

CUESTIÓN DE AMBIENTE

**DIVERSIDAD EN EL MADRID LITERARIO
Y ARTÍSTICO DE LOS AÑOS 20**

Ambience:

1. adj. Surrounding something or someone as an element of their environment
2. n. The air or atmosphere of a place.
3. n. Set of physical, social, economic or other conditions or circumstances of a place, a community or an epoch.
4. n. The animation or opportunity for amusement there is in a place.
1. Adj. loc. Often used to refer to a place of entertainment: Frequented by homosexuals.

Dictionary of the Spanish Language Royal Spanish Academy

One hundred years ago, Madrid began to become the city we know today. Many of the urban landmarks that characterise the city were built in those years, when it ceased to be the capital of the monarchy to become a major modern metropolis. The Gran Vía (avenue), the underground, the urban expansion, the skyscrapers. They all made their appearance back then. As did international fashions in clothing, cocktail bars, avant-garde artistic movements, modern rhythms, cinemas or mass culture.

The 1920s also saw the arrival of major changes in social mores: women taking control of their lives above and beyond the traditional structure of marriage and the family, and the visibility of sexual diversity. Both phenomena, which form the core of today's demands and conquests, have their origins in this period.

The world of the arts, painting, literature, theatre and dance, which experienced a moment of splendour, is a territory that perfectly reflects these changes. On the one hand, because it had always been an area that had been separated from the traditional social structures, but also because it was more receptive to new ideas.

Madrid in the 1920s was in full physical expansion. New neighbourhoods and infrastructures were created and the city finally exceeded one million inhabitants. In these years, the city had 25 thousand telephone lines and more than 30 thousand telephones. There were 44 tram lines, 2 underground lines, 10 bus lines and the first scheduled flights land in Getafe while Barajas airport was being built. The first department stores opened on the Gran Vía (avenue). The city was growing in the midst of cuplé (music hall) and jazz.

Spain's neutrality during the First World War brought it an economic bonanza that was felt throughout the country and also spared it from the destruction and trauma suffered elsewhere in Europe. It was in fact a lifeline that would allow it to catch up with the regeneration process that had been pending since the previous century. Madrid became a place where those fleeing the war could meet and interact with each other. Refugees, spies, diplomats on special missions,

persecuted intellectuals and artists trapped by circumstances converged in a city that greedily welcomed their contributions.

Politically, the decade coincided fully with the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera. After the coup d'état of 1923 and with the support of King Alfonso XIII, the Constitution and political parties were suspended, and a military government was established that would last more than six years. It was a situation similar to that seen in Italy under Mussolini and which would soon spread to other European countries. However, the suspension of the democratic system, the constant persecution of any form of dissidence and a government incapable of solving the country's problems through censorship and repression only served to erode what little confidence remained in the monarchical system.

On the other hand, in the artistic field, the twenties brought about a fundamental change with the transition from Modernism to the avant-garde movements. It was a time when the ideas and practices handed down from the *fin de siècle* still coincided at literary gatherings and exhibitions with the new airs of rupture and experimentation.

At this time, throughout Europe, homosexuality was considered exclusively in pathological or criminal terms, and usually in both. Homosexuals were inverted, deviant or perverted, as the result of criminal instincts or for economic interest. Something had gone wrong during their physical development and their insistence on behaving in such a way could only be understood as a result of vice. It was only now, however, that a new consideration of sexual diversity began to emerge. The impact of the publication of André Gide's "Corydon", together with the dissemination of Magnus Hirschfeld's studies, fuelled the debate. Homosexuality began to move away from the deviant to begin a process of social acceptance.

In Spain, although there was no movement that actually spoke out against the persecution of homosexuals, neither was there such specific repressive legislation as there was in Germany. It was not until the Penal Code of 1928 that the specific legal prosecution of homosexual practices appeared, although it had been implicit in previous laws.

In Spanish literature, homosexuals were first seen in the context of frivolous novels. These scandalous and commercial narratives were characterised by how they pushed the moral conventions of the time to the limit, but they also reflected a reality that had no place in serious literature. In these tales of a world freed from social mores that seeks to excite the reader, we find characters who actively claim their love for or sexual attraction to members of the same sex. Two of the most important authors of such books, Antonio de Hoyos and Álvaro Retana, went about their lives in an openly homosexual manner in the Madrid of the time.

The theatre and, especially, drag shows, were important spaces in terms of visibility. It is worth stressing the enormous success enjoyed by these men who dressed up as women, usually to imitate the most famous female singers of the time. We are not just talking about brief appearances in specialised venues, but about what were often major productions on the most important stages, attracting audiences in their thousands. Some of these artists, as in the case of Edmond de Bries, become real stars.

The theatrical environment is also a permissive space for sexual diversity given that it is an activity that has already had to break with many of the established social structures. It is here that the naked body begins to be seen, and where a previously unaccepted sexuality becomes visible.

As today, Madrid is quite different to the rest of Spain in terms of visibility. In the capital, the possibilities of leading an open or peaceful homosexual life were not the same as in a provincial

city. When the new generations arrived to study or for professional reasons, they found a space of greater freedom, far from the compulsory constraints of the family, which would allow them to flourish sentimentally and sexually. The 1920s saw the arrival of Cernuda, Lorca and Prieto, who encountered an intellectual environment that would allow their work to develop and where they would be able to realise their potential in freedom.

But, as is also the case today, lesbian women suffered a double persecution in those days: for being homosexuals on the one hand and women on the other. These were times when a woman who made her own decisions was labelled as “butch” and when she proved her worth in the professional or intellectual world, she was labelled as “manly” as a compliment. For them it would be even more difficult, twice as hard.

Cuestión de Ambiente seeks to commemorate the lives of a series of male and female creators who, in the Madrid of the 1920s, lived their homosexuality openly and freely. Some completely, others perhaps less so, but all of them, to a greater or lesser extent, lived “out of the closet”. There are more examples, but this exhibition puts the spotlight on those who, because of their importance, their uniqueness and, above all, because of how they lived their truth in full view of the public, were trailblazers of the spaces of freedom that we now enjoy.

The aim of this exhibition is to chronicle the lives and work of these artists in order to enhance their value, to remember their names and their stories in those years. To vindicate them and the city that welcomed them and became the stage for a story that is not told as often as it ought to be.

ÁLVARO RETANA

(Philippines, 1890 – Madrid, 1970)

During the 1920s, Álvaro Retana was a veritable Jack of all Trades in Madrid, whether under his real name or under the good half dozen or so pseudonyms he was wont to use. The “handsomest writer in the world” wrote novels, songs, interviews, reviews and reports; he was a fashion designer, a costume designer for the theatrical world, an illustrator... Unlike Hoyos, who was rather more ambitious in literary terms, Retana’s work was published unashamedly in collections of steamy, scandalous and commercial literature. His fashion creations were sold under franchise throughout Spain. The lyrics of his “cuplés” or music-hall songs were sung on the stage, in cafés and in the early hours of the morning, in taverns.

It was during this decade that he was at the height of his fame and indeed of his infamy. It was the decade of his greatest professional successes but it was also when he spent a few months in jail, in 1926, for “crimes of public scandal through the medium of print”. In other words, for pornography, an event he would make the most of for his own propaganda purposes. There was no better publicist for his work and his own persona than the writer himself; as he knew only too well that the public did not distinguish between the character he had constructed and his narratives. Using his various literary alter egos, he glorified himself in the press, and in his novels he wrote in easily recognisable codes about singers, aristocrats and football players.

The ambiguity of Retana’s public persona infected the ambiguity of his work and vice versa. Ambiguity in sexual matters (he also had relations with women and he would go on to have a son) and ambiguity in the intentionality of his work - by no means as moralising as some would wish to present it - and in his texts and language. Because in actual fact, Retana defended a world with a sincere morality, a world devoid of hypocrisy, where desire helps to break down social conventions. His protagonists were the crazy, modern young men of his time who no longer believed in the world of their parents, who wore make-up and who drank and danced the night away, mixing up the sexes and pursuing pleasure above all else.



We might well say that Retana was one of Spain's first public celebrities from the world of popular culture. His work and his image, inextricably associated with each other, became synonymous with the 1920s. Plucked eyebrows, make-up, jazz, the consumption of alcohol and other substances, lax morals and sexual ambiguity turned him into a star and the personification of his time.

Álvaro Retana was a great admirer of transvestism, as can be seen by the number of articles and reviews he wrote on the subject. As a matter of fact, he sets transvestites on an equal footing with the other actresses and singers he includes in his publications on the history of the theatre. As far as he is concerned, there is no difference between them and people who tread the boards dressed in the clothes of the opposite gender.

His fascination for what he calls "the third sex" is seen frequently in his literature and may have been made manifest in the real-world through transvestites. His work as a songwriter, led him into direct contact with them and he was extremely familiar with their world. He went on to meet such top local stars as Frégoli or Ernesto Foliers in person, and leading international ones such as D'Hernonville when they would perform in Madrid.

He was a personal friend of Edmond de Bries. He collaborated in the theatrical shows he staged, and, in 1921 he published his biography. Over the years he wrote several songs for him that helped to cement his popularity.

Of these, the most well-known is "Evenings at the Ritz" ("Las Tardes del Ritz"), a foxtrot, at that time a rhythm that had just arrived from América. With music by Genaro Monreal, Retana's lyrics tell the story of the young flappers of the time who would spend their evenings dancing in Madrid's luxury hotel par excellence, while secretly flirting with the men they would meet there - unbeknownst to their mothers of course.

Premiered as part of Bries' show at the Fuencarral Theatre on 15 September 1920, it became a huge success and to this day remains very popular and part of the traditional cuplé repertoire.

"As I lie in bed, I ponder the significance of today's adventure. This was the first time in my life that I have gone so far with a woman, but I think it is fair to say that although I had ventured into uncharted territory, I nevertheless proceeded gallantly and acquitted myself with aplomb. What a little theoretical knowledge of a subject can do! I do fear however that the Marquise - or should I say María Luisa- may not have been entirely satisfied with my underperformance given that I was only able to demonstrate to her on three occasions that I was not entirely indifferent to her charms; but the fact remains that it is easier to keep your mouth open than your arm outstretched".

Álvaro Retana, *Tony's Erring Ways (Los Extravíos de Tony)* (1920)

"Manolo Castilla had a weakness for Moresca powder, which gave his cheeks an orangey hue akin to that of a gypsy from the Albaicín; a blue mascara stick which left rather suggestive dark circles under his eyes, and lipstick, which turned his mouth into a smouldering strawberry split in two. On the other hand, Rafaelito Albareda's preference for a somewhat disconcerting pallor meant that he was easily mistaken for Alejandro Dumas' very own Lady of the Camellias, where in the final chapters of the work, and thanks to a combination of white cream and powder, she turned her face into a mask worthy of Pierrot; with no more colour than the intense blue of her pupils and the fiery red of her lips. Where Castilla was determined to appear healthy and cheerful, Rafaelito strove to acquire an unhealthy air which, as he himself believed, was more chic and captivating than the thirty-cent floozy look that characterised the Duchess."

Álvaro Retana, *The High-class Madwomen (Las Locas de Postín)* (1919)

EDMOND DE BRIES

(Cartagena, 1897 – ?)

Arsenio Marsal Martínez, whose stage name was “Edmond de Bries”, was undoubtedly the most famous drag artist of his time, and the 1920s the peak of his career. He had begun his theatrical career as Salmar, acting in provincial circles and learning the trade as he went along, but by the beginning of that decade, he was already a firmly established star in his own right.

Although at the beginning he had imitated well-known artists, such as Raquel Meller or La Fornarina, he soon assembled a repertoire of his own songs with which he toured the country’s most important theatres. His debut performance at the 2,500-seat Fuencarral Theatre in 1920 was graced by the presence of Queen Victoria Eugenia. It was around this time that he met Álvaro Retana who would write a number of songs for him that would make him even more popular such as “Evenings at the Ritz” (“Las Tardes del Ritz”), “Cocaine (“La Cocaína”) or “The Little Japanese Girl” (“La Japonesita”).

He was especially famous for his stage costumes, which he designed and made himself. In actual fact, his second trade was that of a couturier, and he attracted an abundant female clientele. The more sanctimonious members of the press attributed his success among women to this fact, claiming that they actually came to admire his creations. Of all the numerous drag shows in the Madrid of that era, his was by far the most brilliant, luxurious and sophisticated.

During the latter part of the decade, de Bries began to tour internationally, performing in Paris and Berlin. Then came the leap to the Americas, triumphing over the course of four years in Cuba, Argentina and New York. He was also famous for his enormous fees he charged and his legions of admirers, including aristocrats and celebrities from the world of culture.

Although there was the occasional riot and altercation during his performances, with heckling, protests and even complaints to the police, Edmond de Bries’ fame transcended all that. The unquestionable quality of his shows, his professionalism and the fascination that his persona



generated, made him a veritable popular legend over and above the official moral considerations of his time.

At the beginning of the 19th century, drag shows were incredibly successful in Madrid. Carefully staged and sophisticated shows were put on in the capital's most important theatres, but they were also to be found in cafés, cultural centres and dance halls.

It was a theatrical form of entertainment that arrived at the turn of the century at the same time as the success of the exotic dancers of the Belle Epoque, and it attracted audiences for similar reasons: the music and the body. They were performances that brought new rhythms and a ground-breaking sensual component. In the case of the dancers, because they displayed a lot of skin, in that of the drag queens, because of the gender ambiguity. In fact, by and large, most drag performers started out as imitators of the best-known dancers before going on to develop their own repertoire and, above all, their own personalities.

And just like them, these artists were known for their off-stage life. They tended to embellish their biographies with more or less mythical origins, legendary love lives and all manner of anecdotes that could attract the general public to the theatres through the mass media.

In both types of show, their stars also shared the hardships of everyday life offstage. Some were marginalised because they were single working women, which at the time placed them on the fringes of society. Others for practising a sexuality that placed them squarely outside it.

JOSÉ DE ZAMORA

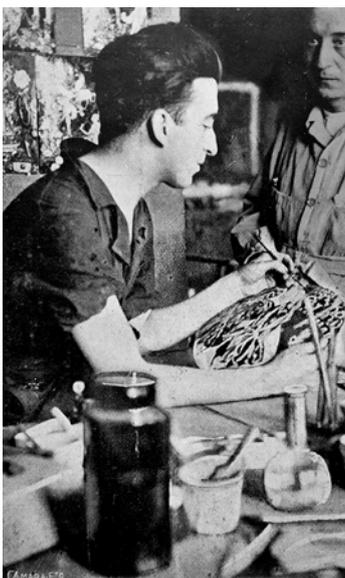
(Madrid, 1889 – Sitges, 1971)

Zamora was a painter, writer, drawer, couturier and a theatrical costume designer unlike any other on the national artistic scene of his time. Having trained in Paris with Paul Poiret, on his return to Spain he brought with him all that he had learned from French fashion and he went on to design the costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes during the season they spent in Spain.

At the end of the previous decade he had opened a fashion house on Calle Nuñez de Balboa which attracted everyone who was anyone in Madrid: from the actress Catalina Bárcena to Marquise Gloria Laguna, well known on account of her scandalous sex life. He collaborated with "La Esfera" and also ran "La Gaceta del Bueno Tono", the fashion section in the "Nuevo Mundo" magazine. He held painting exhibitions in which he presented his work in enamel, a highly complex technique of which he was an acknowledged master. Over the course of these years, his elegant and precious style, so typical of Modernism, is on the wane. He also created outstanding illustrations for stories printed by the legendary Calleja publishing house.

Pepe Zamora frequented the intellectual circles of the capital such as that of Valle-Inclán or the literary gatherings at the Café de Pombo led by Gómez de la Serna who mentions him in his book *The Sacred Crypt of Pombo* (*La Sagrada Cripta de Pombo*). But above all he had a close personal relationship with Antonio de Hoyos and Tórtola Valencia with whom he shared a fascination for Decadent fashion, literary aspirations and a penchant for frequenting taverns and speakeasies until the wee small hours.

Zamora's sexuality was beyond any doubt: he was extremely effeminate and affected in an astonishingly natural way for his time and he openly declared his homosexuality. On the street, he sported his own creations, which he himself sewed and were unabashedly sought after by both genders. His colourful and striking figure was one of the most recognisable in the salons and streets of the Madrid of the day.



The Calleja Publishing House, founded at the end of the 19th century in Madrid, was a typical Regenerationist project of the time that sought national reconstruction through education and culture. In this regard, the publication of children's stories was a key strategic element, as it aimed to encourage reading in the family environment.

In the 1920s it embarked on a policy of high quality publications, based above all on very meticulous translations and eye-catching illustrations that attracted readers. Pepe Zamora became one of the house's star illustrators with an exquisite and personal style.

His theatrical inspiration comes shining through, with figures that stand out against the background, clean and simple lines, and bright colours. Drawn with a great sense of humour, his fantastic creatures are particularly striking, with both animalised humans and humanised animals. The female characters are heirs to the Symbolist ideal of the femme fatale, of oriental princesses and the terrible goddesses of mythology. But they are particularly unforgettable because of Zamora's talent for caricature, his imagination, and his marvellous mastery of technique.

It is worth mentioning Zamora's role as an importer to Spain of the tastes, techniques and styles he had learnt in Paris, both in the field of drawing and in that of fashion design and theatrical costumes.

His work was disseminated through the manufacture of clothes from his fashion house or the creation of costumes for the theatre, but also through the sale of sketches on paper or their reproduction in the press.

Of equal or even greater importance was his role as a teacher or mentor to other people such as his friend and collaborator Antonio Juez and Victor "Vitín" Cortezo. The latter, who had carved out an important international career for himself, was both the disseminator of the ideas he had learned from Zamora and the perpetuator of a genealogy that linked the world of the Belle Epoque with the avant-garde of the 1930s.

ANTONIO JUEZ

(Badajoz, 1893 - 1963)

The son of a wealthy, bourgeois family in Badajoz, Antonio Juez moved to Madrid at the end of the previous decade to become a professional painter.

A self-taught artist, he trained at the workshop of José de Zamora, who would become his most important artistic and personal influence. Juez was a great champion of traditional painting and of the Spanish school, with drawing as the basis of his style. Although he did identify with Symbolism and Decadentism, he nevertheless publicly criticised such new movements as Cubism.

“Tony” Juez socialised in Madrid with the group made up by Zamora, Hoyos, Retana and Tórtola Valencia, both during their nocturnal escapades and in their professional work. He illustrated many of their novels but he mainly shared with them their aesthetic and thematic influences and their artistic references. As regards sexual matters, the fact that he was far removed from his family allowed him to adopt an explicitly homosexual attitude in public that would have been impossible in the Badajoz of the time. His was a quite exquisite Bohemian world in which he stood out on account of his meticulously groomed dandyish demeanour.

Although he would never achieve any great success as a painter, he did nevertheless hold exhibitions of his work throughout the country, and he even sent a couple of paintings to the Universal Exhibition in Sevilla in 1929. During the early 1920s, while he published illustrations in fashion and society magazines in Madrid, in Badajoz he began to collaborate with the written press in which he expressed his conservative and traditionalist political and religious ideals.

In 1928 he returned to his native city for good, after having obtained a teaching post at the School of Arts and Crafts, which became his permanent residence. Continuing his work as a painter, albeit replacing Decadentism by religion, he also discovered Portugal where he would shortly afterwards meet David María da Silva, who would be his partner and companion from then on.



The emperor Vario Avito Basiano, better known as Heliogabalus, reigned from 218 to 222 and is remembered for his disaffection for traditional Roman religion and his affection for Eastern solar cults. He had a long relationship with his charioteer and is said to have married another man. Several chroniclers claim that he was fond of make-up and wigs, which is why certain modern authors consider him to be the first transsexual in history.

With these elements, exoticism and sexual ambiguity, it is not surprising that he became a theme for Symbolism and Decadentism at the end of the century. Alma Tadema and Artaud created works based on the myth, and Antonio de Hoyos himself wrote a novel, *The Old Age of Heliogabalus (La Vejez de Heliogábalo)*, a tale of decadence and corruption.

In Juez's version, it is by no means easy to identify the sexuality of the characters, given that their male and female traits are intermingled. On the left, reclining, would be the mother of the emperor, Julia Basiana, with a manly countenance and dark skin in stark contrast to the pallor and femininity of Heliogabalus in the centre. The figure on the right, again combining attributes of both sexes, may well be his lover. The entire scene takes place in a setting replete with oriental and exotic objects: fabrics, animals and fruit treated with the painter's typically painstaking attention to detail.

"... a strange orientalism leaps over Greek severity and fuses with the mystical Christian vision: there is something sickly, androgynous, feeble and fragile in these human images, and beside them loom the shapeless monsters that populated the night time, hybrid monsters that do not yet have the elegance of the centaurs but rather a bloodcurdling and disturbing something else."

Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent on Antonio Juez (1920)

"... Antonio Juez, bedecked in elegant yellow silk pyjamas, comes out to meet us and cordially reaching his hands out to us says:

Come, please have some delicious tea, it's made with lemon, mint and cinnamon.

Meanwhile, overcome with curiosity, we inspect the sumptuous studio, of which an admirer of the singular artist once said that "it is half temple and half pagoda."

Cipriano Moreno Martínez (1923)

ANTONIO DE HOYOS Y VINENT

(Madrid, 1884 – Porlier, 1940)

At this point in the century, the Marquis of Vinent, with his imposing size (he was almost two metres tall), deaf from birth and always dressed in the latest fashions, was a well-known figure in Madrid. A Grandee of Spain, a regular in the literary gatherings in the cafés and disreputable taverns of Lavapiés, a man of letters of decadent tastes and an acknowledged homosexual, his fame transcended the artistic milieu. Despite the years he had been publishing, he would always be haunted by an undeserved reputation as a dilettante, no doubt due to his aristocratic origins, his image as a dandy and his unorthodox sexuality.

As he wrote at the time, “I am a marquis because I inherited the title, I neither asked for it nor requested it from anyone; but, just because I am a marquis, I have no intention of being either a puppet or a victim; I don’t give a fig for social ostentation, the marquisate and the great crosses are of no importance to me; I intend to write what I like and work as much as I please or as little as it suits me, and to enjoy myself as much as I can, and not to allow myself, under the pretext that I am a marquis, nor that I am an artist, nor that I am a liberal, to steal, or to fight bulls, or to deceive anyone. (...) but I shall continue to dress like a marquis, if the outfit is nice, throwing parties and dinners, attending soirées, living in chic hotels”.

Hoyos’ writing was still linked to the Decadentism of his early youth, which sought neither to teach nor to moralise, and which drew constant criticism from the most conservative sectors, relegating him to novels for quick and scandalous consumption. From 1925 onwards, his fame as a writer began to decline, although he did continue to be very active in the journalistic media, to which he constantly contributed with stories, reports and social chronicles.

His passion for “Manolos”, the name given to the streetwise young men of the most popular neighbourhoods of Madrid, brought him into contact with those districts and opened his eyes to a social conscience that would grow with the passage of time and the increasingly polarised political landscape of the time. If his novels frequently tell the story of a hero who journeys to the underbelly of society and undergoes a process of liberation from his social constraints, around this time, given the decline of his literary fame and his involvement in anarchist movements, the marquis himself embarks on a similar journey.



The friendship between Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent and Tórtola Valencia is an example of complicity, devotion and mutual support over more than 20 years. At the beginning of the century, together with José de Zamora, they formed a regular trio on the streets of Madrid when the theatres emptied, wandering from café to café, until the early hours of the morning. During this period, Hoyos repeatedly praised Tórtola in his publications. He would be her greatest advocate in the press, not only because she was a talented dancer, but also because she embodied the typical ideal woman of Symbolism and Decadentism, which also happened to be his own ideal. The women in Vinent's novels are like Tórtola, even before he had met her. In 1915 he dedicated a novel to her that he built around this idealised figure of a woman, *The Sphinx's Paw* (*La Zarpa de la Esfinge*). At a certain point, there was also talk of marriage between the two. Bearing in mind that both his and her homosexuality were known publicly and openly, we can only presume that theirs was a relationship of affection and complicity that transcended social conventions.

*"Julito crossed the room with an affected gait, ignoring the sniggers that the exaggerated cut of his overcoat raised among the group of rowdy onlookers, and, with his friends following in his wake, he arrived at his coterie, greeted them with a "hello, my graceful darlings", and proceeded to make his introductions, pompously, with ostentatious gestures of exquisite correctness. -Lucerito Soler, queen without a throne; her empire is one of those empires of the Sun, fabulous and magnificent; an empire of dreams.
-But just listen to you, you wag!"*

Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent *Under the Skin* (*A Flor de Piel*). 1907

"He was a large, almost athletic man, rather Saxon-like, as utterly deaf as a luxury cat, very frivolous, but obviously talented ... He had a scandalous reputation as a homosexual, earned with considerable perseverance and application, it must be said affected, the great snob of what at that time was a still small, brash and provincial Madrid ... he dressed in a somewhat scandalous chic style and he paraded his bad reputation, his off-white shell monocle and his almost fabulous jewellery around the latest cafés-chantant and any café with waitress service."

César González-Ruano on Antonio de Hoyos. 1953

"... Pedro Aljubarrota, the Little Count, strode through the café with his gang. Very exaggerated, very flamboyant, arousing general curiosity, not to mention a few comments quite lacking in Christian charity (albeit couched in rather a demure way, as people were well aware that he could stand neither impertinence nor rudeness and that his athletic constitution ensured that he knew how to make himself respected), with his overcoat, his white silk scarf wrapped around his neck and his opera hat tucked under his arm, he walked with affected parsimony, with Tola Colada by his side.

Wanting and succeeding to be very boyish, Tula Varona was of course an exotic type in the Madrid nightspots. She aspired to be ambiguous, turbulent and cosmopolitan, to construct a very gigolo look, a delicious gigolette, who wore pyjamas, smoked rose-tipped Abdulla cigarettes in shell holders, and walked bareheaded in the sun, exposing her hair, cut in the garçon style, to its rays. But the most she could achieve, if we are to be honest, was a rather butch look, which knocked people's socks off. Skinny and angular, she carried a cane and wore tailored suits of black, blue or green cloth, starched collars, and a tie. She spoke with the gruff voice of a cart driver or a clodhopper and she smoked fifty-cent cigarettes. Even so, one had to confess that she was nevertheless very likeable, clever, useful and helpful".

Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent *Bohemian London* (*La Bohemia Londinense*). 1907

CARMEN “TÓRTOLA” VALENCIA

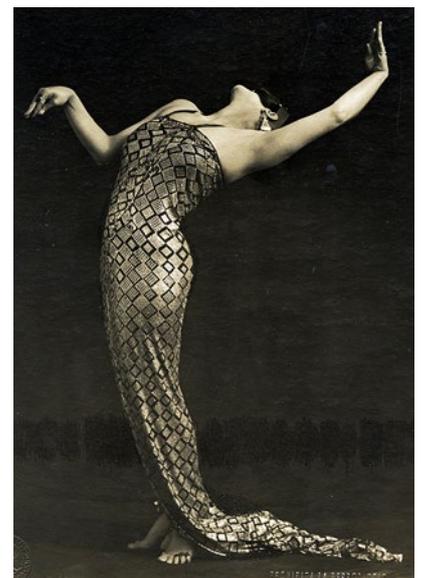
(Seville or Barcelona, 1881 – Barcelona, 1955)

Although she is quite unaware of the fact, during this decade, Tórtola Valencia is entering the final years of her artistic life. The heyday of the exotic dancers with whom she began her career is now a thing of the past, but in her case, her outstanding contribution to contemporary dance is yet to come. These are the years of global fame, of major international tours, of fabulous fees, but above all they are the years of the “anthropological” choreographies in which, using the primitive arts as an excuse, she finally liberated the body from the last remnants of the constraints of the nineteenth century.

Just as she had cast off the corset on the street, on stage she emancipated movement from the conventions of ballet in what was a progression following on from the legacy of Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller. As far as Tórtola was concerned, the body was constantly being reconstructed through gesture.

A collector of art, primarily oriental and pre-Colombian, and a painter herself, she interacted with the intellectual class of her time in the only role afforded to a woman: that of muse. Transformed into an icon, she knew how to play the role of the unattainable sphinx, although in her relationship with Antonio de Hoyos and José Zamora, a more human Tórtola could be glimpsed, dancing in the streets and getting lost in the Madrid night.

As any self-respecting star of her gender, Tórtola shared with other dancers a mythological origin and lovers of high rank: aristocrats, princes, kings... even though no relationship with any such dignitary was ever proven. In private she lived her homosexuality in an extremely natural way and then in 1928, she met Ángeles Magret Vila, her secretary, heiress and companion for the rest of her life, who would remain by her side when she retired from dancing in 1930.





The image of Tórtola de Valencia was a veritable icon of her time. Reproduced on countless occasions in drawings and paintings she was the physical embodiment of the ideal of female beauty of her time. Her shining eyes, made up with kohl, her sharp profile and her famous smile were admired by poets and writers alike. She had a special relationship with photography, a medium that fascinated her. She was probably the most photographer woman in Spain at that time.



So much so that the then recently founded perfume factory Myrurgia chose her as the image for its new product, Maja soap. Tórtola's profile, adorned with an ornamental "peineta" hair comb, a mantilla shawl, a fan and a flounced dress, became the image of the brand in what was one of the most important advertising campaigns of the time. The wrapping of the soap bar remained unchanged for decades.

"Tall, undulating and hieratic at one and the same time, she possesses the hermetic beauty of a sphinx. Her cold, classical and serene face, white and motionless as an alabaster mask, was framed by hair combed in the Egyptian fashion, so thick and black that it seemed carved in ebony; her thin, narrow lips bore a faint trace of purple, and her unusual eyes, green, luminous and triangular, held a strange power of fascination. Always swathed in soft, heavy quilts, inlaid with shimmering gold and silver, with bangles studded with cabbalistic gems on her slender white arms that oscillated like reptiles, her gestures, swayed by the barbaric music of unknown melodies, possessed an ophidian elegance that contrasted with her sphinx-like or rather Sibyl-like stillness..."

Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent, *The Sphinx's Paw (La Zarpa de la Esfinge)*. 1925

"In 1928, Tórtola Valencia dressed in a rather more flamboyant way than everyone else, albeit in a genteel manner; in 1917, [...] she used to cross Calle de Alcalá wrapped in a twelfth-century chasuble or a Pompadour gown, laden down with a purse, a box of chocolates, a fan, a parasol, a travelling gramophone, a kitchen scoop, a shoebox, and other more or less decorative and historical trappings, all of which gave her the appearance of someone moving house. Sometimes, a strange appendage would trail from beneath her skirt, which could equally have been Salome's girdle or General Espartero's cummerbund, causing great hilarity among all the boys and girls of Madrid. Each time Tórtola took to the streets of Madrid her exhibitions caused a scandal; but 'that' didn't matter. What is interesting is that she was an original woman, an exquisite artist, and those unable to understand such Terpsichorean wisdom were sepoys who really ought to have been living in the wilderness as opposed to among citizens and civilised people."

Carlos Fortuny (pseudonym of Alvaro Retana) on Tórtola Valencia. 1930

GREGORIO PRIETO

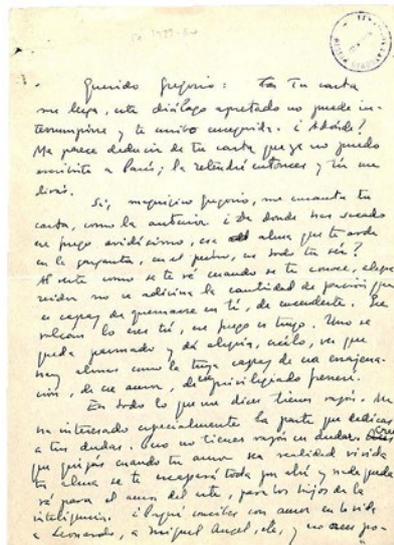
(Valdepeñas, 1897 - 1992)

By the end of the previous decade, Prieto had managed to gain admission to the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts; as he began his studies there, he also began to discover an effervescent city. Having met Rosa Chacel, Timoteo Pérez Rubio and Rafael Alberti, he sets out to explore the local art scene. These are days of lengthy literary conversations, “tertulias”, in the cafés, strolling the streets, chatting and sharing.

In 1919 he holds his first exhibition at the Athenaeum, then in Barcelona and shortly thereafter, his work was being exhibited all over Spain. During this same year, he met Federico García Lorca with whom he immediately became quite intimate, in what was a legendary night that ended with the poet playing the piano in the Residencia de Estudiantes halls of residence. Lorca introduces him to and he becomes friends with Emilio Prados and Luis Cernuda, with whom he enjoyed a close relationship that would last for many years. But of all the poets, his closest friendship was with Vicente Aleixandre, who became his confidant. Although they had contrasting personalities, one introverted and contemplative, the other inclined to action and the desire for knowledge, a very close bond was established between the two.

In 1925 he travelled to Paris where he spent a year; the following year he was awarded a scholarship at the Academy in Rome. These two destinations proved to be pivotal in the development of his painting, which took on the influences of Cubism and Futurism. From then on, of note in his work is the appearance of clearly homoerotic motifs such as sailors, mannequins and classical sculpture. No other consecrated artist of his day created work with such a manifestly homosexual content and imagery. Prieto portrays desire without moral considerations or justification.

All the testimonies about Gregorio Prieto at that time coincide in emphasising his vitality, his desire to live, to know, his extrovert personality and his hedonism. And as far as his sexual orientation was concerned, the fact that he was able to live it openly, without any concealment or



hang-ups, with a soul - as Aleixandre described him - “capable of that alienation, that love, that privileged frenzy...”

The correspondence between Prieto and Aleixandre began in the 1920s and continued until the latter's death. As a form of communication, the epistolary format is perfectly suited to the two characters: the one extroverted and dynamic, the other withdrawn and contemplative. Moreover, the painter's lust for life complemented the poet's poor health, which forced him to live in seclusion.

Throughout all these years they exchange confidences and confessions with one another, and share readings and recommendations. They also share major life experiences, suffer misunderstandings and give each other advice and support, especially in the early years of their relationship, the foundational years of a personality.

Gregorio Prieto produced a number of photocollages during his stay at the Spanish Academy in Rome which constitute a unique collection of work in Spanish art. In Italy, the painter came into contact with the re-reading of the classical tradition that avant-garde artists had carried out. To this we should add the influence of Surrealism, which he had discovered during his stay in Paris.

These dreamlike images are clearly autobiographical in nature. Prieto, who was on a grand tour of Italy at that time, especially of the southern ports, seems to reflect a world of longings and desires in them. He would sometimes dress up as a sailor.

The iconography derives from the then nascent homosexual culture. The sailor as a man without law and with no ties, who appears in the work of Cocteau, Genet and Lorca. The ideal of the beauty of the male body in classical sculpture. The mannequin is a typical element of surrealist imagery that seems to arouse unrequited desire.

The photographs, which he took with the help of Eduardo Chicharro Briones, circulated for years among limited groups of close friends and acquaintances of the artist.

EMILIO PRADOS

(Malaga, 1899 – Mexico City, 1962)

Prados arrived in Madrid in 1914 when he was still very young, barely 15 years of age; four years later, he moved to the Residencia de Estudiantes halls of residence. By the time the other students who were to play a leading role in the decade began to arrive from the provinces, he was already quite at home in the city, both socially and culturally.

Having suffered from a lung disease since childhood, his condition worsened in 1921 and he moved to Switzerland to continue his treatment in a more propitious climate. During his time there he began to write and as soon as he was able to do so, he visited Paris and Berlin where he came into direct contact with the artistic avant-garde of the day. On his return to Spain, he set up permanent residence in Malaga where he worked at the Sur printing house and launched a magazine called *Litoral* in which he published the leading poets of his generation.

From that moment on, he paid regular visits to Madrid and kept in constant contact with the students at the Residence and its social milieu. His relationship with Federico García Lorca was specially important to him - it was to Lorca that he confessed his homosexuality and it is more than likely that he had amorous feelings for him that were not corresponded. This rejection was a painful experience for him.

Nevertheless, these were highly prolific years for his literary production and in fact he published as many as seven books over the course of the decade, while continuing to work as a publisher and a cultural firebrand.

Emilio Prados lived out his life as a homosexual with guilt and shame and in secret. He talked about it with Lorca, with Aleixandre and with Cernuda, but not with his entire social circle. In fact, in public he went about with a girlfriend, Blanca Nagel, a relationship that had no future. His sexuality gave rise to a profound internal conflict that left its mark on him psychologically, so much so that he attempted to commit suicide.



“My beloved Federico, you have saved me, but why have you saved me so late? Trembling, I picked up your letter and trembling I remain, my dearest brother, you are so far away! Through the spider’s web you shine always with the sun; but you flee, you always flee... Don’t say you don’t love me anymore. I know, you have exchanged your friendship for a romantic memory and I am now no more than a figment of mist, a pale shadow of your fantasy that will vanish forever with the first wisp of air. . . If you could only see! I have suffered terribly and I have killed myself a little for you. You didn’t write to me, you didn’t write to me [...] Look, I had thought - seriously - that we would join together forever and that we would shed feelings and restraints from our shoulders and cast off the shackles of responsibility. I had thought we could fly across the sea together. Do you have the courage?”

A letter from Emilio Prados to Federico García Lorca, 1926

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

(Granada, 1898 – 1936)

Federico arrived in Madrid in 1919 to continue his studies, taking a room at the Residencia de Estudiantes halls of residence. The following years would prove to be intense and of fundamental importance for his life and work and would also mark the beginning of his sexual and emotional liberation. Although his first experiences had taken place in Granada, the separation from his family and the environment in which he had grown up allowed him to give free rein to his desire without fear of scandal. Even so, Lorca would always be conscious and careful about whom he revealed this aspect of his life to.

In the city he came into contact with the leading lights of the Spanish culture of his time, both those who were already well established and a group of fledgling young artists. With his captivating and somewhat overwhelming personality, Federico was the heart and soul of the parties that would kick off at La Granja del Henar, the café on Calle Alcalá that they used to frequent, and would often end up at the Residencia de Estudiantes, late at night, with the poet playing the piano. He was a bit of a rake, always on the lookout for the next source of fascination, the next object of desire.

In 1921, he published *Book of Poems (Libro de Poemas)* and premièred his first play *The Butterfly's Evil Spell (El Maleficio de la Mariposa)*, which was a total flop. Even so, Lorca was the great up-and-coming artistic star of the moment. When he finally finished his law studies he was able to devote himself exclusively to writing and it wasn't long before his first successes began to arrive. The release of *Gypsy Ballads (Romancero Gitano)* proved to be a resounding success with both critics and the general public alike.

At the Residencia he met Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, with whom he became totally infatuated, although the relationship would never be physically consummated. The break-up between the two would be definitive and would have a profound effect on him. His most important relationship during the latter years of the decade was his sentimental attachment to the sculptor Emilio



Aladrén, a rather turbulent one, probably due to the diffuse sexuality of the artist and the poet's absolute dependence on him.

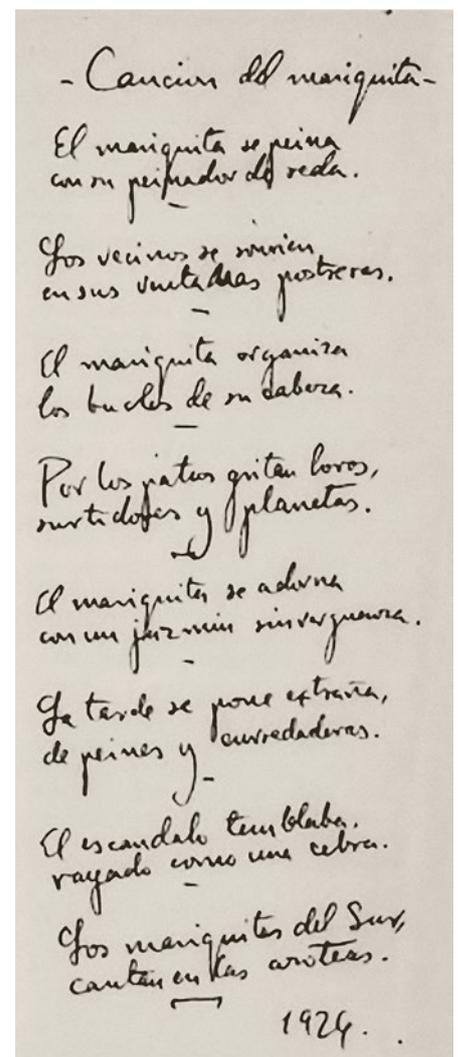
In 1925, Lorca met the sculptor Emilio Aladrén with whom he shared his first important sentimental relationship. According to Maruja Mallo, it was she who introduced them at a party, and even though Aladrén was her boyfriend, the two men left together that same night: "Emilio was a lovely boy, very handsome, very handsome, like a Greek ephebe. He was my suitor (to use that old-fashioned term) and Federico stole him away from me, among other things because he had a Russian temper and he said so many things to him that, well of course, Emilio got all worked up and went off with him".

During the years they were together, convinced of his merits as an artist, Lorca would support him wholeheartedly in his chosen profession, showing him off and introducing him to his personal entourage. Despite the poet's efforts however, Aladrén's career never quite took off.

Federico's friends were not keen on his relationship with the sculptor, they thought he was more interested in his professional contacts than in sexual or romantic matters. In fact, Emilio would end up suddenly vanishing from his life in 1929 when he took himself off to New York with an English girlfriend. Lorca travelled to that American city two years later, and it was there that he would produce his most important poetic work and also achieve his definitive sexual liberation.

*A lovely reed-like boy,
wide shoulders, slim waist,
skin of nocturnal apple-trees,
sad mouth and large eyes,
with nerves of hot silver,
walks the empty street.
His shoes of leather
crush the dahlias of air,
in a double-rhythm beating out
quick celestial dirges.
On the margins of the sea
there's no palm-tree his equal,
no crowned emperor,
no bright wandering star.
When his head bends down
over his breast of jasper,
the night seeks out the plains,
because it needs to kneel.*

St. Gabriel from *Gypsy Ballads*
Federico García Lorca



LUIS CERNUDA

(Seville 1902 – Mexico City 1963)

By the time he made his first trip to Madrid - in 1926 - Cernuda had already discharged the family and social duties to which his family background, marked by a military father, obliged him. He had begun and then abandoned his studies, and he had completed his military service. But most importantly, he had begun to write poetry and he had discovered his homosexuality. From this moment on, his relationship with the city would be intermittent and he would travel back and forth between Seville and Madrid when his practical circumstances allowed him to do so. Not only did he find a kindred intellectual environment in Madrid, but also a territory in which to explore his emotions without the constraints of a provincial capital.

In his case there was never any doubt, questioning or denial of a life condition that he accepted in an absolutely natural way. For Luis Cernuda, homosexuality was something that totally defined and shaped his personality, but he certainly did not reject it nor feel in any way guilty about it. He could not however help but be aware that this circumstance allocated a different role in society to him, that of the eternal outsider.

His personality was marked by this circumstance: by his being separated from the rest. In his dealings with others, he came across as arrogant, distrustful, sensitive and rather unsociable, probably as a defence mechanism. The search for a companion, the impossibility of amorous fulfilment, the longing for self-realisation, marked his literary production and indeed his life.

In 1927 he published his first book, *Profile of the Air (Perfil del Aire)*, which was not particularly well received which in turn left him with a profound feeling of resentment. As far as the literary world was concerned, he also felt isolated from a milieu that was committed to a modernity in poetry that he perceived in a different way. All this heightened his separation from the people around him and reinforced his sense of loneliness. Even in his personal relationships with Lorca, Prados or Alexandre, to whom he was bound by literature and the same unconventional sexuality, there would always be a caesura that would prove impossible to bridge.



His mother's death in 1929 freed him definitively from family responsibilities, both those of a purely economic nature and those derived from no longer having to hide his sexual orientation. From then on he began to write and above all to publish texts about his desires and his search for love in clearly and openly homosexual terms.

Cernuda had a very sensitive personality, probably a product of his feeling so detached from the world.

Outwardly he presented an appearance that was always exquisitely groomed down to the very last detail. Impeccable suits, perfectly knotted ties, slicked-back hair and the typical pencil moustache of the time. Even in photos in which everyone else is wearing a bathing costume, he is always to be seen in a one-piece suit when men's fashion was already favouring shorts only.

It almost seems as if he was deliberately constructing an image for others.

VICENTE ALEIXANDRE

(Seville, 1898 – Madrid, 1984)

Aleixandre had moved to Madrid to study during the previous decade and in 1919 he graduated in Law and began working as a teacher. Over the course of those years he came into contact with other poets and writers of his age, and through them he discovered poetry. His first sexual and sentimental relationships with women also date back to this time.

In the early 1920s he discovered the Residencia de Estudiantes halls of residence and began going around with Federico García Lorca. Through Lorca he met Gregorio Prieto with whom he would establish a lifelong friendship. He began to write his first poems around this time, and his social and emotional life began to get off the ground, although by nature he was always rather more shy and reserved than his peers.

However, in 1925, his life took a dramatic turn when he took sick and was diagnosed with renal tuberculosis. He moved to Aravaca to spend the next few months convalescing, during which he also finished his first book of poems *Ambit (Ámbito)*.

His experience with the disease left him with significant physical sequelae and precarious health for the rest of his life. This forced him to lead an exceptionally quiet and extremely limited social life for someone of his age. Thus began a new chapter in his life, in which he turned his family home in Calle Velintonia into a meeting place for the young poets and artists of the time. His physical condition continued to deteriorate as a result of his illness. But in spite of all this, he had two important sentimental experiences, especially one that lasted for years with the trade unionist lawyer Angel Acero Acero.

Aleixandre's sexual orientation has always been the subject of debate due, on the one hand, to the poet's own discretion about his private life and, on the other, to what would appear to be an external need to classify him in absolute terms in one category or another. The fact is that he was always very discreet and jealous of his privacy, although he always shared his interests and desires



with an intimate circle from whom he never hid his amorous experiences, whether with men or women.

Vicente Aleixandre's first known love was a dancer and singer called Carmen de Granada to whom he dedicated several poems in his first book *Ámbito*. As a result of this experience he was infected with gonorrhoea, which would leave him with after-effects for the rest of his life.

During these years, Aleixandre had two important love affairs with two men. The first was with José Manuel García Briz, a film set decorator, whom he saw on and off for almost three years. He even wrote a number of poems for Briz to sign as if they were his own, but he did not continue his career as a poet.

The second, highly passionate affair was with the trade union lawyer Andrés Acero Acero who left a profound mark on him, especially in the physical sense.

"I have loved several women in my life, once blindly. Until a few years ago, very few, between two such loves, I could not feel the germ of disinterested and ardent contemplations, such as you feel. Is that good or bad? (...) Like you, I am captivated by mouths, eyes, smiles, sculptures. Like you, I love. (...) Like so many others... Like those who will increase in number, because there is no doubt that the future era of health and sport, which is so akin to a Greek resurrection, will bring with it the love of the human form, irrespective of sex".

Letter from Vicente Aleixandre to Gregorio Prieto. 1927

"You're right: stifling feelings, impulses, ways of seeing; talking sometimes behind a mask is painful and innocuous, it is anti-human. Bourgeois society is cruel in its lack of understanding, and when you have to live in it you never live a real life, you always have to live a lie in so many ways, amputated to a certain extent, compelled to lead an intimate life, in the lofty solitude of oneself, which is one's true freedom, one's full and exact expression of oneself. One withdraws into solitude and painfully confesses to being alone, with such bitterness, sometimes dissonant in the concert of half voices".

Letter from Vicente Aleixandre to Gregorio Prieto. 1929

VICTORINA DURÁN

(Madrid, 1899 - 1993)

Victorina Durán is the foremost trailblazer of stage design in Spain and one of the key names in the professionalisation of this speciality. The daughter of a middle-class family that prevented her from pursuing a career in acting, she decided to direct her efforts towards the other side of the stage.

One of the few female students at the Special School of Painting, Sculpture and Engraving in Madrid, she moved in a student environment and enjoyed a social life in which men and women mixed quite naturally, something highly unusual at the time. She met Maruja Mallo, Salvador Dalí, Rosa Rachel and Timoteo Pérez Rubio. Her everyday life as a student gave her access to a modern attitude to life, that of a generation bent on bringing about a radical change for women.

In 1925 she participated in the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris, a city to which she would travel on several occasions and where she would discover all the new ideas of the international avant-garde. She worked at the National Museum of Industrial Arts in a predominantly male environment.

Together with her friend Matilde Calvo Rodero, she opened a studio in which they experimented with different artistic practices. Always alert to new developments in the field of art, she even had a small photography laboratory and specialised in the batik technique.

During these years she held exhibitions in various institutions and in 1929 she became the first woman to be awarded the chair of Costume Design at the National Conservatory of Music and Declamation. She also began her collaboration with Rivas Cheriff at the recently founded TEA (Theatre School of Art) and became one of the first founding members of the Lyceum Women's Club.



During the course of these years, Victorina underwent a personal evolution that took her from being a girl from a good family who still lived under her parents' control to a free and educated woman in charge of her own destiny. During this process, a crucial step would be her discovery and acceptance of her own homosexuality, something she lived without prejudice or trauma and in an absolutely confident and natural way.

With the publication of Victorina Durán's memoirs, the public was granted access to the narration of a unique life experience: the testimony of a woman of the century who witnessed and participated in the most important changes of her time. But the most singular element is undoubtedly her account of her sexual and sentimental life. There are few similar chronicles.

We are not sure exactly how or when she wrote it, but it seems clear that she began to make notes in the 1930s that were probably based on her diaries, which were practically contemporaneous with the events themselves.

Right from her first sexual experience, Victorina had absolutely no doubts and felt no guilt or remorse, rather she assumed her homosexuality in a quite open and natural way. Without any hang-ups.

The Lyceum Women's Club was founded in Madrid in 1926. Based on the model of the first lyceum that had opened in London 20 years previously, it was intended as a space in which women could interact on an intellectual level. A place where women could meet and pursue their professional, educational and cultural development.

The members belonged to a privileged social class and were either professionals in the arts world or at least associated with intellectual circles (usually by family or marital ties). The vocation of the Lyceum was non-political and non-religious and the only prerequisite for joining was to have worked in the field of the arts or the sciences or to hold an academic degree.

The first board of directors was formed by Victoria Kent, María de Maeztu, Isabel Oyarzabal and Zenobia Camprubí. Despite the liberal atmosphere prevailing in the association, it was not long before certain members began to criticise other members with "men's hairstyles and attitudes".

A series of texts were published during the 1920s that seem to synthesise the different issues surrounding the question of homosexuality in Spain: the first two novels with homosexuals as the main characters, the first scientific study into sexuality, and a new penal code that for the first time criminalises sexual relations between persons of the same sex.

Augusto D'Halmar's *Passion and Death of Father Deusto* (*Pasión y Muerte del Cura Deusto*, which was published in 1926, tells the story of the homoerotic desire between a Basque priest and a young gypsy in contemporary Seville. It is a tale of sublimated love that is never taken to a physical level, in which the main character experiences the sensual in an exalted way. Not only does the author eschew making any value judgements, but his characters also never express any feelings, leaving them to be deduced by the reader. D'Halmar himself was homosexual and his first important sentimental relationship took place during his stay in Madrid.

On the other hand, published in 1928, Alfonso Hernández-Catá's *Angel of Sodom* (*El Ángel de Sodoma*) is conceived as a moral tale in which the main character is doomed to live his sexuality with guilt and shame, preferring to die rather than besmirch the family honour. In actual fact, ever since its first edition, the novel contains a preface by Gregorio Marañón in which, from a scientific point of view, he defends the moral value of the literary text

In both novels, the protagonists meet a tragic end, thereby managing to avoid having to give in to their carnal desires and never quite entering, therefore, the realm of crime or perversion. Curiously enough, the two main characters are struck and killed by a train. Both D'Halmar and Hernández-Catá were from Latin America, the former from Chile and the latter from Cuba.

In 1926, Gregorio Marañón published his *Three Essays on Sexual Life* (*Tres Ensayos sobre la Vida Sexual*), a veritable milestone in the scientific literature on the subject. The text examines the different stages of human sexuality, both from a medical and anthropological point of view, but always considering that the perfect and correct sex is the male sex and that all other possibilities are inaccurate, incomplete or mistaken. One major departure however, was the observation of homosexuality, for the first time in Spain, from a pathological point of view, but not from a religious or moral point of view.



Finally, in 1928, the Civil Directory, presided over by General Miguel Primo de Rivera, enacted a new Penal Code which explicitly penalised crimes of “public scandal” (in other words, sexual relations known to anyone who might care to report them) between persons of the same sex. In these cases, the penalty sought is more than twice that applied to heterosexual couples for a similar offence.

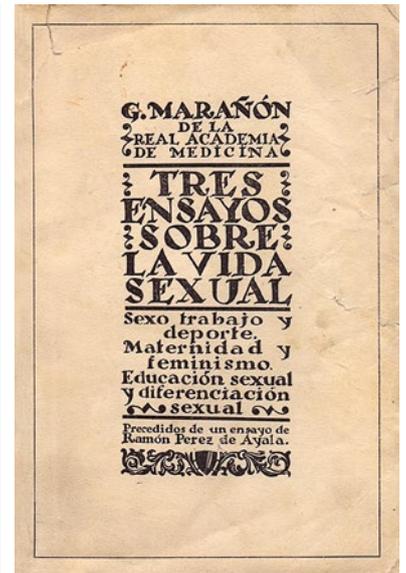
Penal Code
CHAPTER IV
Crimes of public scandal

Art. 616 Anyone who, regularly or in a scandalous manner, were to engage in acts contrary to decency with persons of the same sex shall be punished with a fine of 1,000 to 10,000 pesetas and shall be especially disqualified from public office for a period of six to twelve years.

Published on 8 September 1928

“It can be assured that homosexuality, even as a product of insufficient sexual differentiation, becomes less frequent the closer we get to man. And in man it might well have disappeared by now if unfortunate psychological and pedagogical influences had not hindered its disappearance. In any case, like all other aberrant manifestations of love, it is diminishing every day... To quote Bloch: “As a result of the research I have carried out, I have become convinced that today, not only are there not as many perverts as in the past, but that the perverts of today, for the most part, cannot be considered as degenerates””.

Three Essays on Sexual Life. Gregorio Marañón. 1926



“A sulphurous clarity illuminated the innermost depths of his life, right down to the confines of his boyhood. Everything clicked into place and was explained. What raw, implacable light, what horrifying logic! The least conscious movements of his soul and of his flesh became coordinated and made sense. Now that childish reserve, that time spent playing with dolls and pots and pans, that skilful sewing of buttons and darning, that delight found in the company of girls at school, that avoidance of the boys’ violent games, took on the value of a spring whose pestilent and suddenly released waters threatened to drown him.

A hundred questions, full of disgust and pity at one and the same time, crossed his mind, as if a critical part of him, still free from androgynous contamination, wanted to find out when and by what means that fistula in his instinct had undermined and diverted the course of his life...

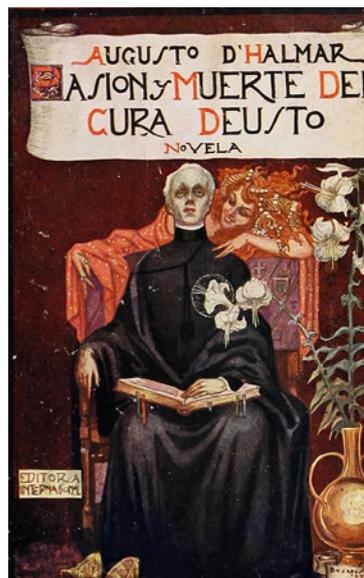
His memory found traces of it even as far back as where childhood erases the external differences of sex and expresses it only in the colours of attire. And from somewhere far beyond his reason, the ironic voice of nature came to him, saying: “Disobey your forms, turn your back on your virile condition.”

The Angel of Sodom, Alfonso Hernández-Catá. 1928

“... Then that man who had starred in so many shows, who had received such acclaim, whose sense of smell had sniffed the perfume of the flowers that fade in the youth of the flesh of a summer, an autumn and a winter, an immense longing to behold himself in the pupils of love, to reverberate in its words, to be intoxicated by its vapours, took possession of the ephebe. And above his head, bathed in the setting of the last sun, his hand brushed that of the priest, who at that precise moment was touching his purple lips and smothering the incoherent sounds uttering from them, as if they were floating over his mouth or coming from farther and farther away... His palate would not savour the honey, nor would it be defiled by gall. And that mystery which we call the voice, would be drowned out forever, with the broken harp of the vocal cords, at the back of the throat...

But now it was the hands; Iñigo’s and Pedro Miguel’s hands met again beside those that were still feverishly bending, but which, like life, would no longer grasp anything but smoke and nothing... The Basque priest’s stammering was almost as uncertain as his movements. Flushed and pallid as a dying man, his breathing had become no less painful. And delighting in that mortal confusion, the misguided adolescent caressed his fingers, on the very palm of that right hand, already in the grip of death...”

Passion and Death of Father Deusto, Augusto D’Halmar, 1924



CUESTIÓN DE AMBIENTE

DIVERSIDAD EN EL MADRID LITERARIO Y ARTÍSTICO DE LOS AÑOS 20

24 de junio – 24 de octubre 2021

COMISARIADO

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