Book Review of *Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano**

Sueli Rocha-Rojas^a

Jesús Ulled was born in 1937, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and moved at an early age with his family to Barcelona, Spain. He is a well-known journalist, the founder of the magazines *Qué Leer* and *Clío*, the author of the recently published novel *Final de Travesía* (2016), and his first book was *Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano*, written in 2012.

In *Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano*, Jesús Ulled presents us with the biography of the French-Spanish photographer and cineaste Jacques Leonard, which Ulled based on Leonard's own unpublished French manuscripts and on information given in interviews by Leonard's sons Santi and Alex, and Leonard's grandson Yago Leonard.

Ulled was the first person to have direct access to Jacques Leonard's autobiographical manuscripts. It was through Jacques Leonard's manuscripts that his family learned of Leonard's half-Romaní ethnic identity, for his mother, Emilienne Tabary, was a non-Romaní French and his father, Julien Leonard, was a French Romaní—hence, the title of the book *Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano*.

Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano has 18 chapters and can be divided into two major parts: The first centers on Leonard's life in France, and the second much shorter part centers on his life in Spain. Chapters 1-15 discuss Leonard's family background and his upbringing in France from the early 1900s to the late 1930s. The second part of the book, the last three chapters, focuses on Leonard's life as a film editor and a photographer in Barcelona from the 1940s until his death in 1994.

Despite his father's Romaní origins, Jacques

Leonard was brought up and educated in the Parisian bourgeoisie life style of his mother, a successful Parisian dressmaker. In the first part of this book, Ulled describes the financial backbone structure of the Leonard family, intertwining it with historical events. For instance, during World War I (WWI), 40% of all French women in the labor force worked in the armament industry in the production of munitions and explosives. Not all women were employed in the factories, since, along with nurses, there were women in charge of public transports, government offices, and women who operated heavy or precision machinery in engineering—jobs that had been previously reserved for men. During the war, Emilienne, who was an entrepreneur, lost all her female workers to the war industries. Ulled describes Emilienne's strength and tenacity to cope with the financial crises derived from the war, and by the end of the war, she had begun to produce clothes for the Hollywood film industry in the United States of America.

Julien Leonard, Jacques' father, was a renowned horse trainer and breeder with knowledge in equine surgical techniques and a dealer skillful in horse-trading for horses skilled for their use in warfare. Ulled offers insight on the pivotal role of people like Julien Leonard, who worked as a *maquignon* (horse trader) during the war. With his expertise, he found the

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best horses for a variety of harsh work on and outside of the battlefield. For transporting combatants or transferring elements of war like guns or carriages, horses were essential. Eventually, Julien's warhorse trading skills and horses themselves all vanished from the battlefields with the advance of technology in warfare, but through Julien's trading, Ulled introduces us to a group of French Romani called Pacorros, whom Julien employed as helpers. It is not clear from this biography whether Jacques Leonard's father belonged to the Pacorros' clan. Nonetheless, Ulled writes extensively on Emilienne and Julien's unique combination of expertise that sustained them throughout WWI.

Jacques Leonard learned from his father the love and knowledge of the equine world and inherited the taste for adventure. He became a filmmaker and a photographer who traveled the world working in the film industry as a film editor. With eloquence and insight, Ulled recounts Leonard's works in the world of cinema while also revealing the early history of the French film industry. Ulled notes that Leonard's first cinematographic work was as a "chico para todo" (dogsbody) for the film *Au Pays des Basques* (1930), directed by Maurice Champreux. Subsequently, Leonard worked for the director Léon Mathot as a production assistant on the film *Embrassez-moi* (1932), which starred Georges Milton, a famous French singer, as a main character. Also in 1932, Leonard worked as an assistant for director Jean Choux in *Un Chien qui Rapporte*. Some years later, after having worked with Jean Choux on five films, Leonard started to work with director Marcel L'Herbier in *La Route imperial* (1935) and *Les Hommes nouveaux* (1936). Furthermore, Leonard also had the opportunity to work with French film director Abel Gance, assisting on *J'accuse!* (1938).

In a narrative that often reads like a novel, Ulled introduces us to Jacques Leonard's first wife France Choux, who he married in 1935 and who was Jean Choux's daughter, and to his first son Marc Leonard,

born in 1938. Ulled writes briefly about Leonard's difficult relationship with his wife France, which culminated in a divorce, and on the loss of contact with his first son Marc¹.

Within the narrative, which discusses French cinema from the 30s to the 40s, Ulled also exposes his readers to the life of the French ventriloquist Robert Lamouret and his wife Vicky Ross, who was a member of a trio of singers and contortionists, the Ross Sisters. With Lamouret, in the 40s, Jacques Leonard toured Australia, India, Italy, and Greece, among other countries.

In the last three chapters of the book, Ulled focuses on Leonard's life in Barcelona. The first time that Leonard came to Spain, arriving in search of documentation for a film about Columbus, he came in contact with the intellectual atmosphere of the 40s in Madrid.

During Leonard's first years in Spain, he worked as a film editor for Ularqui Films Production. Ulled does an excellent job narrating the history of the Spanish cinema during the 50s under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco while discussing important classic films regarding the Spanish Gitano such as *Maria de la O* by Francisco Elías Riquelme, *Carmen de la Triana* by Florián Rey, and *Los Hijos de la Noche* by Benito Perojo, among others. Ulled comments not only on classic films but also on important actors and actresses of the Spanish cinema of the 40s and 50s: Miguel Ligeró, Imperio Argentina, Estrellita Castro, and the greatest flamenco dancer of all times, Carmen Amaya.

Although Ulled's book omits official dates for most of the events he narrates, due to thorough descriptions and an oasis of information, one can easily surmise approximately when events transpire. For instance, Ulled suggests that Leonard moved to Barcelona in the late 40s, and affirms that later in the 50s, he married Rosario Amaya, a Catalan Gitana who worked as a model for painters. Rosario Amaya was the cousin of the flamenco dancer Carmen Amaya.

Rosario, as Ulled states, was Leonard's great love and destiny. After their marriage, Leonard was accepted into the world of the Catalan Gitanos as one of them. He was also given the nickname *El Payo Chac*² and, with his camera, from inside his new community, made extensive, historical, and wonderful photographs of the Gitanos' lives. In the last chapters, where Ulled focuses on Leonard's life in Barcelona, he also offers significant information on the social condition and infrastructure of the neighborhoods where the Catalan Gitanos used to live. Montjuïc is a shallow mountain overlooking the harbor to the southwest of the city of Barcelona. During the nineteenth century, the mountain was used to graze animals and to grow food, and up until 1970s, it was mainly inhabited by Gitanos and other disadvantaged groups. The same socio-economic situation happened on the beach of Somorrostro, the birthplace of the flamenco dancer Carmen Amaya, which today is the Olympic Marina.

Ulled clarifies that even though Jacques Leonard and Rosario Amaya, after they married, lived in an upper middle-class neighborhood, *Barrio de Gracia*, every weekend they, with their sons, would go to stay in the Barracas of Montjuïc to spend time with Rosario's parents and relatives. Due to Leonard's close relationship with Rosario's family, he had free access to the barracks of Montjuïc and to its inhabitants' daily lives. Therefore, he photographed his own Catalan Gitano community from the 1950s to the 1970s, a photographic archive that serves as a unique visual and artistic document about the daily lives and identity of the Gitanos in Barcelona.

Despite the few photographs displayed at the start of each chapter, Ulled's *Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano* is not a book on photography, but a biography of Jacques Leonard. It is a book for anyone interested in the culture of the Spanish and French Romani. It is also a book for people interested in historical events involving France during and after WWI, such as the

role of women in the job market or the disappearance of the use of horses and some other job skills during WWI. Ulled's book offers a panoramic view of the production of the Spanish cinema industry under Francisco Franco and a brief description of the social-economic conditions of the Catalan Gitanos during that era from the perspective of Jacques Leonard's experiences with film and photography.

Ulled gives us through his portrait of Julien and Emilienne unusual insight into a mixed-ethnic married couple going through the hardships of France in WWI. Despite all of the historical events presented in this biography, Ulled's narrative reads like a romance/adventure/history book. This biography, which on the surface may seem to be simply another book describing Roma culture and traditions, illuminates something more substantive—the importance of a little-known Gitano community. Ulled's book opens a door for further work on Leonard, especially during the years in Barcelona, in which Jacques Leonard became a photographer. The author recommends *Mitad Payo, Mitad Gitano* to anyone who wants information on twentieth-century Catalan Gitanos, film, and photography, or to anyone who enjoys a good biography.

Notes

* Jesús Ulled. Barcelona: Destino, 2012. 397 pages. ISBN: 978-84-233-3924-2.

1. For more on Leonard's first son, see the documentary *El Payo Chac* by director Yago Leonard.
2. Rosario Amaya's parents and relatives used to pronounce "Chac" for Jacques, and the word payo means a non-gitano.

Bio

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