another of the works included in L'Essor's 1882-3 exhibition was Regoyos's *La Diligencia de Segovia* (*The Stagecoach of Segovia*), 1882 (figure 30). The street scene is painted from above, separating the viewer from the subject, making him or her a sort of omniscient observer, similar to many city views painted by the French Impressionists. The distance between the viewer and the figures, and the fact that so many of them are depicted with their backs to the viewer, shrouds their identities and expressions, which contrast with the open space they occupy. The horses and carriage are the focus of the image, and most of the figures on the street appear to be waiting to get in it. The figures are cloaked in dark black, brown, and red clothes that echo the colors of the stagecoach. Regoyos painted a mundane view of daily life, not a dramatic or decorative scene. The coach was commonly associated with Spain in travel writings and its inclusion perhaps suggests nostalgia for the past, as the railroad had already entered Spain. These works that Regoyos exhibited before Les XX's formation gave the future Vingtistes a glimpse of Spanish life, one that they probably trusted in its veracity as it was from the hand of a native Spaniard.

Regoyos seems to have had little hope for contemporary artists in his homeland. In *L'Art Moderne* in 1885, he reviewed a literary and artistic exhibition facing the Retiro park in Madrid. His first sentence reads, "The Prado museum, the best collection of masterpieces of Velázquez,

Ribera, [and] El Greco, has in no way inspired the young painters of Madrid. The[se fellows] appear not to understand the Spanish masters: one could say that there is not a single painter in Spain.”¹⁴² He went on to describe briefly some of the contemporary works currently on display. Upon seeing a painting of flowers by a friend, he instead praised the work of the Flemish painter Jean Capeinick (1838-90),¹⁴³ saying that the two artists were not comparable, for the Flemish artist was revolutionary.¹⁴⁴ Regoyos then called a group of small works by artists known as the “Circle of Brussels” splendid.

Regoyos lived in Spain for most of his life, and attached himself to Spanish artists working in an Impressionist style, but he was critical of his country and countrymen, particularly the intellectuals and artists.¹⁴⁵ Regoyos’s opinions of contemporary Spanish artists might have been a decisive factor for their absence in Les XX’s exhibitions. He once wrote,

...I laugh at the illusions of those who believe that modernism can be instilled into a country where misery and backwardness reign in everything and where opening a path that is not the familiar routine is seen as a crime or misdemeanor by them.¹⁴⁶

This passage shows that Regoyos himself believed Spain to be backward, and not capable of progress. In another letter, this one of 1902, he wrote, “Anyway, above all, we Spanish who live in our sad land build up many false hopes—[but] our life is a miserable nightmare.”¹⁴⁷ These thoughts and his choice of subjects fit the Black Legend of Spain and the stereotypes that it

¹⁴² “Le musée du Prado, la meilleure collection des chefs-d’oeuvre de Velázquez, de Ribera, du Greco, n’a rien inspiré aux jeunes peintres de Madrid. Ceux-ci ont l’air de ne pas comprendre les maîtres espagnols: on peut dire qu’il n’y a en Espagne pas un seul peintre.” “Exposición Literario—Artística a Madrid,” *L’Art Moderne* 5, no. 2 (11 January 1885): 11.

¹⁴³ Capeinick worked in Brussels and was known as a painter of still lifes and flowers. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire* Vol. 3, 202.

¹⁴⁴ “Exposición Literario—Artística a Madrid,” 12.

¹⁴⁵ Jose Luis Bernal Muñoz, “Regoyos Visto Por Regoyos,” *Goya*, no. 220 (Jan./Feb. 1991): 222.

¹⁴⁶ “...me río de las ilusiones que se hacen los que creen poder inculcar modernismo en un país donde reina la miseria y el atraso en todo y donde el abrir un camino que no sea la rutina sabida significa para ellos un delito o crimen.” *Ibid.*, 223. No date is given for this letter.

¹⁴⁷ “...en fin que de todo y sobre todas las cosas los españoles que vivimos en nuestra triste tierra nos hacemos muchas ilusiones nuestra vida es una pesadilla mezquina.” *Ibid.*

produced by the late nineteenth century, had existed for at least a century. It was this Black Spain and its dark connotations that seemed to attract these artists of Les XX.

Regoyos criticized his Spanish peers again in July 1887, when Picard and Maus published “En Espagne,” an article in *L’Art Moderne* based on a letter received from someone in Spain, most likely Regoyos. The letter includes details about the art world there and one exception, the Spanish artist Mariano Fortuny y Marsal (1838-1874) whose great importance to contemporary Spanish painting, as well as to modern painting in general, the author discussed.¹⁴⁸ The letter was cited as saying, “Fortuny is considered by the Spanish to be the founder of the universal modern school.”¹⁴⁹ The article credits Regoyos’s teacher de Haes with teaching his students how to paint in a loose style like that of Fortuny. Thus, it is implied that even Fortuny, one of the rare Spanish geniuses, needed de Haes, a Belgian, to teach other Spaniards to appreciate his art and to be modern. Regoyos presented Spanish artists as backward and ignorant.

In addition to *Viaje a la España Negra*, Regoyos was also involved in Solvay’s publication on Spanish art. *Une Rue à Tolède (A Street in Toledo)* (figure 31) is one of two drawings by Regoyos reproduced by his friend Solvay in *L’Art Espagnol*. This drawing was completed on the artist’s trip to Spain in 1882. The viewer’s proximity to the two buildings that flank the narrow walkway and the sliver of sky create an impression of an old and narrow street. In the center background, a woman is depicted leaning over a table, although she is insignificant compared to the buildings. In the catalog *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde*, it is observed

¹⁴⁸ Dario de Regoyos, “En Espagne,” *L’Art Moderne* 7, no. 31 (31 July 1887): 244. Solvay also recognized the importance of Fortuny; the last chapter of *L’Art Espagnol* is titled, “Fortuny—Conclusion.”

¹⁴⁹ “Fortuny est considéré par les Espagnols comme *el fundador* de l’école moderne universelle.” Ibid. Fortuny had traveled to Morocco, and had lived in Italy and France, before returning to Madrid to study Goya. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire* Vol. 5, 590.

that the rough style of the drawing itself echoes the simplicity of the street scene.¹⁵⁰ The strong shadow, present in many of Regoyos's works, recalls Goya's sharp dividing of pictorial space into bright light and dark shade.

Although Regoyos served as a direct link to Spain for Les XX, his own statements, both written and pictorial, clearly convey his ambivalence about his homeland and countrymen. While Regoyos considered the Spanish masters to be worthy of study and emulation, as is evident in his *Mendigo* series, he was not confident that his countrymen appreciated their native artistic traditions and accomplishments. Regoyos's education in Madrid with de Haes probably fostered the notion that Spaniards needed other Europeans to appreciate their own artistic past and to progress. Regoyos's paintings of his homeland provided the Vingtistes with images of contemporary Spanish life, including some stereotypical Spanish activities such as bullfighting, no doubt adding to their pre-conceived notions of Spain. Like many of his fellow Vingtistes, Regoyos was concerned with his contemporary world and created works that reflect his experiences, including those in Spain. Unlike Regoyos, de Groux and Ensor appropriated aspects of Spanish art, in particular that of Goya, to create highly original depictions of their Belgian environment.

¹⁵⁰ Goddard, *Les XX*, 174.

Chapter 7

Henry de Groux's Images of Dread

Henry de Groux (1867-1930), son of the Realist painter Charles de Groux, studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and had exhibited his work for the first time only a year before his election to Les XX in 1887.¹⁵¹ He left the group just a few years later, when in 1890, he saw the work of van Gogh that was to be exhibited at Les XX's annual Salon. He then pulled his own work from the show, stating that he refused to have his work in the same exhibition as "l'exécrable *Pot de soleils* de Monsieur Vincent," (Mr. Vincent's atrocious pot of sunflowers).¹⁵² At a banquet to celebrate the opening, he then made a number of negative comments about the artist's work, prompting Toulouse-Lautrec to challenge him to a duel. Although the duel was prevented and de Groux later officially apologized, he resigned from the group.¹⁵³ He and his imagery remained controversial for all of his life and career.

A small passage in an 1891 issue of *L'Art Moderne* described the experience of contemplating a work by de Groux.¹⁵⁴ The author wrote of the artist, "[He] seems to be the only painter today [who is] sufficiently tormented by his own heart's insomnia to express, in his art, profound realities."¹⁵⁵ The writer clearly believed that de Groux was one of the few artists of the day who was painting his inner demons. The author described how the viewer shudders with

¹⁵¹ He became a member of Les XX after a controversial vote within the group. Whistler, who had already exhibited with the group in two of their annual exhibitions, was nominated for membership that same year. Although some members believed that Whistler should be brought in because he already had a widespread reputation, the group eventually voted instead to support young Belgian artists, and de Groux was elected. Ibid., 40.

¹⁵² Maus, *Trente années de lutte*, 100.

¹⁵³ Maurice Tzvern and Philippe Aisinber *Le Cercle Des XX* (Bruxelles: Fine Arts S.A., 1989), 189.

¹⁵⁴ "Petite Chronique," *L'Art Moderne* 11, no. 2 (11 January 1891): 15.

¹⁵⁵ "paraît être aujourd'hui le seul peintre assez tourmenté par l'insomnie de son propre Coeur pour exprimer, en son art, les réalités profondes." Ibid.

fear at seeing the canvases that so successfully evoke death. The next four paragraphs apply such emotive words as “sobs,” “bitterness,” “torture,” “pity,” “terror,” and “anguish” to de Groux’s art, and describe de Groux as having the “fire of colors ground on the most luminous and sharpest palette...that one has seen since Delacroix.”¹⁵⁶ The spiritual dimension of de Groux’s work is also acknowledged by the author in an analogy between the act of viewing his painting and religious events such as Pentecost and All Saints’ Day.¹⁵⁷ De Groux’s work impacted its viewers with an intensity unlike many of his contemporaries, evoking strong responses.

In addition to his painting, de Groux spent much of his time as a printmaker. One of his biggest motivations for this was financial, as prints were easier to sell than paintings.¹⁵⁸ These prints found more of a market in Paris than in Brussels, making de Groux, along with Ensor, who also had a serious interest in printmaking, well known in Paris.¹⁵⁹ Contemporary critics compared his color and dramatic compositions to the work of Delacroix and Rubens.¹⁶⁰ His work was compared briefly to Goya’s in the 1899 issue of the French periodical *La Plume*, which was wholly dedicated to de Groux and his career. The author Léon Souguenet, after citing de Groux’s similarities to Turner, wrote, “One can also say that [de Groux’s] process relates to that of Goya.”¹⁶¹ Souguenet, however, did not offer any specific visual comparisons between the two artists’ work. Despite the visual similarities recognized, if not discussed, by his

¹⁵⁶ “Cela, dans un incendie de couleurs écrasées sur la palette la plus lumineuse et la plus taillée dans du coeur de chêne qu’on ait encore vue depuis Delacroix.” Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Goddard, *Les XX*, 81.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 82.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 83-84. British poet Arthur Symons also compared his figures to El Greco’s “groups of lean and tortured figures, consumed by flames of the soul.” Arthur Symons, *From Toulouse-Lautrec to Rodin With Some Personal Impressions* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1960), 146.

¹⁶¹ “On peut aussi dire que le procédé se rattache à celui de Goya.” *Henry de Groux, numéro spécial de La Plume* (1 & 15 Apr. 1899): 206.

contemporaries, there is no evidence that de Groux knew Goya's work, although as a printmaker and part of an artistic circle that admired Goya, he was likely to be familiar with at least *Los Desastres* and *Los Caprichos*.

Like Goya, much of de Groux's own work refers to the social and political situation in Belgium during his life. One of the artist's most important works is the pastel *Les Errants* (*The Wanderers*) or *Les Gitanos* (*The Gypsies*), c. 1889 (figure 32). Gypsies themselves were widely associated with Spain. As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution that dislocated many poor and working class people, such scenes of wandering families were not uncommon in Belgium, and de Groux may very well have witnessed such a sight.¹⁶² Goya depicted a similar subject in No. 45 of *Los Desastres*, *Y esto tambien* (*And this too*) (figure 33).¹⁶³ The Royal Academy of San Fernando first published *Los Desastres de la Guerra* in 1863, thirty-five years after Goya's death. The collection of eighty plates includes scenes from the Napoleonic invasion of Spain (1808-1813), a famine in Madrid (1811-12), and allegorical images that refer to the oppression of the regime of Ferdinand VII and the Catholic church.¹⁶⁴ It is believed that Goya worked on the series for approximately ten years, from 1810 to 1820. As he worked on them over such a lengthy period, they range greatly in style. Tomlinson pointed out that this first edition was published around the same time that war photography was becoming widespread, thereby encouraging a strictly documentary reading of Goya's series.¹⁶⁵

Although in *Y esto tambien*, the mothers and children are depicted fleeing some threat, probably the Napoleonic occupation, in *Les Errants*, they appear rootless in an industrialized world. Both scenes depict urgent, contemporary subjects for their respective artists. The images

¹⁶² Goddard, *Les XX*, 158.

¹⁶³ The caption under the preceding plate 44 is "Y lo vi" (I saw it).

¹⁶⁴ Tomlinson, *Graphic Evolutions*, 32.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

are similar in that humans and their animals appear homeless. Both images indicate that the expropriation affects whole populations. In Goya's image, the central family sits in one wagon but another wagon in the background suggests the spreading misery.

De Groux's image is more crowded and claustrophobic than Goya's, and contains multiple animals and a cluttered landscape. Stephen Goddard has suggested that the kite, caught in telegraph wires, just to the right of the pole, alludes to the family's desire to escape their present squalid circumstance, brought on by industrialization.¹⁶⁶ A number of animals appear in the Belgian's image, including several dogs fighting over carrion, monkeys, a goat, and numerous chickens and roosters. These animals and their violent activities suggest the competition for survival among the human, which is lacking in Goya's image. In the foreground, de Groux depicted a fiddle, perhaps to reinforce the association of music with gypsies.¹⁶⁷

Another print that reflects the politics of his time is *Quand les bourgeois dormant dans leurs lits* (*When the Bourgeois Sleep in their Beds*) 1893 (figure 34). It appeared in an 1893 book of stories about the Franco-Prussian war, *Sueur de Sang* (*Sweat of Blood*) by de Groux's friend Léon Bloy.¹⁶⁸ The particular story it illustrates is entitled "Le Fossoyeur des vivants" ("The Burier of the Living") in which a character roams the streets where there are scattered everywhere bodies of the living and the dead.¹⁶⁹ According to Goddard, de Groux used one of the first lines of the story, an overtly political statement, as his title.¹⁷⁰ When the print appeared in the edition, however, the title was changed against de Groux's wishes to the next sentence in

¹⁶⁶ Goddard, *Les XX*, 158.

¹⁶⁷ See Marilyn R. Brown *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: The Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1985), 25-6 for information on gypsies and music.

¹⁶⁸ The two were very good friends; Bloy mentioned de Groux very regularly in his journal.

¹⁶⁹ Goddard, *Les XX*, 162.

¹⁷⁰ Goddard states that the passage has "political connotations," but does not explain further. *Ibid.*

the story, “It is something, sir, about which Dante never spoke,” indicating that the original title was problematic, which angered de Groux.¹⁷¹

The print resembles numerous plates of *Los Desastres* in their depictions of piles of human carnage resulting from famine and war, experiences common to the Franco-Prussian War. *Los Desastres* No. 30, *Estragos de la Guerra (Ravages of War)* (figure 35) is an image with a similar theme. In both, the dominant image is a pile of bodies and objects that belonged to the people when alive. Both artists created a particularly disturbing juxtaposition of the living and the dead; in de Groux’s print, although some sections are difficult to decipher, many faces are clearly discernible, some completely devoid of life and others with wide eyes and panicked expressions emphasizing the horror of their situation. These bodies, both alive and dead, lay together. In Goya’s image, the bodies on the ground appear lifeless, but the position of the falling woman, especially her hands spread out above her head, suggests that this body is still alive. This combination of the living and dead in both works emphasizes the horror of war not just for those who die in conflict, but for those who must witness and continue to live surrounded by death.

The painting that is perhaps de Groux’s best known is *Le Christ aux outrages (Christ Tormented)* (figure 36) begun in 1887, when he was only twenty-one years old and his mother had just passed away. At this point, he was ready to create a work that Goddard interprets as “his cataclysmic commentary on human grief.”¹⁷² Bloy described it in his journal as a work “nearly untranslatable into words, truly it is sad!”¹⁷³ While the painting and lithograph that de

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 167.

¹⁷³ “presque intraduisible par l’écriture, tellement elle est douloureuse!...” Pierre Glaudes, ed. *Léon Bloy Journal I: 1892-1907* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1999), 6. Bloy goes on for almost four full pages about the work and the thoughts that it provokes.

Groux completed almost ten years later express grief, he also imbued the works with a sense of isolation, as Christ, although surrounded by a large crowd, only manages to reach out with one finger to connect with another person.

Le Christ aux outrages was exhibited for the first time at the Belgian triennial Salon in 1890, the same year de Groux resigned from Les XX. King Leopold II was so taken with the painting that he asked to speak to the artist.¹⁷⁴ When the King asked de Groux to explain the ugliness of the figures, in particular that of Christ, de Groux responded,

I thought that the emotions that they express do not have to beautify them...I thought that Christ, being God in human form in order to take on all human sorrow and grief, could not be beautiful, at least not in the common sense of the word, and in this circumstance, he had to endure physical fear and the outward appearance of guilt.¹⁷⁵

Although de Groux would probably not have been aware of it, in 1792, Goya authored a letter to the Academy in which he discussed the problems with depicting the divine, which he believed was everywhere; consequently, artists should remain free to depict divinity however it appears.¹⁷⁶ De Groux shared a similar approach in work, particularly *Christ aux outrages*.

After its display in Brussels, the King paid to have the painting sent to Paris for an exhibition there; however, it was refused by the official Salon and shown only in a small venue. Many critics wrote about the work at this time, and broadly compared it to Goya's art. A writer for *La Plume* wrote in 1892 that, "one discovers in [de Groux's] tragic and poignant art a mysterious affinity with that of Breughel, of Rembrandt, of Delacroix and sometimes also of Goya."¹⁷⁷ Because these named artists often depicted common folk, the critic may have found

¹⁷⁴ This information about the painting is all from Goddard, *Les XX*, 167-68.

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in translation by Ibid., 167.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 85.

¹⁷⁷ "on découvre dans son art tragique et poignant une mystérieuse affinité avec celui de Breughel d'Enfer, de Rembrandt, de Delacroix et parfois aussi de Goya." *La Plume*, 242. The article reproduced in *La Plume* originally appeared in *Figaro Illustré* in April 1892.

similarities with de Groux's depictions of the lower classes. Between 1894 and 1898, de Groux made the lithograph after a photograph of his original painting.¹⁷⁸

In de Groux's print, Christ is being led, presumably to his death, by soldiers while a sea of people try to touch him. Interestingly, the figure whose hand Christ reaches is partially overlapped and not clearly visible, giving the gesture a more universal meaning. Although many of the crowd figures look frightened or distressed, some look angry, as though they are ready to attack. In either case, it looks as though Christ is about to be swallowed up by the throng of people. Goddard suggests that the print may be read as autobiographical, like Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels*, and as expressing the alienation that both artists felt from their society.¹⁷⁹ De Groux resigned from Les XX, escaping from what he viewed as a hostile environment; however, his Christ is not as lucky and cannot escape.

L'Art Moderne published an excerpt of Bloy's lengthy comments on the painting. Bloy felt that de Groux's work attained a spiritual power not achieved since medieval times, "I affirm twenty times the triumph of *Christ aux outrages*, the greatest attempt at Christian spirituality that had been achieved in painting since the predecessors of that toned down paganism that is called the Renaissance."¹⁸⁰ He wrote of the horror of the image of Christ's torture and compared the emotional response before such an image to that of *Ecce Homo* by the Spanish old master Alonzo Cano.

¹⁷⁸ Goddard, *Les XX*, 167.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. The two artists were working on these paintings at the same time and may have been inspired by one another. Both artists may also have been influenced by George Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte*, a painting that inspired many of the Vingtistes when it was shown in their Salon of 1887. Ibid. Nancy Davenport also suggests that the painting may be related to Charles L. Muller's *Nous voulons Barrabas* of 1878, which is in the Musée Wicar in Lille where she suggests de Groux may have visited during his travels between Paris and Brussels. Davenport, "*Christ aux Outrages* by Henry de Groux," 294, n.26. If this is correct, and de Groux did visit museums in Lille, he also would have been exposed to the same works by Goya that Ensor saw there.

¹⁸⁰ "...j'estime vingt fois assuré le triomphe du *Christ aux outrages*, tentative la plus formidable de spiritualisme chrétien qu'on ait accomplie en peinture depuis les prédécesseurs de ce paganisme édulcoré qui s'appela la Renaissance." Leon Bloy, "Le Christ Aux Outrages," *L'Art Moderne* 12, no. 30 (24 July 1892): 235.

But *Christ aux outrages* is best compared to Goya's *Capricho* No. 24: *No hubo remedio* (*Nothing Could Be Done About It*) (figure 37). Here, a half-naked and bound woman, a victim of the Inquisition as indicated by her conical hat, is being led to her death. In both pictures, the victim has at least one judging figure staring directly at her or him and is surrounded by an angry mob, some of whom have grotesque, mask-like faces. The written commentary included in the proofs with Goya's image¹⁸¹ identify the woman as innocent, a martyr,

They are persecuting this saintly woman to death. After having signed her death sentence, they take her out in triumph. She has indeed deserved a triumph and if they do it to insult her they are wasting time. No one can shame someone who has nothing to be ashamed of.¹⁸²

The crowd does not recognize the woman's innocence and is depicted as a hostile mob. Nancy Davenport has discussed *Christ aux outrages* in relation to the sociological study of crowds or crowd theory.¹⁸³ Throughout the nineteenth century, the crowd became increasingly associated with the angry mob, an entity to be feared.¹⁸⁴ Although depictions of street scenes had been rare in Belgian art, in the 1880s, writers began writing more and more about the city and its social implications.¹⁸⁵ The rapid industrialization of Belgium had led to worker revolts and demonstrations, many of which, including the one for universal suffrage on August 15, 1886, took place on the Boulevard Anspach in Brussels. In the 1860s, Leopold II had begun a major reorganization of Belgian cities using Baron Hausmann's work in Paris as a model, in part to take control of streets and public squares. Davenport argues that the European imagination saw the crowd as a hostile, destructive force, and she quotes a poem by Verhaeren, "La Révolte," in

¹⁸¹ A manuscript now at the Prado is believed to have been written by Goya's own hand to accompany the plates. Gassier, *The Life and Complete Work of Francisco Goya*, 131.

¹⁸² Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), plate 24.

¹⁸³ Davenport, "Christ aux Outrages," 284.

¹⁸⁴ Susan M. Canning, "La foule et le boulevard: James Ensor and the street politic of everyday life," in Jane Block, ed. *Belgium, the Golden Decades 1880-1914* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 42.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

which he echoed such a view.¹⁸⁶ She posits that the “savage crowd and its victim, the defenseless hero, was the single theme of De Groux’ historical and mythic art,” as Christ was the original “hero/victim” of the West.¹⁸⁷

De Groux may have been familiar with Goya’s depictions of crowds from his various paintings and print series. Goya depicted crowds, which like de Groux’s, came at a time of great social upheaval. According to Victor Stoichita and Anna Maria Coderch, Goya invented a new vocabulary for the disorderly crowds that appear in his works.¹⁸⁸ Tomlinson notes that Goya’s crowds often appear in scenes in which “cruelty becomes public spectacle,” as in figure 37.¹⁸⁹ She suggests that Goya’s portrayal of the populace may have come from his disillusionment with his fellow citizens and their ready acceptance of Ferdinand VII and his regime.

De Groux would continue to make prints reflecting the political and social climate of the time for the rest of his career. About ten years after painting *Christ aux outrages*, de Groux depicted Émile Zola leaving the Palais de Justice after a hearing in the Dreyfus Affair, in which Zola, a hero to de Groux, fights off the “hideous crowd.”¹⁹⁰ The two works were so similar that some contemporaries called the later piece, “Zola aux outrages,” again reinforcing the original work’s themes of an outsider trying to reform society and of innocence wrongly punished.¹⁹¹ De Groux spent War World I in Paris and made a series of prints showing the horrors of it. Although most artists created heroic images showing noble French soldiers and citizens, de

¹⁸⁶ Davenport, “*Christ aux Outrages*,” 289.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 290.

¹⁸⁸ Victor I. Stoichita and Anna Maria Coderch, *Goya: The Last Carnival* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1999), 37.

¹⁸⁹ Tomlinson, *Graphic Evolutions*, 33. She cites *Los Desastres* No. 28, *Populacho (Rabble)* and plate 12 of *La Tauromaquia* as two such examples.

¹⁹⁰ Goddard, *Les XX*, 167.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Groux's images are full of anger and death. Here again it is hard to deny the influence that Goya's *Los Desastres* may have had on the artist.¹⁹²

¹⁹² In the one article that I found on this series of de Groux's work, Nancy Davenport mentions *Los Desastres* briefly but dismissed them, saying de Groux's images are devoid of the "heroism and martyrdom" that Goya "celebrated" in his etchings. I do not believe that she studied *Los Desastres* thoroughly enough, and I do not agree with this statement. In addition to this, she has a number of errors, particularly in the chronology of de Groux's life. Davenport, "Henry De Groux, the Great War and the Apocalypse," 159.

Chapter 8

James Ensor, Goya, and the Macabre

Although a founding member of Les XX, James Ensor's (1860-1949) relationship with his fellow artists was always contentious, as was his opinion of the art of the past. He once said, "All the rules, all the canons of art vomit death like their bronze brethren."¹⁹³ Despite this apparent hostility towards the art of the past, he began studying Rembrandt, Turner, Daumier, and Goya, all four printmakers, at the Brussels Academy on the recommendation of one of his professors.¹⁹⁴ Although most scholars mention Ensor's admiration of Goya in passing, few give any evidence of it in Ensor's art or his writings. Ensor, like Goya, admired Rembrandt, which can be seen as an important tie between the oeuvre of the two artists,¹⁹⁵ although the Dutch old master did not share their satirical tendencies. Ensor and Goya also shared an interest in witchcraft, monsters, and the grotesque.

Ensor grew up in Ostend, on the Belgian coast where his mother ran a souvenir shop that sold, among other things, masks to be used at Carnival. He referred to his mother, at least once in writing about his life and family, as "espagnole."¹⁹⁶ One modern scholar described Ensor's mindset of the late 1880s, "he allowed an almost malevolent imagination to run riot in the creation of oddly shaped and caricatural creatures. He saw himself, in the midst of the hostile

¹⁹³ Quoted in Eisenman, *Nineteenth Century Art*, 364.

¹⁹⁴ Bénézit, *Dictionnaire* Vol. 5, 138.

¹⁹⁵ Garcia, "La postérité de Goya," 154.

¹⁹⁶ Hugo Martin, ed. *James Ensor: Mes Écrits* (Éditions Labor, 1999), 13. Dictionaries of nineteenth-century French slang suggest that "espagnol" meant vermin or pestilence. However, this seems an unlikely descriptor for Ensor's mother. See Lorédan Larchey, *Dictionnaire historique, étymologique et anecdotique de l'argot parisien* (Paris: F.Polo, 1872), 127, for one such entry.

crowd, as a rejected Christ figure.”¹⁹⁷ Like de Groux, Ensor developed a fantasy world in his art, mixing wild, urban crowds and religious imagery. He also painted the misery of the disenfranchised in his native Ostend.¹⁹⁸

In a letter to Regoyos of December 1884, Ensor wrote of a recent trip to Lille during which he visited the city’s museum and saw works by Goya, which were the highlight of the museum.¹⁹⁹ In the letter, which he addressed to “Mon cher Dario,” or “My dear Dario,” he stated that he was so enamored of Goya’s work that he would visit Spain as soon as he sold a painting and could afford the trip. He mentioned all three paintings that were owned by the museum and at the time identified as works by Goya, *Les Vieilles*, *Les Jeunes*, and *Le Garroté* (a picture now attributed to Eugenio Lucas Velázquez).²⁰⁰ He exclaimed about the first work he mentioned, *Les Vieilles* (*Old Women*) (figure 38), “never have I seen figures more ghastly, they deeply upset me.”²⁰¹ Clearly struck by the lifelike quality in Goya’s work, he continued on, “these Spanish paintings stir my blood.”²⁰² The two women, whose skull-like faces cause one to think they are near death, are being observed by the personification of time. Their mask-like visages are similar to many that Ensor would soon paint. Although Ensor did not specifically mention the written message in the work, Xavier Tricot has suggested that Ensor may have been inspired by Goya’s inscription “Que tal?” to include words in his *Squelettes voulant se chauffer* (*Skeletons trying to warm themselves*) (figure 39) of 1889.²⁰³ The words, “Pas de feu. En trouverez-vous demain?” (No fire. Will you find some tomorrow?) are written on the base of the

¹⁹⁷ MaryAnne Stevens, ed. *Impressionism to Symbolism: The Belgian Avant-Garde 1880-1900* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1994), 21.

¹⁹⁸ John David Farmer, *Ensor* (New York: George Braziller, 1976), 12.

¹⁹⁹ Xavier Tricot, ed. *James Ensor: Lettres* (Bruxelles, Éditions Labor, 1999), 153-155.

²⁰⁰ See the exhibition catalog, *Goya, un regard libre* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1998) for more information about these paintings and others in the Lille collection.

²⁰¹ “Jamais je n’ai vu de figures plus affreuses, elles m’ont impressionné vivement.” Tricot, *James Ensor*, 154.

²⁰² “Ces peintures espagnoles m’ont remué le sang.” Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 153.

stove depicted in the work. As the women in *Les Vieilles*, the skeletons appear in a precarious life and death situation. In the letter, Ensor next mentioned *Les Jeunes* (figure 40), describing its background as being like that of a Manet,²⁰⁴ probably for its sketchy appearance and contrasting tones.

In addition to these paintings in Lille, Ensor was familiar with Goya's prints, or at the very least, *Los Caprichos*, as he made one drawing (figure 41) after a print from that series. Around 1885, Ensor drew after Goya's *Los Caprichos* No. 51: *Se repulen (They Spruce Themselves Up)* (figure 42), although he altered the face of the demon clipping another's toenails. The changed face, with its less exaggerated features and prominent facial hair, suggests that Ensor inserted a portrait of a friend or perhaps a self-portrait, which has some logic, as this is the head of a figure that aids others.²⁰⁵ In other works, Ensor conveyed an underlying message about his relationship with his fellow Vingtistes.²⁰⁶

At least one scholar has explored Ensor's possible inspiration from Goya's art for one of his own paintings. In her article, "La postérité de Goya au XIX^e siècle et dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle," Françoise Garcia points out the similarities between Ensor's *Démons me turlupinant (Demons teasing me)* of 1895 (figure 43) and Goya's figure that evolved out of a self portrait in No. 43 of *Los Caprichos*, *El sueño de la razon produce monstrous* (figure 44), in which the figures of both artists are haunted by monsters.²⁰⁷ However, in Goya's work, the

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ The figure's face is so sketchy that all that can really be seen of the physiognomy is the beard and mustache. Many of the Vingtistes fit this vague description, including Ensor himself.

²⁰⁶ For another example, see *Les Cuisiniers dangereux (The Dangerous Cooks)* of 1896.

²⁰⁷ Garcia, "La postérité de Goya," 154. Although this work dates to the period slightly after the dissolution of the Les XX, it was one of the only direct comparisons of the two artists' work that I found. As Goya's print was reproduced in *L'Art Espagnol*, Ensor more than likely would have been familiar with it.

monsters hover as emanations of the sleeping figure's mind, whereas in Ensor's, they are depicted taking him away.²⁰⁸

Ensor created many group or crowd scenes. He began depicting street scenes around 1880, although the crowd only appears in his oeuvre about five years later. The first is his drawing of 1885, *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ Into Jerusalem* (figure 45). The creation of this picture coincides with Ensor's increasing interest in socialist causes,²⁰⁹ and it has been established that he was aware of Goya's work by this time. At Les XX's salon of 1887, Ensor exhibited a series of drawings, including a larger version of *The Lively and Radiant*. In *La Gazette's* review of the exhibition, the critic A.J. Wauters opined that the heads in Ensor's crowds were, "deformed by physical work, convulsed by the fatigue from walking, altered by bitterness, vengeance, and appetites...who want to improve, reform, overthrow, disrupt, with their flags, banners, emblems, symbols, signs..."²¹⁰ This description of the deformed bodies of those involved in political reform recall some figures in *Los Caprichos* and *Los Desastres*.

In one of Ensor's recurring images of skeletons, *Squelettes se Disputant un Pendu* (*Skeletons fighting for the body of a hanged man*) 1891 (figure 46), two skeletons fight over a hanged body. It has been suggested that the inspiration for the painting was a photograph of Ensor and a friend fighting playfully on the beach.²¹¹ But one is reminded strongly of *Los Caprichos* No: 12: *A caza de dientes* (*Out Hunting for Teeth*) (figure 47). In both images, the dead are being plundered. Goya's woman is clearly alive, and Ensor's skeletons are active,

²⁰⁸ Garcia goes on to suggest that Ensor provided a link between Goya and the German Expressionists for whom depicting the ugly was a necessity. Ibid., 156.

²⁰⁹ Canning, "La foule et le boulevard," 46.

²¹⁰ "déformées par le travail corporel, convulsionnées par la fatigue de la marche, altérées par la rancune, la vengeance et les appetites..." and that Ensor represented those "qui veulent améliorer, reformer, renverser, bouleverser, avec ses drapeaux, des étendards, des emblems, des symbols, des cartels..." Quoted in Block, *Les XX*, 38.

²¹¹ Xavier Tricot, *James Ensor Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings* (Antwerp/Belgium: Pandora, 1992), 312.

while being watched by other masked, hideous figures. The image of the skeletons fighting over a body labeled “stew” certainly suggests the savageness of life, as does Goya’s image and de Groux’s *Les Errants*.

Another common motif in Ensor’s oeuvre is the mask, which became for the artist a symbol of the world around him. He felt misunderstood by many of his contemporaries and used masks in his work to conceal the identity of his critics in order to attack them in his art. As has already been mentioned, masks surrounded Ensor from a young age in his mother’s shop. A mask is a contradiction itself, in that it is visible and yet makes something else invisible at the same time.²¹² He began doing images of masks in the 1880s; the first of these images is *Les Masques Scandalisés* (*The Scandalized Masks*) of 1883 (figure 48).²¹³ Ensor enhanced a typical, interior scene by masking the two figures. The especially large nose, pointed hat, and stick of the figure in the doorway give the woman the appearance of a witch. The man is depicted sitting at a table with nothing but a half-empty bottle, suggesting drunkenness. Because the two figures wear masks, the viewer cannot see who they are or how they might be responding emotionally to the situation.

Goya also depicted masks in many of his images, notably here in *Los Caprichos* No. 6: *Nadie se conoce* (*Nobody Knows Himself*) (figure 49). The text that has been attributed to Goya in reference to this print could also apply to Ensor’s image, “The world is a masquerade. Face, dress and voice, all are false. All wish to appear what they are not, all deceive and do not even know themselves.”²¹⁴ Not all of the figures in *Nadie se conoce* appear as grotesque as Ensor’s figures do. While the background figures who appear to be watching the young couple seem

²¹² Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, ed., *Ensor* (Wommelgem: Blondé Artprinting International, 1999), 19.

²¹³ Whitfield has suggested that the two figures are Ensor’s parents. Sarah Whitfield, “James Ensor,” *Apollo* 151, no. 455 (Jan. 2000): 55-6.

²¹⁴ Goya, *Los Caprichos* No. 6. See note 181; the same applies here.

monstrous, the couple in the foreground appear to have typical human features. Ensor's mask images also bear a strong resemblance to Goya's Black Paintings, many of which contain figures with exaggerated features and mask-like visages.

Stoichita and Coderch have studied Goya's use of masks in their book, *Goya: The Last Carnival*. Carnival, a time with associations for Ensor due to his mother's livelihood, was a religious celebration when everyone wore masks; some wore animal masks while others participated in cross-dressing, the ultimate form of reversal and otherness.²¹⁵ Carnival represents the world turned upside-down and tolerated extreme behavior and mock violence as a "safety valve" for the rest of the year, though at times the violence became real.²¹⁶

Ensor combined the fantasy and reality surrounding Carnival in his masterpiece, *L'Entrée du Christ à Bruxelles en 1889* (*Christ's Entry into Brussels, 1889*) (figure 50), which he began in 1888. At least one modern scholar has called the picture one of the key works of modern painting and one that announced the beginning of modernism.²¹⁷ Like Goya in *Los Caprichos* and *Los Desastres*, Ensor created social commentary in art form. The image depicts Ensor, as Christ, entering Brussels in the middle of a Mardi Gras celebration. This painting is possibly a response to Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, in its size and use of a large group of contemporary people for social commentary.²¹⁸ Seurat's painting was exhibited at Les XX's 1887 Salon, where it had enchanted many of the Vingtistes, who then began to paint in a Pointillist style. This embrace of the latest French style by so many of his peers apparently increased Ensor's feelings of alienation from the group. This hostility is expressed here on the

²¹⁵ Stoichita and Coderch, *Goya: The Last Carnival*, 17.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 22-23.

²¹⁷ Norbert Lynton, "Very Nasty Great Art," *The Art Book* 10, no. 4 (Sept. 2003): 6.

²¹⁸ Goddard, *Les XX*, 167. Both works in fact, suggest alienation from modern society.

left with onlookers vomiting off of a porch down onto a banner bearing Les XX's emblem.²¹⁹

Despite this insult to Les XX, the painting was scheduled to be shown in their annual show of 1888.

Goya clearly served as a source of inspiration for Ensor throughout his career. Both artists presented a combination of grotesque imagery and social commentary in their works. Ensor's art reflects not only the political climate of Brussels in the late nineteenth century, but also his own feelings of isolation from his fellow artists. Despite his differences with Les XX, Ensor stayed a member until its end. In fact, during the November 1893 vote for dissolution, of the sixteen members who voted, Ensor was the only one against dissolving the group.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Susan M. Canning, "The Ordure of Anarchy" Scatological Signs of Self and Society in the Art of James Ensor," *Art Journal* 52, (Fall 1993): 50.

²²⁰ Block, *Les XX*, 76.

Chapter 9

Epilogue

By looking at both the visual and written works by artists and writers associated with Les XX, we can begin to understand how the political, social, and artistic climate in late nineteenth-century Belgium made Spain a welcome source of inspiration for several of these artists. The examples of Les XX's interest in Spanish art and culture are numerous and varied, reflecting not only the group's shared interests, but also each individual artist's own ideals. When Les XX formed in 1883, they were almost immediately controversial for their liberal politics and desire to escape from the constraints of the official Belgian triennial Salon. Some of their members looked to Black Spain, not to create historical paintings, but their own versions of Spanish stereotypes; others studied the rich tradition of Spanish painting to enrich their own.

What is presented here is only a sampling of interactions between members of Les XX and Spanish art and culture. Other Vingtistes, such as Meunier, deserve more study, and Regoyos, de Groux, and Ensor deserve deeper study. I have examined only a few examples of each artist's work, but more could be considered. Only touched on here, another rich avenue for exploration is the link to Spain and Spanish art provided by the foreign *invités*, Redon and Whistler, at Les XX's salons.

I have focused on the period between 1883 and 1893, when Les XX was active as a group. It would be interesting to see how these artists' ideas about Goya and Spanish art in general evolved, and how these changes may be evident in their work. As was previously mentioned, de Groux did a series of prints during World War I, a series that could surely be

studied in comparison to *Los Desastres*. Ensor continued painting well into the twentieth century, and this later body of work could be studied for signs of Spanish influence. Just as Goya's career spanned two centuries, so did theirs, creating a body of work as reflective of its own time as Goya's was to his.



Figure 1

Carlos de Haes, *View of Madrid* c.1855-65

The National Gallery, London, Oil on paper laid on canvas, 25.2 x 45.2 cm



Figure 2

Franz Kasper Hubert Vinck, *The Scourging* c.1884

Location unknown, 228.6 x 125 cm



Figure 3

Louis Gallait, *L'Abdication de Charles Quint* 1841

Musées royaux de Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Oil on canvas, 485 x 683 cm



Figure 4

Constantin Meunier, *Scène de cabaret à Séville/Café del Buzero* 1882-83

Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Oil on canvas, 126 x 151 cm

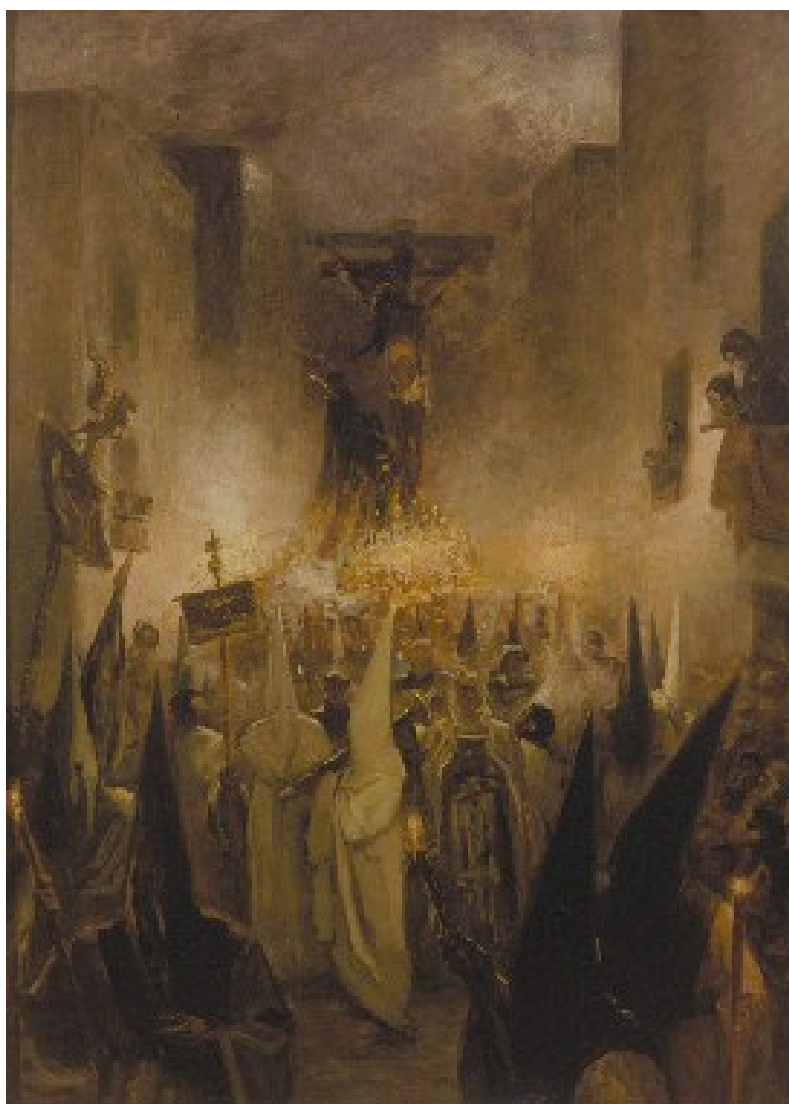


Figure 5

Constantin Meunier, *Procession du silence, Séville* 1882-83

Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Oil on canvas, 54 x 110 cm



Figure 6

Photo from L'Essor's exhibition of 1883

Reproduced in Feltkamp, *Théo van Rysselberghe*, 228



Figure 7

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Balthazar Carlos à cheval* 1882

Location unknown, Oil on canvas, 174 x 116 cm



Figure 8

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Jeune Gitane de face* or *Espagnole* 1881

Royal Collection, Brussels, Oil on canvas, 32.5 x 30 cm

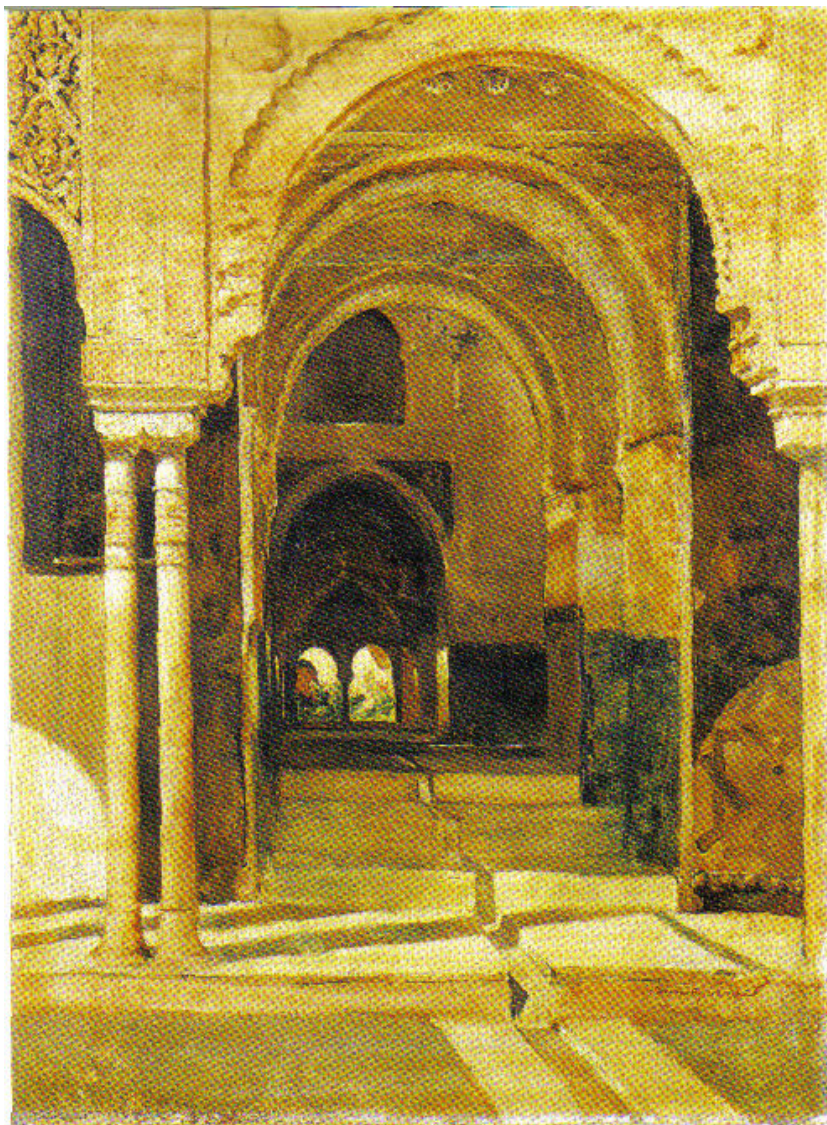


Figure 9

Théo van Rysselberghe, *L'Alhambra* 1884

Private collection, Oil on canvas, 120 x 88 cm



Figure 10

Constantin Meunier, *Portrait of Regoyos* 1884

Private Collection, Watercolor, 44 x 32 cm

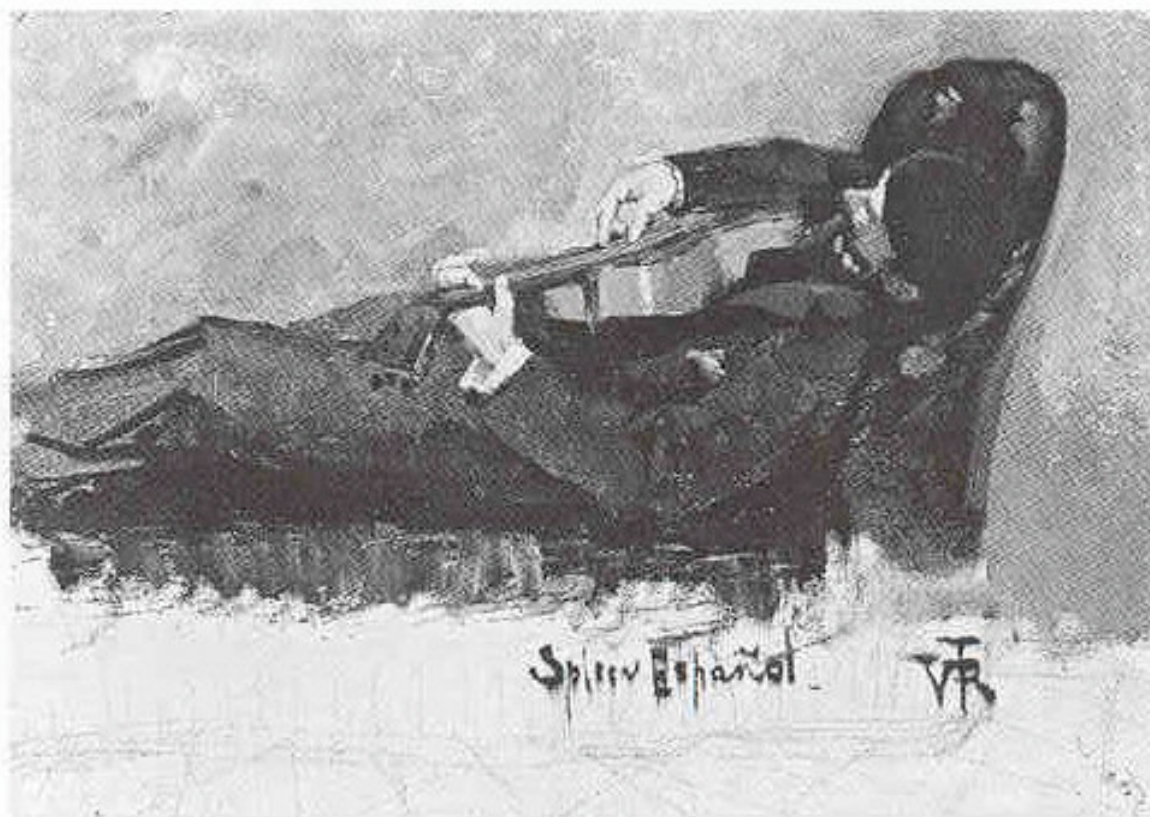


Figure 11

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Spleen Espagnol* 1881

Banque Dexia, Brussels, Oil on canvas, 34.5 x 48 cm



Figure 12

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Dario de Regoyos de profil* 1882

Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Oil on wood, 30 x 42.5 cm



Figure 13

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Dario de Regoyos de face* 1882

Private Collection, Oil on panel, 30.5 x 41.5 cm



Figure 14

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Le guitariste-Portrait de Dario de Regoyos* 1885

Museo del Prado, Oil on canvas, 52 x 34.5 cm



Figure 15

James Ensor, *Au Conservatoire* 1902

Private Collection, Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 65 x 82.5 cm



Figure 16

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Dario de Regoyos* 1886

Musée Verhaeren-Le Caillou qui Bique, Charcoal drawing, 18.5 x 22.5 cm



Figure 17

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Dario de Regoyos* 1889

Private collection, Charcoal drawing, 25 x 19 cm



Figure 18

Théo van Rysselberghe, *Dario de Regoyos* 1889

Private collection, Lithograph, 29 x 24 cm



Figure 19

James Ensor, *Portrait of Regoyos* 1884

Collection Crédit Communal de Belgique, Oil on canvas, 65 x 57 cm

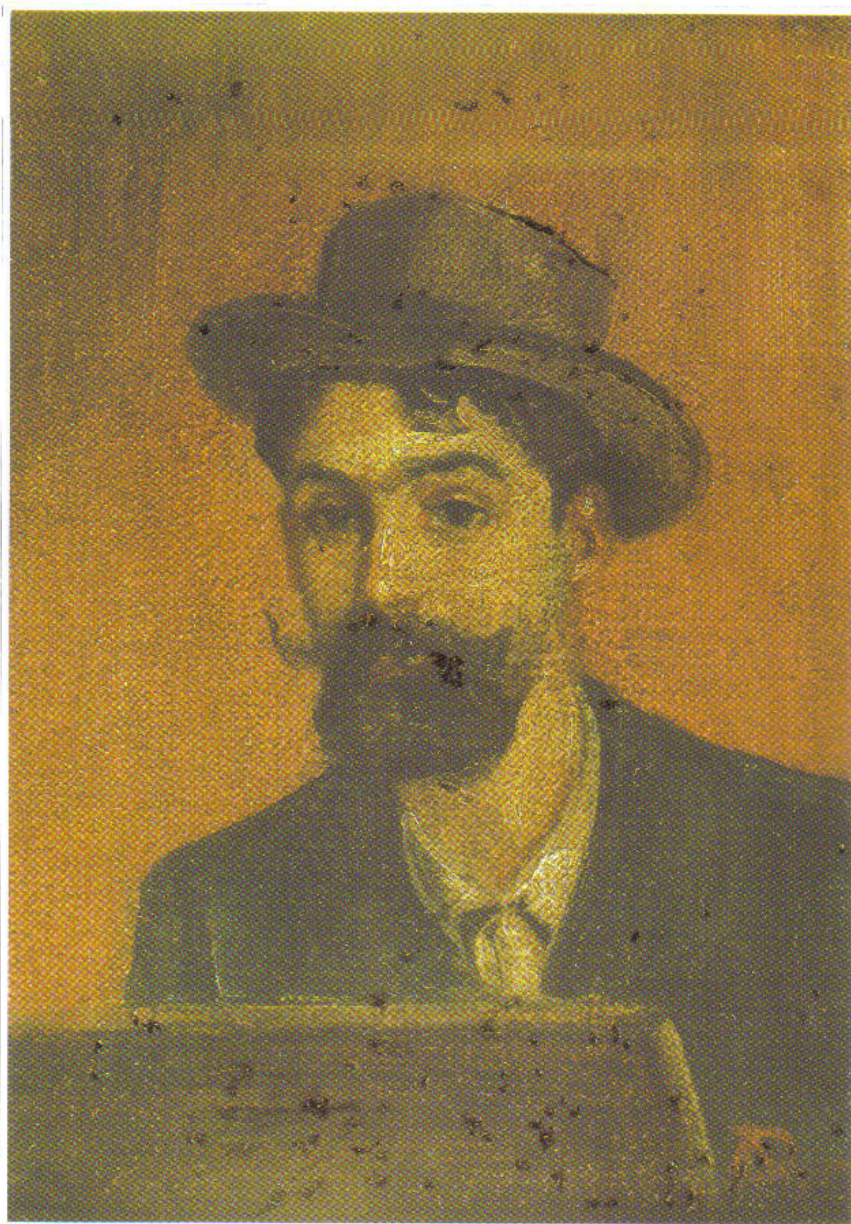


Figure 20

Dario de Regoyos, *Autorretrato* c.1879

Private collection, Oil on cardboard, 22 x 16 cm



Figure 21

Jean Delvin, *Victime* 1901

Musées royaux de Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels,

Charcoal, pastel and pencil on paper, 118 x 98.5 cm



Figure 22

James McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Black: Pablo de Sarasate* 1884

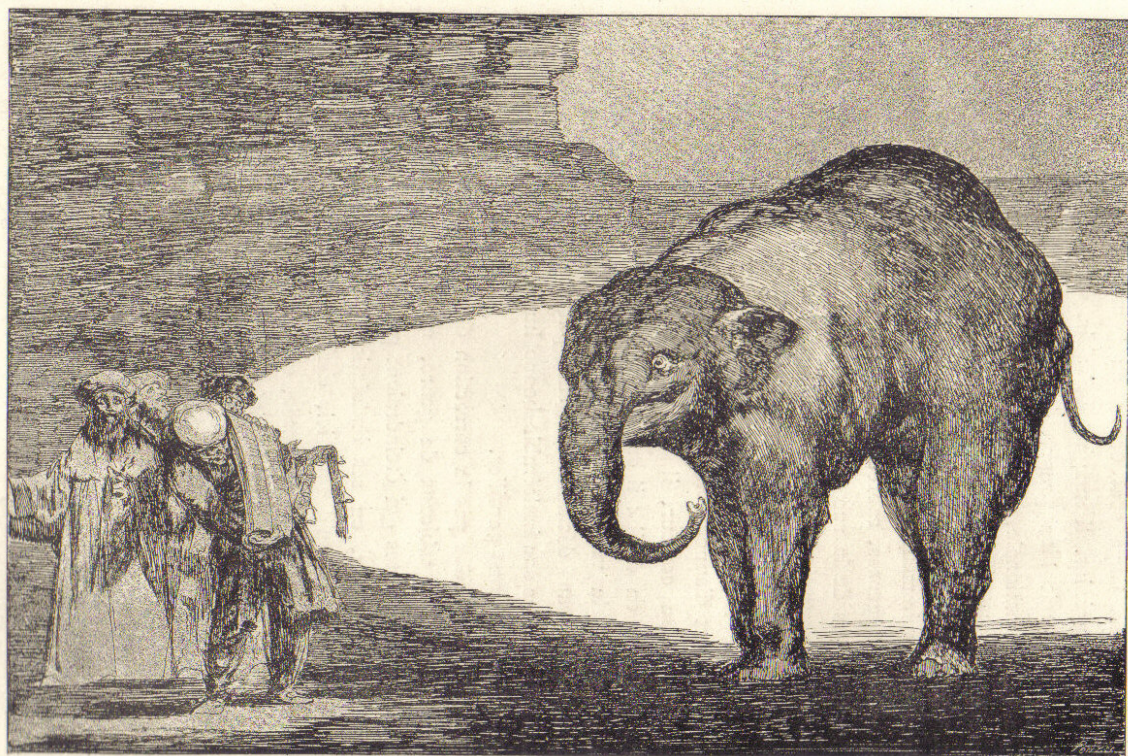
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Oil on canvas, 248.4 x 140.7 cm



Figure 23

Odilon Redon, *Hommage à Goya No. 1: Visage de mystère* 1885

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux, Lithograph, 29.1 x 23.8 cm

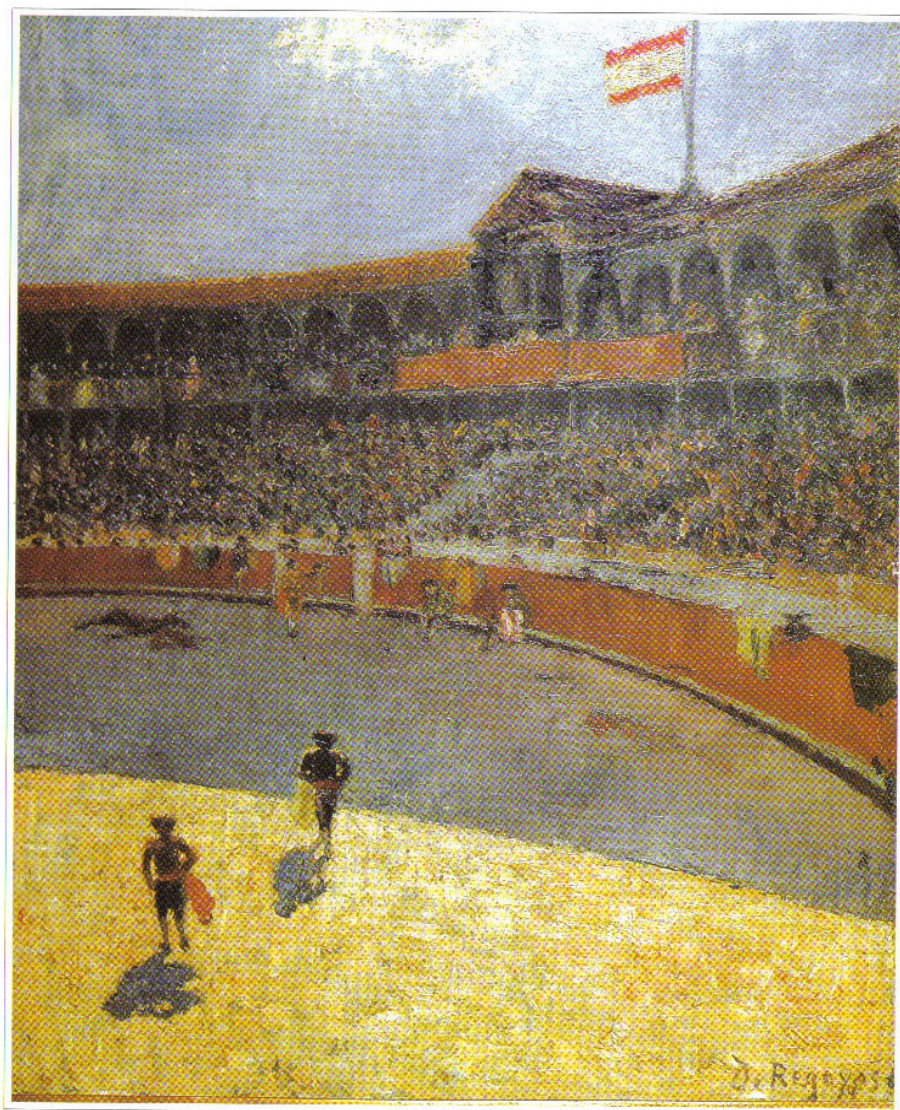


GOYA. — « AUTRES LOIS POUR LE PEUPLE. »
Fac-similé d'une eau-forte.

Figure 24

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Disparate de Bestia* c.1815-24

Etching and aquatint, 24.5 x 35 cm



A. TENDIDO DE SOMBRA 1882

Figure 25

Dario de Regoyos, *Tendido de Sombra* 1882

Private collection, Oil on canvas, 78 x 65 cm



Figure 26

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Suerte de vara* 1824

J. Paul Getty Museum, Oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm

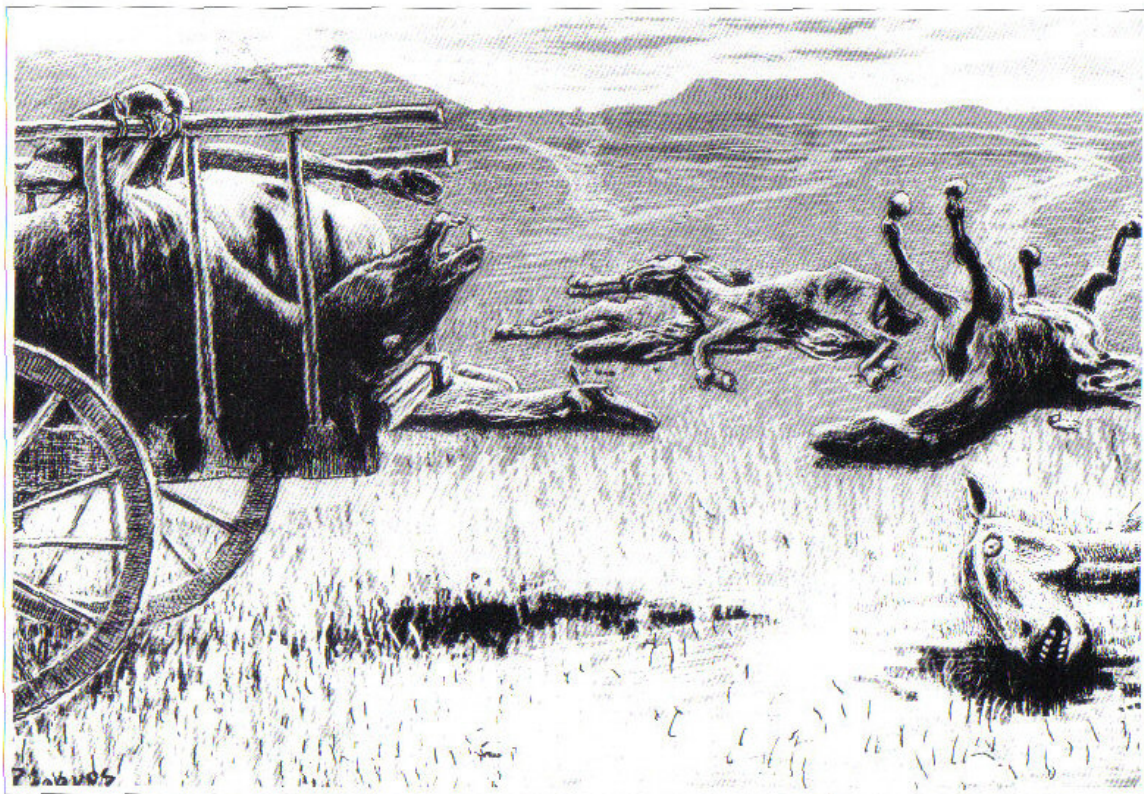


Figure 27

Dario de Regoyos, *Victimas de la Fiesta* 1894

Casa-Museo del pintor Abelló, Mollet del Vallés, Barcelona, Engraving, 31 x 45 cm



Figure 28

Dario de Regoyos, *Mendigo I* 1882

Private collection, Oil on cardboard, 27 x 18.5 cm



Figure 29

Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, *The Jester Pablo de Valladolid* c. 1632–35

Museo del Prado, Oil on canvas, 213.5 x 125 cm



Figure 30

Dario de Regoyos, *La Diligencia de Segovia* 1882

Private collection, Oil on canvas, 30 x 42 cm



Figure 31

Dario de Regoyos, *Une Rue à Tolède* 1882

Private collection, Pen and ink on paper, 52.5 x 34.5 cm

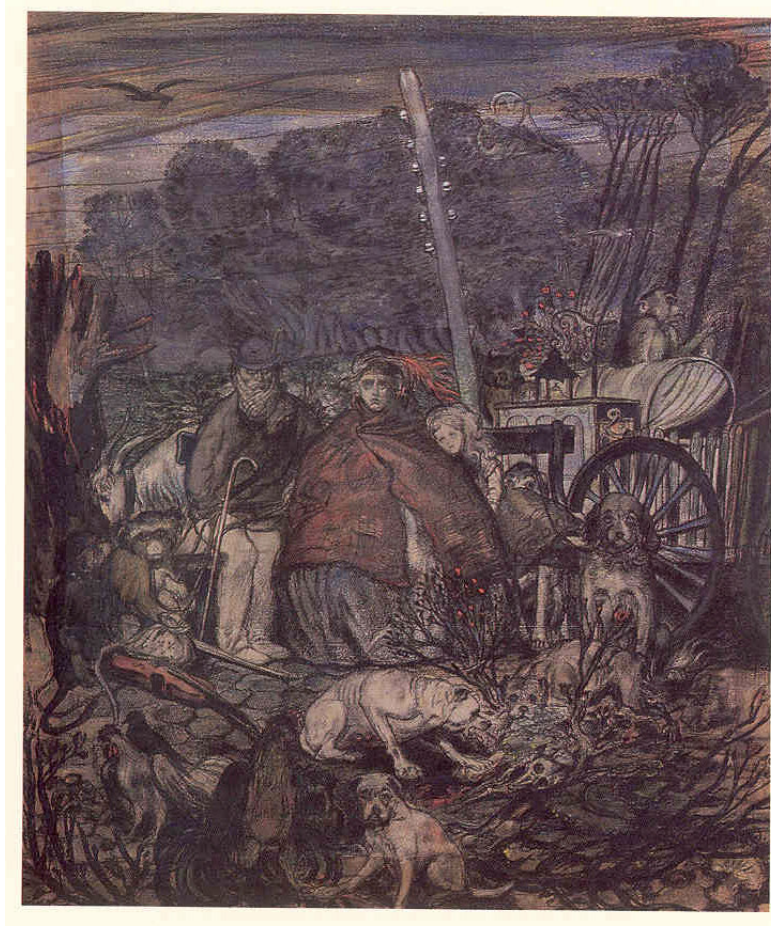


Figure 32

Henry de Groux, *Les Errants* or *Les Gitanes* c. 1889

Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique,

Chalk, ink, and gouache laid on cardboard, 87.3 x 72.5 cm.



Figure 33

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Desastres de la Guerra* No. 45: *Y esto tambien* c. 1810-19

Etching and aquatint, 16.5 x 22 cm



Figure 34

Henry de Groux, *Quand les bourgeois dorment dans leurs lits* c. 1893

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Lithograph, 17.1 x 20.6 cm

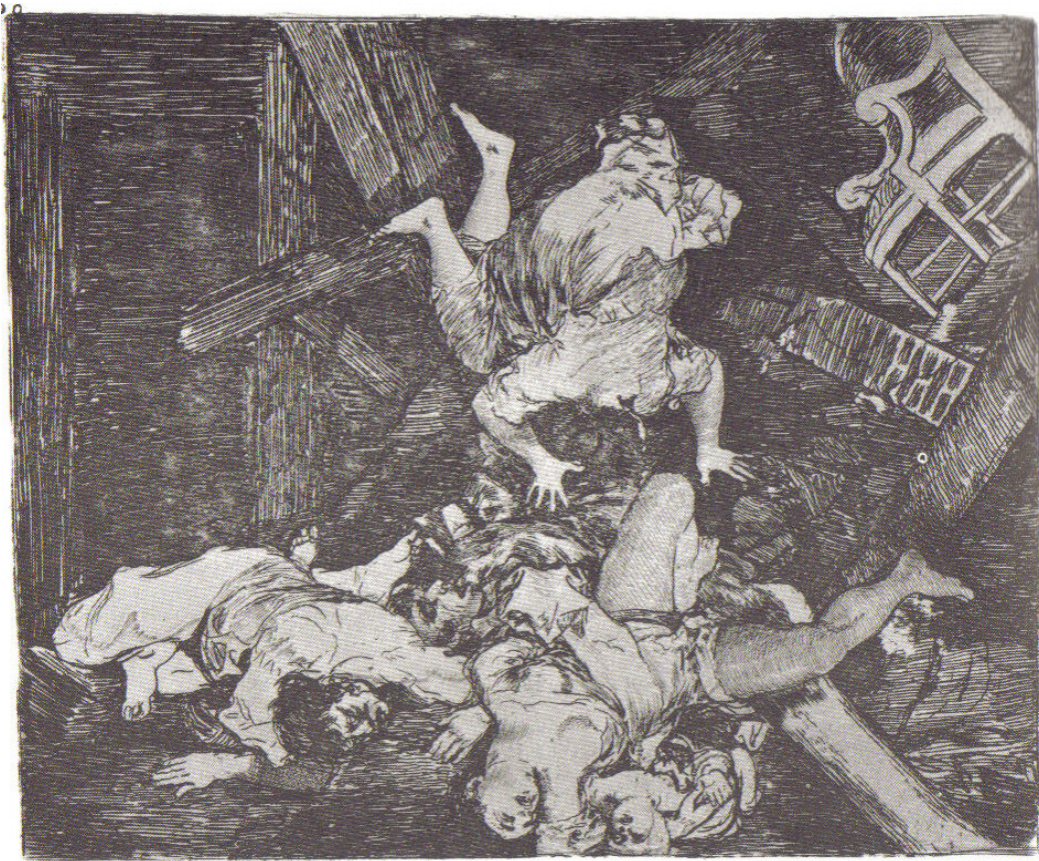


Figure 35

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Desastres de la Guerra*

No. 30: *Estragos de la Guerra* c. 1810-19

Etching, 14.1 x 17 cm



Figure 36

Henry de Groux, *Le Christ aux outrages* 1894-98

Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas, Lithograph with pastel, 51 x 60 cm



Figure 37

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos* No. 24: *Nohubo remedio* 1797-98

Etching and aquatint, 21.7 x 15.2 cm



Figure 38

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Les Vieilles* c. 1808-12

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, Oil on canvas, 181 x 125 cm



Figure 39

James Ensor, *Squelettes voulant se chauffer* 1889

Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, Oil on canvas 75 x 60 cm



Figure 40

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Les Jeunes* c. 1813-20

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, Oil on canvas, 181 x 125 cm



Figure 41

James Ensor, *Personnages of Goya* c. 1885

Art Institute of Chicago, Pencil on paper, 15.7 x 22.6 cm

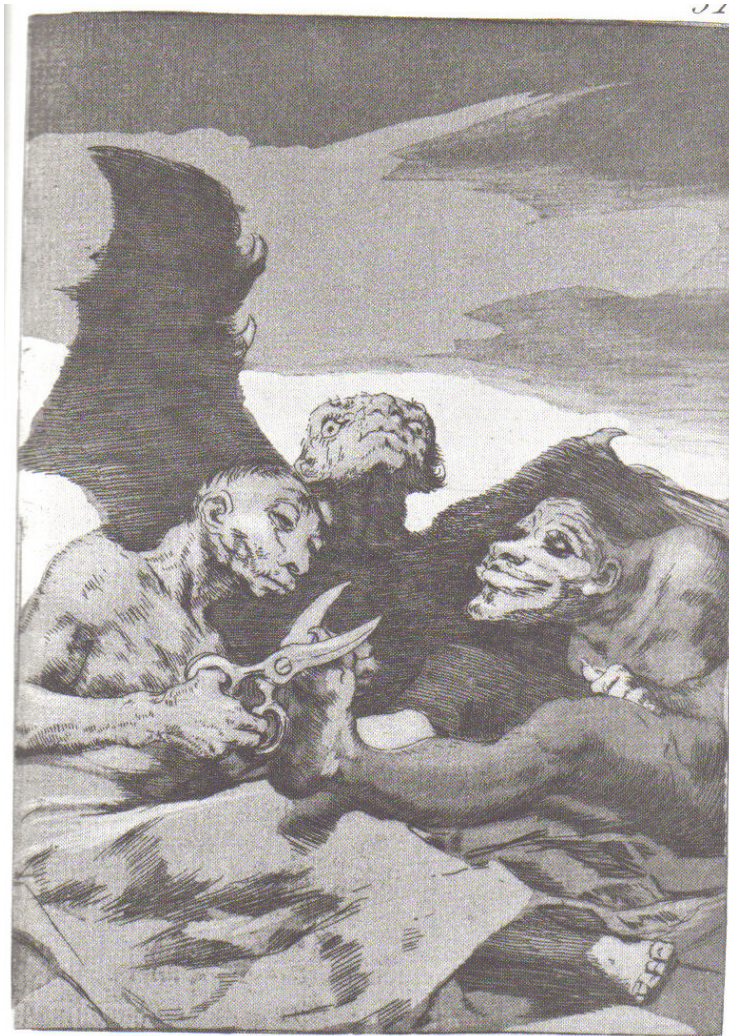


Figure 42

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos* No. 51: *Se repulen* 1798-99

Etching and aquatint, 21.4 x 15.1 cm



Figure 43

James Ensor, *Démon me turlupinant* 1895

Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ostende, Watercolor on paper, 39 x 18.8 cm



Figure 44

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos*

No. 43: *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* 1798-99

Etching and aquatint, 21.7 x 15.2 cm



Figure 45

James Ensor, *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* 1885

J. Paul Getty Museum, Graphite and conté crayon on paper, 25.5 x 16.6 cm



Figure 46

James Ensor, *Squelettes se disputant un pendu* 1891

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Oil on canvas, 68 x 85.4 cm



Figure 47

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos* No. 12: *A caza de dientes* 1798-99

Etching and aquatint, 21.8 x 15.1 cm



Figure 48

James Ensor, *Les Masques Scandalisés* 1883

Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Oil on canvas, 135 x 112 cm.



Figure 49

Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Los Caprichos* No. 6: *Nadie se conoce* 1798-99

Etching and aquatint, 12.8 x 15.3 cm



Figure 50

James Ensor, *L'entrée du Christ à Bruxelles en 1889* 1888-89

J. Paul Getty Museum, Oil on canvas, 252.7 x 430.5 cm

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