

The Deteriorating Histories in the Public Everyday Space of Post-Francoist Barcelona

by

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Introduction

“The air of the city makes one free.”
--German proverb

I tend to think of this dissertation as a photograph of a city, one taken with a very long shutter-speed. Although I write these words in June of 2008, the shutter opened January of 2004 when I began researching the project in Ann Arbor. Like a time-lapse photograph, this study captures temporal movements and changes; on one hand it freezes evanescent changes while, on the other hand, it shows their fluidity and superimposition. It is History, because each time I return to the city, and by the time this is read, the city will have changed significantly. What is written here may no longer be valid for the present, but rather only for a specific moment I experienced in the past.

Of course this dissertation does more than just reflect a city. While the city, specifically the everyday public space of Barcelona, will be our main protagonist, we will explore a diverse spectrum of media that represent it, such as literature, film, photography, and everyday objects. All of these materials together will form a rich and unique cultural collage that will allow for a heterogeneous, interdisciplinary, and hence

more objective glance at how urban space is intimately related to memory, identity, and history.

I will demonstrate that, in the last three decades, as Spain transitioned from a dictatorship to a democracy and Barcelona rapidly became the Southern European capital of business and culture, urban space has played a fundamental and underestimated role as an ideological platform on which new collective social identities have been constructed. Further, I will show how prioritizing a global economy has resulted in postmodern spatial transformations such as gentrification, mass tourism and heightened security. These changes have nullified the promises of local social democracy, and rewrote and commodified history.

I have chosen to limit the concept of space to three qualifiers: everyday, post-Francoist, and Barcelonese; and I limit the concept of time to two: post-Francoist and deteriorating. It is fundamental that I briefly explain the qualifiers in this introduction because beneath them lie the important theoretical and historical rationales for their inclusion. Without explaining why I have chosen them, the themes will appear arbitrarily floating and disorganized. On a practical level, explaining these qualifiers will help to justify the purpose and academic value of my dissertation. However, in order to promote the permeability of these limits and not be constricted by them, throughout the dissertation I have made historical and spatial connections that lie outside their framework. Let us begin with the most abstract of the qualifiers: space.

1. Space

The permeability of spatial qualifiers as well as the metaphor of a long-exposed photograph derive from a theoretical idea of Henri Lefebvre's influential book, The Production of Space, published in 1974. In his typology of space in a capitalist society, Lefebvre dissects space into several triads that further subdivide into nearly two dozen overlapping categories. From these categories, I extracted two conceptualizations of space, favoring one over the other.

The first way of conceptualizing space is more traditional and, in my opinion, historically flawed and fallacious. That is, one thinks of space as absolute, static, scientific, homogeneous, circumscribable, and hegemonic. For example, this would be similar to the study of famous buildings in History of Art classes or in documentaries on architecture. The other tendency that Lefebvre advocates influenced my choice of texts for this dissertation as well as my readings of them.¹ I think of space as elusive, ever-changing, intimate, multifaceted, contradictory, dialectical, intermixed, superimposed, fluid, and heterogeneous. Under this second conceptualization I include what Lefebvre, coming from a Marxist tradition, denotes as "social space," which he defines thus: "social space is a social product" (26). This second conceptualization grasps the complex reality of space. It interprets space not as a static and neutral coordinate within time and divine Nature, but rather as a product of ever-changing socio-political and economical negotiations that we produce (26-31). This definition could take a material form, such as a façade; or an imaginary form, such as depictions of façades in a movie. The definition could translate into a theoretical form of space, such as postmodernity or a practical form,

¹ Lefebvre has influenced spatial theorists such as Marc Augé, David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Michel de Certeau.

such as a protest for the removal of fascist iconography from façades. His approach conjoins spatial production as imagined and real, theoretical and practical. Instead of creating divisions, my reading of Lefebvre recognizes these divisions, but moves beyond them. Ultimately, this heterogeneous approach advances a more multilateral view of history and society.

Why have I chosen to focus this dissertation on space? Space allows me to work with a myriad of themes and disciplines that are of interest to me such as Spanish cultural studies, architecture, urbanism, art, resistance, memory, identity, politics, immigration, postmodernism, film, Situationism, and photography. Although an interdisciplinary approach requires breadth and complexity, I find it to be the most exciting, thought-provoking, and truthful way of presenting and analyzing knowledge.

Second, space has not received an equal amount of inquiry in the corpus of western knowledge. Although space has been of interest in philosophy since Kant in the nineteenth century, and “space is” [. . .] “the inscription of time in the world,” space has been given little attention in studies on History, Literature, or in critically thinking and teaching about the past in general (Lefebvre, Writings 16). As Michel Foucault and geographer Edward Soja point out—time traced historiography, not space.² “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (Foucault, Power 70). Over the past two centuries, the result of this historiography was “historical imagination,” or a tendency to contextualize a subject through its immediate temporal history, leaving out its geographical position

² This is one of the main premises of Edward Soja’s book Postmodern Geographies and Michel Foucault’s article “Of Other Spaces.”

(Soja 13-4).³ Many of us do this as a preliminary activity in presenting texts—we provide our readers or students with a historical (temporal) contextualization before reading cultural texts. This has become the norm since cultural studies penetrated education and academia. But what about spatial contextualization?

My dissertation tries to bring this material to life; it tries to highlight the human complexity embedded in inanimate space. In humanizing space, sometimes I will focus on *space* more than on the individuals who inhabit it. For example, when discussing the demolition of buildings, I will sometimes attend more to the razed buildings than to the individuals who have been evicted from the buildings. This should convey not a lack of sympathy, but rather an attention to the historical elements of a new or lesser-known perspective. Since space and humans are inseparable, in this dissertation, I will not only examine space that individuals create (for example, contemporary architecture, urban furniture, and street signs), but also I will proffer an unconventional and reversed perspective on the discourse that contemporary architecture, urban furniture, and street signs create about us. Benjamin believed that objects assembled together will speak for themselves. As he says in this admirable passage from The Arcades Project, an unfinished compilation of brief cultural texts regarding nineteenth-century Paris:

Method of this study: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. (Arcades 460)

While this expository method would be insufficient for a doctoral dissertation, in a Benjaminian gesture, I often give the microphone to space and let it tell us about social

³ Soja takes this term “historical imagination” from C. Wright Mills, whose works Soja briefly analyzes in order to provide an example of the faulty traditional studies that stressed the importance of time over space.

life and the effects it has on us (sentiments, histories, identity, memory,...etc.). What do façades, bricks, streets and ruins tell us? What do they *no longer* tell us and why? The latter question is particularly useful because it includes the subjects that do not have a voice. For instance, perhaps an immigrant or an elder no longer frequents a plaza because he/she has been deported or he/she has passed away. He/she can't speak to us of his/her memory of what occurred in that space. But, upon careful examination, the plaza can speak to us. We can read the residues that were left behind in that space—the memories that they deposited in those spaces—perhaps a store poster in Arabic or some cats that the elder used to feed.

While space as a concept is very broad and philosophical, for this dissertation I have limited my scope of space to: the public, the everyday, Post-Francoist, and the urban, specifically Barcelonese. As we will soon see, something these four concepts have in common is that they yield innovative perspectives, inclusive and interdisciplinary approaches, and political potentials.

2. Public

A difficulty in explaining my focus on public space lies in defining it. How can we define *public space*? By common associations? By our experience and investigation of it? I have included both since they're quite different. The common association includes public space in a dichotomy with private space. We generally think of private spaces as homes, shops, institutions, governmental buildings and places frequented by people with money such as country clubs and restaurants. We associate private spaces

with being exclusive, fixed, and circumscribable. They are generally for the occupation of a select group of people, and thus are legally purchased at some time and have an owner. Access to private spaces is restricted by locks, surveillance and time restrictions. On the other hand, public space is usually thought of as the opposite. We associate it with more inclusive spaces, such as outdoor spaces, natural spaces, park, plazas, streets, and sidewalks. They belong to all citizens, are free (one usually doesn't pay to enter or leave), neutral, less fixed, more fluid, and are open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

However, sharing our experiences in and investigations of public space indicates that the common usage of the term not only is false, but also is deceptively and increasingly engulfed by its antithesis, private space (Baudrillard, "Simulacra"; Capel 57; Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelones). Writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán defines public space as "a fight won against speculators" (Barcelones 24). Economical and political strings pull the strings of public space in many directions. All space—private and public—now has an owner, is constantly being purchased, and has an open and close time determined by the highest bidders. Authority tries to map and control public space just as they do with private space. With architects, police, cameras, paper, and computers, they try to trace it and draft it millimeter by millimeter (de Certeau). Citizens are hardly free in public space. Rather, we are subjected to (and most of us abide by) a plethora of official and unofficial performative regulations imposed both consciously and unconsciously by authority and our fellow urban dwellers (Delgado, Animal). Further, public space is not nearly as inclusive as it appears. For example, the homeless and prostitutes are usually pushed out; those who possess a disrespected identity may feel excluded, and disabled people are often unable to access the space.

While the public sphere is discreetly and progressively privatized, in this dissertation, I don't consider all space as private.⁴ That is, within what we traditionally believe to be public space (plazas, streets, sidewalks), unique characteristics and potentials exist that are not found in traditionally private spaces. Most importantly, because public space is generally accessible to everyone, it is the ideal space for agencies of all sizes to impose ideologies on all of us, and for us to negotiate within them. In spite of regulation and exclusion, public space still remains the location with the heaviest accumulation of *everything social*.

Considering this dualistic background, I chose to focus on public space for the following five reasons. First, public space brings collective political and historical potential into the picture. No other space exists that is more historically rich than public space—akin to mountains of history books and diaries. Further, since public space is more fluid than private space, it contains more autonomy, nooks, niches, hideouts, and spontaneity, enabling urban dwellers to elude some vigilance and possess some autonomy. Power and change are reliant on the autonomy in space; without space, one has no ideological agency (Lefebvre 44-67; Althusser 99). In theory, public space is one of the few existing spaces where a large number of people, regardless of their material possessions, can come together to have political influence (Bermann; Harvey).

Another reason I've chosen to focus on public space is because it is going extinct. The element of autonomy is small and decreasing. Can we think of a space where one doesn't feel pressure to spend money? Where one doesn't feel obligated to conform to an externally-imposed set of rules? Where one doesn't feel the victimizing discomfort of

⁴ For more on the privatization of contemporary public space, see: Baudrillard, "Simulacra"; Lefebvre, Production; Sennet, Consciousness 11-40; Foucault, "Other"; or Capel 57.

surveillance cameras and policemen? Nature once fulfilled this luxury (Lefebvre, Production). No space today is exempt from such economic and legal pressures.

Third, nationally speaking, public space became an important item on the new democratic agenda established in the early eighties in Spain. Thus, by examining public space during this period, we will see how authorities have used it as a tool to construct collective ideologies regarding what our past is, how our city should be, and how citizens should behave. In addition, examining public space will allow us to see how citizens have responded (often via space) to these democratic transformations in their space. For example, some have responded by draping protest signs across their balconies, by giving new spaces unexpected functions, or by buying into more private and individualized lifestyles.

Fourth, the cultural materials and approach of this dissertation seek to correct some misconceptions about public space. I think a misanthropic idea opposes it with our comfort of the private home and conceptualizes public space as impersonal, almost nebulous, abject, precarious, nameless, and inanimate, an anti-Nature in need of tidying and surveillance. This perspective, in my opinion, is an outcome of late-capitalist conditions that work against political solidarity and the humanization of public space.⁵ By analyzing relationships with public space, this dissertation aspires to provide an inspiring, rich, and intimate perspective of public space.

Finally, I'm interested in public space because it is an innovative way to study society. While urbanists and architects attend to public space, it is scarcely included in

⁵ I am referring to neocapitalist conditions such as the creation of historical amnesia, consumer values and individual competition. We will further discuss these conditions as well as the dehumanization of public space in following chapters.

literary and cultural studies, rarely put in the blender with literature, film, and photography. In this sense, I believe my dissertation contributes something new.

For all of these reasons, my dissertation addresses public space, advocates its democratic and urgent potential, and argues for the importance of conserving and expanding it. Now, how does immersing the *everyday* with public space change things?

3. Everyday

Instead of picture the world as a drama of significant (and exceptional) events and people, set against a backdrop of everyday life, the relation between foreground and background needs to be reversed. (Highmore 27)

Everyday space is the most theoretical, practical, and inspiring, of the four qualifiers.⁶ In books and classes that deal with urbanism, architecture, or cities, we are usually provided with technical information about monumental space, such as dimensions, blue prints, the designer/architects names, origins, and dates. As history has been represented by hegemonic time, space has been represented by monumental space, such as, museums, statues, religious or governmental buildings, institutions, and of course, monuments. Let us look at this image of Barcelona that the Ajuntament published in a tourist magazine (fig. i).

⁶ Before beginning this section on the “everyday” I should indicate that I am unaware of a formal theory of everyday space. Most of my ideas are a synthesis of the theories of everyday life and urban culture, as formulated by such cultural theorists as Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Georg Simmel, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Marc Augé, and Ben Highmore.

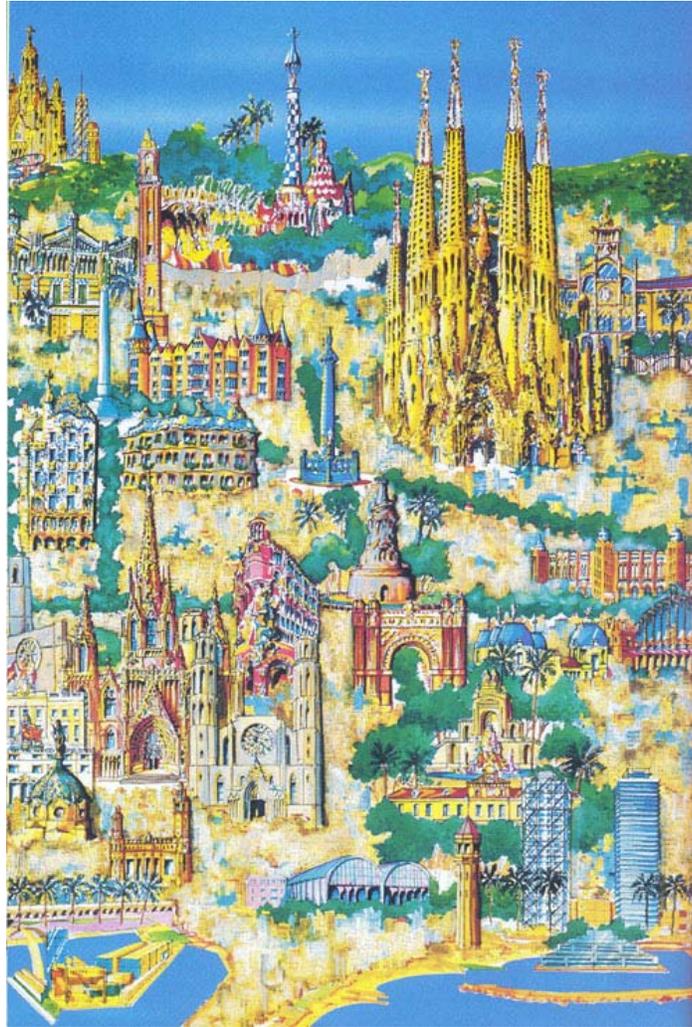


Fig. i. Image from Barcelona's Department for Tourism. (Tour-ismes 88)

Here we see a series of well-known monuments—several of Antoni Gaudí's works, El Arco de Triunfo; the clock in the Plaza de Rius i Taulet; the Monumental bullfighting ring; the parliament building of Ciudadela; the two towers of Villa Olímpica (Torre Mafre and Hotel de les Arts); the Torre del Aigua; Francia Train Station; several buildings from the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie movement *Modernisme* (El Hospital de Sant Pau, La Casa de les Punxes), and at least five religious buildings (the main cathedral, Santa María del Mar, the Basilica del Tibidabo, the Mercé church, and of

course the disproportioned Sagrada Familia); and finally some rich natural resources (lush green mountains, trees, and a blue sea).

In this image, certain spaces are enlarged in size and saturated in color. These spaces are not arbitrarily chosen; they share many of the same characteristics, suggesting a very careful selection. For example, we could denominate all of the highlighted spaces as “buildings” or “monuments” because they are clearly delineated and recognizable as such. In addition, all of the enlarged places are private, of great economic wealth, officially protected by the state, and several of them are affiliated with the Catholic Church. In reality, they are all very spacious, dominating the city’s skyline. Thus, these are what I consider hegemonic spaces, what Lefebvre calls “monumental spaces” (sacred and belonging to authority), and they re-narrate a very selective history (Production 225). In this image only associations with Catholicism, the bourgeoisie, material wealth, and the state have been chosen to attract tourists—chosen to represent the entire heterogeneous city and its past.

I included this image to illustrate the visual antithesis of this dissertation. This dissertation seeks to explore the ambiguous, elusive, and undocumented components of history and space—feelings, identities, memories, everyday practices, displacements, dispersions, anachronisms, tactics, un-written rules, hidden meanings, alternative functions, marginalized populations, tensions, and possibilities. Applied to Barcelona, this will translate to issues such as nostalgia for lost urban places, political identities and memories repressed by historical amnesia and gentrification, incipient forms of resistance to the city’s postmodern image, creative ways of inhabiting gentrified spaces, ways of projecting Francoist, democratic and neocapitalist values in everyday spaces, the

symbolic relevance of new façades in the Historic Quarter, the appropriated spaces of the recent wave of foreign immigrants, and strategies that the Neighborhood Associations can use to regain influence. However, we are not going to find these in polished monumental space nor their technical representations (blueprints, floor plans, maquettes, and maps). So, where can we look?

If we remove those enormous souvenirs from the image I just discussed, what is left, beneath the bushes, where the paint color becomes an indefinable murky yellow, is where we will find this dissertation's focus. Public everyday space consists of everything visible to the public eye, everything that forms part of our urban milieu—corners, façades, door knobs, signs, storefronts, sidewalks, trash bins, and abandoned lots. Since they exist beyond conventional space, they also exist beyond conventional language. As a result, they also constitute spaces that do not have proper names such as: *marks that footsteps leave on storefront hearths over time*, or *the interior walls of apartments that are left standing after a building has been partially razed*.

By addressing everyday space, we uncover another stratum of the underrepresented. By adding on another qualifier, we don't limit space but rather we expand it. *Everyday* public space can transcend common associations of public space to embrace *everything*, even the monumental, and especially that which has been previously ignored—the “remainders”; “cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits”; and the “residues of a dream world” (Highmore 26; de Certeau 38; Benjamin, “Paris” 162).

I wanted to focus on everyday space because, on one hand, it provides a more holistic, inclusive, and objective view of contemporary social history. On the other hand, it possesses a unique potential for social change. I have concluded that both of these

results derive from three of the everyday's characteristics: *interdisciplinarity* (its appeal to multiple disciplines) *uncircumscribability* (its tendency to evade categorization and spatial conventions), and *underrepresentedness* (its availability to represent what has been underrepresented). Now I will explain.

While public space is generally studied in departments of Urban Planning and occasionally in Architecture, it lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach. While public *everyday* space is not studied in any specific discipline, it “exists ‘between the lines,’” and for this reason it *requires* a new, non-canonical, and interdisciplinary approach (Highmore 26).⁷ Once we see everyday space as a text (such as literature), then we can—at the least—begin reading it as we do anything else (books, films, newspapers, floor plans, etc.) and analyzing it with the same theoretical tools and for the same practical ends.

This is important because the struggles between politics, history, power, and possibility transverse written laws and conventional spaces. Today evidence of these ongoing struggles are everywhere, from store signs to garbage. An unlimited corpus of cultural material awaits critical, historical, and dialectical attention. Further, if we agree with Althusser, Jameson, and Baudrillard that capitalism forms the three-dimensional backbone of our contemporary culture, then *the everyday*, as ubiquitous as capitalism, is the most efficient form with which we can approach contemporary (capitalistic) culture.

⁷ Why does interdisciplinarity matter? Because knowledge is still generally studied within canonical disciplines, which have a certain Western, white, male, monotheistic, heterosexual agenda behind them. Studying a topic within one discipline limits and excludes areas of knowledge that don't conform to one discipline (such as public everyday space). Further, it excludes the plethora of connections that can be made between existing disciplines on the other. For more information on the importance of interdisciplinarity (which also coincides with the objectives of “cultural studies”) see Foucault's *The Order of Things*, Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*, and Herbrechter's *Cultural Studies Interdisciplinarity and Translation*.

In Reading the Everyday, Moran, referring to Lefebvre, defines the everyday as “a kind of remainder which evades conventional divisions of knowledge: it is ‘defined by “what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis’” (8). I had mentioned that public space is uncontainable, public *everyday* space is even more so: it is messy, elusive, and unrestrained. One cannot map the marks on the storefront hearth, the space of a vagabond’s or cat’s stroll, or a *flâneur*’s derive.⁸ That a space cannot be mapped does not render it historically irrelevant to a view of society held by Western knowledge (Foucault, Power 70; Soja). Here we have the fundamental worth of the everyday. Indefinable spaces are more apt to evade agents of control, such as the wealthy, the police, the media, and archival organizers.⁹ This means that everyday space grants us a remarkably liberating element of personal and collective autonomy. A hidden political potential lies within the everyday space. (It’s hidden because it is discarded, and it contains potential because a discarded space implies a different historical narrative. Reading such a space is a politicized act because most of our historical consciousness comes from state sources, such as the image I just discussed.)

⁸ The *derive* is a concept coined by the Situationists International in 1960’s in Paris. It was the subversive idea of walking aimlessly through the city, allowing the city’s stimuli to guide. The ultimate objective was to create what they called “psychogeography.” Psychogeography was a new social science which Guy Debord, cultural theorist and leader of the Situationists International, defined as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.” (Andreotti 18).

⁹ In Everyday Life and Cultural Theory, Ben Highmore speaks of the difficulty in trying to archive or organize a corpus of everyday life (24-6). On another note, for specific examples of everyday practices that evade authority, see Michel de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life. We will explore the latter book in the second chapter.

Nowadays, regulation and globalization mean that “there are more truths in twenty-four hours of a man’s life than in all the philosophies” as Situationist Raoul Vaneigem wrote (21). The truth comes from the more inclusive approach of everyday life. It doesn’t only consider polished finished capitalist products (Marx’s alienated commodities) such as books, films, and buildings; it also reads the ephemeral and undermined processes that go into their production (de Certeau; Lefebvre, Critique 57).

Both the political emancipation and the more inclusive perspective partially derive from the fact that the everyday entails *practices*. A reading of everyday space is based in practice and experience, as opposed to theory and science (de Certeau; Highmore; Buck-Morss 3). Everyday space is *lived* space, and therefore, more collective and personal than regulated monumental spaces. Michel de Certeau reflects the practical and political value of this concept in his book The Practice of Everyday Life. According to de Certeau, everyday practices can be mundane actions like brushing one’s teeth or purchasing a sandwich. They can also be (what I prefer to distinguish as everyday “tactics”) practices realized by people with little or no economic power realize who minimally manipulate regulations to achieve some small objective. For example, pilfering office supplies or taking short cuts through private property on one’s way home from work.

We can see this attention to personal practice in Walter Benjamin’s works. Benjamin, one of the earliest theorists to publish thoughts on everyday space, sought to demythify the fascist and capitalist tale of history in his myriad writings on everyday objects and spaces in the early twentieth-century European cities. Many of his works (The Arcades Project, “One-way Street,” and several essays on individual cities) contain

personal and critical observations of everyday spaces. Speaking of the experimental nature of Benjamin's essay on the city of Naples and The Arcades Project, Susan Buck-Morss states that for Benjamin,

buildings, human gestures, spatial arrangement—are “read” as a language in which a historically transient truth (and the truth of historical transiency) is expressed concretely, and the city's social formation becomes legible within perceived experience. (27)

Here we have a list of “things” that don't fit into any category but that of the everyday: buildings, gestures, and spatial arrangements. They evoke practicality and legibility such as the practice of interpreting building façades or facial gestures. From these everyday observances we can read ephemerality, malleability, and flexibility, qualities that contrast with the totalizing hegemonic narratives (such as the monumental spaces of the image) that boast strength, grandeur, and endurance (Frisby).¹⁰

De Certeau, Lefebvre, and David Harvey define the everyday as an undermined location of capital exchange, one that contains enough autonomy and potential to break from it (de Certeau; Harvey Spaces; Highmore 17). For this reason, Benjamin, Lefebvre, de Certeau, Bermann, the Situationists International, Highmore, myself, and many others concur that everyday space is where the changes for a more just society can be initiated (Lefebvre, Urban xiii; Bermann 12). “It is in the everyday that emancipation might be found (if it is to be found at all); critiques of the the everyday will emerge in the practices of everyday life, not in the rarefied or deadeningly ‘realist’ programmes of political parties” (Highmore 29). Accordingly, in the following chapters, I will discuss how the small everyday practices in the public spaces of Barcelona, such as tying one's bike to a

¹⁰ Benjamin's legibility would be later questioned by the postmodernists, such as Jameson and Baudrillard, who would discard space as having lost its truthful signifiers to neocapitalism. See Postmodernism and “Simulacra.”

tree, playing a game of volleyball, strolling down a particular street, using a large plant pot as a bench, are rich sources of untold historical narratives, unresolved social issues, and resistance.

4. Urban and Barcelona

[The city] isn't just a place to live, to shop, to go out and have kids play. It's a place that implicates how one derives one's ethics, how one develops a sense of justice, how one learns to talk with and learn from people who are unlike oneself, which is how a human becomes human. (Sennet, "Civitas" 83)

In 1903 Georg Simmel published the essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life," one of the few attempts in Western society to theorize the urban psyche. On one hand, he portrays the city as an inhumane place. He states that the urban dweller "reacts with his head instead of his heart" and is "lonely and lost as in the metropolitan crowd" (176, 181). He/she ends up developing a "blasé attitude" (an insensitive way of dealing with one's milieu) in order to survive the overwhelmingly high level of sensorial stimuli (sounds, sights, pace, anonymity, regulated time, multiplicity, monetary and identity pressures) that reach his/her senses as soon as he/she steps into the street (175-8). On the other hand, Simmel finds liberation, reconciliation, and tolerance in the city. In the end, the essay encapsulates the positive, negative, and contradictory qualities of the metropolis. Without mentioning Marx, Simmel appears to indicate a place where Marx's

idea—that dialectical contradictions can bring about social change—can be realized: the city!

Similar to our discussions regarding public and the everyday space, my decision to focus on the city *also* entails using an interdisciplinary method and reading underrepresented texts. However, my main attraction to and reason for researching, writing, and residing in the city is for its potential as an agent of social tolerance. As “social totality is crystallized in miniature in the metropolis,” adding the *urban* to the public and everyday implies the most heightened form of human diversity (Gilloch 5).¹¹ No other place exists where we come into contact with so many inherent social differences and must learn to coexist with them.

The second most important reason for focusing on the city is because the city does something fascinating and unique with time—it provides us with a palimpsest. In our urban milieu we find layers upon layers of time inscribed on the physical materials, in the people, and in their mental images. Like an old chalkboard, time has been written, erased, written, erased; but if we look carefully we can vaguely recognize the way things used to be, and also how and why they exist in the present. The city is an anachronistic juxtaposition. There is no other place where we can study the constant interaction between times, histories, and memories (see figs. ii, and iii, as well as figs. 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8).

¹¹ In this passage Gilloch is referring to one of the reasons why Benjamin was interested in the city. I don’t believe that Benjamin would have wanted us to interpret Gilloch’s use of the word “totality” in this passage through contemporary cultural theory, meaning a type of hegemonic totality or exclusive unification. Benjamin conceptualized the city as physically and ideologically fragmented. As Gilloch goes on to say, “the main themes of this [Benjamin’s] phenomenology of the city are the fragmentation, commodification, interiorization and marginalization of experience (7). In my opinion, Gilloch uses the word “totality” to denote a kind of synthesis.



Fig. ii. Two street signs in the Gothic neighborhood. One reads in Castillian “Distrito 21º Barrio 4º Manzana 3ª Calle de Ripoll,” and a newer one in Catalan reads “Carrer de Ripoll.” Layers of age evident in the degeneration of façade colors and unmatched stones in door arch. Semi-erased graffiti. Megan Saltzman, August 2005.



Fig. iii. A brief encounter: fourth century Romans meet twenty-first century speculators and graffiti artists. Between the ruins and the graffiti-covered wall lies the basement of a new building under construction. Gothic neighborhood. Megan Saltzman, August 2005.

The more all peoples are included in the city, the more this palimpsest becomes free, autodidactic, experience-based, and pluralistic. The city has an inherent pedagogical and sociological function, as seen in Sennet's epigraph above. Yet, as I mentioned in my earlier discussion of Lefebvre's idea about all space being produced and commodified, palimpsests also have dominating creators, headmasters and authors who impart their corresponding ideologies. The city is in need of good students, of readers, to read its history in its space, and to decipher and bring it into the political realm, so that this palimpsest becomes accessible to everyone.

Another valuable reason to study the city as a text is because as the economy globalizes, it localizes hubs in cities, which decreases the political and economic gaps between cities and nations (Castells; McNeill 69). According to Rogers's article "Citizenship, Multicultural, and the European City," northern European cities, in which he specifically names Barcelona, are becoming "new political agents" that are less reliant on their countries, and hence more spatially identified by their city status (286). Studies have argued that cities are becoming the equivalent of nations in providing and competing for employment, investment, patriotism, and citizenship (Castells; Balibrea, "Urbanism" 196; Rogers 288). Balibrea and McNeill add that boosting city pride was one of the key components to early democratic government in Barcelona in order to "become part of a broader community of cities not marked or limited by state and/or national borders" ("Urbanism" 196). This suggests that the growing importance of the city in relation to the nation may be extending to other parts of Europe. I don't believe that political dynamics have reorganized to such a degree that they are being replaced by the city, but the city as a spatial entity is increasingly powerful. For this reason, it needs

to be integrated with issues that are generally addressed within national paradigms, such as governance, citizenship, identity, history, memory, politics, and symbology.¹²

Why have I chosen to focus on the urban in *Barcelona*? The primary reason is urban innovation. Since the medieval walls were demolished in 1854 Barcelona has been collectively conscious and cautious of its cultural identity as a city. This was initially facilitated by an unprecedented influx of wealth coming from the local textile industry and the sugar cane exploitation in Cuba, which triggered a history of immigration. Within this collective identity that was born with the modern city, aesthetics, urbanism, and Catalan nationalism became prominent cultural discourses.

In addition, since the Middle Ages, Barcelona has been fraught with tension regarding central Castilian power. For this reason, there has always been an antagonistic tendency to turn their backs on Spain as a homogenous nation, on tradition, on Catholicism, and on autarky, all of which were imposed on the city several times during dictatorships based in central Spain. Instead, Barcelona, with its location on the Mediterranean Sea close to the French border, has historically looked towards the cultural and economic advances and experiments of Northwestern Europe. All of this has invested Barcelona with a rich and unique legacy of creative and innovative projects in urbanism and architecture, which have been and still are at the forefront of Spanish culture. In this sense, Barcelona could be used to predict urban tendencies in other nearby cities.

¹² For more information regarding the increasing importance of the role that cities play, instead of nations, in determining legal citizenship, see Alisdair Roger's article, page 288.

Finally, while Barcelona shares many similarities with other cities in Spain, many of the ideas I was interested in exploring coincided in Barcelona: urban utopias, neighborhood movements, city image, immigration, as well as political and nationalistic symbology in public space).¹³ Now that we have clarified our spatial focus, let us move on to our temporal focus.

5. Post-Francoist and Deteriorating

I've conjoined my spatial focus with a temporal coordinate—from November 1975, when Francisco Franco died, until June 2007 when the bulk of my dissertation was completed. During this period, Spain experienced an unprecedented and rapid resignification of time and space. After 36 years of a conservative dictatorship characterized by economic and cultural isolation, democratic elections were finally held. The social-democrats were victorious, initiating a transition to democracy. After the death of Franco, much optimism and solidarity flourished for social and political improvement. It was a special time for urbanism—a time when a diverse spectrum of citizens from a variety of classes, professions, religions, and political stances, united under the common belief that, with their participation, public space could be a vehicle to bring democratic change (Capel 30; McNeill).

In Barcelona neighborhood organizations became active, urban culture reclaimed the streets, new public spaces were initiated, and old ones were revived. As Barcelona became more and more integrated into a global economy, it also began to generate

¹³ In the following chapter we will analyze Barcelona's modern history in greater depth.

unprecedented levels of tourism, gentrification, image creation, technological advances, and immigration. All of these resultant characteristics are central to my interest in exploring the historical, ideological, material, and affective consequences that democracy and globalization together have had on public space and urban culture.

I will now elaborate on the historical effects of the period in order to explain why I chose to add “deteriorating” to the temporal frame of my dissertation. The word deteriorating is appropriate because history is disappearing from our collective consciousness—as expressed in the public everyday space. Post-Francoist transformations erased many layers of the city’s past (of the palimpsest or the chalkboard). Since Franco’s death, two general periods of historical erasure have occurred. The first began in the 1980s with the politics of amnesia, the *pacto de olvido*, a collective consensus implemented by politicians to erase the Civil War and the Franco regime in order to peacefully transition to a democracy. In public space, this translated to the removal of all reminiscences associated with the Civil War and Franco (street names, monuments, plaques, etc.).

The second began in the late 1980s and continues to the present with Barcelona as become an important node on the global economic network of cities. The local governments began to prioritize attracting foreign investors and tourists over addressing local needs. As a result, historical buildings were (are) being destroyed and their communities dispersed in order to build upscale housing, offices, shops, and hotels. In addition, the heavy financial investment resulted in an increased police force and the installation of surveillance cameras in public spaces. These actions have not only

controlled the city's image, but also perpetuated historical amnesia, political apathy, privatization, and individualism on the other. And the outcomes have been further strengthened by the general sensorial stimuli of the city and the increasing projection of consumer values.

I also wanted to include the word deteriorating for its connotations of loss, decadence, or the *falling apart of things*. Benjamin lamented the loss of "aura" in mass culture, and Lefebvre spoke of the loss of "oeuvre" in the city ("Work"; Right). Loss encapsulates the postmodern amnesia of history and disintegration of solidarity.

The word deteriorating also seemed accurate because it does not replicate but does evoke some of the theoretical connotations of *fragmentation*. Many cultural theorists who have written on modernity and postmodernity have written about fragmentation: Simmel, Benjamin, the Surrealists, the Situationists International, Jean-François Lyotard, and Fredric Jameson, among others, conceptualize the urban milieu through fragmentation. They concur that, under capitalism, the way we think and create is fragmented because ubiquitous and deceptive agents (such as the state, capitalism itself, the media, and multinationals) project their economically-driven ideology into our everyday culture and space. The agents' ideology is deliberately fragmentary (for example, the *pacto de olvido*) and it affects our cultural and historical understanding. Accordingly, Jameson states that there is a "disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present" ("Postmodernism" 143). Simmel adds, "the past comes down to us only as fragments" (Frisby 57). This is heightened in the city, where fragmentation is concentrated.

I choose not to use the word *fragmentation*, as others have, for two reasons. First, it implies more theoretical connotations than I wish to present due to my focus on practices. Second, visually-speaking, the word fragmentation conveys a coming-apart with clean-cut jagged lines on a singular plane, such as a shattered window lying on the sidewalk. Deteriorating, on the other hand, conveys a more organic, textured and layered coming-apart. For example, we can think of the peeling or crumbling layers of façades or again, the palimpsest and erased chalkboard. The latter is semantically closer to what I want to communicate about Post-Francoist time because the textured multi-layered quality of what remains reflects the *heterogeneous range of our consciousnesses and our resistances* to the forces that break history (or us) apart.¹⁴ Although authorities may break time and space into fragments, organic resistances will remain like shattered glass. In the film En construcció and the novel El pianista I will discuss how small communities and their memories still permeate their original space (the Historic Quarter, Ciutat Vella in Catalan) despite having been evicted from it either physically or symbolically. For this reason, the *falling apart of things* should not be read as a pessimistic or apocalyptic gesture.

¹⁴ In such texts as Postmodernism, Seeds, “Simulacra,” and “Consumer Society,” Jameson and Baudrillard argue that contemporary culture is dominated by a kind of neocapitalist monster that incarnates monumental and absolute spaces (such as large-scale buildings and spaces dominated by video cameras) and people with power (such as police, CEOs, and architects). However, I disagree with their approach because they speak in general terms, disregarding the small and residual spaces that have very little contact with this monster (for example in the periphery of the city, and rural and small town areas), or the spaces that are able to manage to live underneath it (such as homeless people and prostitutes, and their spaces) or deliberately resist it (such as neighborhood organizations and the space they appropriate for protests and meetings). For Jameson and Baudrillard, generally speaking, if this small, organic, or resistant space exists at all, it existed in the past.

The gerund of the word deteriorating was chosen to evoke the temporal concept of a *process*. The process indicates a fleeting nature of time in both our everyday practices and what is deteriorating. By studying time and space through consultation of ephemeral processes, my study lends complexity to the postmodern historical narrative which provides us with holistic and solid ideas (products) about time and space.¹⁵ Marx, Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin, and de Certeau all believed that “the passing moment [of these fragments, deteriorations, everyday practices] was able to capture modernity” and reflect a permeable and imperfect world (Baudelaire qtd. in Frisby 45).

Finally, in our discussion of everyday space, I mentioned that capitalism takes the form of the everyday and that studying this form can give us a better picture of capitalist-based culture and history. I wish to add that since urban dwellers live within fragments of capitalism from Marx’s commodities to de Certeau’s everyday practices, *deterioration*, *fragmentation*, or *any term that expresses separation* also take the form of the everyday. For example, when we analyze marks on a storefront hearth, or a gesture, or the practice of taking shortcuts, we are speaking of pieces of our culture that are usually conceptualized as disjointed. Putting together the previously disjointed results in a different view as well as a sense of the reasons for the disjunction.

¹⁵ Lyotard calls this holistic state-produced consciousness “meta-narratives” (Postmodern). In the following chapters I will explain meta-narratives and explore some examples of them in Spanish history.

6. Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter “Barcelona’s History and Contemporary Image” introduces the historical background of Barcelona from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. It includes a critical explanation of how the city’s contemporary international image is culturally and spatially reproduced and the effects that it has had on historical consciousness. I analyze both everyday cultural products such as tourist magazines, advertisements, and films as well as large-scale urban developments including gentrification, urban renewal campaigns, and the increase of police and video surveillance throughout the city.

The second chapter deals with “spatial tactics” wherein spaces are appropriated temporarily and discreetly to meet basic needs. Drawing from The Practice of Everyday Life by Michel de Certeau, I develop a theory of spatial tactics and support it with examples from Barcelona such as ATM nooks and storefronts used as bedrooms, abandoned lots as recreational areas, flower pots as benches, and construction sites as playgrounds. I derive many of these examples from my on-site observations, Luis Guerín’s film En construcción, Nadja Monnet’s anthropological monograph on Barcelona’s Historic Quarter, and my personal photography. Based on these examples, I argue that uncovering a spatial tactic not only disrupts the city’s illusory image but also reveals the lack of fulfillment of a basic need. Spatial tactics thus possess a unique potential for bringing oppositional discourse to the forefront where political action can be realized.

The third chapter shows the affective results of these spatial transformations. It highlights intellectuals who both criticize postmodern Barcelona and simultaneously

recreate a nostalgic “Old Barcelona” of “the ways things used to be” by evoking everyday spaces such as streets, plazas, cafés, rooftops, markets, tread marks on storefront hearths, and demolished buildings whose original façades are supported by scaffolds. I analyze passages from novels such as Vázquez Montalbán’s Carvalho detective series and El pianista, Xavier Moret’s El último hippy, as well as the essay “La destrucción de Barcelona” by Juan José Lahuerta.¹⁶ Finally, I include both a “photographic intermission” that deals with architectural anachronisms, and a spontaneous interview with Remei, a resident of the Raval neighborhood. The chapter illustrates how the rapid dehumanizing transformations of the postmodern city are producing a nostalgic response similar to Simmel’s blasé attitude, and I show how the cultural market profits from this nostalgia by creating idealized representations of this “Old Barcelona.” In the final analysis, both the market and the intellectuals fortify the reproduction of falsified images of the past, which eradicates any efficacy of the intellectuals’ original critique.

In the conclusion I offer some modest suggestions, based on my research and experience in Barcelona, as to what I believe would need to occur in order to reverse the direction of historical and spatial destruction.

¹⁶ El último hippy is a Spanish translation of the original Catalan novel Qui paga mana.

Chapter I: Barcelona's Contemporary History and Image

In this chapter I will explore the underpinnings of Barcelona's contemporary image as Southern Europe's culture and business capital"—modern, socially democratic, unified, culturally-rich, and peacefully multicultural. But before doing so, I will trace what I consider to be decisive moments in Barcelona's urban history in order to accomplish two imperative objectives for this chapter and the entire dissertation. First, the urban history will show how this contemporary image is a historical and temporal product intimately rooted in local, national, and global cultural tendencies, political tensions, and economic development. Second, tracing the urban history will contextualize the following thematic chapters. I will begin with the mid-nineteenth century and move forward chronologically, bringing ourselves into the muffled vacuum that was the public space of the Francoist city. I will then turn my attention to the Barcelona in transition to democracy and then ultimately to the present-day city, where we will see many of the nineteenth century phenomena revived in *esperpento* fashion.

1. The Turn of the Century

The period between the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the Spanish Civil War (April 1, 1939) contains many urban phenomena and historical continuities, evident in today's image and urban politics. For example, we note the topographical expansion, aesthetic and ideological demarcation of Barcelonese architecture for the Catalan consciousness, an unfulfilled utopia, widespread destruction and construction, as well as corrupt speculation.

If we were to specify a beginning in modern history when the thickest roots of today's Barcelonese culture began to sprout, we would begin with the deadly summer of 1854 when a plague broke out across Spain. The place most devastated was: Barcelona. Barcelona, cramped within its medieval walls at the time, was the most densely populated city in Europe (Epps 151). The walls were maintained much longer than any other European metropolis because of the city's frequent revolts against local, national, and ecclesiastical authority. Conditions within the walls were congested, damp, and unsanitary. Greenery was nonexistent. In Eduardo Mendoza's historical novel La ciudad de los prodigios, he recounts that when the protagonist arrived in Barcelona during that period,

por todas partes vio miseria y enfermedades. Hasta barrios enteros aquejados de tifus, viruela, erisipela o escarlatina. Encontró casos de clorosis, cianosis, gota serena, necrosis, tétanos, perlesía, aflujo, epilepsia y garrotillo. La desnutrición y el raquitismo se cebaban en los niños; y la tuberculosis en los adultos; la sífilis en todos. (33)

That year the average life expectancy fell to 25 years and the rich vacated the city, fleeing to the countryside. The following year, socialist architect Idelfons Cerdà i Sunyer designed an innovative urban plan to sanitize and ventilate as well as expand and

modernize the city. Central and local governments finally approved of Cerdà's plan and authorized the demolition of the disease-infested walls, which resulted in the utopian modern city (Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelones 58; Sánchez and Pomes 209; Epps 150-1; Resina, After-Images 85-6).

During the next two decades, the city expanded in a hexagonal grid from the historic quarter, along the coast and out towards the mountains. It primarily formed the wide bourgeois residential neighborhood of the Eixample, also known as the “modernist neighborhood” for its abundance of elaborate and organically elegant *Moderniste* style homes and elegant façades. The buildings that lined the Eixample would later, with the publicity of the Olympics and the subsequent tourist image, become the modern architectural marvels of the world; and the name of one of the period's architects, Antoni Gaudí, would become synonymous with Barcelona.

Urbanists have often categorized the Cerdà plan as a “garden city” plan (Dizal).¹⁷ The plan, akin to Haussmann's in Paris, was intended to “ventilate” the city and allow for new technology (such as cars and trams), while at the same time gaining control over citizens. Wide boulevards, for example, fulfilled the purpose of ventilating and providing space for new transport, as well as preventing barricade construction and revolts (Vázquez Montalbán 73-4). Further, every street was lined with large shady plane (*platanero*) trees. Initially, each block was to be built up on only three sides, leaving one

¹⁷ The garden city was a utopian style of urban planning that was experimented with in the U.S. and Europe around the turn of the century. The idea was that an egalitarian residential self-contained industrial community surrounded by a green agricultural belt would eliminate the growing negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution in the cities: slums, overcrowdedness, uncleanliness, and poverty. Accordingly, although urbanists today refer to the Cerdà's plan as a “garden city” the term wasn't used per se until 1898 when Ebenezer Howard coined the term by designing and realizing garden cities in England (Fishman).

side and the interior for public green zones. However, with the population rapidly growing and speculation booming, the green zones did not endure (Sánchez and Pomes 211). After of the implementation of the Cerdà plan, the city nearly tripled in size, the real estate market skyrocketed, and the original garden city plan was quickly put aside in order to build on all four sides of the block (Heeren 24; Epps 154).¹⁸

We must consider that urban speculation in general involves renovation or reconstruction, and in most European cities, the problem emerges that, due to lack of space, ultra-high density becomes commonplace. As a result, in order to build something new, something old amongst the two millennia of material history has to be removed. As follows, another connection to urban politics between the nineteenth-century and the contemporary period is the widespread construction and demolition of historic (century-or-more old) edifices. Although the Eixample initially extended into farmland, leaving the historic quarter extant, the plan eventually required an artery to the sea. Hence in

¹⁸ In the novel La ciudad de los prodigios (1986), the author Eduardo Mendoza recreates the following corrupt process of speculation in the second-half of the nineteenth century, a process that, as we will see later, resonates identically with present-day urban politics:

El precio de los terrenos subía mucho de inmediato, porque no hay en Occidente pueblo más gregario que el Catalán a la hora de elegir residencia: a donde uno va a vivir, allí quieren ir los demás. Donde sea, era el lema, pero todos juntos. De esta forma la especulación seguía siempre el mismo patrón: alguien compraba el mayor número posible de parcelas en una zona que consideraba propicia y construían en una de esas parcelas un edificio de viviendas, dos a lo sumo; luego esperaba a que todas esas viviendas estuvieran vendidas y ocupadas por sus nuevos dueños; entonces ponía en venta el resto de las parcelas a un precio muy superior al que había tenido que pagar por ellas. Los nuevos propietarios de estas parcelas, como habían satisfecho por ellas un precio muy superior al valor original, se resarcían de la pérdida por medio de un sistema que consistía en lo siguiente: dividían cada parcela en dos mitades, edificaban en una de las mitades y vendían la otra mitad al precio que habían pagado por las dos mitades juntas. Como es natural, el que compraba esta segunda mitad procedía del mismo modo, esto es, dividiéndola por la mitad; y así sucesivamente. Por esta razón el primero de los edificios construidos en una zona tenía una superficie bastante considerable; el siguiente, menos, y así hasta llegar a unos edificios tan estrechos que sólo admitían una vivienda por planta, y aún ésta sumamente raquíta y oscura, hecha de materiales de calidad ínfima y carente de ventilación, comodidades y servicios. (254)

1908, the historic quarter was cut down the middle in order to construct the Via Layetana.¹⁹

The city began transforming from a less religious and military-controlled milieu into a more cultured and greener environment. The city's prison, Ciudadella, was destroyed and converted into the city's main park. And we mentioned the planting of the *platanero* trees. Spaces in which convents had been burned in the 1835 revolt were turned into cultural centers in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Liceu opera house, the Plaza Reial, and the downtown markets Santa Caterina and Boquería, appeared during this period (Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelonas 67). Also, Las Ramblas began to take on its importance as the city's most diverse and leisurely frequented public space.

The new city, with its lofty green zones and flourishing of public culture, were representative of the general utopian atmosphere that emerged with the expansion of the city. Around the same time, other factors that simultaneously contributed were: the bourgeois revolution; new public spaces for congregation (parks, metro, trams, plazas, fountains), the secularization of the city, the rapidly growing working class, and a swift decline in illiteracy. Further, a significant increase in the study and public visibility of local Catalan history (particularly medieval and Roman) was reflected in the new architecture and monuments dispersed throughout the city during the *Noucentista* art movement (circa 1906 to 1923).

Speaking culturally, and in very broad terms, between the destruction of the walls until the Second Republic (1931-1939), the city hosted a renaissance of Barcelona's most

¹⁹ During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Via Layetana was called Via Durriti after the anarchist leader Buenaventura Durriti.

artistically innovative, creative, and progressive culture.²⁰ The period was highlighted by an abundance of world-renowned artists such as painters Pablo Picasso, Ramon Casas, Salvador Dalí, and Santiago Rusiñol; film director Luis Buñuel; poet Jacint Verdaguer; writer Josep Pla, performer Carmen Amaya; and dozens of architects such as Antoni Gaudí and Lluís Domènech i Montaner. The city also became the home and muse for many foreign artists like photographer Margaret Michaelis, and writers George Orwell, Simone Weil, Georges Bataille, and Jean Genet (Vila-Sanjuán). As stated, literacy was on the rise creating a need for libraries, schools of higher-education, museums, and publishing houses. Many vanguard and surrealist interdisciplinary urban art and architecture magazines appeared such as “Les amics de les arts,” “Troços,” and “Actividad Contemporanea” (Resina, Aeroplano, 31-33). The latter two magazines were affiliated with the emergence of the GATCPAC (“Grupo de Artistas y Técnicos Españoles para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea”). The GATCPAC was an innovative group of architects during the Second Republic (1931-1939) who were experimenting with architecture and urban planning in order to improve conditions in public space (Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelones 118). Also, this period experienced its heyday in street festivals, bars, cafés, brothels, cabarets, theatres, Catalan cultural centers, and “Els Jocs Florals” (an annual poetry contest dating back to the Middle Ages).²¹

²⁰ The bourgeois class and its patronage of art and architecture developed with the influx of capital from an international textile industry and the sugar cane industry in Cuba (with the exception of the “Desastre del 98” when Spain relinquished its last colonies, including Cuba, in the Spanish-American war).

²¹ Many of these artistic and urban-planning phenomena were quite common in nineteenth-century European industrial capitals such as London, Berlin, and Paris. However, Barcelona stands out for two reasons—the collective consciousness and importance given to the city’s architecture, and the tension occurring from the demarcation and fluctuating repression from

Barcelona's international reputation portrayed a city of both architectural innovation (seen not only in the façades of the Eixample neighborhood, but also in the buildings on display for the World Expositions in 1888 and 1927) as well as a city of political protest for its frequent destructive revolts. Barcelona's reputation was also enhanced by the arrival of alluring media technology such as film and photography to package and spread novelties to the masses.²² As many urban cultural theorists have already claimed of the modernist period, the general period fostered an unprecedented collective and utopian urban consciousness, innovation, and solidarity.²³ We can see this in Eduardo Mendoza's historical novel La ciudad de los prodigios:

En Barcelona sobran las oportunidades para quien tiene imaginación y ganas de aprovecharlas. Piense, joven, que no ha habido en las historia de la humanidad época como ésta: la electricidad, la telefonía, el submarino...¿hace falta que siga enumerando portentos? Sólo Dios sabe a dónde vamos a parar. (27)²⁴

Madrid that Barcelona has experienced as a result of not being the nation's federal capital (Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelones; McRoberts).

²² Manuel Vázquez Montalbán writes in Barcelones that Friedrich Engels wrote that Barcelona held the world record for barricade construction) (67). Apart, the following is a list of popular (non-authoritative) and violent upheavals in the center of Barcelona between the mid-nineteenth century to the start of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939): between 1840-1919 working-class struggles provoked a lot of violence, in 1943 citizens tried to unsuccessfully demolish the medieval walls themselves; in 1855 a *huelga general* (general city-wide strike) went into effect; and perhaps the most famous incident—*Setmana Tràgica*: in 1909 a mob broke out burning down 21 out of the city's 58 churches and 30 of the city's 75 convents. A repetition of this anti-clerical violence would reappear during the Spanish Civil War. Further, between 1910 and 1923 over 800 strikes occurred. This tension would culminate and unify to form the Republican stronghold during the Civil War. The Spanish Civil War did not end until the last Republican city, Barcelona, was taken by Franco's Nationalists.

²³ For example, Walter Benjamin, Fredric Jameson, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Brad Epps, Joan Ramon Resina, and David Frisby have all written on the topic of modern urban utopia.

²⁴ Translation: "In Barcelona there are more than enough opportunities for those who have the imagination and interest in taking advantage of them. Think kid, there has never been a time in the history of humanity like now: electricity, telephones, submarines...need I continue naming the prodigies? Only God knows where we're going to stop."

When Franco's troops took control of the city, the unstoppable energy and optimism Mendoza expresses did in fact come to a conclusion. The city wouldn't experience another geographical expansion of the size of the Cerdà plan until the next industrial boom, occurring one hundred years later in the 1960s in the Francoist city. It, too, would attract a wave of emigration, corrupt speculation, utopian ideals, and take technology to an unprecedented level, but the cultural wealth would not be repeated, only revived as a tourist commodity.

2. During Francoism

On April 1, 1939, Franco effectively halted the pace of the Second Republic's modernity, mortally wounding urban culture and condemning it to remain in a philistine coma until the 1960s. Cultural and economic borders closed. The fascistic project in Spain violently restricted the development or influence of any culture that did not conform to Franco's conservative, Catholic, and Castilian hegemony. Information about Francoist urbanism in Barcelona is scant mainly because the Francoist regime limited the use of public space to state-organized political, religious, and sport events, such as official speeches in plazas, Semana Santa and soccer crowds in the streets. For all other occasions, the law that prohibited the congregation of people in public space was in effect. Evidence of culture, festivals, signs—anything linked to homosexuality, atheism, communism, socialism, or dissent—disappeared from the public sphere, the streets. Cultural representations of any spaces—in literature, newspaper, film, or television—were censored.

Since Barcelona represented an economically-powerful antithesis to central nationalism as well as the main Republican stronghold during the Civil War, this control was more strictly reinforced. As Johnston observed, “Catalonia stood for everything they [the Nationalists] abhorred: social revolution, the communist party, the Republic, anticlericalism, cultural pluralism, and regional political autonomy” (43). Accordingly, urban culture associated with the innovative Vanguard of the Second Republic, exemplified by art and literary movements was exiled and/or denied expression.²⁵ The GATCPAC’s projects for public space were deferred, and the People’s Olympics were cancelled. The use and visibility of Catalan language vanished from public sight. The seven major newspapers published in Catalan were shut down as were the Catalan cultural centers. Catalan street names were replaced with Castillian names (Ontañón 241-9; McNeill 144).²⁶ Further, some traditional outdoor Catalan festivals were prohibited such as “Diada Nacional de Catalunya” (Catalonia’s Independence Day), “Els Jocs Florals,” the annual street festivals “San Medir,” “San Mercé,” and the Gràcia

²⁵ The Second Republic organized an international sport festival in Barcelona called “La Olimpiada Popular” (The Peoples’ Olympics). It was politically charged against, and taking place simultaneously as, the Nazi’s 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. However, the Spanish Civil War broke out days before the opening ceremony, and The Peoples’ Olympics was hastily cancelled. (Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelones 123)

²⁶ The Franco regimes also repressed educational institutions. Regional administration of schools was transferred to Madrid or Francoist loyalists, while educators of Catalan language and culture lost their jobs. As Johnston states in Tales of Nationalism, “as part of the campaign to wipe out the Catalan tongue, any use of the language in schools and in textbooks and any references to Catalan history or literature were prohibited. The schools were ‘purified’ by mass dismissals of Catalan teachers and the importation from other regions of teachers loyal to the regime. Local administration of the schools was transferred to the Ministry of Education in Madrid. The Autonomous University of Barcelona was given over to new administration. The Institute of Catalan Studies, founded in 1907, was closed and replaced with the official Spanish Institute of Mediterranean Studies” (30).

neighborhood festival.²⁷ In addition, monuments were immediately torn down, for instance: the monument commemorating Rafael de Casanova (leader of the Catalan independence in the early eighteenth century), the Republican monument to the “Soldado Caído” in Plaza de Catalunya, and the Republican emblem on the Capatania Palace (Rubio).²⁸ The latter was replaced with a Francoist coat of arms, which still remains standing today (Rico).²⁹

As can be imagined, social life, Catalan culture, foreign culture, and political dissent, that remained in the country moved indoors to private spaces. Johnston recounts that the church in Catalonia served as a haven from the police, allowing many oppositional groups to form. These groups often appeared as ostensibly apolitical non-cultural social functions such as “choral societies, dance clubs, music circles, and excursionist or mountaineering groups.” They had sham names such as “Manuel de Fall Circle, the Jazz Club, the Club 49, Young Musicians” and the Excursionist Club of Catalonia (44). Johnston goes on to say that

at a time when Ortega y Gasset had condemned the rest of Spain as “socially invertebrate,” Catalonia had a rich fabric of civic, cultural, and recreational organization. There were excursionist clubs, boy scouts, glee clubs, chorales, Catholic organization, theatre groups, small orchestras, and dancing clubs (44).³⁰

²⁷ The Nationalists did allow citizens to continue dancing La Sardana, the traditional Catalan dance, in public places. Supposedly the reason was because “la danza no atentaba contra la unidad lingüística” (Punzano). Translation: “the dance didn’t threaten linguistic unity.”

²⁸ The changes on the façade of the Capatania Palace are particularly representative of ideological resignification in public space. The Francoist emblem replaced the Republican emblem that had been there since 1931, and the Republican emblem had replaced the monarchical emblem that had been there since the early 1920s (Rico).

²⁹ Also of this nature, in 1928 the Primo de Rivera dictatorship dynamited a large four-columned monument in the Plaza de España because it symbolized the Catalan flag (Huertas 60-1).

³⁰ Literature sketches a picture of what the Francoist city must have been like. Novels such as Carmen Laforet’s *Nada* (1944), Mercé Rodereda’s *La Plaça del Diamant* (1962), Juan Marsé’s *Ronda de Guindardó* (1984), Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *El pianista* (1985), and most recently

As we will soon see, the communities that these private spaces formed, hidden behind religious or athletic façades, would later become fundamental to the political solidarity and revitalization of urban planning that manifested itself, particularly as Neighborhood Organizations, in Barcelona immediately after Franco's death.

By the mid-50s, Franco's technocrats began to open up the economy to reverse the country's path towards bankruptcy. At that time, another wave of employment, immigration, and housing construction poured into Barcelona, all of which would continue to escalate until the 1973 economic crisis. During this economic boom, immigrants settled along the city's coastline, making their own shed-like homes called *barracas*. Speculators, unsupervised and equipped with cheap inhumane materials, constructed blocks upon blocks of cement homes (*casas baratas*) for the poor on the periphery. Many of the neighborhoods were unsanitary, dense, and isolated with no running water, open spaces, public transportation, or greenery. Subsequently, a "red belt" was formed—a Castilian-speaking working class population influenced by Marxist ideas. Due to the deindustrialization of the central historic quarters, red belts were typical of European cities during the 1950s to 1970s (McNeill 61).³¹

This period is known as "Desarrollismo" and "Porciolismo" after the mayor at the time, Josep Porcioles (1957-1973). It was characterized by unregulated sprawl,

the international bestseller *La sombra del viento* (2001) by Carlos Ruíz Zafón, contain scenes of public space in Barcelona the city during the early Franco years. Generally speaking, the reader gets the impression that nothing much was going on in the public sphere during the early Francoist years, the authors portray the streets as quiet, dirty, gray, sutured, hunger-ridden, boring, male-oriented, mysterious but unwelcoming, strict in spirit, and functioning as a place of transit between one private space to another.

³¹ In *Los mares del sur* Vázquez Montalbán portrays an example of one of these red belt towns—San Magín. We will learn more of the political and material aspects of this neighborhood in the chapter on Nostalgia.

laissez-faire construction of peripheral neighborhoods, and pedestrian-unfriendly highways such as Ronda del Mig and Ronda del Dalt (that uprooted thousands and still runs through the downtown splitting the urban fabric) (McNeill 119). These characteristics were representative of urban planning under Franco—a general lack of ethical consideration for the immigrants as well as historic preservation. For these reasons, they also ironically coincide with twenty-first century urban planning in Barcelona.

In hope of better integrating Spain into the European market as well as saving Spain's international face, in the early sixties Franco's technocrats began to loosen the reins on some cultural and economic sectors (this period is known as *La apertura*).³² Subsequently, in Barcelona subtle signs of resistance began to surface in cultural circles. The avant-garde film movement *La Escola de Barcelona* ("The Barcelona School") and the affiliated literary movement *El Gauche Divine*, in which Manuel Vázquez Montalbán and other well-known contemporary Catalan novelists participated, emerged. The two groups were small, highbrow, and replicated by their Castilian-language counterparts (*Nuevo Cine Español* in Salamanca and the novelists of *Realismo Social*). Most likely *La Escola de Barcelona* and the *Gauche Divine* were relatively tolerated by the regime for these three characteristics, but they nevertheless received significantly less subsidies by the central government than their Castilian counterparts (Galt).

A movement that was effective in reaching across cultural capitals, bravely defying the ideological and linguistic censorship of the 60s, was the musical movement called "Catalan Nova Canço." Many of the singers that formed the group (Lluís Llach,

³² Translation: "opening."

Joan Manuel Serrat, Raimon...) performed in Catalan with lyrics that symbolically evoked collective aspirations for cultural freedom and democracy. The most notorious of these songs is “L’estaca” by Lluís Llach. Here is an excerpt from the lyrics:

Siset, que no veus l'estaca
a on estem tots lligats?
Si no podem desfer-nos-en
mai no podrem caminar!

Si estirem tots ella caurà
i molt de temps no pot durar,
segur que tomba, tomba, tomba,
ben corcada deu ser ja.

Si jo l'estiro fort per aquí
i tu l'estires fort per allà,
segur que tomba, tomba, tomba
i ens podrem alliberar.³³

The references in this song are necessarily ambiguous due to prevailing censorship, but they do convey the sentiment that the repressive “estaca,” which will fall if the people

³³ Translation:

Siset, don't you see the pole
that we're tied to?
If we don't untie ourselves
we'll never be able to walk!

If we all pull it'll fall
it can't last long,
surely it'll fall, fall, fall,
it has to be worm-eaten by now.

If I pull hard over here
and you pull hard over there,
surely it'll fall, fall, fall
and we'll be liberated.

unite, is obviously attributable to Franco. The lyrics imply universal emancipation; I interpret them as an urgent call to join together to reclaim autonomy of the streets.

3. 1975 to 1978

In spite of *la apertura*, when Franco died, he left Spain in another economic recession, lagging far behind Western Europe in all sectors except tourism. Unemployment was on the rise and the country was still excluded from the European Union for its recent autarky. Franco had bestowed King Juan Carlos upon Spain, but the king, against his sworn oath to Franco, legalized political parties and began decentralizing political power to the country's seventeen regions. In 1978 a new constitution was written, often referred to as one of the most liberal of Europe. The following year, democratic elections were held and center-right candidate Adolfo Suarez became the interim president.

In Barcelona, on April 3, 1979, the first municipal elections since 1931 were held. The PSC (Socialist Party of Catalonia) won with 33.9%, and Narcís Serra became the city's first socialist mayor, which meant an initial victory for the neighborhood associations as they were most supported by the PSC. In 1982, the PSOE (Socialist Party), easily won the general elections, and Felipe González became president for the next eight years. The socialists' first priority was to rapidly restore modern democratic values—legalized unions, freedom of expression, the separation of the church and the state, recognition of diversity, power of regional autonomies, and universal health care.

When Franco lay on his deathbed, two important Barcelonese figures, the president of the *Generalitat* (Catalonia region government) Lluís Companys, and the anarchist, Salvador Puig, were executed without democratic trials. The Socialists were faced with issues that had been repressed under the dictatorship: the unsolved issues related to the Civil War (1936-39) and the Franco regime (1939-75). What to do with the injustices that had recently occurred? The strategy chosen to both successfully transition into a democratic country as well as integrate into the European economy is known as the *pacto de olvido* and *concenso de silencio*.³⁴ In other words, this approach censored the controversial side of history, specifically: the Civil War and the following years of Francoism.³⁵ While the *pacto de olvido* in Spain is usually considered a phenomenon that affected mass culture (such as film, television, and newspaper), previously-undermined value resides in focusing on *urban space as a cultural text* read by the masses. By so doing, one can see how common public space was also used as a political and ideological tool to silence the past.

After gaining power, one of the Socialists' first actions was to remove reminiscences of the dictator from public space. To avoid public outrage, many monuments (such as equestrian statues of Franco and his regime's symbols that were placed on the façades of state buildings) were disassembled surreptitiously, often during the night (McNeill). In Barcelona, street names that symbolized commemorating famous

³⁴ Translation: "pact of forgetting/oblivion" and "consensus of silence."

³⁵ For more information regarding the erasure of historical memory during the transition to democracy in Spain see Aguilar Fernández's *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española*; Cardus i Ros's "Politics and the Invention of Memory" (19); Moreiras Menor's *Cultura herida*; Richards's "Collective memory, the nation-state and post-Franco society" (44); and Vilarós Soler's *El mono del desencanto*.

figures and dates of Falange's history reverted to their original Catalan names commemorating famous figures and dates of Catalan history (Vázquez Montalbán, Barcelones).

In November of 2007, the current social-democratic administration of president Luis Zapatero enacted the *Ley de la Memoria Histórica* which mandated that all Francoist reminiscences be eliminated from public space in Spain. The law

insta a las administraciones públicas a tomar las medidas oportunas para la retirada de escudos, insignia, placas y otros objetos y menciones conmemorativas de la exaltación personal o colectiva de la sublevación military, de la Guerra Civil y de la represión de la cultura.³⁶ (“Sant Joan”)

However, the law contains ambiguous exceptions. For example, the state requires approval for “aquellos [monumentos] que sean de recuerdo privado, y que tengan un valor arquitectónico y artístico-religioso, protegidos por Ley” (“Barcelona todavía”).³⁷

We can be subjugated to one of these exceptions at the end of the Ramblas, where they intersect with Passeig del Colón. There stands a large Francoist coat of arms on the façade of the Capitanía Palace that reads “Una, grande y libre.” According to Narcís Serra (socialist Minister of Defense between 1982 and 1991), the symbols have not been removed because the emblem forms “parte sustancial de la ornamentación del edificio” (Rico). Some sculptures also remain from the dictatorship: “La Victoria, obra de Federic Marés, en la plaza de Joan Carles I, el monumento a José Antonio Primo de Rivera, en la

³⁶ Translation: “[the law] urges that public administrations take opportune measures to dismount coats of arms, paraphernalia, plaques and other objects and commemorative mentions of the personal or collective exaltation of the military uprising, the Civil War, and cultural repression.”

³⁷ Translation: “those monuments that are private, that have architectural and artistic-religious value, protected by law.”

avenida Josep Tarradellas, o el del grupo Carlos Trias, en la calle Artesanía” (“Barcelona todavía”).

Shortly after the *Ley de Memoria Histórica*, another initiative was taken to remove an ubiquitous reminder of the dictatorship—the plaques depicting the Falange’s symbols (arrows and yoke) that appear on the façades of public housing constructed during the regime. An article published in April 2008 states that in Barcelona alone, a total of 4,361 plaques still remain (“Sant Joan”).³⁸

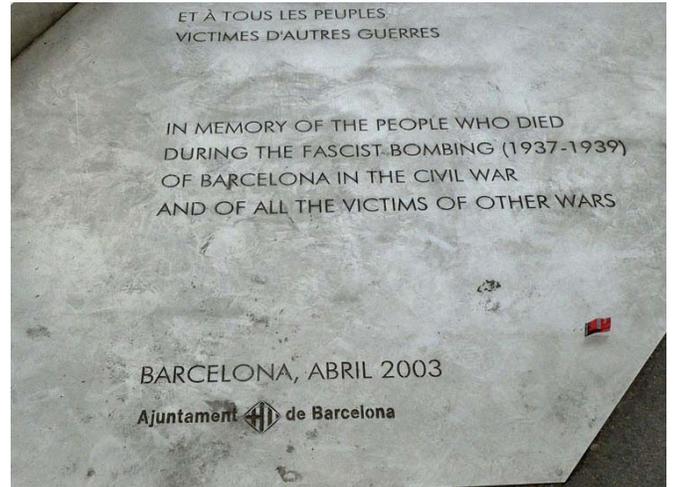
In the Gothic Neighborhood an everyday space from the Civil War/Franco era still exists that has yet to be eradicated. It has no doubt endured because of its qualities as an everyday space, which don’t convey with any official iconography. Lost amongst the dark narrow and winding streets lies the small, bright, and quiet Plaça de Sant Felipe Neri. Flanking the plaza is a church whose lower half reveals what could be interpreted as deterioration, but is actually deep splinters. Urban legend tells us that it was against this wall that Republicans were lined up and shot during the Civil War. Conversely, historical evidence has revealed that in January 1939, the Nationalists dropped a bomb on the plaza killing 42 people who had taken refuge in the basement of the church (see fig. 1.1).

³⁸ The website <<http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/11694/0/simbolos/franquistas/madrid/>> compiled an exhaustive list of Francoist monuments and street names that exist in Spain at the time the article was published. However, Barcelona doesn’t appear on the list.



Fig. 1.1. Children play ball in the historic plaza of Sant Felipe Neri. Megan Saltzman, March 2005.

Another component of the *pacto de olvido* reflected in urban space was the replacement of Francoist monuments with an unprecedented abundance of new and abstract monuments designed by foreign artists. These have been criticized for eschewing politicization or what Balibrea calls the “politics of amnesia” (Balibrea, “Urbanism” 190). Since the past was being silenced, the few commemorative monuments that were constructed are located in discreet locations. For example, with the exception of the sculpture on Gran Via (a central location), Roy Shifrin's “David and Goliath” sculpture commemorating the International Brigade is located by a highway in the northern district of the Carmel neighborhood (fig. 1.2 and 1.3). Beth Galí's monument commemorating the victims of the Civil War is located at the Fossar de la Pedrera, which is tucked away at the quarry beneath Montjuïc. (With the latter, it does make conceptual sense that the monument is located on Montjuïc as this was the location where Republicans were executed and thrown over the cliff).



Figs. 1.2 and 1.3. Sculpture and plaque (in Catalan and English) erected in 2003 (nearly 30 years after the fall of the Franco regime) by the *Ajuntament* commemorating the victims of the Nationalist bombings in Barcelona. I haven't been able to find the artist's name. Photos courtesy of Albert Rubio Martínez, August 2007.

It's evident that historical ignorance perpetuates political apathy, consumerism, and a diminished sense of collective memory. However, the media and academia have not discussed to what extent eliminating these historical—albeit fascist—monuments form part of the *pacto de olvido* and hence, are counterproductive to creating a democracy.

4. Born Again Urbanism

The death of Franco brought urban planning back into the spotlight, reinvigorating and amplifying urban policy (specifically what was called the PGM—*Pla General Metropolità d'Ordenació Urbana*) of 1973 with grassroots participation. Important factors in creating a modern and democratic image abroad—initially based on collective approval at home—were urban planning and public culture. Pasqual Maragall (mayor of Barcelona during the fundamental transitional years, 1982 to 1997; member of the PSC; and perhaps the most important figure associated with post-Francoist Barcelona) reflected this ideology of the early democratic years in his maxim: "La mejora del espacio público es relevante para la resolución de los problemas económicos y sociales" (Capel 30).³⁹

The primary agent of the Post-Franco period in channeling the voices of city inhabitants for better living conditions has been the Neighborhood Association (FAVB, *Federació d'Associacions de Veïns de Barcelona*). Many citizens united by their opposition to the Franco regime were coalescing underground and gaining strength. In 1971 they were allowed to officially surface (McNeill 64).

Upon Franco death, the resistance which was already organized was ready to fight for change. In fact, 70 days after his death, the group reclaimed the streets in mass protest for the first time in nearly 36 years demanding not just "llibertat, amnistia" and "estatut d'autonomia," but also urban reform (McNeill 121).⁴⁰ Subsequently, with public funds, and in spite of the economic crisis, local urban planners and architects worked

³⁹ Translation: "Improving public space is relevant for solving economic and social problems."

⁴⁰ Translation: "Freedom, amnesty" and "statute of autonomy."

closely with the grassroots neighborhood organizations and were able to better the urban fabric with inexpensive small scale interventions.

The FAVB's main objective was to improve conditions in public space. Construction regulations were established to decrease density and to limit the height of buildings. In addition, streets were re-illuminated with new lampposts, more subsidized housing was created, the Porcioles periphery was beautified, and the Mull de Fusta ("Fusta Port") was cleaned. Cultural centers ("*casales*") were opened in every city district, and street festivals were revived. Of utmost importance was resurrecting old open spaces and creating new open spaces. This was realized by recovering the interiors of *manzanas* in the Eixample as well as creating small parks, *zonas verdes*, out of abandoned industrial space, and *plazas duras* (McNeill 144, Capel 86, Borja and Muxi 173).⁴¹

Foreshadowing the policy to come, an exception exists to this small-scale urban policy of the early 1980's. In the mid-nineties several blocks were demolished in the Raval in order to build the Plaça dels Angels as well as the main cultural agency—the MACBA (Museu d'Arte Contemporàni de Barcelona). The construction of the MACBA was the first major event that was to transform the Raval topographically and economically from a lower-income dilapidated neighborhood into an upscale gentrified community. This wide, smooth, and gleaming white building, enhanced and contrasted by the spacious and dark plaza below, was designed by the internationally-known American architect Richard Meier. Today (twenty years later), by means of razing old buildings and displacing the local population, a conglomeration of new and renovated

⁴¹ *Plazas duras*, literally "hard plazas," are simply and inexpensively made out of a sheet of cement. Sometimes they accompanied by benches and/or small trees.

buildings has surrounded the MACBA—costly–boutiques, cafés, gentrified apartments, art galleries, another contemporary museum (the CCCB, Centre d’Arte Contemporani de Barcelona), and most recently the University of Barcelona’s new Department of Geography, History and Philosophy.

Stephane Heeren, who advocates Barcelona’s historical preservation in the most comprehensive book on the topic, La remodelación de Ciutat Vella, claims that, in regard to the historic quarter, Franco ironically left it in an *advantageous* situation, “arquitectónicamente casi intacto” (Heeren 12). We shall now see why he would make such a claim.

5. 1986 to 1992

The communal effort and urban politics of the early democratic years took another turn in October 1986. That year Spain became a member of the European Union and Barcelona was chosen to host the 1992 Olympics. Urban policy began to accommodate large-scale projects, incorporating private and foreign investments, architects, and urban planners. With the arrival of the postmodern global economy, urban space began to drastically transform. A split began to grow between citizens and the *Ajuntament*. This occurred largely because many political activists (having gained trust in the new government or wanting to cash in on the opportunities that the Games would bring) left the neighborhood associations (such as Oriol Bohigas, Minister of Urbanism of the *Ajuntament*) (McNeill 111).

With funds from the IOC (“International Olympic Committee”), the national government, the *Generalitat*, and the *Ajuntament*, the entire city underwent construction in preparation for the games. The *Ajuntament* and *Generalitat* considered the Games to be an exciting opportunity to boost the economy and to re-define Barcelona’s image. The city continued urbanizing the periphery (particularly Montjuïc, Vall d’Hebrón, Diagonal, Poble Nou, and the Gloriès area) and embellishing public space (L. Moix). Along the coast, Mare Magnum (a generic mall-and-pier for tourists) was constructed while the *barracas* and the small seafood shacks (that Vázquez Montalbán’s Carvalho loved so much) were demolished. Between 1987 and 1994, 2.5 million square meters (1,553 square miles) of *zonas verdes* were added to the city (47 Capel). In the 1990’s, an impressive number of public sculptures—500—were installed in public spaces across the entire city (137 McNeill). Many were designed by internationally known Western artists, such as Frank Guery’s “Pex” and Rebecca Horn’s “El río de la luna.”

In addition, communications and transportation was improved. A modern television tower designed by Santiago Calatrava’s (well-known Valencian architect) was erected on the top of Montjuïc; the airport was expanded; the three major highways were completed; and a half dozen metro lines were extended. Also, several facilities for the games were built such as hotels (some on public land); Villa Olímpica to house the athletes; and facilities on Montjuïc such as a stadium, an Olympic-size swimming pool, and the Sant Jordi Palace (McNeill 128). Further, new regionally-funded art centers were established in the historic quarter. Adding to the already popular MACBA and recently renovated Picasso museum, the sixteenth century building that houses the Santa Mònica Center of Art on the Ramblas was renovated, and the Fundació Tapies was established in

the Eixample. Adjacent to the new MACBA, the Casa de Caritat, an eighteenth-century building in the Raval was turned into the CCCB.⁴²

As a result of the Games was that unemployment dropped 7% (Ciutat Borja). However, the disadvantages seem to outnumber the advantages. After the Games concluded, the city had a debt of a billion pesetas (L. Moix). Further, since that key 1986 date, the population of Ciutat has been steadily decreasing as locals were and are not able to afford living downtown. A consequence was that the Olympics served as Barcelona's full initiation into the postmodern global network economy. We will soon see the repercussions of this.

In order for the Games to be carried out smoothly, the same tactic used to successfully transition to democracy was used—political consensus with a futuristic vision:

To stage the games successfully would require a lot of co-operation between old and new orders. The mayor [Pasqual Maragall] knew that the successful establishment of Spain as a constitutional democracy required the Left to moderate their demands and work diplomatically with the so-called *poderes fácticos*, the powers-that-be such as the army, monarchy and capital. (McNeill 42)

For example, the new democratic government voted for Joan Antoni Samaranch, the Minister of Sports during the Franco regime, to be the president of the IOC. As McNeill mentions, the same was happening on the left as “many of those urbanists—politicians, architects, planners—who had been at the forefront of the anti-developer, anti-Francoist resistance in the BCN of 1970's, were now carrying out many of the [Olympic] projects” (McNeill 42). The figure most associated with the Post-Francoist city, Pasqual Maragall,

⁴² The Casa de Caritat was originally an eighteenth-century almshouse that was abandoned during Francoism.

is often called “Porcioles with an Olympic shirt on” for his neocapitalist approach to governing the city (McNeill 142) (see fig. 1.4).⁴³

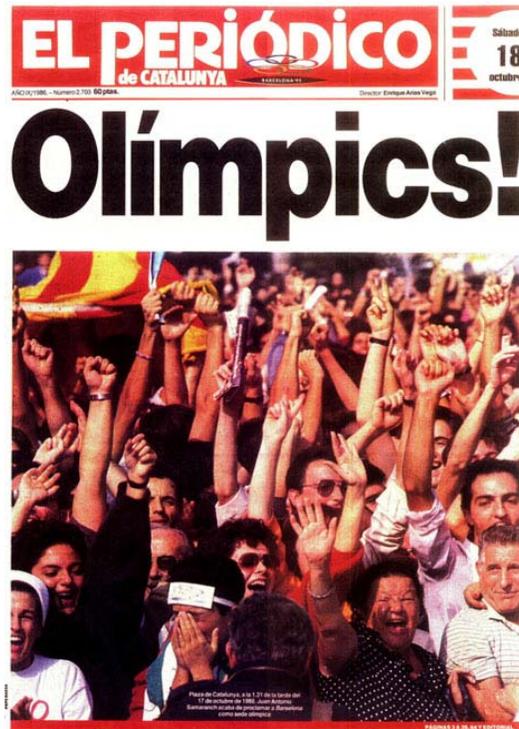


Fig. 1.4. Locals react euphorically upon hearing the news that their city will receive two weeks of international media attention. From the cover of the El periódico newspaper, October 18, 1986.

The Olympic phenomenon was not entirely new; Barcelona has a history of international events. The city hosted two world fairs in 1888 and 1929; it was about to host the People Olympics in 1936 when the Civil War broke out; and Porcioles unsuccessfully pursued hosting the Olympics and the World Expo in 1982. A

⁴³ Seen in a national perspective, Barcelona was not the only city in the international spotlight in 1992. That year Seville held the World Expo and Madrid received the “European City of Culture” award. Further, 500 years after the discovery of America, the “reconquest” of Spain, and the expulsion of the Jews, King Juan Carlos made a public apology for the latter. Altogether, 1992 was the year that Barcelona and Spain, however much they demarcated themselves, showed the world their ability to “participate fully in the international community after decades of isolation” (McNeill 74).

fundamental difference that separates the international events of the modern period from those of the postmodern period is that, in the latter, the international events have been utilized “as an excuse for urban transformation in times of crisis and economic recession” (Balibrea, “Urbanism” 206).

This false reasoning was demonstrated not only by what happened during the preparation for the Olympics, but also during the 2004 “Forum.” The Forum (the Universal Forum of Cultures) is a new international event that takes place every four years in a different city in order to promote “cultural diversity, sustainable development and conditions for peace” (from its mission statement at <www.barcelona2004.org>). Barcelona hosted the first Forum in the summer of 2004; and once preparations began, so did strong criticism. The Forum, which cost the city 3.2 million euros, has been accused of being another Olympic-size excuse to gentrify the lower-income post-industrial Poblenou neighborhood (where it took place). Further, some argued it was a waste of public funds (58% of funds were public) to attract private investment and local consumption under the mask of promoting open cultural exchange.⁴⁴ Administrators have also been mocked for promoting an egalitarian mission to realize and hide contradictory urban projects. Manuel Delgado, professor of Urban Anthropology and political activist in Barcelona, highlights the events neocapitalist and apolitical function beneath the image of “cultural diversity.” For him, the Forum is “una diversion en que la

⁴⁴ Some more reasons why the Forum has been highly criticized are: the high prices of tickets for some events, having raised the cost of living in Poblenou, having received money from patrons who financially support the war in Iraq (Coca-cola, Endesa, Indra, La Caixa), and for being highly selective in the type of organizations and speakers who were allowed to participate in the “open” dialogues and exhibits. For more information on criticism of the Forum, see Blanchar’s “El látigo de la indiferencia,” Delgado’s [La otra cara del Fòrum de les cultures](#), and the websites <www.espacioalternativo.org>, and <www.indybarcelona.org>.

pluralidad cultural se verá reducida a una pura parodia destinada al consumo de masas y a la buena conciencia institucional” (“El gran”).⁴⁵

6. The City’s Image

Aesthetics, visual culture, especially visual representations of the city have played a central role in developing Barcelona’s post-Francoist economy, tourism, history, memory, and identity. As the global economic network establishes hubs in cities, a totalizing image of the city has increasingly become a fundamental marketing tool. Resina in Iberian Cities acknowledges the “enormous investment in image production” as a result of the “consciousness of this power [of the city] and the desire to capitalize on it are” (xxi). However, this marketing strategy obviously prioritizes global capital over local demands and needs, and as a result, turns the city into an international business.⁴⁶

As former mayor Pasqual Maragall admits himself:

[e]n sentit estratègic, podríem dir que les ciutats són com empreses que competeixen per atraure inversions i residents, venent a canvi localitzacions avantatjoses per a la indústria, el comerç i tota mena de serveis. (Resina, Iberian Cities)⁴⁷

Accordingly, as we have seen, Barcelona boomed in the service sector and uprooted industry from the downtown area in order to replace those areas with services for the managerial and tourist class (Borja and Muxi; Balibrea, “Urbanism”; McNeill).

⁴⁵ Translation: “a leisure event in which cultural plurality will be reduced to a pure parody destined to mass consumption and good institutional conscience.”

⁴⁶ I am referring to the city here in whatever holistic form we can attribute to it.

⁴⁷ Translation: “in a strategic sense, we could say that cities are businesses that compete in order to attract inversions and residents, coming to exchange advantageous locations for industry, commerce, and all types of services.”

Barcelona was about to become the focus of an international spotlight and the Olympics were the perfect opportunity to realize this internationally marketable image, breaking with the fascist and Castilian identity that Franco had imposed on the region. Formulating the postmodern image has not simply meant providing the mass media with visual information of what is marketable—its canonical art and monumental architecture. After all, Barcelona has been doing that since the nineteenth century with tourist magazines, books, posters, postcards, international expositions, photography, travel logs, etc.

Rather, the *Ajuntament* and *Generalitat* had, as never before, opted to project the city's image onto a much more ubiquitous platform, one that would reach a larger audience beyond tourists and art historians. This platform includes everyday public space. Today, *everything* in public space is a vehicle and accomplice for marketing the city's image and forming our urban consciousness—plazas, streets, façades, markets, street signs, street furniture, public transportation...etc. Also reproducing the city's local image around the globe are all the facets of everyday technology—television, blogs, Google Earth, music, photography, and film. In the end, the image reaches everyone who, in one way or another (virtually, mentally, physically...), comes in contact with the city.

Ubiquitous, multifaceted, ever-changing, and subjective—the city's image is not easy to approach and re-represent. What does this image ideologically consist of? I will explain the image in general terms and then examine some concrete representations. This image, identity, or model, packages Barcelona as Southern Europe's cultural and business capital—modern, socially democratic, unified, culturally-rich, well-planned

urbanistically, and (most recently) peacefully multicultural. To illustrate, let us begin with two straightforward and general non-fictional representations of the postmodern city. The first comes from the “tourism” section of the internet’s most popular website for information regarding Barcelona (the *Ajuntament*’s website). On this webpage, one’s attention is drawn to the multicolored animated banner that flashes the following message (see fig. 1.5):

La Barcelona que us espera és...acollidora, progressista, sostenible, solidaria, íntima, inquieta, innovadora, històrica, estimada, dinàmica, verda, mediterrànea, moderna, moderna, moderna, dialogant, cosmopolita, diversa, calida, blava.⁴⁸



Fig. 1.5. Three frames of the flash (format) advertisement from the *Ajuntament*’s website. (Please note the horizon of Barcelona replicated in each image, as we will be referring to this when we discuss “totality.”) <www.bcn.es>

The second comes from the chapter “Modern Spaces: Building Barcelona” by American cultural theorist Brad Epps. Epps writes that Barcelona is the

darling of architects, artists, and urban planners, pride of nationalists and internationalists, site of world’s fairs and Olympic games, of workers’ movements and bourgeois pleasures, of medieval memories and modern projects. (xvii)

Benjamin, Debord, Baudrillard, Jameson, and Resina postulated that capitalism converted contemporary images and representations into phantasmagoria and spectacle (“Work”; Society; “Simulacra”; “Postmodernism”; After-Images).⁴⁹ Hence, given that

⁴⁸ Translation: “The Barcelona that awaits you is... welcoming, progressive, sustainable, unified, intimate, bustling, innovative, historical, loved, dynamic, green, Mediterranean, modern, modern, modern, dialoging, cosmopolitan, diverse, warm, blue.”

⁴⁹ Baudrillard, for example, wrote that in public space the lines are blurred between what we believe to be “true” and “false”, “real” and “imaginary” (“Simulacra” 171).

images barely represent reality nowadays, I will dissect the messages of these general representations *less* for the sake of determining to what extent they reflect or verify reality, and *more* for the sake of illuminating their political and economical underpinnings. By underpinnings I am referring to the motives, agencies, and social relationships not implied in the image itself, but that lie beneath it, constantly reconstructing and re-signifying it.⁵⁰

Let us first look at these underpinnings within the concept of multiculturalism in the city's image. Dialectic, diverse, progressive, unified, international, and "modern, modern, modern;" together these qualities form a rhetoric of peace, the same rhetoric that was used in preparation for the Olympics as well as the 2004 Forum (see fig. 1.6 and 1.7). Since immigration began to boom in Barcelona about a decade ago, the cityscape of Barcelona does in fact appear multicultural. In Barcelona, more than any other city in Spain, immigrants, tourists, students, conference participants, and business elites from all over the world share a common space. While the rhetoric embodies humanitarian values worth promoting (especially urgent in an increasingly multi-ethnic city), the problem is that it is not genuine. It merely reflects political and economic opportunism.⁵¹ Immigrants face everyday xenophobia regarding employment, housing, and legal

⁵⁰ For more information on the deceptive significance of visual mass culture see Baudrillard's essay "Simulacra and Simulations" or Jameson's essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." Or for more classic texts, see Debord's Society of the Spectacle, Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" or The Arcades Project.

⁵¹ Delgado, in El gran circo de las culturas, adds that "El 'multiculturalismo' en Barcelona es la imagen que al día siguiente publicaba la prensa, de unos policías cargando como un venado recién abatido a uno de los inmigrantes acampados." Delgado is referring to an event that occurred in Barcelona on August 16, 2001. While preparations were under way for the "multicultural" Forum, the police force shut down a metro station, enclosed themselves around and arrested a group of 200 homeless immigrants ("El gran"; "La policía").

attention. Any examination of the correlations between ethnicity, income, and geographical residence in the city reveals the ethnic inequality and precarious nature of the city. This xenophobia has been escalating since the immigration boom began in the late 90s (Imaginary; Sanz; INE, “Encuesta”).⁵²



Fig. 1.6. Olympic peace advertisement from El periódico newspaper. October 18, 1986.

⁵² A newspaper article entitled “La precariedad en la ciudad” states that while the economy in Barcelona has been better than ever, the number of people requesting help from *Càritas*, the city’s main charity organization, which is also Catholic, has escalated by 29% from 2004 to 2007 (Sanz). (The article doesn’t mention if the increase in seekers could be due to an increase in publicity or locations of the organization.)



Fig. 1.7. The 2004 Forum poster depicting different hands coming together, an explicit symbol of the multiculturalism and tolerance the administrators said the event was to promote.



Fig. 1.8. Shown here are the front and back sides of a bookmark I found in the Gràcia neighborhood in the summer of 2005. As mentioned earlier, the Forum was to represent peace and tolerance. Here we see the humanitarian

Forum logo (two hands coming together) showing its other side—a shopping bag, surrounded by minuscule commodities and the words “Barcelona, la millor botiga del mon” (“Barcelona, the best store in the world”)!

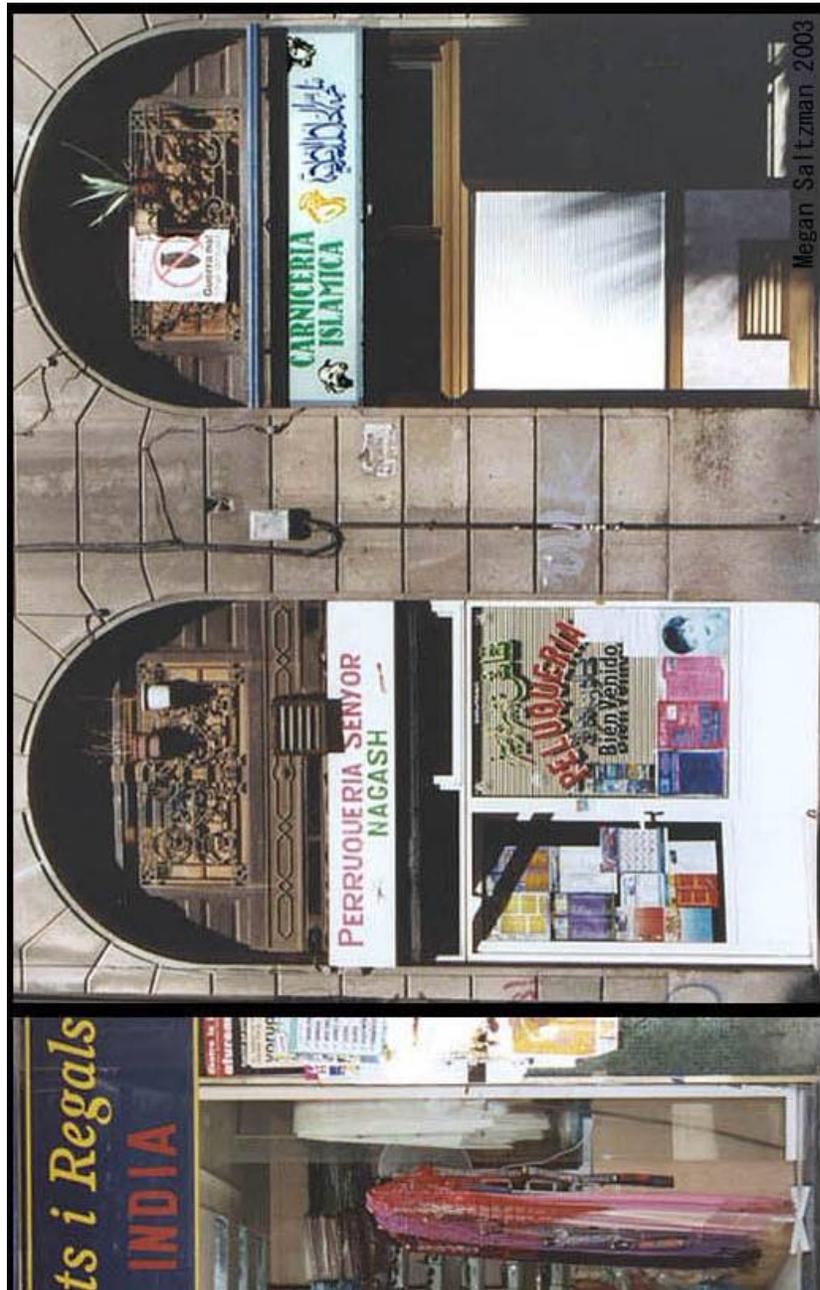




Fig. 1.9. A juxtaposition of three different façades around the west end of the Raval neighborhood that depicts the mesh of cultures. Megan Saltzman, 2004.

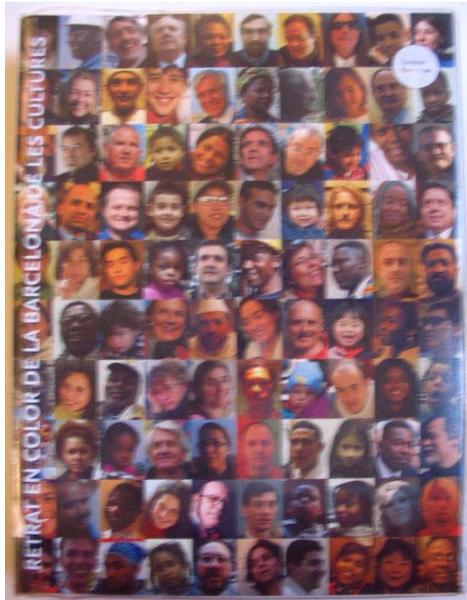


Fig. 1.10. The cover of the book published by the *Ajuntament* titled Retrat de la Barcelona de les cultures.

Now I'd like to discuss the concept of "modern" represented in the *Ajuntament*'s ad and Epps's passage. The varying definition and theorization of the word "modern" as well as the concept of modernity complicate the analysis of *Ajuntament*'s and Epps's reference to the "modern." To begin, we must consider that the City Council and Epps are directing their discourse to different audiences. While the *Ajuntament* flashes the word "modern" before the websurfer, Epps paraphrases the concept for intellectuals.

In the case of the online advertisement, the definition of "modern" no doubt is the common one of popular culture, meaning innovative and non-traditional. To market Barcelona as innovative and non-traditional demarcates itself from the rest of Spain as well as Spain's Francoist past, both of which contain traditional associations. It can also be read as an attempt at demarcation in the sense that "modern" suggests something *different* amongst homogenizing tendencies. As cities globalize and look uniformly

similar, a city that is innovative comes across as containing something new, something different, an interesting surprise in store for those who come to Barcelona.

I have included Epps's description of Barcelona because Epps, with sarcasm, provides us with the representative image that many foreign contemporary intellectuals possess. Epps extracts images from Barcelona's most well-known period (the mid-nineteenth century up until the end of the Civil War), which we have already discussed—political unrest, world fairs, and a flourishing of bourgeoisie culture.

Neither of these presentations is correct or incorrect. Rather, what is important to take from these representations, and what we will continue to see throughout this chapter, is that the city of Barcelona, from interrelated historical and cultural sources and for a variety of motives and audiences, is constructed as “modern,” within the ambiguous definition of the concept.

Barcelona coincides with other cities around the globe that are dealing with immigration and adopting strategies to attract tourism, the business class, and foreign investments. As Jansson says:

there emerges a certain globally shared formula for what is representative and what is not, implying that most metropolitan centres today offer much the same mixture of events, fairs, heritage buildings, ethnic restaurants and so on. One might say that the intensified exchange of capital and culture generates global ensembles of urban diversity and specificity-ensembles which are not so place-specific after all. (qtd. in Balibrea, “El modelo” 8)⁵³

The results of this global formula are obviously homogenizing; and homogenization doesn't sell to the international customer who wants something more than familiar comfort. Further, homogenization doesn't allow cities to compete with one another. In

⁵³ Balibrea is quoting page 472 of André Jansson's “The Negotiated City Image: Symbolic Reproduction and Change Through Urban Consumption,” from “Urban Studies,” Vol. 40, n. 3 (2003).

order to lure consumers and compete globally, the image must appear to be “place-specific” no matter how unoriginal and similar it is to other cities. As Kevin Lynch points out in the first chapter of The Image of the City, this “distinctiveness” is one of the variables of the formula for a successful city image (5). Similarly, Križnik writes in Forms of Local Resistance: No al 22@: “in the struggle among cities to put themselves on the world map, particular local historical and cultural distinctions are thus becoming an ever more decisive factor for spatial arrangements of the global capital” (12).

Spain was aware of the importance of marketing distinction as early as the mid-1950s when Franco’s technocrats promoted the country’s motto “Spain is different” to lure tourists to the coast (Gies 1). Today, simply marketing a country for tourism is insufficient within an economic network of globally-connected cities that transcends national borders and differences (Capel; M. Castells). Thus, the two most prominent (and interrelated) qualities that the *Ajuntament* appropriates to demarcates the city are “Catalan-ness” (qualities that stand out as Catalan as opposed to Spanish) and architecturally-rich.

First, in regard to the former, demarcating a city with one nationality presupposes negotiation with the ethnically pluralistic population. In Barcelona this implies negotiation between the Catalans (defined generally by their knowledge and preference to speak Catalan) on one hand and everyone else on the other hand, for instance—Barceloneses who don’t identify as Catalan, immigrants from other parts of Spain, international immigrants (primarily Moroccan, Pakistani, South American), gypsies, and tourists. If not clearly and visually identifiable as “the other,” the cultures of “the others” could interfere with packaging Catalan characteristics. The decision to include Catalan

nationalism in the city's image entailed a national and economic risk, adding fuel to the fire of the never-ending debate on national identity.

The most effective strategy for promoting the city's Catalan qualities derives from the enormous funds spent by the *Ajuntament*, and especially the *Generalitat*, to re-introduce the Catalan language into every aspect of urban society. This included Catalan studies, institutions (for example, the Ramon Llull Institute and the Institut d'Estudis Catalans), education (Catalan is the mandated language in public schools), television, radio, editorials, and street signs.

We can also see active Catalan chauvinism and tension between Catalan and Spanish nationalisms during the Olympics. Before the Olympics, for example, many full page advertisements were published in national newspapers around the world that reflected anti-Spanish sentiments. I recall seeing an ad in the New York Times. Under a map of Spain the ad asked "Where is Barcelona?", and on the next page the ad read "In Catalonia." Also, during the opening ceremony of the Games, members of the audience waved signs and t-shirts reading "Spain is not Catalonia" and booed the king Juan Carlos (Costa). And supposedly, when the king and queen of Spain were introduced on stage during the opening ceremony, to their surprise, the national anthem of Catalonia—*Els segadors*—began playing on the loudspeakers (Delgado, "Agorafobia").⁵⁴

In spite of the events at the Olympics, the City Council has tried to be as profitable as possible, and over the years this has required taking a stance and creating an image that encompasses the spectrum of open and closed stances on nationalism.

⁵⁴ In addition, a famous photo supposedly exists in which the son of the *Generalitat's* president, Jordi Pujol (1980-2003), is wearing one of these shirts while running alongside an athlete holding the torch (Costa).

Maragall was aware of this, and for this reason, one of his main objectives as mayor (1983-1997) was “to become part of a broader community of cities not marked or limited by the state and/or national borders (Balibrea, “Urbanism” 197). In my opinion, the chosen stance and image are purposely ambiguous and moderate. They provide discourses that are both open-inclusive-multicultural and closed-exclusive-Catalan.

Returning to the Olympics, in spite of the tensions, overall there was political consensus and this open nationalistic stance was manifested. We already mentioned that political parties united to stage the Games. Another example is that during the opening ceremony both Catalan and Spanish flags were waved and anthems were sung (McNeill 42).

No doubt this balancing act between open and closed stances on Catalan nationalism was influenced by the longstanding rivalry and compromise between the *Ajuntament* and the *Generalitat*. The *Ajuntament* has been in the hands of Maragall and the PSC which, especially during the years under Maragall, pushed for a more inclusive identity. Conversely, the *Generalitat* has been in the hands of the CiU (“Convergència i Unió,” center party of Catalan nationalism) from 1980 to 2003 (under Pujol’s presidency) and has promoted Catalan nationalism (Megías; Balibrea, “Urbanism” 196).⁵⁵

This inclusiveness goes beyond contemporary politics. Location and a long history of immigration and political tension with central Spain have associated Barcelona with social tolerance. Since the Middle Ages when Catalonia functioned as a powerful and independent empire, Barcelona’s location close to France has brought employment, immigration, and culture from afar. This paved the way for many waves of immigration

⁵⁵ Pujol and the Generalitat have had more success promoting their Catalan nationalism in the city of Gerona (Megías).

and cultural advances (from artistic to scientific), forming the “cultural pluralism” that Franco “abhorred.”

Wanting to promote its economy and compete with central Spain, or at least serve as an oppositional alternative, Barcelona opened its doors to foreign cultures and immigration. While local discrimination existed between old and new populations in Barcelona, historian Hank Johnston, in referring to the twentieth century, maintained that political parties overall welcomed immigrants in Barcelona, denominating them “Catalans by destiny” (43 and 2).⁵⁶ The following passage written in 1998 by Barcelonese writer Nuria Amat in her essay “La ciudad de las palabras” reflects this vision:

somos catalanes, exiliados, turistas y emigrantes, de todo un poco. Heterodoxos, en suma. En esencia, algo desenraizados. Turistas de luna y paraíso interno. En Barcelona no hay bandera, no hay himno, no hay ejército [sic!]. Es un país literario, una tierra de siesta y acogida, una ciudad profunda y soñadora.” (Resina, Iberian Cities xviii)⁵⁷

It is obvious that Amat idealizes the city, as she exaggerates the positive qualities and excludes the negative. The “somos” implies Anderson’s unified imaginary community,

⁵⁶ Hank Johnston writes in Tales of Nationalism that “in Catalonia immigrants were given the exalted label, “Catalans by destiny” and that “the [Catalan] nationalists welcomed the participation and support of “Catalans by destiny” into their political parties (2).

⁵⁷ This quote comes from Resina’s introduction to the book Iberian Cities. He criticizes Amat for being “an example, among many others, of this new attitude born of wealth and a complex postfascist syndrome” (Iberian xviii). In my opinion, Resina’s inclusion of Nuria Amat in this “postmodern mythography” that “celebrates Barcelona’s political languor and its conversion into a never-never land of dreamy enjoyment, a sort of European Isla Mujeres or Disneyworld of the South” misleadingly represents her as reactionary (xviii). He decontextualizes her words from her other works. Although Amat speaks generously of Barcelona in the above quote, she has written and published many important fictional writings that critically advocate gender equality, antiviolence, and recovering historical memory erased under Francoism and the succeeding transition to democracy. See, for example, her outstanding short story “Casa de verano” in Mujeres al alba or her interview and universality manifesto written with other leftist activists, writers, and philosophers in “The Barcelona Review” (Amat, “Entrevista”).

and, as we discussed with the image of multiculturalism—that *somos* does not exist. However, less obvious is that the *Ajuntament* has transformed the city’s current immigration situation into a component of the city’s image—that of being peacefully multicultural and integrated, which merits a checkmark for the requirement of “ethnic restaurants and so on” that Jansson mentions above (qtd. in Balibrea, “El modelo” 8). Perhaps Barcelona’s long history of open-door immigration policy has facilitated the acceptance of the *Ajuntament*’s recent promotion of Barcelona as a multicultural city. (Nevertheless, given the rise in historical amnesia, the idea is certainly questionable.)

We have seen the political consensus formed during the transition to democracy, with the Olympics, and with the effort to construct a nationally-neutral image. The projected multiculturalism can also be considered yet another component of the *Ajuntament*’s postmodern strategy for creating an imaginary community, consumerism, and an apolitical consensus. Delgado calls this strategy a “pràctica del ‘bon rotllo’ permanent” and it “contrastava frontalment amb realitats socials dures” (Delgado, Elogi 28).⁵⁸ With the words “progresista” and “dialogant,” the City Council’s advertisement boasts that Barcelona is a city of progressive dialogue. Conversely, when business globalizes and citizens becomes more apolitical, dialogue between the government and local communities weakens. In fact, Delgado, degrades the function of today’s Barcelonenses to mere “extras de la pel·lícula” (the city being the set, the government being the director) (qtd. in Ricart). Further, “diversity” is translated to expensive ethnic gastronomical options in the historic quarter (Delgado, Elogi 28; Ricart).

⁵⁸ Translation: “the practice of a permanent ‘good atmosphere’ which greatly contrasts with the hard social realities.”

Now let us discuss the second place-specific difference—that of the city’s architecture. Compared to other cities, Barcelona is fortunate in its wealth of turn-of-the-century painting, sculpture and architecture. Even before the mass production of the city’s image, Barcelona’s fortuitous circumstances provided a locale for several Barcelona-specific artists including Picasso, Dali, Joan Miró, and Antoni Gaudí, who were already internationally famous. It follows that, in order to attract tourists and upper-income residents, the local government and private sectors (contractors, businesses, and real estate agencies) have capitalized on the city’s art history, turning it into a cultural mecca. Of key interest have been the modernist architecture (late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries), contemporary architecture, and cultural activities and venues (museums, cultural centers, conferences, libraries, cinemas, cafes, bars, restaurants, and galleries). Antoni Gaudí has been packaged as the city’s mascot and his *trencadis* (mosaic of broken tiles) design as the city’s logo.

Three other projects implemented by the *Ajuntament* that have fortified the image of turn-of-the-century architecture are the campaign “Barcelona, Posa’t guapa,” the catalogue titled “Catàleg del Patrimoni Arquitectònic Històric-Artístic del Centre Històric de Barcelona,” and the tourist route called “Ruta Modernisme.”

Since 1985, the city has spent 38 million euros (60 million dollars) on the campaign “Barcelona, posa’t guapa” (“Barcelona, get pretty”) (<www.bcn.es>). The objective of this campaign is to restore and embellish façades and public places around the city. The campaign has been widely critiqued (in blogs and by urban cultural critics such as Balibrea, Heeren, and Capel) for having given wide preference to the Eixample neighborhood, and its restoration of the Modernist façades (see fig. 1.11).



Fig. 1.11. A poster from the Barcelona *Posa't guapa* campaign. The poster depicts a modernist façade and states that the campaign is for “our buildings,” encouraging collective confidence, approval, and participation in an imaginary city. Image taken from the *Ajuntament*'s website.

Second, the other medium through which modernist buildings have been favored is the contentious catalogue that the *Ajuntament* published in 1987 in order to protect buildings considered “*patrimoni cultural*” from demolition. Of the wide variety of centuries and styles of buildings in the city, nearly all of the selected buildings that have won this title are the modernist ones in the Eixample neighborhood that in one way or another reflect the turn-of-the-century bourgeois culture and history (see fig. 1.12).

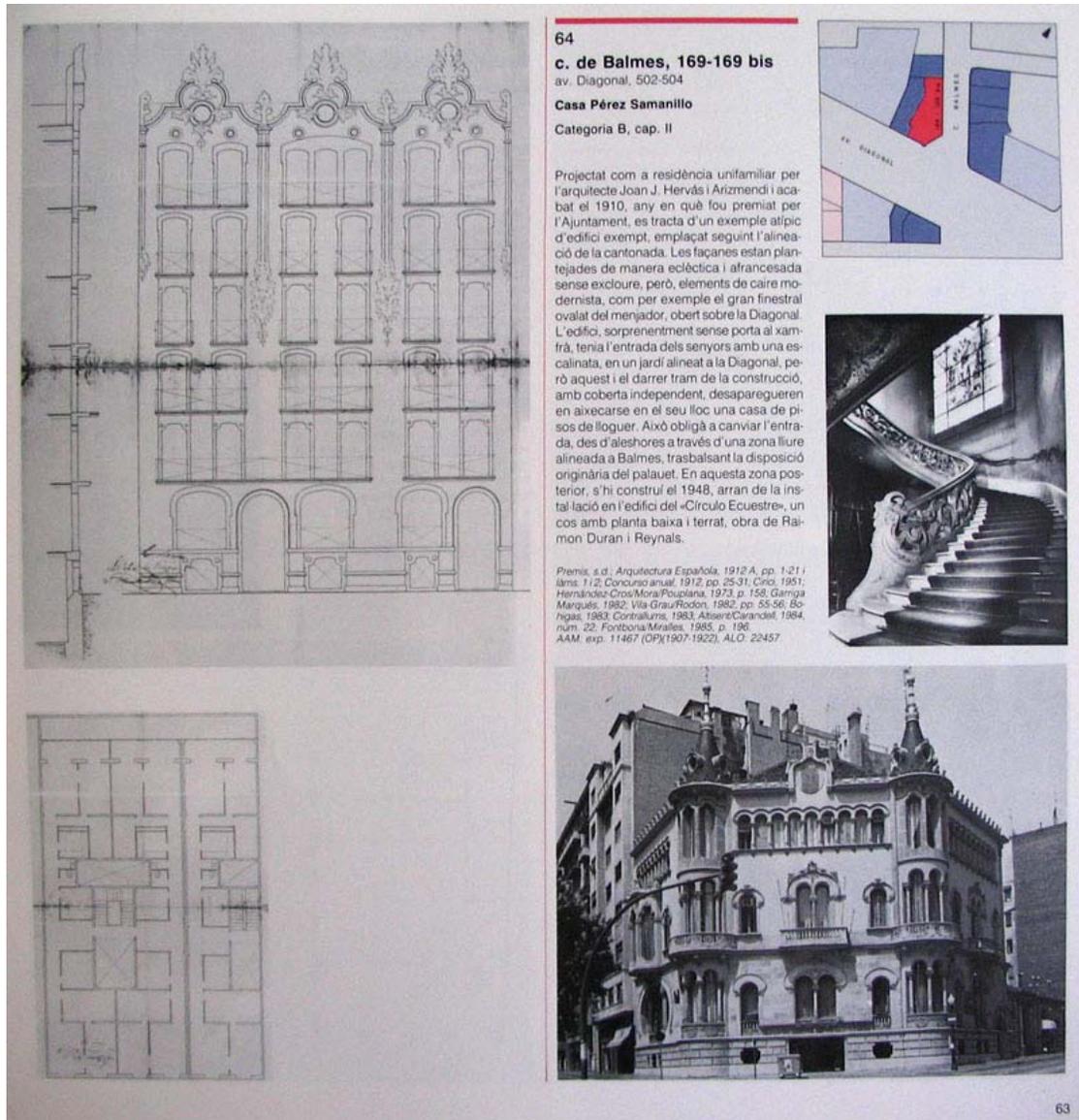


Fig. 1.12. An page from the *Ajuntament's* selective inventory of buildings in downtown Barcelona that are officially protected from demolition. Here we see the modernist building that stands on the corner of Balmes and Diagonal. The inventory highlights the building's floor plan, location, patrons, and (bourgeoisie) history, a justification for its conservation. Image courtesy of the CCCB.

Third, in the last decade, the *Ajuntament* and the *Diputació* (government of the greater metropolitan region) have created different architectural *rutes* (“routes”) for tourists throughout the city. The most popular one is the *Ruta del Modernisme* (“Modernism Route”). Streets highlighted in pink mark the route on the *Bus Turístic*

maps. These correspond to red circle plaques that are embedded into the sidewalks. (see fig. 1.13).



Fig. 1.13. The red circle embedded in the sidewalk reads “Ruta del Modernisme.” Megan Saltzman, August 2005.

The obvious problem with focusing only on the modernist buildings is that it writes and maintains a unilateral view of history. All periods and classes possess, or possessed, a space worthy of saving. But, the campaign, the catalogue, the *Ruta del Modernisme* maps and plaques together strengthens the history of only one class of only one period—the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century. In the meantime, they demolish historical factories, brothels, *barracas*, and all the historical narratives they tell.

The modernist hyping of Barcelona can also be seen in another cultural medium, one not financed by the local government. Pedro Almodóvar’s film All About My Mother was produced by his state-subsidized production company (El deseo). The film, which won an Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 1999, presents Barcelona as a stunning,

kaleidoscopic, and somewhat pretentious background for the plot—a city of modernist and art deco architecture on the Mediterranean.

Barcelona is introduced to us from the air—a breathtaking evening aerial shot from the mountains over the sea with the city lights glistening below (see fig. 1.14). Interestingly enough, in several scenes the characters are placed in front of a modernist and/or retro background in public (and private) spaces—in front of the Sagrada Familia, a modernist pharmacy, the Palau de Mùsica, Casa Ramos, and Manuela’s and Rosa’s mother’s flats (see fig. 1.15). In fact, a unique pattern emerges in these mise-en-scènes. Almodóvar initiates several scenes with an anthropomorphized and seductive shot (glance) of a modernist building. The camera is inclined upwards, looking up at the building, and subsequently the lens slowly moves down its façade and then zooms out, conjoining the protagonist with the architectural background. The Sagrada Familia, the Palau de Musica, and the modernist building, Casa Ramos in the Plaza de Lesseps, are all filmed this way. As can be imagined, All About My Mother has been criticized by urban cultural critics (such as Quintana i Morraja and Balibrea) for having “fet més per la promoció turística de Barcelona que totes les campanyes de la Generalitat i el Ajuntament alhora” (Quintana i Morraja 126).⁵⁹ If we revisit the website ad above—“welcoming, progressive, intimate, bustling, innovative, historical, dynamic, Mediterranean, modern, cosmopolitan, diverse, warm, blue”—Almodovar’s and the regional government’s representation of Barcelona align themselves quite

⁵⁹ Translation: “done more for Barcelona’s tourist promotion than the *Generalitat* and *Ajuntament* combined.”

harmoniously.⁶⁰ In any case, the film highlights more than just monumental spaces. Some realistic representations exist in the film that the *Ajuntament*'s excludes from its image, such as a plaza in which immigrants are cohabiting, and also the María Cristina campground (slightly outside of the downtown area) where prostitutes and transvestites engage in sexual services.



Fig. 1.14. Still from All About My Mother. An aerial view of the city from the Collserola side of the mountains.

⁶⁰ In spite of the film conforming with the *Ajuntament*'s image, I love this film for its ingenious photography, kitsch color schemes, and vibrant portrayal of the city. For me the kitschness of the modernist and retro architecture and interior designs are a vibrant and original setting to place the melodramatic tongue-and-cheek plot and vulnerable characters. And while it may not be the best film to vindicate marginalized space, it does vindicate other social issues, such as gender and sexuality.



Fig. 1.15. Still from All About My Mother. Columns of the Palau de Música modestly glisten behind Manuela as she tends clothes on the balcony.

All About My Mother is one of many films that represent Barcelona's modernist architecture. Other examples include Antonioni's, The Passenger; Whit Stillman's WASP-conservative, Barcelona; Cedrick Klapisch's, The Spanish Apartment (2002); and Catalan director Ventura Pons's, Food for Love (2002).⁶¹

However, many films have been produced in the last two decades that represent the *non*-Modernist side of Barcelona, in some cases purposely aspiring to break with the modernist imagery. To name a few: Marta Ballebò-Coll's independent film Costa Brava, Montxo Armendáriz's Cartas de Alou (1990), Jo Sol's Taxista ful (2005), Joaquim Jordà's De nens and Monos como Becky, and José Luis Guerín's En construcció. These non-conforming films often achieve less visibility due to their low-budget, small-scale, and use of the Catalan-language. They are usually limited to a local

⁶¹ To come next year is Woody Allen's latest film Vicky Cristina Barcelona being filmed in Barcelona and Bilbao as we speak/read.

and/or Catalan-speaking audience. This monetary and ideological split leads us to conclude that an interesting correlation exists between the size of a film budget and its conformance to the *Ajuntament*'s marketable representation of Barcelona.

Barcelona has also boosted an artsy image in the last decade with an abundance of international conferences and events, such as the 2004 World Forum and the music festivals Sonar and Grec. In addition, the local governments are biannually sponsoring dozens of events around the world, in Spain, and especially in Barcelona for Barcelona-affiliated artists. For example, 2002 was the international year of Antoni Gaudí, 2004 was the year of Salvador Dalí, and 2006 was of Picasso. While the *Ajuntament* (and the real estate agencies) continue to market the city and its neighborhoods for their artistic cachet, the image is increasingly false because independent artists along with their art are being forced to flee downtown Barcelona due to of the escalating production costs and inability to prosper. As I heard the independent media artist, Valentín Roma, say at a 2005 conference entitled “Repensar Barcelona—Recuperar la Ciutat,” “What local artist can compete with something like the Forum? A three million euro cultural event?”⁶² Further, photographer and documentalist, Eva Megías, resident of the Raval neighborhood since 2001, wrote me on January 30, 2006:

los agentes inmobiliarios y el mundo del arte trabajaban juntos para aburguesar un barrio. En el Raval, cerca del Macba, están surgiendo unos locales cuyas actividades tienen relación con el Arte. Sobre todo en la calle Lleó. Según el libro esto no es más que una estrategia para atraer a compradores de clase media-alta, para darle al barrio un aire bohemio. Después de los 5 años de contrato barato por

⁶² In a talk by Valentín Roma titled “Barcelona y sus infraestructuras artísticas.” July 8, 2005 at the Centre Civic Pati Llimona. These are not Roma’s exact words, but my translation of an idea that he repeated several times.

ej. 500€/mes, los agentes inmobiliarios suben el alquiler a 2500€/mes para que las galerías de arte desaparezcan, una vez cumplida su función.⁶³

While the *Ajuntament* capitalizes on the artistic component to formulate the city's image, the small-scale art market, if not uprooted for lack of money, is increasingly controlled by regulations imposed by “sign-up sheets”, video cameras, street cleaners, and an expanded police force. For example, in order to perform in public, street artists are required by the new *Civisme* law to sign up for specific times and locations.

In addition, on a micro level, this aesthetic strategy tries to highlight historical-architectural differences between neighborhoods. Or as Križnik aptly stated in Forms of Local Resistance: No al 22@, “global capital is becoming more interested in local heritage, shamelessly appropriating the local imaginary for its own purposes and profits, creating in this way “themed” localities” (8). Hence, for example, the Gothic Neighborhood is known for its ostensibly medieval Gothic architecture, symbolized by the main cathedral, gargoyles, grey stonework, and narrow streets. However, these characteristics did not originate several hundred years ago, but rather in the early twentieth century. At that time, the Neo-Gothic style re-emerged with the *Modernisme* movement following in the footsteps of the French Gothic Revival and Medieval restoration movements in the mid-nineteenth century. Along with the Born, these two neighborhoods have been highly gentrified in the past two decades. As a result, with the exception of a few churches and the city's cathedral, little remains in the Gothic

⁶³ Translation: “the real-estate agents and the art world were working together to gentrify the neighborhood. In the Raval, close to the Macba, new artistic places are emerging. Especially on Lleó street. According to the book, it's nothing more than a strategy to attract middle-class buyers, in order to give the neighborhood a bohemian feel. After a cheap five-year contract, for example, 500 euros a month, the real-estate agents would increase the rent to 2,500 euros a month so that the galleries would disappear once their mission was accomplished.

neighborhood that is authentically “Gothic” in style or from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. On the same note, now that the Eixample neighborhood has been packaged and promoted for its Modernist architecture, it appears that the Barceloneta is being gentrified into a “Havanita” theme for its Caribbean style balconies, color, humidity, sun, restaurants (“HBN BCN Havana Barcelona”) and location adjacent the beach.

Creating neighborhood themes has also required that the *Ajuntament* preserve buildings that are not in the official catalog. For example, the factories and chimneys of working-class areas have been retained and highlighted. Križnik and Balibrea separately mention that the *Ajuntament* created an “industrial theme” out of the Poble Nou neighborhood on the spur of the moment, when they decided to preserve the remaining factories and chimneys after previously implementing plans to demolish them (Križnik 49, Balibrea, “Urbanism” 190). A couple of chimneys have similarly been preserved in the Raval and Paral·lel, neighborhoods.

Urban theorists critique the preservation of these chimneys as hypocritical since the connection with the original occupants is completely severed. The chimneys serve the new population as, what Lynch calls “landmarks” and what Balibrea shrugs off as a mere “logo[s] of a shopping mall” (83, “Urbanism” 191). They have been converted into empty and anachronistic symbols of a distant past.⁶⁴

In the end, we have an architectural theme park, neighborhood to neighborhood, I’d call them—Gothicland, Havana Island, Industrial Majesty, Raval Epcot Center. It is

⁶⁴ This superficial preservation of chimneys reminds me of what the architect Jean Nouvel in The Singular Objects of Architecture calls “embalming.” He is referring specifically to the preservation of historical façades during the demolition of the medieval neighborhood of Paris during Haussmannization (44). In the last chapter on Nostalgia, we will discuss a case of this embalming in Juan José Lahuerta’s essay “La destrucción de Barcelona.”

Baudrillard's Disneyland simulacra applied to the city par excellence. Soon they will just need a trolley.

The Ajuntament and private speculators also support another style of architecture, one that does not fit into the thematic single-neighborhood paradigm we've thus far discussed and that has been appearing since preparations for the Olympics began.⁶⁵ This style is the postmodern and contemporary; and it is dispersed through out the entire city. It is implied in the *Ajuntament's* ad with the adjectives "innovadora," "cosmopolitana," "dinàmica" and, again, "moderna." Horacio Capel, in *El modelo Barcelona*, comments that Barcelona is "deseoso de estar a la última moda" (88). So far, it has succeeded in doing so, keeping the city aesthetically competitive and turning it into a display of the world's hottest names in twenty-first century architecture. Richard Meier, Jean Nouvel, Frank Ghery, Rem Koolhaas, Santiago Calatrava, and Norman Foster have all planted their signature in Barcelona.⁶⁶ Manuel Delgado, urban activist and professor of urban sociology at the Universitat de Barcelona, writes:

Barcelona és una model o millor una *top-model*, una dona que ha estat entrenada per romandre permanentment atractiva i seductora, que es passa el temps maquillant-se i passant-se guapa davant del mirall, per després exhibir-se en una pasarel·la destinada a les ciutats-fashions, el més in en matèria urbana.⁶⁷ (*Elogi* 17)

⁶⁵ For now, I am limiting my reference to postmodern and contemporary architecture to the large-scale, multi-million euro buildings and monuments designed by internationally famous architects (as opposed to *all* buildings constructed in postmodern period).

⁶⁶ An announcement was made on September 18, 2007 that the famous English architect Norman Foster will redesign Camp Nou (Barcelona's main soccer stadium). This 250 million euro project will be Foster's second massive structure in Barcelona. (His first is the Collserola television tower that hovers over the city.) ("El mismo").

⁶⁷ Translation: "Barcelona is a model or better yet, a top model, a woman that has been trained to remain eternally attractive and seductive, that spends her time putting on make-up and getting pretty before the mirror, so that afterwards she can display herself on the runway destined for fashion-cities, the most *in* in urban material."

It is unfortunate that the vane and superficial seducer happens to be female, but the point remains that of vanity and superficiality. The postmodern buildings shown below are noticeable for their color, unusual form, large size and also because they are free-standing (as opposed to attached to other buildings). Heeren and Capel criticize these buildings for shattering the harmony of the city's fabric (see figs. 1.16 to 1.18).



Fig. 1.16. The “Torre Agbar” and its disharmony with the surrounding urban fabric. Designed by the well-known French architect Jean Nouvel and inaugurated by King Juan Carlos September 2005.
< www.torreagbar.com >



Fig. 1.17. On the left is the “Torre Mapfre” (1992) designed by Madrid-based firm Iñigo Ortiz & Enrique León. In the middle we can see the Hotel Arts (2004) designed by the Chicago-based firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. On the right is Frank Gehry’s “Pex” (1992) sculpture. The three structures are adjacent to the nineteenth-century Barceloneta neighborhood which flanks the coast and was obliterated and urbanized for the Olympics and is currently (2007-8) the newest target of gentrification. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_Arts>



Fig. 1.18. I call this “the spaceship building.” It belongs to Telefónica and is located in the Eixample neighborhood at Mallorca with Viladomat. It looks like it’s made out of plastic. Megan Saltzman, July 2006.

While the city “has chosen to disseminate the political-symbolic meaning projected by its cultural space in multiple architectural projects,” other Spanish cities are beginning to tout their wealth and modernity with a singular brand-named contemporary building (Balibrea, “Urbanism” 196). That is, Madrid has the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and the new addition to the Prado, Bilbao has the Guggenheim museum, and most recent, is Valencia’s Centre de les Artes. If the designer trend continues, as is inevitable as more cities want to compete economically on the international network of cities, we can anticipate more large-scale designer construction (and demolition) in the cities that can best afford it.

Meshing with the architectural component of the city’s image is the applauded title that Barcelona has been given by European architects and urban planners: “The Barcelona Model” (mocked by dissidents as “the Barcelona brand”) (Balibrea, “Urbanism”). This title resulted from the post-Francoist projection of the positive aspects of Barcelona’s urban projects and history, particularly the drastic urban transformations the city underwent in the 80s and 90s and the city’s wealth in big-name architecture. When one refers to the Barcelona Model, they are referring broadly to successfully progressive, modern, and investment-productive urban planning strategies (Capel; Balibrea).

A component of the Barcelonese image that is not mentioned in the *Ajuntament*’s online ad is its promotion of the city as Southern Europe’s business capital. We can trace this business orientation back to the early democratic years, specifically 1982, when Mayor Pasqual Maragall, known for his nationally-inclusive and neo-capitalistic approach to governing, became mayor of the city. Although he fervently believed in the

humanitarian potential of the metropolis, he welcomed the pressures of a global economy. As a result, leftist groups have criticized his governing for having watered down the socialist goals of democracy. In so doing, he enhanced the city's places of consumption to accommodate international business. For example, he revived Porcioles's Ribera Plan ("Plá de la Ribera"), which had been rejected through protests in the 1870s, and favored the deindustrialization of the downtown area, converting it into a service and office sector. Similarly, he transformed Tarragona street in the Eixample into Barcelona's "Wall Street" (McNeill; Balibrea)

In the summer of 2005, I found two public artifacts that display this consumer value of the city's image. The first are garishly large, bright-orange signs in the Gothic neighborhood that welcome you in three languages and depict bright-red shopping bags that spell out "Barna Centre Barri Gotic." The second object was the bookmark, mentioned earlier, that depicts hundreds of little commodities and reads, "Barcelona, la millor botiga del mon" (see fig. 8). From the above, it would appear that the *Ajuntament* conceptualizes the Gothic Neighborhood as a Mall and that the entire city is "The Best Store in the World." Evidently and unfortunately, the city's name is being equated to a commodity more than ever, truly becoming a "brand" and what Delgado calls "un parc del consum i per al consum" (*Elogi* 10) (see fig. 1.19 and 1.20).



Fig. 1.19. Cucurulla Street, or, Gothic Neighborhood Mall. Megan Saltzman, August 2005.



Fig. 1.20. The Barcelona brand. Stenciled graffiti on a façade in the Raval. Megan Saltzman, July 2006.

This combination of both business and cultural components construe what urbanists call the “quality of life” factor (Križnik, M. Castells). For over five consecutive years, Barcelona takes the top position offering “the best quality of life in Europe” (Križnik 16).

7. Totality

In 1960, Kevin Lynch wrote a book about the concept of spatial legibility in the city in his classic Image of the City. According to Lynch, people form “mental maps” of their geographic orientation of cities by prominent landmarks, monuments, boundaries, and leisure, residential, and industrial districts. His book describes how and why we form these mental maps in order to provide urbanists with new proposals to humanize the city. What did Lynch discover about our mental maps of space? He noted that we strive (in theory) to conceptualize and (in practice) acclimate ourselves within holistic, clear, and unified images of our cities, because we fear disorientation and the unknown.⁶⁸ Hence, a successful image provides the inhabitant with a sense of legibility, security, reliability, functionalism, and sustainability (9-10).

Balibrea, in 2001, arrives at similar conclusions about the characteristics of the urban image (unifying and simplified). However, unlike Lynch, she provides her analysis not as an aid to urban planners, but rather to critically point out the image’s economical power, dissimulated hegemonic construction, and its danger in creating social exclusion and political consensus:

Totalizing visions of the city provides the citizen with a single, overall representation of it: an image claiming to embrace everything, or everything that matters, with no shadows, no fissures, no dissidences, these being represented as an innocuous pluralism. (203)

Accordingly, the *Ajuntament*, akin to advertisement companies, deploys holistic images of the city for political and consumer consensus, and as a response to our

⁶⁸ Jean-François Lyotard in The Postmodern Condition and Fredric Jameson in Postmodernism and Seeds of Time suggest that this fear of disorientation exists as one of the “conditions” (disorienting, decentered, and fragmented) of our postmodern experience and culture. In the last chapter on nostalgia we will explore how this condition triggers a nostalgic desire for the past.

vulnerability for secure, legible, and intelligible wholeness. This strategy resonates with Jean-François Lyotard's notion of meta-narratives—those totalizing ideals that the state created for nationalistic, political, and historical purposes during the Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century (The Postmodern xxiii-xxiv). If the idea of totality during modernity was to normalize differences, than the idea of totality in postmodernity is to market these differences. In spite of the difference of a century, the state still creates meta-narratives, but today the ends are more economic (as opposed to political or historical). Also, nowadays the meta-narratives are ideologically circumscribed within a city (as opposed to a nation) (Balibrea "Urbanism"; Capel; Jameson, Postmodernism). Beneath the city image or consciousness lies an attempt at totality, an attempt to persuade us that their representation is a reliable enclosed fact of its own. This ubiquitous constructed truth suggests a kind of *real-life* all-inclusivity.

What does a totalizing vision of the city look like? Thus far, three totalizing visions of the city have been presented: the internet banner's depiction of the skyline of Barcelona (fig. 5); the opening scene of the Barcelona chapter of All About My Mother (fig. 13); and in the introduction to this dissertation, which describes the tourist depiction of Barcelona, from the mountains to the sea. By comparing these three images to the other images included in this dissertation, it becomes apparent that the former visions knit a safety blanket of holistic images and mental maps for the conventional viewer. In addition, I don't think that Lynch's and Balibrea's theories imply that *all* images depict totality. We could, for example, browse through any tourist book and find close-up images of singular spaces. However, state-produced and/or state-subsidized images of cities do assure that a pleasing and totalizing image fills the urban imaginary.

Contrary to the totalizing image, Lynch adds another component to the desirable city image:

there is some value in mystification, labyrinth, or surprise in the environment. [. . .] This is so, however, only under two conditions. First, there must be no danger of losing basic form or orientation, or never coming out. The surprise must occur in the over-all framework; the confusions must be small regions in the visible whole. Furthermore, the labyrinth or mystery must in itself have some form that can be explored and in time be apprehended. Complete chaos without a hint of connection is never pleasurable. (5-6)

Although Lynch's book was written nearly 50 years ago and primarily addressed North American cities, this formula applies in its entirety to the post-Olympic urban planning strategies in Barcelona. While Barcelona is represented as totalizing, rational, and orderly, it is also represented as safe and spontaneous. The *Ajuntament* has created a buffer, or pockets of free space, where "mystification, labyrinth, or surprise" in "small regions of the visible whole" are possible.

In Barcelona, we can see this "mystification" in the well-maintained glittering relief sculpture on the façades in the orderly Eixample. We experience the "labyrinth" in the intertwining streets of the Gothic neighborhood and the Born. The "surprise" we find in the entertaining street shows on Las Ramblas and Port d'Angel. These examples give us the sense of an uninhibited relationship with public space. But where Lynch stops and Balibrea begins is that the relationship is just simulacra. What increases the adrenaline in the tourist who has found something "off the beaten track" is nothing more than a spectacle being monitored by surveillance cameras, street sweepers, and policeman, who increasingly monitor and sterilize the façades, streets, and street shows. They, along with

the cameras, cleaners, and police, are what make or allow them to glitter, intertwine and entertain.⁶⁹

Finally, returning to Balibrea, who states that giving the appearance of safe spontaneity in the city creates and sustains:

a democracy without politics—that is a democracy of consensus—in which confident and passive citizens, mute with satisfaction, place themselves in the hands of ‘políticos gestores [para que] se encarguen de brindar toda la prosperidad, felicidad, paz y estabilidad posibles.’ (“Urbanism” 205)⁷⁰

The danger of this hegemonic or singular representation of progress is that it purposely and discreetly “denies the existence of what is not made visible: undesirable spaces and subjects” (“Urbanism” 205):

The constant tributes paid to the city’s beauty have helped to distract the attention of visitors and citizens alike from other fundamental, much less satisfactory, issues: employment, housing, public transport, or even the questioning of the same urban projects whose aesthetic value is so intensely praised. One could say, provocatively drawing on Walter Benjamin’s famous dictum, that the more aesthetics is politically used in Barcelona, the more politics is itself aestheticized, so that political consensus and the obedience of the masses are achieved by continually producing for them what is perceived as a aesthetic or artistic gratification. (“Urbanism” 192)

Urban sociologist and activist Manuel Delgado writes in a similar vein but more locally specific:

Darrere de la Barcelona narcisa, extasiada amb la seva pròpia imatge, hi habiten a l’entorn de 340 mil pobres; un 15% dels seus infants ho són; uns 180 mil pensionistes barcelonins cobren por sota del salari mínim interprofesional; un nombre difícil de calcular d’estrangers –a l’entorn dels 160 mil es calcula—viuen

⁶⁹ In my opinion, the *real* uninhibited spontaneity lies in the next chapter about Spatial Tactics, where we will explore alternative uses to public space, that temporally and unintentionally break with the city’s image.

⁷⁰ Here Balibrea is referring to Josep Maria Esquirol’s book La frivolidad política del final de la historia (2003). Translation: “business-politicians [that] are in charge of bringing forth as much prosperity, happiness, peace, and stability possible.”

amagats; per ells Barcelona és una ciutat sota toc de queda i el seu espai públic un territori perillós; tres mil sense sostre dormen al carrer cada nit . (23-24, Elogi)⁷¹

Hence, Barcelona wins awards for its urban planning and image, and, like other post-modern designer cities such as New York, Paris, and London, offers architects a platform (what Max of chapter four will criticize as a “un inmenso tablero de Monopoly”) where they can showcase their newest creations (Moret 175). At the same time, generations of indigenous businesses, communities, and historic buildings are destroyed, or retrofitted, and politics become more simulated and antiseptic via aesthetics beyond what Benjamin could ever have imagined. And in the end, this producing citizens that are “més docil que mai” (Delgado qtd. in Ricart).⁷²

Thus, we have primarily addressed examples in which the mass media selectively chooses what to include in its representation of the city and how surveillance cameras and policemen protect it. Let us now look at another source of social exclusion and how it is implemented.

8. Gentrification

Gentrification is a term that Ruth Glass coined in the early 1960s in her book London: Aspects of Change. Gentrification is generally defined as the process by which low-income residents are displaced from an urban area in order to renovate the area and

⁷¹ Translation: Behind the narcissist Barcelona, with its own image, about 340 thousand poor people live, 15% of which are children, around 180 thousand are pensioners who are paid less than minimum wage. A difficult amount of foreigners to calculate—an estimated 160 thousand are calculated—they live hidden away. For them Barcelona is a city under a curfew, and their public space is a dangerous territory; three thousand homeless sleep in the street each night.”

⁷² Translation: “more docile than ever.”

accommodate upper-income residents.⁷³ The process often entails demolishing the original buildings and constructing new ones. While gentrification was traditionally attributed to rent gaps between a location's current and potential value, more recent studies on gentrification have incorporated the influence of culture. What I will now discuss is precisely that—the relationship between gentrification and culture.⁷⁴

In Barcelona, the most gentrified areas are also some of the most culturally dense and diverse areas in the city.⁷⁵ The target areas of gentrification in the historic quarter have been Ciutat Vella and Poble Nou—the former for its public visibility, and the latter for its conversion into the city's information-technology center.

Before presenting a critical evaluation of gentrification, we should be aware that when Franco died, because of the lack of interest in maintaining public space, Ciutat Vella was left in dire straits. This was an immediate concern of not only the *Ajuntament*, but also the neighborhood associations. According to Heeren, in the 1980s, 65% of residences were over a century old, very small (half were less than 60 meters square), 90% did not have elevators, and 7,000 homes did not have a private bathroom. Overall,

⁷³ With the exception of Castells, Friedman, and Wolff, who recognize the power of an internationally mobile class, the majority of urban theorists who have written on gentrification (for example, Chris Hammet, Ruth Glass, Rowland Atkinson, and Gary Bridge) highlight the fact that gentrification caters to the “middle-class,” but I find this debatable and at least out-dated in many American and European cities because, based on my own experience, many of the newly renovated areas in downtowns across the U.S. and Europe are clearly inhabited by the upper-middle and upper-class (Rise; Hammet 335).

⁷⁴ Ruth Glass and Neil Smith are two early theorists who studied gentrification in economical terms. Neil Smith attributed gentrification to a rent gap, which he defined as “the difference between the potential value of inner urban land (low because of abandonment due to deindustrialization and suburbanization) and its potential value (if put to a higher and ‘better’ use)” (Atkinson 5).

⁷⁵ Chris Hammet is one of the theorists who stresses the importance of culture behind the motives of gentrification: “Gentrification is not simply a class or income phenomenon. It is also crucially linked to the creation of a new set of cultural and residential preferences” (334).

the structures were in unsanitary but sound condition. Heeren also explains that the *Ajuntament*, more often than not, has opted for new construction rather than renovation because the latter is more expensive (40). On occasions, the *Ajuntament* allows certain buildings to decay in order to justify their clearance (69).

Heeren also provides us with the process in which demolition occurs. First, urbanists and architects would develop reform projects named “PERIs”: Planes Especiales de Reforma Interior, for which the *Generalitat* had to approve. After being approved, the plans were assigned to a construction company, usually Procivesa (Promoció de Ciutat Vella Sociedad Autónoma) and/or Incasol (Institut Català del Sòl), two contracting companies that work with public and private funds.

Victoria Mora, head historian of the Museo de Historia, told me in an interview during the Summer of 2005 that before anything is demolished, the city sends archeologists to the site to survey if artifacts exist that are worth saving. If archeologists identify something of value, it is taken to another museum—El Museo de la Ciutat. She also informed me the museum doesn’t possess a catalog or database of the found artifacts.⁷⁶ The problem lies in how the *Ajuntament* and the Museo de Historia define what is and what is not historically valuable. Most likely, their criteria follows the same archeological procedures used when deciding what façades to renovate, where to install surveillance cameras, etc.

When buildings are razed, residents are required to relocate, often under inhumane circumstances. From the sums provided in Heeren’s research and the José Luis

⁷⁶ Heeren claims that this same museum possesses stained glass windows, floor tiles, reliefs, and metallic balustrades (Heeren 64 and 77). Imagine what a fascinating place the storage room of the Museo de la Ciutat must be, with diverse objects removed from their homes, numbered and under lock and key akin to a concentration camp of old everyday objects...!

Guerín's documentary En construcción (two sources that explore gentrification in the Historic Quarter in the 90s), we can estimate that those evicted are only paid around 4,800 to 7,200 euros (6,500 to 9,800 dollars) for relocation (Winkels). Once vacated, the buildings are torn down, and the land is then sold to real estate developers, who erect apartment buildings whose units are rented or sold at exorbitant prices. The RISC's, "European Housing Review", reports that Spain is the European country whose housing prices inflated the most from 2003-2004.

Furthermore, tenants are often forcefully evicted from their homes by means of "mobbing" (harassment). Real estate agencies and landlords have been accused of abuses such as—cutting off water, vandalism, breaking locks, "abandonar la vivienda, cortar los suministros, promover conflictos entre vecinos y actos incívicos, y generar humedades, peste incendios o ruidos" (Heeren 60; Pellicer). The author Ana María Moix adds that she has even heard of agents leaving slaughtered cats and dogs at the door front (A. Moix). Recently, the *Generalitat* passed a new law (*Ley de Derecho de Vivienda*) that penalizes mobbing and more efficiently channels reports of it to the government. As a result, reports have decreased (44% from 2004 to 2005). However, this activity continues to occur since the group that inhabits the desirable historic neighbors is vulnerable. That is, that they are less likely to press charges because of their age (many are elderly), because of language barriers, or because of encountering legal barriers (many are immigrants) (Pellicer). While the *Generalitat* may have become more aggressive in its condemnation of mobbing, this can also be interpreted as a way of diverting attention from the larger problem of speculation (see fig. 1.21).



Fig. 1.21. *Plaza dura*. Part of the new Rambla de Raval which was constructed in the late 1990's and for which 5 historic blocks, 1,384 flats, and 293 stores were razed. The jagged edges of the buildings, left over after the demolition, were capped with new flat buildings seen in the background which lacked the amenity of balconies. Ironically, 80% of activities were funded by *El Fondo de Cohesión de la Unión Europea*. (Heeren 76). Megan Saltzman, March 2005.

The situation becomes even more difficult when the recently evicted attempt to secure replacement housing. Since prices have skyrocketed in the core city, individuals are forced to forage far from their original habitat, fracturing their original communities. Their search is complicated further by racism including racist landlords, real estate agents, and even housemates.⁷⁷

On occasions, the *Ajuntament* has used gentrification as a rationale for eliminating delinquency. The most famous case, *Operación Sant Ramón*, occurred in 1989 when an

⁷⁷ In 2005, when I was looking for a room to rent in the downtown area, I searched on the main housing website (unaffiliated with a real-estate agency): <www.loquo.com>. Interestingly, I found several ads written by landlords and tenants who specified that they would only rent to Spanish nationals.

entire historic block frequented by drug lords, addicts, and gangs, known as the “Isla Negra” in the Raval, was bulldozed (Villar 239). Razing as a solution to social delinquency, as opposed to utilizing local social services, has failed, as the problem of delinquency is only moved elsewhere, out of the international spotlight.

All of these cases point to a clear case of geographical social cleansing. The lower economic class, usually immigrants and elders, are excluded from living in the city center. Capel in El modelo Barcelona: Un examen crítico and Tabakman in “El Casc Antic de Barcelona: ¿actuación urbanística o ‘limpieza social’?” concur that if the *Ajuntament* genuinely wanted to promote diversity, it would not be merely interested in moving the rich to the low-income neighborhoods as is happening in Ciutat Vella. It would also do the unprecedented, moving the poor into the rich neighborhoods like Sarriá and Vallvidrera (Capel 52). Further, “Transparency International,” an international non-profit organization that investigates national corruption, reports an unsurprising detail. Since 1995, the rate of corruption due to urban speculation has dramatically increased in Spain. It recently was ranked twenty-fifth on the list of the most corrupt countries in the world, embarrassingly exceeded largely by countries suffering extreme poverty or/and warfare (“España”) (see fig. 1.22).



Fig. 1.22. Seized gap in the Raval where a five star hotel is being built. Megan Saltzman, February 2005.

In the following chapters, we will examine cases of gentrification represented in fictional films and novels. At this point, I would like to address a new spectacle that has surfaced in Barcelona's postmodern cityscape resulting from gentrification—bared walls. Unlike those bared walls that remain standing after a war, these bared walls have been carefully undressed by bulldozers. Once exposed, they do not bother to hide their intimate parts—bathroom tiles, children's scribbles, severed pipes, a kitchen cabinet, a division between the bathroom and kitchen, a peeling sheet of wallpaper. All are exposed to the sun and rain, made visible to the public, and eventually adopted by strangers as their new and indifferent family (passerbys). The interior, once heated, echoed

someone's private thoughts, words, and gestures.⁷⁸ Similar to the spatial tactics in the next chapter, these bared walls are harmless, ephemeral, and unintentionally and visually disruptive to the nicety and totality of the city's image. Bared walls are embarrassing for speculators, because they detract from the city's aesthetic harmony and could trigger disturbing questions such as "*What happened to the people who used to live there?*" Since bared walls are temporary scenes, capturing them in photography is critical. Soon they will be re-dressed, and forgotten (see figs. 1.23 to 1.26).

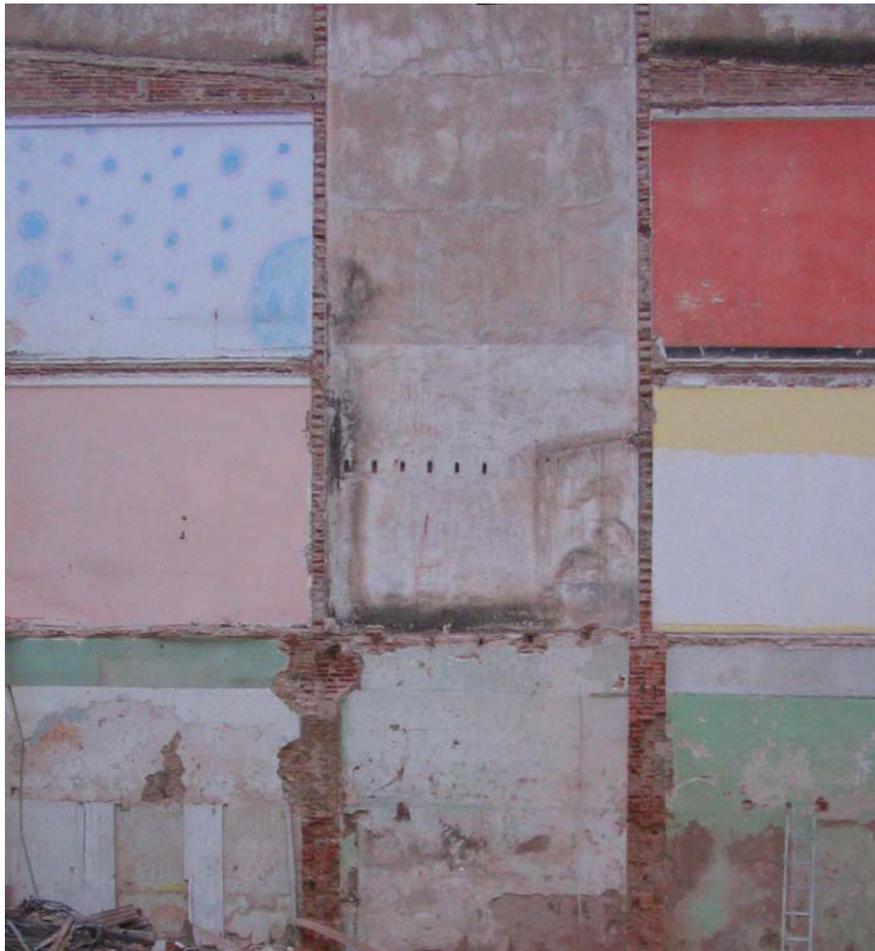


Fig. 1.23. In the Exaemple de l'Esquerra. Megan Saltzman, August 2005.

⁷⁸ Interestingly enough, these bare walls have also become a canvas for social resistance.

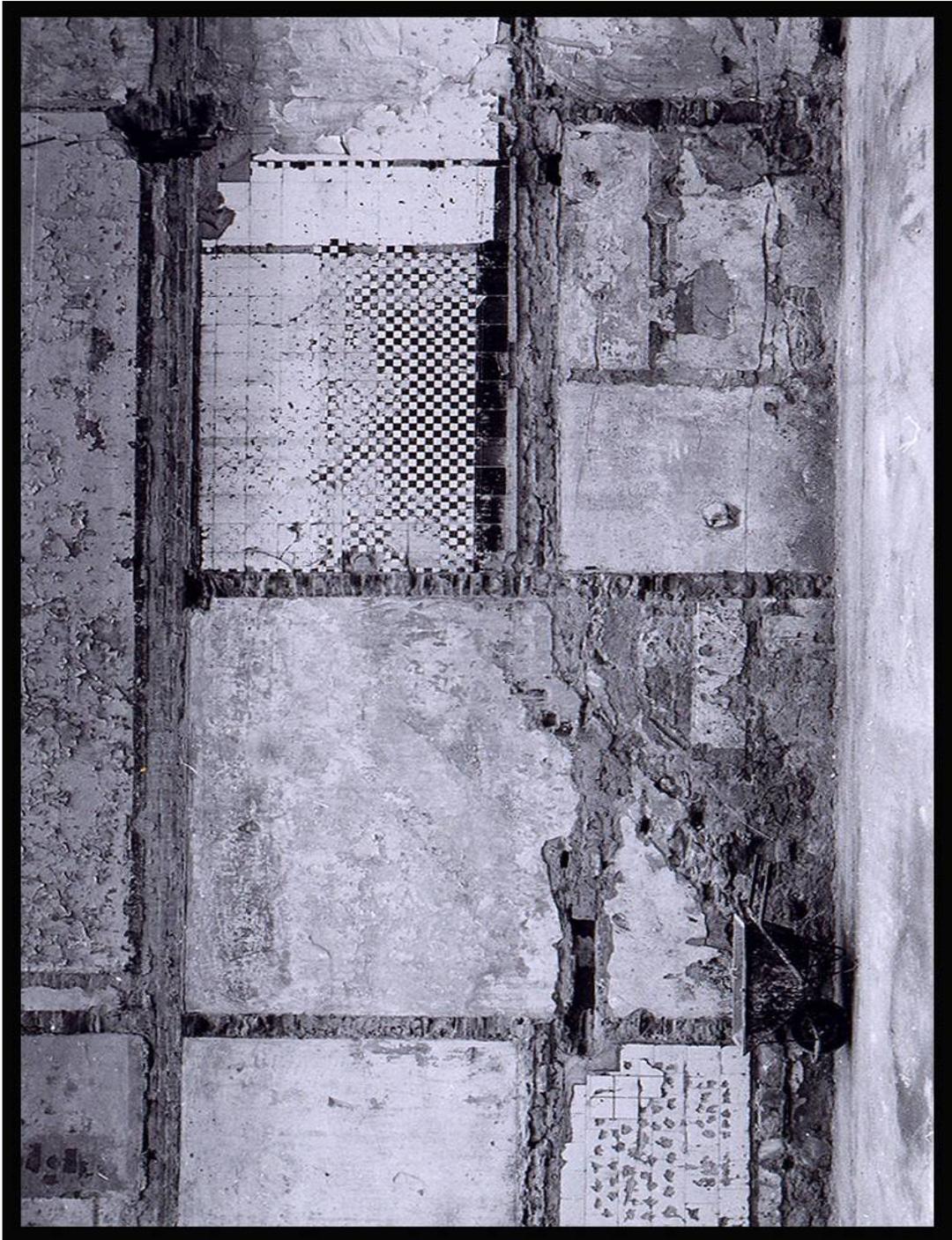


Fig. 1.24. In the Raval. Megan Saltzman, March 2005.

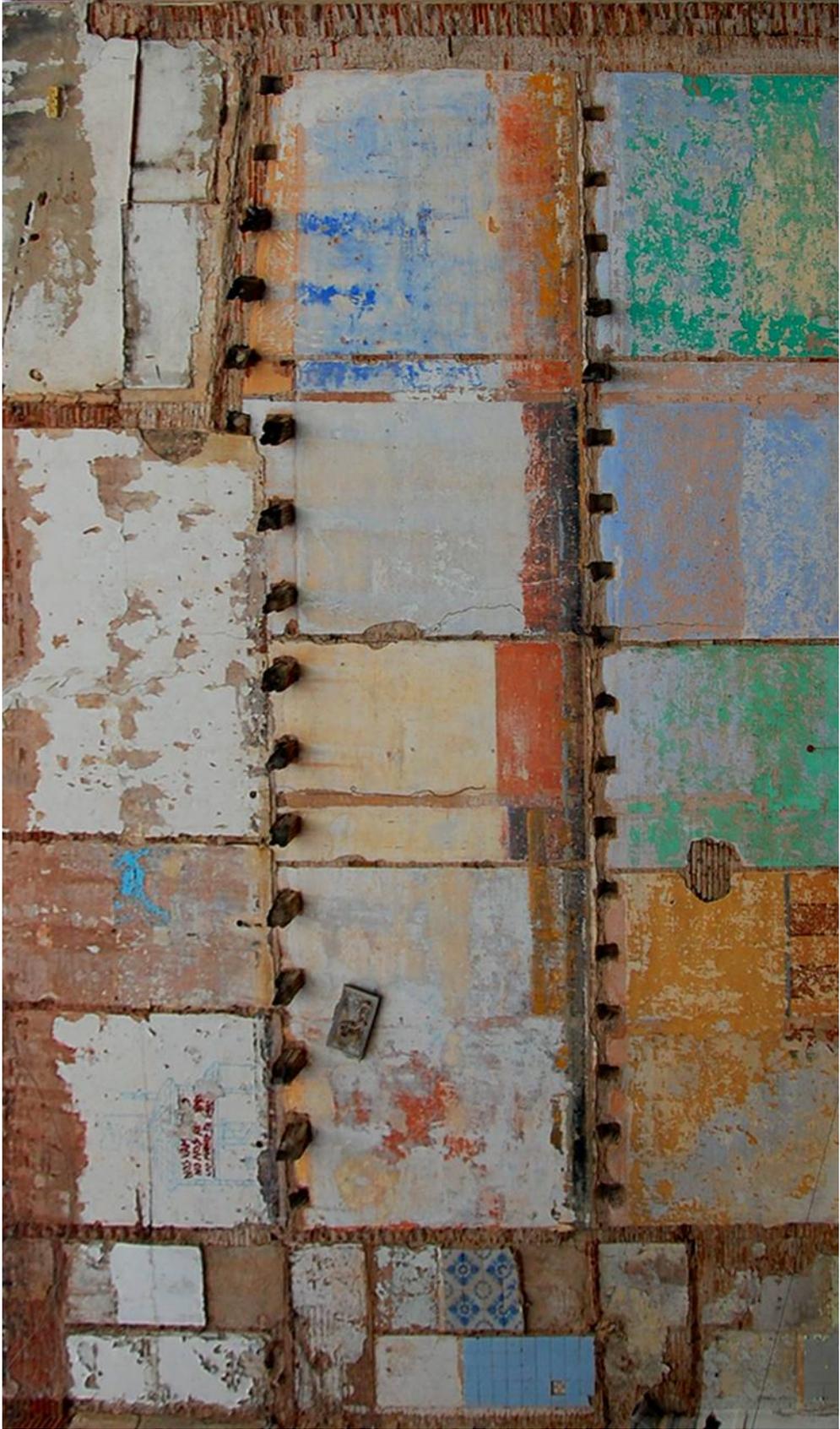


Fig. 1.25. Torrent d'Olla Street with Terol Street in the Gràcia neighborhood. Megan Saltzman, August 2008.

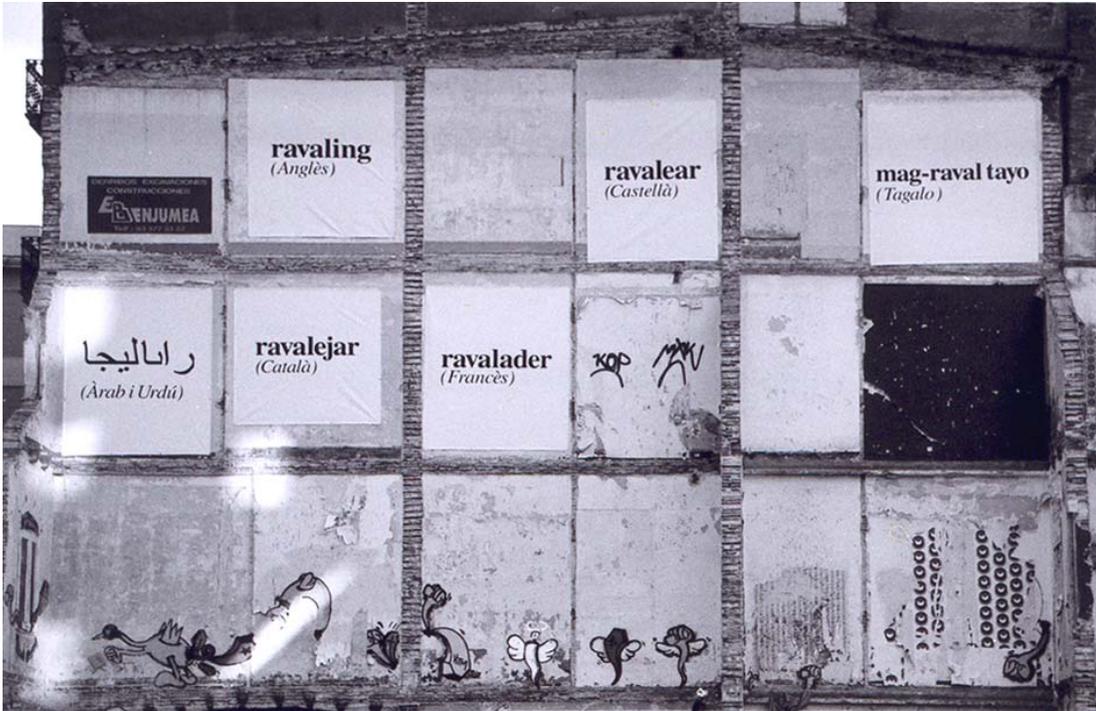


Fig. 1.26. What to make of this representation of diversity? (I haven't been able to find the author to this installation but it might be the CCCB because it is next door and they claim to celebrate diversity.) Megan Saltzman, March 2005.

How do these agents of speculation and destruction defend themselves? The *Ajuntament* and contracting companies claim that renovation is too expensive, and that many of the buildings are uninhabitable. Architects have also been identified as accessories in this process:

los políticos se dejan aconsejar por los técnicos. Por tanto deberíamos concluir que son los arquitectos lo que no han estado a la altura de las circunstancias. Deseosos de estar a la última moda, incapaces a veces de valorar y respetar el contexto en el que se levanta el edificio nuevo, dispuestos generalmente a destruir o modificar un edificio existente, aunque luego se violenten si se quiere corregir o modificar su preciosa intervención. (Capel 88)⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Translation: “politicians let themselves be advised by the technicians. Therefore we should conclude the architects are at the height of the situation. Desiring to be in fashion, often incapable of valuing and respecting the context in which they raise a new building, generally willing to destroy or modify an existing building although later they get angry is one wants to correct or modify their precious invention.”

Many of today's architects and urban planners (such as well-known architect Rem Koolhaas, architectural theorist Arjun Mulder, and Barcelonese politicians Oriol Bohigas, Narcís Serra, and Pasqual Maragall) advocate that *the city must modernize*—a classic and ambiguous argument. However, their endorsement is new; contemporary architecture must be multifunctional and flexible in order to adapt to the rapid changes (especially informational and technological) that contemporary society faces.⁸⁰ We also have to recall that it is natural for architects to promote material change because for the most part, without demolition creating space, new architecture in contemporary European cities wouldn't exist. Demolition is a *raison d'être* for the European architect who puts his/her name on a building; without it, he/she would be restricted to the humble collective task of working in the field of restoration.

In addition, those in favor of gentrification or material change tend to claim that it promotes *cohesión social*, diversity, and in a way, this is true (Atkinson). If we look at the city's most gentrified downtown neighborhoods—the Raval and the Born—they are diverse, with a wide-range of ethnicities, ages, and economical groups. But, it is only diverse by day. At night, the immigrants and prostitutes and/or other low-income citizens return to the outskirts of the city. Also, this diversity is questionable as to how it translates to actual social interaction. Does it imply local residence, community, or social integration? Do differences in the historic center merely cross paths, or do they work together to foster tolerance?

⁸⁰ Mulder calls this global flexible architecture “transurbanism.” For more information on the propositions of architecture in the twenty-first century, I recommend any of the recent books and magazines by Rem Koolhaas's or Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder's book [Transurbanism](#).

An influx of national and international businesses has also triggered gentrification. In the last two and a half decades Barcelona has progressed from an economic recession to being ranked number five on the 2006 list of “Europe’s best cities to do business in” (“Barcelona sube”). A notable example of this trend is the company called Inditex.

Inditex is Spain’s richest and most ubiquitous textile chain that includes Zara, Massimo Dutti, Pull and Bear as well as four other popular clothing stores. It should come as no surprise that Amancio Ortega, the president of Inditex, has recently purchased several office and residential buildings in the historic quarter of Barcelona (“El presidente”; Barrón). Together, with El Corte Inglés department store, the two national corporations control 39% of the region’s textile industry (clothing, shoes, accessories, home goods) (“El Corte”).

How do these developments manifest themselves to the public space? Although El Corte Inglés and Inditex are two separate corporations, the latter resembles the tentacles of El Corte Inglés. While the department store occupies a large building with many floors, Inditex’s small shops are dispersed throughout the commercial areas of the city. The clothing stores give the appearance of a diverse selection of small stores and small businesses, when in reality they are all part of the same corporate ownership. The octopus metaphor is appropriate because, as is usually the case, the national chains absorb (strangle) the other businesses around them, making it almost impossible for a small or local business to flourish (Heeren).

The most evident case of corporate concentration in Barcelona is the stretch from Plaza de Cataluña (where the main El Corte Inglés is located) to Portal d’Angels. Portal

d'Angels is a wide pedestrian street in the city's principal commercial area in the Gothic neighborhood where reportedly 60 million people shop each year (E. Castells). By no coincidence is the space that has been reserved for pedestrians and human congregation also the city's shopping hub. What was once an area of thriving local businesses is now a generic collection of clothing stores, almost entirely owned by Inditex (three identical Zara's have been established in close proximity to each other). In fact, Inditex just recently (2007) destroyed the last cultural-historical remnant on the street—Cine París, the only movie theatre remaining in Ciutat Vella—in order to build yet another Zara (E. Castells). Further, what is not owned by Inditex is owned by other national and international chains such as McDonald's, Pan's & Company, Fotoprix, Mango, Benetton, and Cortefiel.⁸¹

More and more areas are becoming similar to Portal de l'Angels. For example, as of 2007, Starbucks had established 16 franchises in downtown Barcelona (<www.qdq.com>). Also, when I returned to Barcelona in 2006, I was surprised to find that Camper, the upper-end Spanish shoe company, had bought out several buildings on the entire southern half of Elizabets street in the El Raval neighborhood. They had acquired a half dozen local shops including a nineteenth-century flat building, and had revamped them into a shoe store, a four-star “Casa Camper Hotel” (whose rooms cost between 200 and 265 euros per night), and a Camper Food Ball that offers balls of organic rice. An interesting note—on Camper Hotel website, the hotel boasts of its “nineteenth-century building [. . .] in the heart of the multicultural neighborhood El Raval” (<www.camper.es>).

⁸¹ For more information on Inditex's activities in Barcelona, besides the five articles already mentioned, see articles by Garriga and Bagué, Fuentes, and Aymerich.

Many local urbanists (such as Capel and Heeren) and urban dwellers have criticized the city's new architecture for being inhumane and/or obtrusive within the historic cityscape. For example, Heeren comments that “la nueva arquitectura no se integra en el entorno existente, parece un cuerpo extraño, inhóspito y masivo, sin respetar las formas y las dimensiones de la edificación tradicional” (104). If we recall the new designer architecture we saw earlier, clearly the buildings do not blend well within older established neighborhoods. Also, regarding the new and more common residential architecture that is replacing the razed historic buildings, many lack the amenities that the original architecture included, such as balconies or communal space on the rooftops (Heeren 87) (see figs. 1.27 and 1.28).⁸²



Fig. 1.27. New innovative and balcony-less apartments stand out in the Raval. In spite of its many inhumane qualities, I commend the new architecture in Barcelona for its warm and original color schemes. Megan Saltzman, February 2005.

⁸² This type of architecture is not entirely new. Contemporary critics, such as Heeren, tends to draw a chronological dichotomy between old and new architecture, good and bad, modern and postmodern respectively, with the mid-1980s (for Spain) as the turning point. In my opinion, although urban planning and architecture *did* take a drastic turn in the mid-80s, the era in which architecture became “strange, inhospitable, and massive” occurred earlier. This drastic turn in architecture began in 1928 with the founding of the GATCPAC, not out of misanthropic or poor taste, but rather the effects of social urbanism and avant-garde aesthetics (flat, clean and light angles and colors, large glass windows and doors, metal railings and balconies) seeping in from Northern Europe (Mendelson).



Fig. 1.28. Spread across these two pages are three generations of façades within a panorama of four blocks in the Born neighborhood. From left to right, we can see three temporal types of apartment buildings typical of Post-Francoist Barcelonese cityscape; several older façades from which clothes illegally hang from the balconies (center left and center right); a building whose exterior has been removed and whose interior walls are visible (center right); and 6 new balcony-less buildings. Megan Saltzman, May 24, 2005.

In order to recover some kind of aesthetic harmony as well as enhance historical neighborhood differences, the *Ajuntament* has implemented two other strategies. The first is reconstructing some façades in their original style. An example of this is to be found at 528 Gran Via and also in the façades around the new Caterina market in the Born. These façades, with their shimmering perfection, have come under criticism for looking “fake” amongst their genuinely historic and organic neighbors (see fig. 1.29).



Fig. 1.29. 528 Gran Via. Brand new façade designed in nineteenth-century *Modernisme* style. (<www.qdq.com>).

The second strategy consists of partially demolishing a historic building while very carefully sustaining the original façade intact by means of steel scaffolding. The new building is then aligned with the original façade. Often this transformation and the eviction of its inhabitants go completely unnoticed since they happen behind the façade

and scaffolding. However, one visible and well-known example of this treatment is the old bull-fighting ring that is being turned into a shopping mall (see fig. 1.30).⁸³



Fig. 1.30. The second strategy. Turning a bull fighting ring into a mall while preserving the façade. Megan Saltzman, June 2005.

Beyond architecture in the traditional sense, the inhospitable feelings also hold true for transformations in everyday spaces such as shadeless *plazas duras*, parks that are drying up due to record-breaking droughts, surveillance cameras, more stringent laws in public space, and the addition of urban furniture like *sillas autistas* and *bancos unipersonales*.⁸⁴ (These type of sitting accommodations, along with the exclusion of balconies in the new architecture, contribute to fostering an individualistic society.)

⁸³ In the chapter on Nostalgia, we will view two more buildings of this type when I analyze an essay (“La destrucción de Barcelona”) that condemns the buildings being remade using this second strategy as mere “empty shells.”

⁸⁴ Translation: “autistic chairs” and “unipersonal benches.” Autistic chairs are individual chairs grounded into a sidewalk or plaza. Unipersonal benches are benches that are divided into individual chairs by arm rests.

9. Conclusion

The postmodern renewal projects have also had some positive effects. The Historic Quarter is now cleaner, safer, and smells better. The number of homeless people and drug addicts has decreased (Villar).⁸⁵ The city's gastronomical options are now more ethnically diverse. Overall, a renewed sense of pride can be felt in the city. However, these advantages have been carried out at the expense of forcibly uprooting and dispersing centuries-old local communities and businesses to the periphery of the city, dramatically raising the cost of living, increasing privatization, creating economic and ethnic segregation, and destroying the history and memory of those spaces left behind.

As Barcelona becomes an increasingly important link in the global network of financial hubs, the downtown belongs less to the locals and more to, what Rem Koolhaas calls, the “kinetic elite,”—the tourists, the international managerial class and millionaires like Amancio Ortega. The kinetic elite are individuals who are always in transit and have no interest in community building (Stadler). As a result, while the *Ajuntament* tries to embellish and create marketable differences between the neighborhoods, the elites create “an increasingly homogenous lifestyle”; the neighborhoods lose their identity, their original differences (M. Castells 349). They begin to look more and more like one another, each with the same commercial offers, national and international chains, and exclusive prices. Accordingly, we observe a correlated economic and spatial split—between the center and the periphery, and the kinetic elite and locals, respectively.

⁸⁵ Whereas the number of homeless individuals has decreased in the Historic Quarter, it has in fact increased overall in Barcelona, implying that eliminating homelessness from the historic quarter does not solve the problem. See *El Periódico*'s article “El Ayuntamiento reconoce un aumento del número de personas sin techo en Barcelona.”

Let us look at this historical transformation with a wide-angle lens, from the beginning of this chapter to the end, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. At the beginning of the chapter I cited several similarities between the turn of the nineteenth century and the contemporary period such as speculative corruption, the international display of architecture, failed urban utopia, and the revival of local history represented in public space. Later, we observed similarities between the Francoist city and the contemporary city including more speculative corruption, vigilance of public spaces, and the importance of public space for political ideology evidenced in the street names and monuments.

Over the course of a century and a half, we have seen how public space has been constantly reevaluated, remanipulated and resignified in order to promulgate or reinforce political, historical, and economic ideologies—from the innovative utopian façades that flourished in the Eixample, the neoclassical sculptures of Noucentisme, the changing of street names during Francoism, the creation of hundreds of inexpensive public spaces in the early democracy to the recent installment of hidden video cameras.

As we saw with the bared walls, gentrification, intrusive new architecture, fragmentation does increasingly exist in the way we conceptualize and produce our capitalist-based culture. However, the modern meta-narratives in the present as well as the unfulfillment of collective utopian goals prove that historical continuity transcends this fragmentation. While Habermas and Lyotard spoke of unfulfilled modernity (of “the infinite advance towards social and moral betterment”) during the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century in Europe, we have not only seen this correspond to Spain as the Civil War and Franco extinguished the Second Republic, but we have also seen this

unfulfillment reappear in the present (Habermas 2; Lyotard, “Defining”). The uninhibited priority that the *Ajuntament* and local politicians give to the global market has impeded the realization of the promises that were made during the transition to democracy.

This temporal similarity refutes the generalizing and dualistic arguments that most politicians and some cultural theorists make about the separation between eras: for example, the voiced gaps or deliberate silences that exist between modernity and postmodernity (such as those that Jameson, Baudrillard, Călinescu construct), between a pre and a post, and between Francoism and contemporary democracy in Spain.⁸⁶ Their generalized paradigms package time, reproduce meta-narratives, and perpetuate a circumscribed way of thinking, all of which discreetly exclude the connections that run between, small-brow culture, and marginalized populations.

Given this historical continuity, *what has changed?* In my opinion the transformation over the last century and a half can be broken down into two major infrastructural changes—*a new global level in economical and spatial decontextualization and the means to protect them*. Let me first explain the former.

⁸⁶ To illustrate how Jameson, Lyotard, and Călinescu split, perpetuate and over-generalize broad and heterogenous time periods (“modernity” and “postmodernity”) with an insufficient number of texts (primarily literature, film, and architecture, which are usually high-brow, large-scale, or main-stream economically speaking), see Jameson’s *The Seeds of Time and Postmodernism*, Lyotard’s “Defining the Postmodern,” and Călinescu’s *Five Faces of Modernity*. For discussing our “postmodern condition” within a better understanding of the interrelated mesh between the modern and postmodern as well as the ubiquity and diversity of cultural texts on which these temporal ideas are projected (from the canonical to the everyday, from high to low brow, from theory to practice), I recommend the works of Marc Augé, Jean Baudrillard, Manuel Castells, David Harvey, Marshall Bermann, Pierre Bourdeau, and even Walter Benjamin, despite of the age of his works.

In July of 2004, I went to the University of Barcelona to hear José Luis Guerín, the director of the film En construcción, speak about the themes in his films. He concluded that gentrification turns the Raval neighborhood into “un barrio de tránsito.” In practical terms, his conclusion can be extended to all of the historic and financial quarters of cities that participate in the global market.

Guerín’s comment resonates with Manuel Castells’s theory on the space of flows:

The space of power and wealth is projected throughout the world, while people’s life and experience are rooted in places, in their culture in their history. Thus, the more a social organization is based upon ahistorical flows, superseding the logic of any specific place, the more the logic of global power escapes the socio-political control of historically specific local/national societies. (347-48)

In other words, people root themselves in space, but as more involve themselves in the global information and business network, the more local history and cultural space degenerate and detextualize into Guerín’s space of “transit,” Castell’s “space of flows,” Augé’s “non-spaces” (Non-places).

The kinetic elite increasingly make their home in these non-spaces. Homogenous spaces, generally for the managerial class, extend from airports, hotels, gyms, restaurants, multinationals, gated communities, and to entire historic urban centers.⁸⁷ For capitalists, the advantages of this un-attached or boundless space is that it allows capital to flow with less reliance on public funds and more on private technology. The kinetic elites’ financial resources and presence are unconnected to local space and communities, as they are in a constant movement from one similar financial hub to the next. In the end, a generic community is created that

⁸⁷ In the United States these “non-spaces” exist in suburbs or what Castells and Joel Garreau call “edge-cities” (Castells 333-34).

has skills that now transfer anywhere and can be argued to possess ‘decontextualized cultural capital’ that allow portable social resources to be deployed in new contexts. This ability to transfer professional skills has created a super-mobile fraction that consider their identities in a global context, while professional and managerial groups more embedded in national and neighborhood contexts perhaps aspire to these kinds of networked and boundless identities. (Atkinson and Bridge 9)

This decontextualized community of *sillas autistas*, *bancos unipersonales*, and iPods impedes the formation of a cohesive community that could unify to construct barricades, stage a strike, pack a Neighborhood Association meeting, or simply have any significant influence over capital agencies.

The second component of the infrastructural changes in the post-Francoist city relates to the exaggerated lengths that the government undertakes to implement their control via aestheticized strategies. State control over the city has evolved since the boulevards were widened to impede revolts during the nineteenth-century. Today’s strategies in Barcelona are facilitated by advances in technology in order to maintain control over citizens as well as the city’s positive international image. For these reasons, we see the following in public spaces: divided benches that impede people from playing table games or lying down which prevent the area from becoming a comfort zone for the homeless; flats without balconies which complicate hanging clothes out to dry (reminiscent of a ghetto or gypsy enclave); video cameras; an increased police force in Ciutat Vella; the new *Civisme* law; the application of non-adhesive paint on lampposts to deter the posting of flyers (Cedó); and most recently—an increase in street cleaners who shoo away skateboarders by spraying down with water the plazas in which they traditionally skate (Plaza dels Angels and Plaza de la Universitat).

Of course, the primary means of achieving aesthetic marketability has been gentrification. Gentrification is more prevalent and overpowering than ever before. Atkinson and Bridge in Gentrification in a Global Context make an analogy that shows its severity (12-15). Their theory is that gentrification is a form of modern-day colonialism. An elite white and Western culture unilaterally takes over a space and imposes a new re-structuring and re-signification of that space (in its material, ideological, ethnic, and economic form) under the deceptive justification that the changes are vital for improvement for all and for adapting to, and remaining competitive with, some place far away.

Despite being labeled as a form of colonialism, the city's urban policies have earned international praise, many rewards, and attempts at imitation.⁸⁸ To illustrate its impact, according to the online magazine "Bilbao Metropoli," post-Francoist Barcelonese strategies have been implemented in Seville, Santiago de Compostela, Mexico City, Turin, and Salerno (Italy) and will soon be implemented in Toma (Italy), Lisbon, Valparaíso (Chile), Bogotá, Las Palmas (Canary Islands), and Monterrey (Mexico).

The Barcelona Model should not be a source of emulation for having "expulsat la compleixat humana, el malestar de les classes" (Delgado, Elogi 12). Both Heeren and Capel separately propose that Barcelona examine the preservation of historic quarters in Italy and France, highlighting cities such as Bologna, Naples, and Glasgow, which, under similar anachronistic and local-global conditions have been more effective in preserving and restoring their historic quarters and indigenous communities (Heeren 110; Capel 70).

⁸⁸ Barcelona has received the internationally competitive urbanism awards such as The Royal Gold Medal of 1999 by the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), the "Most Admired Knowledge City" of 2007, and is currently nominated for UK's Academy of Urbanism 2008 "European City of the Year" award.

In this chapter I've discussed several cases of political consensus: the conjoining of parties to facilitate transition to a democracy, to silence the past, to stage the Olympics, and to create a marketable contemporary image of the city. We have seen how a variety of local, national, and global state, financial, and artistic agencies project this consensus upon the city, on everything from monuments and street names, to bookmarks and advertisements, together forming our urban consciousness. The postmodern aesthetization of the city replaces political differences and aspirations with all-enveloping sense of economical well-being, which culminates in an urban culture of historical and political amnesia, injustice and indifference.

What other alternative exists to bridge differences? Couldn't these cases of political consensus simply be an effort to improve conditions? Don't we all have to make concessions to realize collaborative projects? I have tried to make the counter argument. If the political consensus in Barcelona were simply bridging differences then poverty would not be on the rise in one of the wealthiest regions of Spain (Sanz; INE, "Contabilidad"). Carmen Giménez, director of the Neighborhood Organization of the Raval neighborhood, explained to me in August 2005 that participation in the organization was decreasing. Accordingly, if the political consensus were merely an issue of solidarity, participation in the Neighborhood Organizations, still the principal mediator with the *Ajuntament*, would not be decreasing.

I'll end this chapter with another song, similar in content but different by four decades from Llach's "L'estaca":

donde hay necesidad nace un derecho
sal a la calle, tomo lo que es tuyo
cuando todo se puede decir

la forma de censura es el consenso.⁸⁹ (Hechos contra el decoro)

In the next chapter, we will illuminate some creative everyday ways in which the local community disrupts the *Ajuntament*'s postmodern image and political consensus.

⁸⁹ Translation: “a right is born where there is need / get in the streets, I’m taking what’s yours / when everything can be said / censorship is consensus.”

Chapter II: Spatial Tactics

One winter afternoon when I was wandering around the Raval neighborhood, I came upon a volleyball game taking place on a homemade *volleyball court*. Immigrants were playing inside of *an abandoned lot* where a building had been razed. The lot was fenced off, and the bottom couple of feet were cemented off, so I walked around it to see how they had gotten inside, and on one side I found a jagged hole in the lower part of the fence, about one-half foot by one-half foot. I thought how they must have had to crawl in individually and slip the poles and the net through. The discovery of their harmless cleverness made me smile a bit. I took this picture from inside that hole (see fig. 2.1).



Fig. 2.1. Megan Saltzman, February 2005.

A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers (both of these terms in the plural) – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.

–Michel de Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 150

No están permitidos los siguientes usos impropios de los espacios públicos y de sus elementos: [...] Utilizar los bancos y los asientos públicos para usos distintos a los que están destinados.⁹⁰

–Article 58 of Ordenanza

She didn't need to pick up the ramparts,
a milk lid would do,
placed on her head,
and the city would be hers.

–Megan Saltzman

⁹⁰ Translation: “The following improper uses of public space are prohibited [...] to use benches or chairs for uses different than for what they’re made for.”

Representations of public everyday space contain historical narratives, and finding the underrepresented ones gives us a more inclusive socio-historical understanding of a city's environment. The conditions of the postmodern city complicate the legibility of these narratives. For example, gentrification, ubiquitous stimuli, manufactured images, and consumer attractions rapidly and simultaneously transform, add noise, and project totalizing cultural ideologies within the urban space. As Henri Lefebvre describes in The Production of Space, in a time of heightened capitalism, space is a dissimulated, fluid, and superimposed social product. To this claim, Jean Baudrillard adds that postmodern space "blurs the lines between what we believe to be 'true' and 'false', 'real' and 'imaginary'" ("Simulacra" 171). In other words, many ever-changing and interconnected semiotic layers intertwine between our initial impression of public space and a more inclusive understanding of the city's environment. How can we discern the latter? This chapter explores everyday resistances that confront the factors blurring social reality. I call these spatial tactics.

This postmodern or neocapitalist reconfiguration of time and space began to seep into Barcelona once democracy was reinstated in Spain in 1978. Since then, and especially after the city was selected for the Olympics in 1986, a careful image has been created, one that has prioritized a global economy over local social equality and that at the same time has obscured the latter. This image, also known as "the Barcelona Model," has promoted the city as "Southern Europe's culture and business capital": modern, social democratic, unified, and most recently peacefully "multicultural." Further, with 7 million tourists in 2007 and also as an internationally-praised urban planning model this image has proved to be very successful ("Barcelona tuvo").

One of the components of the ideological construction of this image was *the material deconstruction of areas of the city that did not fit the image*. Of highest priority was Ciutat Vella—the downtown Historic Quarter, since it is the most visible and visited. In light of this visual obstruction, in the city, little bits of truth find their way to the surface. One of the main ideas of Michel de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life is that urban dwellers will always find clever ways of slipping around spatial regulations. He calls these maneuvers “tactics” and they form part of a larger category of everyday practices within the temporal and spatial framework of modern urban space. The creators of spatial tactics temporarily appropriate a space and give it a different function, not to make a political statement, but to make ends meet. De Certeau argues that everyday practices are replete with subtle, and often undermined, forms of resistance. Similar to Walter Benjamin’s interest in the discarded commodities of nineteenth century Paris, de Certeau wants to uncover a similar byproduct of consumer society, one that is fleeting yet residual, a “remainder” or a “smudge”, with “trace[s] or mark[s] that eat into the borders” (66, 155).

For a spatial tactic to be created I believe four components are needed: the non-fulfillment of a basic need, creativity, a bit of transgressive will (to do what one is not supposed to do), and an urban space that is regulated while still containing a certain degree of autonomy. Because spatial tactics belie the pleasant image of the city, they are a form of resistance, an antagonism, but they don’t resist deliberately, their objective is not to break rules but to get by. And because they are not politically motivated like their deliberately and ideologically antagonistic counterparts (such as *okupas* [squatters],

graffiti, art projects, organizations and movements, *detournement*⁹¹ ...) they lurk in the very darkest shadows of underrepresentation.⁹²

Applied to the context of the Post-Francoist Raval neighborhood, I'm going to extend de Certeau's idea further to show the many levels of discourse that spatial tactics can reveal about the history of the space of the other in a time of drastic decrease in semiotic transparency. This is especially unique and useful if we consider that historians and the media have traditionally chosen to trace and present the past by means of *time* (as opposed to space) and *official subjects* (as opposed to "the other").⁹³ Hence, this chapter has molded itself into two main intertwining discourses (like a double helix). One strand theoretically explores *spatial tactics*, that is: the limits, interactions, and complexities of human creativity, necessity, and power, within the fluid/transforming and thick context of public urban space. The other strand applies this theoretical structure to a specific time and place. The inevitable result (and without the credentials in anthropology) has turned out to be a critical anthropological sketch of the space and everyday life of the other in

⁹¹ *Detournement* is a term that comes from the Situationists International and it is similar to my definition of the spatial tactic (reappropriation of a space) with the exception that it has direct political ends. Some examples of the Situationists' detournements were: "turning the Boulevard St. Michel into a lecture hall, or [inviting] workers into the Sorbonne to set up workers' councils." (from the magazine "The Economist," June 1988, quoted in "The Situationist City" by notbored!.org)

⁹² Though later I will show that spatial tactics are atemporal, we should note that in a (postmodern) time of increasing apathy and apoliticality, it is fundamental that we begin to examine the resulting everyday practices of apoliticality (such as watching TV, playing videogames, loitering, boredom...) and trace their larger political and economic picture and question their rupture with it. (In a literary study, Ross Chambers talks about the everyday practice of loitering in Loiterature; and Benjamin talks about boredom in The Arcades Project, suggesting that it emerges in Modernity and amongst the upper-class, neither of which I find true.)

⁹³ For more information on the historiographical shift from time to space see: Fredric Jameson's first chapter in Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism and Edward Soja's "History: geography: modernity."

contemporary Ciutat Vella; a sketch that doesn't look very different from what is currently going on in other mid-sized historical cities around the globe.

Before continuing I should further define and then modify de Certeau's definition of spatial tactics because it is, like the general concepts of everyday life, very broad and all-inclusive. De Certeau's "form of resistance" includes cooking, reading, storytelling, walking, a child doodling in a school notebook, and an adult stealing office supplies. Besides being an active and undermined form of resistance, de Certeau also distinguishes this resistance as "a product of consumption," but this does not delimit the focus much since he considers everything interrelated to the economy.⁹⁴ (We will come back to this economic reduction later.) We may wonder if, like the economy, his object of study is equally ubiquitous, applying to all everyday gerunds.

To de Certeau's definition, I add that spatial tactics exist because material regulations exist. They are the fences, the no-signs, video cameras, the policeman's glare. Sometimes these restrictions are official, sometimes unofficial, but usually they are somewhere in-between and subjectively reinforced. And they are not always material or concrete regulations. They are ideological as well, constructed socially and collectively, unwritten rules that carve out a space for the individual based on his/her ethnicity, beliefs, or social class.

Hence, as the modern and postmodern thinkers of space have reiterated (for instance Lefebvre, Althusser, Debord, Foucault, Castells), material space is intimately

⁹⁴ De Certeau writes, "to a rationalized, expansionist and at the same time centralized, clamorous, and spectacular production corresponds another production, called "consumption" (xii). The latter is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisible, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order."

related to social discourse and ideology.⁹⁵ Accordingly, besides providing a temporary solution for the one who “makes use of the cracks,” spatial tactics, can expose some of the ideological underpinnings of what we see in public space (de Certeau 37).

Because spatial tactics exist along the wobbly line that separates the legal from the illegal, they are necessarily temporary, vulnerable, mobile, and elusive. This spatial instability pertains to certain types of subjects. For example, we can think of the subjects and spaces where prostitutes advertise their services, where recent immigrants sell their goods out on a sheet, where *chatarreros* sort through the garbage, or where *trileros* play their fraudulent betting games with the naïve (see figs. 2.2 and 2.3). Subjects whose space is more transitory than others’, whose practices disrupt decorum, and whose financial means must constantly be suspended in order to run and hide from authority.



Fig. 2.2. *Chatarreros* on Gran Via. Megan Saltzman, 2005.

⁹⁵ I’m referring specifically to the following texts: Lefebvre’s The Production of Space, Debord’s Society of the Spectacle, Foucault’s “Of Other Spaces,” and Castell’s “The Space of Flows.”



Fig. 2.3. A *trilero*. Margeret Michaelis, 1932.

So where are these spatial tactics and when do they emerge? Because they are elusive and ephemeral we have to look carefully to find them—“the inscriptions of these various logics are written in places so obvious that one does not see them” (22, de Certeau). While we can imagine that the medieval organic city must have been replete with spatial tactics, in the Postmodern city, from my experience, spatial tactics tend to arise in three areas: in the historic neighborhoods where there are more niches and nooks; in the periphery of the city where there is less vigilance; and in temporarily-abandoned construction sites where materials are left out. In regard to time, though we will see that spatial tactics are transtemporal and ephemeral/temporary, spatial tactics tend to proliferate more during states of repressive exception in which individuals are driven to use their creativity and everyday space in a new way, such as: during or after a bombardment, during a violent uprising, under the pressure of a crowd or mob, or during a sudden loss of civil rights or economical means.⁹⁶ And for some of us (as we’ll soon see), the everyday may be a state of repressive norm.

⁹⁶ Examples of spatial tactics provoked by state of exceptions: we can think of *schools* that may be temporarily converted into *bomb shelters*; or *alleys* into *hiding places*; and the recent case of Hurricane Katrina in which *football stadiums* were used as *shelters*. In the second chapter of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s novel El pianista there is a fascinating example that arises out of a

When spatial tactics are visible they can function as an unintentional and harmless urban antagonist, defying the city's image. They are a moment of truth amongst the everyday ubiquitous stimuli, or as Foucault suggests in his passage on heterotopias:

“...heterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.” (Foucault, “Of Other” xvii)⁹⁷

An example of this “true picture of the past [that] flits by,” as Benjamin puts it, is my initial volleyball photo (“Thesis” 25). This scene “stopped me in my tracks.” Within the Raval, where the tourist industry is very successful and the ethnic diversity is translated into a consumer trend, tactics unveil, in plain and simple terms, the economic and ethnic segregation in the neighborhood.

Besides the abandoned lot/volleyball example, some other visible spatial tactics that I have found in Barcelona include (the italics denote the *previous space* and *new “tacticized” space*): homeless people using the *heated 24-hour public ATM rooms* and *store front hearths as beds*; *balconies used to hang clothes* and *protest signs, façade*

repressive state of exception (the becomes a norm): Francoism. A group of Republicans in the 1940s have made the *rooftops* their *streets* and *plazas* in order to evade public space where they don't feel comfortable (what I just referred to as an “unwritten rule”). When one of the young men asks another why they spend so much time on the roof, he answers: “Tal vez para no bajar a la calle. ¿A ti no te pasa? Me parece vivir en un país que no es mío.” (Vázquez Montalbán 120)

⁹⁷ I'm not going to elaborate on Foucault's concept of heterotopias (which is defined at length in his essay “Of Other Spaces”) because I find it unhelpful. In this essay he defines heterotopias as the following type of spaces: universal, inside and outside of all places, of crises and deviations, dependent on society, multifaceted, retaining a variety of temporalities, non-spaces, inclusive, exclusive, illusional and real...etc. For me the concept is so broad, contradictory, and omni-applicable that it doesn't have a specific or practical function.

corners and trash dumps used as urinals, and plant pots and left-out construction materials used as benches (see figs. 2.4 to 2.6, and 2.18 to 2.20).⁹⁸



Fig. 2.4. Balconies used to hang multilingual signs. Due to the large amount of tourists that frequent the area, the signs ask passerbys to keep the neighborhood clean and quiet. Megan Saltzman, 2005.



⁹⁸ One might argue that I just said that spatial tactics don't include those used for political ends and clearly these balconies draped in protest messages are political. To this I would answer affirmatively and negatively; it's a borderline case, which is quite common in questions of the everyday. Usually balcony signs are political but in this case it seemed to me that residents lacked a space where they could communicate with their fellow urban dwellers (such as a public announcement board or column) and so the balconies were converted into this lacking space.

Fig. 2.5. Decorative plants and people share a resting place. Eva Megías, 2006.



2.6. A woman makes use of left of construction materials in the Raval. And someone has made use of the balconies to hang an illuminated heart. Megan Saltzman, July 2006.

Another example—I discovered a spatial tactic that occurs outside of where they usually occur and defies the Cerdà Plan in its attempt to gain control over citizens with its wide boulevards. The *limpiacristales* triumphed! *Limpiacristales* are people who wash car windows, usually without the driver’s consent, while one is stopped at a traffic light. One doesn’t find them in the dense historic quarter nor in the periphery. Rather, *limpiacristales* randomly appear at the intersection of wide boulevards (in Barcelona in

the Eixample neighborhood) where cars stop-and-go and outnumber pedestrians and police, providing an ideal fluid space to work without being apprehended.

The vulnerability and elusivity of spatial tactics bring us to a central impediment in approaching a vision of the urban space that accounts for the underrepresented and their spatial tactics. It is in the nature of spatial tactics *not* to be visible, not to call much attention. Hidden, they don't directly defy the city's image, but they do stir the collective consciousness (and give the local law enforcement and the *Ajuntament* something to do). For example, we can think of hide-outs, or illegally occupied buildings such as the abandoned ones *okupas* live in (see fig. 2.7). These are often the spaces where the local authorities are trying to crackdown on in order to eliminate their presence from downtown display. And these subjects (it shouldn't be ignored) usually pertain to the lower or middle class.⁹⁹



⁹⁹ The report titled La Barcelona dels barris published in 1999 by the Generalitat (Catalonia government) and the FAVB (Neighborhood Associations of Barcelona) found that in 1986 7.6% of those living in Ciutat Vella were considered “upper class.” By 1996 22.6% were upper class (19).

Fig. 2.7. I asked Eva Megías to take this picture of these flat doors and shut windows. Though they appear to be *locutorios* (fax/internet/telephone places) are actually where prostitutes run to hide when police are near.

It's worth pointing out that the uncircumscribable and marginalized characteristics of spatial tactics are reflected in the way one speaks about tactics. De Certeau and Foucault in "Of Other Spaces" relate everyday space to everyday figures of speech such as proverbs and storytelling.¹⁰⁰ For example, one often hears someone say that "prostitutes hang out around there" or "there are a lot of pickpockets in that area," or as I heard once: a foreigner asked a local where she had purchased her scarf and the local gave the vague response "immigrants sell them around the touristy areas." Notice that the space is estimated, pointed out with a general wave of the arm. These phrases not only denote the ambiguity of the space of spatial tactics and the space of the other, but also, many times this speech is realized in an informative and condescending. One who knows the city warns another who does not know the city about a place he/she believes to be inferior. Via this everyday way of communicating, a negative collective notion is passed along, fostering a larger audience of believers and caution-takers, and consequently segregation in all facets (ideological, spatial, political, economic). Hence, it's clear in this everyday language that there is a collective value judgment (an "unwritten rule") that belittles those who do not possess a fixed space (what de Certeau refers to as a "circumscribable space").

¹⁰⁰ One can read more about figures of speech and storytelling as everyday practices in chapters two and six of *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

In La formación del espacio público (2002) anthropologist Nadja Monnet observed the following tactical tendency as a result of recent gentrification projects in the Raval:

Sorprende observar que la ocupación, por parte de la población, de los nuevos espacios que nacen de la destrucción de manzanas enteras se realiza de manera muy lenta. Generalmente, los antiguos itinerarios se conservan: los vecinos siguen utilizando el recorrido de siempre, aunque el trazado de las calles haya desaparecido, y tardan un tiempo antes de decidirse a cruzar el nuevo espacio vacío. Los primeros pasos son dados generalmente por los niños que no dudan en transgredir los antiguos límites y en apoderarse del lugar para convertirlo en un terreno de juego (que brillan por su ausencia el barrio), mientras que los adultos ocupan estos espacios de manera más restringida. Se suelen mantener en los bordes, sentándose en unos postes provisionales para charlar y observar a los jóvenes que juegan.¹⁰¹ (94-5)

This scene reveals (what I would generalize to) two natural tendencies regarding public spaces in major transition; spaces that are pulled between being ours and theirs, old and new, familiar and unfamiliar.¹⁰² Firstly, children, less inhibited than adults, are more likely to traverse an unfamiliar space. Secondly, we seem to have a cat-like and unconditional curiosity to check out and occupy our nearby or familiar space, no matter how others transform or destroy it.

Visible or not, someone concerned with social and historical justice can interpret spatial tactics as a manifestation of a social problem, a sign that certain basic needs are

¹⁰¹: Translation: “It’s surprising to observe that the occupation, by part of the population, of the new spaces that are born out of the destruction of entire blocks is slowly carried out. Generally, the old itineraries are preserved, the neighbors keep using the same trajectory as always, though the paths of the streets has disappeared, and it takes awhile before they decide to cross into the new empty space. The first steps are taken generally by the children who don’t hesitate to break the old limits and take over the place to convert it into a play area (which are scarce in the neighborhood), while the adults occupy these spaces in a more restricted fashion. They usually stay along the borders, sitting on some provisional posts to chat and observe the young ones playing.”

¹⁰² I say “major” transition because one could argue that space is fluid and always in transition with time.

unfulfilled. Once located, these practices can make a problem visible; they possess a unique potential for bringing oppositional discourse to the forefront where political action is possible. In this light, the examples of tactics mentioned thus far reveal that Barcelona lacks public sport facilities, employment, benches, public restrooms, affordable homes, a free market at the grassroots level, public services and spaces for women, elders, and immigrants. It should be noted that this lack does not pertain to those subjects who *prefer* to go without a proper space. Not everyone wants a proper space. The possibility also exists that someone both doesn't have access to a sport facility and also does not want it either, rather, only wants to create an illegal and/or his/her own sport facility.

Besides the fact that the practitioners of tactics usually choose to be discreet, another reason why spatial tactics are not visibly evident is because we are convinced that they don't—or that they barely—exist. In many ways, in contemporary democratic localities where apathy is on the rise, an appearance of autonomy, tolerance, generosity, and fairness is fostered. This derives from little everyday possibilities, such as samples at a grocery store, holiday donations, free customer service hotlines, even affirmative action (“discriminación positiva”)—practices that—on the small and common scale—look kind. They foster the false idea that, not only can one do as one pleases in public, but also that this is a gift resulting from good *civismo*. Hence, not only are tactics ambiguous because of their elusivity, but also, this mythical freedom (which is visible in public urban space) adds to the ambiguity by making it difficult to distinguish what is a spatial tactic, on the one hand, and what is a simple exercise of one's right in public space on the other.

Let me give you an example of an illusory right. As I have shown in the previous chapter, in Barcelona the collective assumption exists (and this is often heard from

foreigners and anything *Ajuntament* and/or tourist related) that there *is* a lot of spatial freedom—that the city is in the hands of its citizens. The tourist will recall the abundance of portrait and graffiti painters on the streets, musicians and dancers, particularly in the tourist areas and in the metro. The *Ajuntament* displays creatively-designed posters around the city promoting collective autonomy and identity.

However, visible occupation is increasingly regulated, primarily in the areas where tourists and capital flow—such as Ciutat Vella, the Eixample, and the metro. Within these image-cautious spaces, street artists, for example, must be granted a permit from the *Ajuntament* in order to occupy public space and only for an allotted time. Hence the street shows change right on the hour. And only non-percussion, classical, and “melòdica” music are allowed (Ajuntament, <www.bcn.es>). During the Summer of 2004 I observed signs in the halls of the metro that read “Músics al Metro.” Currently, musicians are required to sign up and play only underneath these signs (see fig. 2.8). Accordingly, by Summer 2006 I observed that musicians no longer played within the subway cars. During the Summer of 2006 I spoke with a cellist who played every afternoon behind the cathedral. He confirmed the *Ajuntament*’s rules and added that police have the right to confiscate the instruments of uncompliant musicians.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ The complete rules regarding musical performance in the public space in Barcelona are available on the *Ajuntament*’s webpage at:
<http://w10.bcn.es/APPS/STPSipacWeb/mostraTramit.do?p_tramit=20040001312>



Fig. 2.8. A musician plays next to his legal spot in the metro in Barcelona. Courtesy of <www.hobotraveler.com>.

Recalling article 58 of the new civic regulations that I included as an epigraph at the beginning of this chapter (benches are only to be used for what they’re supposed to be used for), a main reason behind both the elusivity of tactics and the appearance of spatial freedom lies in what they are a response to the law. To the law enforcer’s advantage—the language of the laws are ambiguous. This is obvious to anyone who lives in Barcelona and sees how the police use a tougher hand with locals, especially immigrants, than with the most unruly group: tourists.¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the most arbitrarily reinforced laws in public space are those regarding drinking alcohol, selling in the streets without a permit, begging, prostitution, and most recently the laws of “necessitats fisiològiques”: “és prohibit fer necessitats fisiològiques, como ara defecar, orinar, escupir i altres analogues” (*Ajuntament, Projecte Article 43*).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ As we saw in photo 3.4, those trying to regulate the disturbances that tourists cause are less often authorities and more often local residents who hang home-made signs in different languages from their balconies.

¹³ Translation: “It’s is prohibited to release one’s physiological needs, like defecating, urinating, spitting and other analogues.” Also, the end of article 43 clearly shows both what spaces in the city are important and also the little value “everyday” space has in the official sphere of things. Article 43 reads: it is “especialment prohibida [if the aforementioned is done on] monuments o

Supposedly this includes vomiting as well.¹⁰⁶ The ambiguous rhetoric is common in the *ordenanzas*, for which many acts are prohibited if they “causin molèsties.” The *Ajuntament* should be required to more clearly define ambiguous terms in the new civisme laws such as *problemas serios*, *altres analogues* and *molèstias*.

Another example—in regard to prostitution, in Barcelona it is legal, but not “quan aquestes pràctiques excloguin o limitin la compatibilitat dels diferents usos de l’espai public.”¹⁰⁷ Mayor Joan Clos doesn’t clarify this language by asserting: “No quiero decir que vamos a perseguir la prostitución. Se intervendrán cuando se observan problemas de convivencia serios...” (García).¹⁰⁸ Though the new laws on prostitution are ambiguous, clearly they are not aimed at improving the security or health of the vulnerable prostitutes (many are slaves to mafias and don’t speak Spanish) but to eliminate them from the city’s image to increase profits. The law does not exist without its sympathizers. Locals in Sant Antoni neighborhood have held protests expressing concern that prostitutes are scaring away local commerce. And it’s not just about image for profits, but for ethics as well. As one mother says: “Aquí hay muchos niños que van al colegio y que tienen que

edifices de catalogació especial, o edifices institucionals o administratius.” (*Ajuntament*, Article 43) (Also, if the mysterious “catalogació especial” to which they are referring is the *Ajuntament*’s *Catàleg del Patrimoni Arquitectònic Historico-Artistic del Centre Històric de Barcelona*, it should be noted that not all the buildings in this catalogue are “public” and belong to the *Ajuntament*.

¹⁰⁶ In the article titled “La evacuación de la cerveza” it says “La ordenanza prohíbe “defecar, orinar, vomitar y escupir” (García). Eva Megías, in an email interview, affirms that vomiting is prohibited. In January 2006 protests were carried out against this in the Raval neighborhood.

¹⁰⁷ Translation: “when these practices exclude o limit the compatibility of the different uses in public space.”

¹⁰⁸ Translation: “I don’t mean to say that we’re going to persecute prostitution. We’ll intervene when we observe serious problems.”

pasar por en medio de este espectáculo” (Castán).¹⁰⁹ In any case, I observed that prostitutes still resist the new laws by exercising their vocation along the Ronda de Sant Antoni and the Zona Universitaria.¹¹⁰

Returning to the definition of spatial tactics, de Certeau makes a distinction between “tactics” and “strategies”: tactics are an elusive space of the other, and strategies are “a place that can be circumscribed,” such as institutions and monumental space (xix). However, this dichotomy is messier than he proposes because one agent (authority) has more power over the other, and hence encapsulates the other. Authorities are obviously aware of the everyday tactics of resistance and have their own tactics to combat them and sustain their power. They try to appropriate many of the same organic qualities that tactics possess, for example: flexibility, elusivity, fluidity, and malleability; such as surveillance cameras, dogs, and undercover police.¹¹¹

For this reason, both the common military distinction between tactics and strategies, as well as Althusser’s paradigm between the ISA and RSA, both ideologically align themselves more realistically than de Certeau’s division between tactics and

¹⁰⁹ Translation: “There are a lot of kids here that go to school and they have to pass through this spectacle.”

¹¹⁰ Given that these two locations differ in that one is right in the middle of the tourist enclave (Ronda de Sant Antoni) and the other is further out, close to the city’s limits (Zona Universitaria), an interesting comparative study would be to investigate how public response to prostitution differs in correlation to geographical distance from the image-conscious city center.

¹¹¹ Postmodern architects and urban planners also strive for these qualities that tactics possess. Though this isn’t evident in Barcelona until the 1990s, over a half-century ago urbanists like Henri Lefebvre, the Situationists International and the (post)modernists architects Le Corbusier, Robert Venturi, and more recently Rem Koolhaas, theorized on the fluidity and interconnectedness of architecture and urbanism. The latter three architects highlighted the need to take advantage of these qualities, to simplify, to create structures that were flexible and easily transformable, for they had predicted the technological demands that would soon be asked of our cities as we moved closer to an informational age.

strategy. In the military, strategies are the large prescribed plans from top to bottom, while tactics are the small improvised plans at the bottom. Thus follows that both strategies and tactics function within the military's structure. But the tactical level is singular since it is here where actions are self-realized instead of exteriorly-imposed, where actions have the fragile opportunity to both occur out of free will and slither in and out of this exteriorly-constructed structure.

Accordingly, I'd like to add Louis Althusser's model to this paradigm. Althusser's model is not based on space (fixed verses elusive) or agent (authority verses other) but rather *the manner in which control is executed*: on one hand: the "Repressive State Apparatuses," which is executed through repression and violence (the military, police force, justice system) and on the other hand: the "Ideological State Apparatuses", which is executed through ideology (church, school, media, culture, entertainment).

I believe this model is more realistic than de Certeau's because it compensates for the movement and flexibility between types of spaces and agents. Further, it entails the authoritative agent's ubiquitous role in maintaining the entire structure through both violence/repression and ideology, which includes implementing both strategies and tactics of both violent and ideological types. Also, following in Marx's footsteps, Althusser's model allocates *resistance* within the ISA: "the Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle" (99). Hence, we could deduce that, in spite of authority's presence in the ISA, the others' spatial tactics are also present in the IRA and have the potential to bring about social change.

Now that we have clarified the essence of spatial tactics, and since at least Lefebvre, David Harvey, the Situationists, and the Surrealists are confident that it is *in*

the everyday that change is possible,¹¹² let's now bring spatial tactics into the dialectical interdisciplinary laboratory (not the scientific laboratory which de Certeau and Foucault find inadequate) to see how, on a scholarly level, they can be used in order “to destroy the spectacle” so that “fluid historical time [can] be rediscovered” (<www.notbored.org>).¹¹³

Because human precariousness still exists and because spatial tactics are based on the natural human instincts of survival and creativity, they are regenerative, transtemporal (transcending time) and heterotopic (transcending space). De Certeau hints at this when he defines a tactic as “a skill that disappears into them and reappears again” (18).¹¹⁴ Further, since precarious conditions still exist, spatial tactics not only transcend the city's image, but also the traditional linear myth of progress of history and the fragmented and pleasant (post)modern narrative of temporality—visible in both everyday public space and the general collective consciousness. So, if one spatial tactic is not enough to prove a spatio-historical tendency, we can join several spatial tactics together and use them as a *dialectical tool* to presupposed and trace the creativity and narratives that lie outside historic brackets, in other times (heterotemporality), and other places (heterotopicality) since humankind's first civic regulation was implemented. This will

¹¹² I'm basing this statement on the books Spaces of Hope by David Harvey, The Production of Space by Lefebvre, and the art projects realized by the Situationists International and the Surrealists.

¹¹³ With these quotes the authors of “Notbored!” are referring to Lefebvre's The Production of Space and Debord's Society of the Spectacle.

¹¹⁴ I'm not sure what he is referring to with the pronoun “them”, so I include the whole passage in case my reader would like to try to figure it out: “Like the skill of a driver in the streets of Rome or Naples, there is a skill that has its connoisseurs and its esthetics exercised in any labyrinth of powers, a skill ceaselessly recreating opacities and ambiguities—spaces of darkness and trickery—in the universe of technocratic transparency, a skill that disappears into them and reappears again, taking no responsibility for the administration of a totality.”

create dialogue between times and spaces that are commonly disassociated. Let us look at five examples.

First, the case of *barracas* (cheap unregulated housing). If we can recognize the creation of *barracas* as a spatial tactic (and it is since it's a creative way of "making do" resulting from the lack of affordable housing) and that they are transtemporal and heterotopical, we can connect their individual cases and see them as part of a larger picture across time and geography. So, for example, in Barcelona, or Spain in general, in spite of the common disassociation or outright rejection of the similarities, the current immigration issues bear a resemblance to those of the wave of migration from other parts of Spain in the 50s (mainly from the south to Barcelona and Bilbao). This similarity can be proven by the fact that new immigrant *barracas* have appeared on the rooftops in the Historic Quarter, recalling the *barracas* that proliferated along the beach during the 50s up until the 80s, when they were torn down in preparation for the Olympics (Capel) (see fig. 2.9).

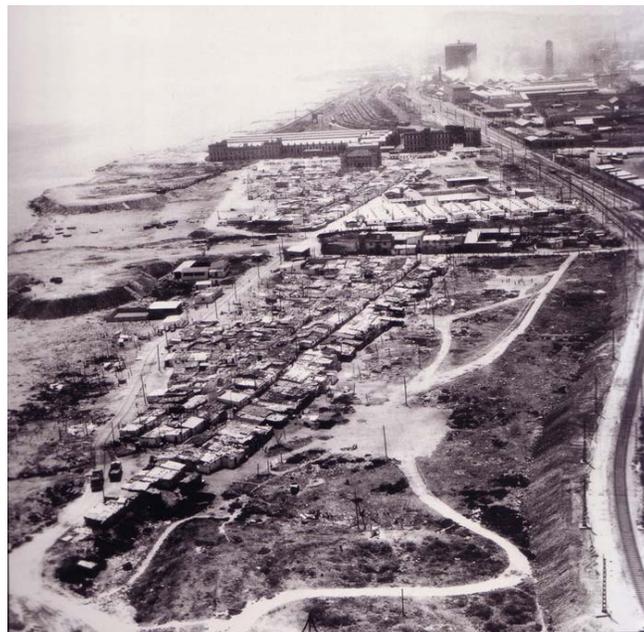


Fig 2.9. The *barracas* that used to line the Barceloneta. From Barcelona desapareguda.

My second example provides the same kind of historical echo: the black market. In the historic quarter networked immigrants sell pirated CDs and DVDs; solo elders sell unpredictable *pacotilla* (second-hand stuff). This could be put in dialogue with the *estraperlo* market that existed in the same area during the Franco regime (see figs. 2.10 and 2.11).



Fig. 2.10. Jaume Juncadella, 2005



Fig. 2.11. In the Raval, these “junk markets” usually appear on weekend mornings, Megan Saltzman, 2005.

Example three: the everyday practice of urinating. Although the smell has diminished a great deal since the November 2005 civic laws, anyone who has walked through Cuitat Vella knows it smells like pee. Though urinating pertains to everyone (not just the other) it nevertheless has become a spatial tactic in Barcelona, for it highlights a reappropriated space and a recurring issue: due to the lack of public restrooms, the vertical surface of *façade corners* and *trash bins (contenedores)* are used as *urinals* (see fig. 2.12). This past November, 2005, and January, 2006, port-a-potties were installed through Ciutat Vella to eliminate the practice. A recent article in El País traces the issue back:

El consistorio ha optado por instalar los urinarios y retomar así una larga tradición en Barcelona. Hasta 1984, había unos 48 mingitorios públicos, situados en puntos estratégicos y lugares de paso, como la plaza de Catalunya, la plaza de Urquinaona o el paseo de Sant Joan. Ese año el *Ajuntament* los sustituyó por otro sistema: las cabinas individuales. Pero era de pago y la gente no las utilizaba. Barcelona no había experimentado aún el boom del turismo y el consistorio decidió retirarlas. (García)



Fig. 2.12. Eva Megías, 2006.

For another account, I asked the photographer Eva Megías, native of Úbeda (Spain), resident of the Raval since 2002, about this issue through email. In her response she elaborates on our third example and points out a fourth: homelessness. (I quote fully since her oral history is interesting, original, and “unpublished.”)

Mi padre me contó que en los años 50-60 cuando él vivió en Madrid había baños y servicios públicos para la gente que no tenía ninguna habitación en casa habilitada para la higiene corporal. Eran baratos y frecuentados por gente de clase baja. Con el tiempo en las viviendas de la clase baja han ido apareciendo los cuartos de baños. Por lo que hoy en día es difícil de encontrar un piso donde no haya un baño. En aquella época no había gente durmiendo en la calle, no existían los “homeless”, el gobierno franquista no permitía esto. Con la democracia fueron apareciendo en la calle gente sin casa. Y por eso, esta gente empezó a utilizar la calle como baño. También hay inmigrantes que vienen de países pobres que traen la costumbre de orinar en cualquier sitio, porque en sus países también lo hacen así, sobre todo los que vienen de entornos rurales. Además de la típica gente, española por ejemplo, que es mal educada y mean en la calle durante el fin de semana cuando han bebido demasiadas cervezas.¹¹⁵

Megia’s account seems consistent with another type of tactical economy that comes and goes, that of the *chatarreros* (the fifth example). Every year that I’ve returned to Barcelona I’ve observed an increase in *chatarreros* (people who search through the garbage, often to resell the goods), primarily immigrants and local elders (see figs. 2.2 and 2.13). In my opinion, this is a result of the escalating cost of living in the downtown area.

¹¹⁵ Email interview with Eva Megías; responses received on February 7, 2006. English: “My father told me that in the 50s-60s when he lived in Madrid there were bathrooms and public services for body hygiene for those that didn’t have a room at home. They were cheap and used by the lower class. As time passed, bathrooms began appearing in lower-class housing. Nowadays it’s difficult to find a flat that doesn’t have a bathroom. Back then there weren’t people sleeping in the street, there weren’t “homeless”, the Francoist government didn’t permit it. With democracy homeless people began appearing on the streets. And therefore, these people began using the street as a bathroom. Also there are immigrants that come from poor countries and bring the custom of peeing wherever, because in their countries they did, especially those that come from rural areas. Besides the typical people, Spanish for example, who are rude and pee in the street on the weekends when they have drunk too many beers.”



Fig. 2.13. A homeless woman sleeps on a bench on Gran Via, Megan Saltzman, 2005.

Hence, in spite of the images of progress, and a cookie-cutter version of history of “grand narratives,” spatial tactics have the potential of confronting the present with historical discontinuity (“destroy[ing] the spectacle” so that “fluid historical time [can] be rediscovered”).¹¹⁶ Spatial tactics can complicate the line of history, particularly its breaks or moments that are given a proper name, or an end, or a beginning—the “grand narratives.” In the case of twentieth-century Spain for example, these interpellated fragments are “the end of Francoism,” “*desarrollismo*,” or “the transition to democracy.” *Barracas*, the black market, port-a-potties, homelessness, and *chatarreros*...these examples straddle temporality and more importantly they complicate notions of progress; they support Lyotard’s and Habermas’s conclusion that *the promises of modernity were never fulfilled*, and in more local terms they put into serious question the common and

¹¹⁶ In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard defines “grand narratives” or “meta-narratives” as large well-known historical narratives that construct our collective ideologies; such as Marxism or the “grand quests” of the Enlightenment.

simplified idea that 1975 is an abrupt turning point in Spanish history, that things drastically changed for the better, and that “Spain’s transition to democracy was a success” (Richards 38).

While spatial tactics have the potential to confront the present with its own repressed past, this potential is politically weak and obscure; it doesn’t have a voice. Since the creators of spatial tactics often find themselves in precarious conditions, their practices need observant mediators to locate, translate, and make public the social injustices from which they derive. Whereas nationally important figures, events, and spaces have traditionally had a historian to document them, spatial tactics haven’t. As de Certeau says, “it [the tactic] marks itself (by smudges, lapses, etc.) but it does not write itself. It alters a place (it disturbs), but it does not establish a place” (155). In the daily bombardment of information, if spatial tactics reach our eyes and/or ears at all, it is usually through the news or government-funded media which represents them as a form of moral degeneracy, such as *okupas* being evicted or immigrants being arrested for illegal sales. For example, the summer of 2005 I saw new large vertical signs hanging from the lampposts lining Las Ramblas. The black and red signs depicted a pair of hands playing the *trilero* game and in three languages it read “*Beware! This is a trick!*” (In spite of these signs I continued to observe successful *trileros* at work.) Further, these representations are often worded by the media as “conductes incíviques” and as a threat to “convivència” (*Ajuntament, Projecte 6*).

So, although *everyone* is capable of discovering *everyday* life, spatial tactics are in need of keen observers who have time to wander and get off track. For instance: the *flaneur*, situationist, anthropologist, archeologist, detective, prisoner, *chatarrero*, free-

runner,¹¹⁷ bored person, children, cats, pigeons, and the “organic intellectual” are all generally well-equipped with time, sensibility, cleverness, and curiosity for the everyday and are more likely to encounter tactics within a regulated space.¹¹⁸ (Further, they are also the ones who, if driven by necessity, would be best at not only finding tactics, but also *creating* them.) But—only *present-day* tactics. Since tactics are hidden and ephemeral, the tactics of the *past* require a sensitive historian to carefully search and filter through the rubbish and the archives (as Benjamin, the Surrealists, and the Dadaists did).

Nevertheless, to discover tactics in the city and the library is to complete only half of the task. This is where society, including Academia, falls short—few deinstitutionalize their social discoveries. As Highmore says (referring to the ideas of Henri Lefebvre), the everyday has the potential of breaking political ground and concludes that:

What all this results in is, I think, a suspicion (sometimes confusingly articulated) about translating everyday life theory and practice into the available language of ‘critical’ politics. [...] it is in the everyday that emancipation might be found (if it is to be found at all); critiques of the everyday will emerge in the practices of everyday life... (Highmore 29)

¹¹⁷ Freerunners can often be seen jumping around cities, using unexpected platforms (railings, rooftops, windowsills...) to get from A to B. According to <www.wikipedia.org> “Free running is a physical discipline, in which participants [Free runners] attempt to pass all obstacles in their path in a smooth and fluid way. Free runners interact with their environment using movements such as vaulting, jumping, somersaults and other acrobatic movements, creating an athletic and aesthetically pleasing way of moving.”

¹¹⁸ In Carol Becker’s essay “The Artist As Public Intellectual” she defines (via Edward Said’s words) the role of the artist, which she feels is unambiguously public and related to Antoni Gramsci’s definition of the “organic intellectual” from Prison Notebooks: “The organic intellectual is the one “whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on the basis of universal principles: that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behavior concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations, and that deliberate or inadvertent violations of those standards need to be testified and fought against courageously.” Edward Said distinguished the organic intellectual from the “professional intellectuals” who simply pass knowledge along.

Hence, although we can consider tactics a positive form of resistance, because of their nature to hide, they are voiceless and therefore, by themselves, they are not effective as a long-term strategy in improving living conditions or writing their history. For this reason individuals who can not only encounter tactics, but also extract their deeper meaning, trace the temporalities they represent (past to future), and make them *really* public (not just to the elite circles) are needed. Larger organized movements (such as the FAVB (Federació d'Associacions de Veïns de Barcelona, neighborhood associations) and ONGS (*organizaciones no gubernamentales*, non-profit organizations) are two agencies that have been the most effective in translating the tactics and bringing their social issues into the ring of critical politics. Without a public mediator, the problems continue, and the function of the tactic is nothing more than a temporary refuge for the other and a cool coffee topic for paid intellectuals.

Two examples of spatial tactics that were effectively recognized, publicly translated, and also responded to by the *Ajuntament* are the recent installation of the port-a-potties and bike racks. In the past, bike riders often used *sturdy vertical objects* (such as trees, window bars, lamp posts) to lock up bicycles (see figs. 2.14 and 2.15). Although it is possible that the *Ajuntament* followed up on the bike and port-a-potty issues only for the sake of the city's image and smell, since their actions succeeded grassroots protests, it is also possible that these examples are proof that spatial tactics via a mediator can make a political difference.



Fig. 2.14. Bikes tied to window bars, Eva Megías, 2005. Fig. 2.15 Bike tied to a tree, Eva Megías, 2005.

The catch in this move to the political, however, is trying to evade the commodification monster, in and around us, and which chews up most progressive efforts and spits them out as fashionable (as it did with Surrealism, whose politically charged works have ended up as centerpieces in high-ceilinged living rooms and national libraries.) If we pay too much attention to the form or single content of acts of political potential, they will not only foreshadow the others but also become trendy and frivolous, losing their political power. In Benjamin's 70-year-old essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," for example, he warns us about the aestheticization of politics, in reference to Fascism. With its overwhelming production of stimuli and information, advanced capitalism impedes the efforts of art in the city and provokes, what Simmel called a century ago: a *blasé* attitude, which depletes our sensitivity and temporal consciousness.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Fredric Jameson, on page 142 of "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" speaks on the waning of subversive art: "That is to say that whatever the explicit political content of the great high modernisms, the latter were always in some mostly implicit ways dangerous and explosive, subversive within the established order. [...] there is very little in either the form or the content of contemporary art that contemporary society finds intolerable and scandalous."

Though one part of me is flattered, the other part feels uncomfortable about the becoming-commodity of my volleyball photograph. I have heard two colleagues refer to it while making small talk; and once someone called it “*cool*”—George Orwell’s “Newspeak” adjective! I hope my reader sees a problem here. How *can* we approach, examine and publicize the tactic *without decontextualizing and aestheticizing it*?

De Certeau would respond: not with the traditional scientific approach. He concludes that the scientific method is insufficient in analyzing such an elusive, qualitative, and contextual (intimately related to its context) aspect of society because it simplifies these practices to numbers and materials: “statistical investigation remains virtually ignorant of these [tactical] trajectories”, “what is counted is *what* is used, not the *ways* of using” (xvii, 35).¹²⁰ Hence, since the scientific method fails, what de Certeau indirectly calls for is a more interdisciplinary and “everyday” approach to culture. Highmore’s answer, on the other hand, is that:

no form of discourse is ever going to be ‘proper’ (appropriate) to everyday life. The everyday will necessarily exceed attempts to apprehend it. This would simply mean that the search for the perfect fit between a form of representation and its object (the everyday) needs to be called off. (Highmore 21).

Maybe de Certeau gets caught in-between the monster’s teeth—he sometimes aestheticizes the precarious. He states that tactics are both a way of getting by due to an “absence of a proper locus”, often as the “only possibility, as a ‘last resort’”; as well as an art form: “arts of making,” “an art of the weak” (37, xv). Either I have not understood this correctly or there appears to be a contradiction or an exploitation in attributing both of these qualities to tactics. For the purpose of this study, if one limits art (as I do) to a

¹²⁰ De Certeau later states: “Statistics can tell us virtually nothing about the currents in this sea theoretically governed by the institutional frameworks that it in fact gradually erodes and displaces” (34).

voluntary creation, the spatial tactic could not be a work of art, at least not on behalf of the creator who reappropriates merely to meet a basic need. Hence, for this chapter, I've tried not to aestheticize the spatial tactic (however marvelous I think they are) because that would hinder its true potential and obscure its precarious origin.¹²¹ Perhaps the contradiction implies an unresolvable paradox inherent to tactics? Another interpretation of *the art in the tactic* is that de Certeau simply wants us to elevate the status of, and conceptualize the tactic as, that of a learned practice and process, such as the way someone learns to paint or draw or fix a roof.¹²²

Although de Certeau concludes that the scientific method is ineffective in this context, and Highmore that: *no* form appropriately represents everyday life/tactics, I believe the dialectical creations of the aforementioned subjects—for example: the flaneur's poetic lament; the Situationist's and Surrealists manifestos and art projects; the organic artists' social projects; and the anthropologist's monograph; and the detective's and especially the solidarity organizations' report—provide the richest and most heterogeneous texts through which everyday life can be studied.

Benjamin's and the surrealists' response was to use the montage or the dialectical image as an intentional and unconventional juxtaposition which would force the readers

¹²¹ We come across this aestheticization again in the chapter titled "Walking in the City" in which de Certeau describes the vast objective view over New York City from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center: "To what erotics of knowledge does the ecstasy of reading such a cosmos belong? Having taken a voluptuous pleasure in it, I wonder what is the source of this pleasure of "seeing the whole," of looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts" (22).

¹²² The Situationists International spent a lot of time arguing between how to include art in taking action on everyday life politics. In the essay "The Situationist City" from the post-Situationists website "notbored.org," the anonymous writer makes various references to the ideological rifts between the "pro-art" and "non-art" factions within the Situationists. Further, the author states that the Situationist movement gradually shifted from revolutionary art (1957-1961) to revolutionary practices which culminated with the insurrection in Paris, May 1968.

and viewers to break with traditional modes of thinking in order to make sense of the whole.¹²³ They brought the everyday to the forefront, challenging modern-day concepts of aesthetics and history. But maybe these representations are no longer as effective anymore? As Jameson says, (referring to postmodernism) “there is very little in either the form or the content of contemporary art that contemporary society finds intolerable and scandalous” because institutions and commercialization “empty them [art forms] of any subversive power” (“Postmodernism” 142-3).¹²⁴

In conjunction with Benjamin, I would like to suggest that we can help the everyday discourse become the agent of its own form by allowing it to arrange itself on the page or canvas (with the hope that its result be relatively legible) or at least loosen the rein a little bit.¹²⁵ If modernity and everyday life are fragmented and fleeting, what better way to represent them (both in art and academic spheres) than in creative fragments, vignettes, aphorisms..., like the fragmented form of many of Benjamin’s works.¹²⁶ This

¹²³ I like the way Oscar Tusquets Blanca phrases it in Todo es comparable: “Todo parece indicar que el misterioso mecanismo de creación que se aplica tanto a la ciencia como al arte nace de relacionar dos fenómenos aparentemente inconexos; y cuanto más inconexos aparecen, más imaginación hace falta para descubrir una afinidad oculta, y más original resulta la creación” (9).

¹²⁴ In this passage Jameson is referring to “art forms” (works of art). I earlier argued that spatial tactics are not an art form, and I still stand by this—Jameson is referring to art forms as subjective forms of representation, such as how we represent the everyday/tactics, not the original object of study per se (such as tactics).

¹²⁵ In [N1a,8] of The Arcades Project Benjamin writes “Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuable, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them” (460).

¹²⁶ Some other critical works whose creative form, I think, represents the everyday effectively are: Louis Aragon’s Paris Peasant, Maurizio Viano and Vincenzo Binetti’s article “What Is to Be Done?” in Marxism Beyond Marxism, Tour-isms produced by the Fundació Antoni Tàpiesl, Situationistes, Situationists produced by MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona), the books by Jordi Borja, and the books by Rem Koolhaas. It seems to be a literary tendency

would not make art immune from the commodity monster, but, open-ended fragmented work would foster subjective interpretation, *not* of what the author wants to say, but what the *materia prima* has to say. For this reason it is subversive, openly subjective (no two people will interpret the text in the same way) and it does generate discourse—like the mountains of discourse the Arcades Project alone has inspired.

Some artists who have dealt with the everyday life in an urban milieu have provided a critical platform for spatial tactics. Because spatial tactics exist for only a brief time, film offers a more-permanent and critical platform that allows them to be put on pause and analyzed. The documentary En construcción by José Luis Guerín focuses on a case of gentrification in the Raval neighbourhood in 1999 and captures several spatial tactics. A nineteenth-century flat building is being demolished and a new one is being constructed. In the old building lower-income families were paid the equivalent of about 3,600 euros to move elsewhere, while the new 70 square meter apartments sold for about 110,000 euros each (Winkels).¹²⁷

In this film, one doesn't see the manufactured image of Barcelona. There's no Gaudí architecture, shopping, or fun-n-sun. The film focuses on the small construction site, where an intimate community, a way of life, and 2000 years of history all become victims of the bulldozer. With wide-angle shots and long takes, Guerín's camera, like the creators of spatial tactics, pries into the semi-private realm, passes through the fences and keep-out signs, through the alluring consumer opportunities, and past the media and

coming from interdisciplinary fields of urbanism, sociology, architecture, and graphic design and slightly more in Europe more than elsewhere.

¹²⁷ Concerning the exact figures, accordingly to Abdel Aziz el Mountassir, the Moroccan philosopher and local construction worker who appears in the film, tenants were paid 600,000 pesetas to abandon apartments that later sold for 20 million pesetas (Winkels).

pretentious façades. His camera allows the viewer a relatively objective glance into a raw and ephemeral space and shows several examples of locals re-appropriating their transformed space. For example, children use beams laid against a wall as slides, and two men use planks of wood as benches. On the white floors and walls of the new unfinished apartments, a young couple has made a bedroom with a mattress; children make a playhouse with left out construction materials; and a homeless man has converted the terrace into a kitchen. Amid the debris, we even see stray cats making themselves at home (see figs. 2.16 to 2.18).



Fig. 2.16. From En construcción. Courtesy of Ovídeo TV S.A.



Fig. 2.17. From En construcción. Courtesy of Oviedo TV S.A.



Fig. 2.18. From En construcción. Courtesy of Oviedo TV S.A.

Perhaps the most startling and fascinating spatial tactic in the film is one reclaimed not by the living, but by the dead. During the demolition of the old building, workers discover a Roman cemetery. Fences are immediately erected around the remains, and while construction work is postponed, Guerin's camera continues filming, recording the disparate comments and facial expressions of the people who huddle around to speculate about what's been found. While the discovery of the archaeological remains reveals the historical and functional depth of the space, onlookers' irrational hypotheses reveal that they are unaware of the depth and tend to take space at surface value. As one observant onlooker states, "vives encima de los muertos y ni te enteras."¹²⁸ Four months after the discovery of the remains, they are removed from their location, and construction continues.

At the beginning of the film we see a series of eyes painted on a wall. Towards the end, the camera zooms in on the eyes and a bulldozer tears the wall down. Besides denouncing gentrification, Guerin is asking us to look more closely at the paradoxical significance of space at a time when visibility is being literally and symbolically torn apart. On one hand, we observe the dense socio-historical network that space provides and retains, but on the other hand, we observe its superfluity and irrelevance. We see walls going up and being torn down, floors being installed and ripped apart, doors being knocked down and put up again—constant movement on a variety of planes, transition, replacement, demolition, construction: all these spatial transformations on fast forward. In the end, it is as if all the material barriers cancel each other out or disappear. We see how silly they are or, how silly we are to give such importance to putting up a bathroom door, or a wall between my apartment and my neighbours,' when soon they'll be torn

¹²⁸ Translation: "We live over dead bodies and don't even know it."

down again. One woman shrugs while gazing down at the Roman skeletons and comments “todo el mundo en el mismo agujero, tanto los ricos como los pobres.”¹²⁹

Which leads us to a reductive question regarding spatial tactics. My reader may have noticed the class-consciousness related to the majority of the aforementioned cases of spatial tactics. For the most part, the subjects named pertain directly to the lower class—*chatarreros*, prostitutes, *limpiacristales*, the unemployed, black markets. And we have seen many economically motivated tactics, such as tying one’s bike up so another doesn’t steal it, selling goods on the street, or having to sleep on a storefront hearth. I’m leading us to a question: is money what keeps spatial tactics going? De Certeau engulfs spatial tactics as “a product of consumption.” Similarly, Louis Althusser, in the footsteps of and a century after Marx, believed that an “infrastructure” of “economic base” lies beneath culture, social stratification and its repressive ideology to maintain/“reproduce” them. Spatial tactics are part of our everyday culture. So are spatial tactics reduced to *modern urban capitalism/the division of classes*?

I don’t feel confident enough to agree with Althusser because that would mean that three of the requirements for spatial tactics: regulations, transgressive will, and creativity are individually related to social class, and I don’t believe they are. If cultural constructs are rooted in economical exchange, then to know for sure one would have to investigate to what extent transgressive will, creativity, and regulations are innate and to what extent they are cultural constructs participating in economical ends. Let’s briefly take these three apart in order to see to what extent spatial tactics depend on capitalism.

¹²⁹ Translation: “Everyone ends up in the same hole, the rich the same as the poor.”

Regulations (both written and unwritten, for example respectively: an *ordenanza* prohibiting vomiting in public space as well as the *feeling* that Moroccans are not welcome to join the Sardanya dance that takes place every Sunday morning in the Plaça de la Catedral) are not always directly based on economic production because the latter (the feeling of exclusion) often originates from the national myth for which other factors, such as nationality, skin color, and language (Catalonian, white, Catalan) may come before economic productivity.

Transgressive will. Do the conditions of poverty create a behavioral tendency or urge to break spatial boundaries without direct political or economical motives? Would the upper-class have the humility to beg or sleep on the street if they lost their economic means? Based on what we see in the city and popular media, it may appear that this type of “degeneracy” or behavior is related to a set of reproduced values of the lower class. But evidently it’s not. Other factors such as age, sexual orientation, and political beliefs have caused individuals, and especially collectives, to break spatial boundaries for non-political/non-economic reasons, for example, to make a play area or to simply talk with a friend or intimately engage with a person who happens to be of the same sex or similar political beliefs which are not collectively given a proper public space and/or acceptance.

Finally, the correlation between creativity and capitalism/division of classes. If we take the human epitome of creativity to be the artist, it is true that most of Western culture’s famous artists came from the accommodated bourgeoisie class. But the sociologist Pierre Bourdeau would argue that this is simply because of what he calls *cultural capital*: the education, cultural repertoire, and values that one receives from

his/her immediate cultural surroundings, especially school and family.¹³⁰ (So for example, being able to appreciate opera (highbrow art) is not innate, but comes from a series of cultural formations that provide specific educational tools that endow certain individuals with the ability to appreciate opera.) Cultural capital is passed on from generation to generation. For this reason, we could also say that regardless of class, it's often the case that artists come from families of artists. If creativity develops in correlation to our cultural surroundings then that means something wonderful: that *we all* have some creativity in us, a survival ability that all of us possess, regardless of how loosely or tightly we are economically constrained.

Hence, I think this proves that spatial tactics and all their discourse, although it seems to arise from modern capitalism—related to the economical struggle within time and space—existed before capitalism. They can't be reduced to capitalism but to *some form of regulation*, some written or non-written rule that tells the individual “NO.”¹³¹

To conclude. As autonomy and spontaneity disappear from the city, so do spatial tactics, degenerating the living conditions and histories not only for those creative or forgotten subjects that “make use of the cracks”—the lonely, the displaced, the cats, the kids, the dead—but for all of us living in an urbanized setting (de Certeau 37). I have applied it to a time and urban space (contemporary Ciutat Vella) but it is in no way limited to this time and space, I could just have well applied the theory to the city in

¹³⁰ Though *cultural capital* it's denominated “capital,” Bourdieu's not referring to capital in the sense of money (that's what he calls *economic capital*) rather he's uses the term capital to signify a type of individual possession. These terms, which have become part of Bourdieu's general vocabulary, are defined in his essay “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction.”

¹³¹ For this reason I suggested earlier that the organic medieval city must have been replete in spatial tactics.

general, or to Ann Arbor or any urbanized area. In fact an investigation of spatial tactics is even more urgent in rapidly gentrifying cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Baghdad, New Delhi, Istanbul, New Orleans, the neighborhood Poblenou of Barcelona. In all of these areas historic space is being transformed into a mere economical and informational node (space of transit) on a network of global cities dominated by New York, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Frankfurt and Paris (Križnik, Castells).

The autonomy that remains in the city needs to be taken up before it disappears completely. This autonomy resides in the everyday day, in spatial tactics, in the little ways in which we and others exercise our non-violent desires and needs in space. At a time of deceptive transparency, fragmented history, and increasing surveillance and regulation, if we can make an effort to give spatial tactics less commodified attention and public representation, they have the potential to fill the blanks of history, improve living conditions, and give the citizens, as Lefebvre's book is titled, their "right to the city."



Fig. 2.19. The abandoned lot where immigrants used to play volleyball. (See fig. 2.1.) Eva Megías, January 23, 2007.

Chapter III: Urban Nostalgia

1. Introduction

There has been a proliferation of cultural materials (books, films, museum exhibits) produced in the last three decades in Spain that either abstractly present the city “the way it used to be” before the transition to democracy, or lament the present-day city. Both of these representations suggest a problem with the contemporary city and a new cultural phenomenon.

This may appear obvious or unimportant. Contemporary European society is increasingly urbanized and twentieth century Europe has witnessed mass influxes of migrants from rural areas and small towns to the cities, war exiles, and more recently massive waves of immigration from the colonies to the European “homeland.” In addition, since the 1960s, cultural censorship in Spain has wound down and public cultural expression (such as literary publications, film expositions, and museum space) is increasingly ubiquitous.

Under these circumstances, one might posit that, evidently, more critical cultural products are going to be produced than before, and their discourse, as the cultural industry tends to thrive in urbanized areas, is obviously going to be urban-related.

However, in spite of these conditions, and unlike previously, these cultural products are representing urban time and space in a new way: nostalgically.

This chapter will analyze critical representations of the relationship between individuals and their public space in the Historic Quarter of Barcelona in several cultural texts (novels, an essay, and a personal interview). I will argue that, while the socio-political structure in democratic Barcelona continues to merge with a global economy, a nostalgic aura and degeneration of both historical consciousness and general state of wellbeing are resulting. More specifically, as basic needs are met in this democratic period, as the velocity, alienation, ephemerality, and information dissemination in urban social life becomes increasingly overwhelming, urban “thinkers” are struggling with feelings of *impotence* and *hopelessness* in being able to apprehend anything. In the end, these nostalgic thinkers develop a longing for the past to the extent that, just like the consumer-driven market, they also produce fragmented and idealized images of the city’s history, which are retrogressive and eradicate the efficacy of the urban dwellers’ original critiques and the fulfillment of their desires.

2. Prologue and Some Theory

“Porque también somos lo que hemos perdido.”¹³²
—Alejandro González Iñárritu, Amores perros

As the modern city transforms economically and politically, buildings are razed, new ones are erected, fixed populations become transitory... The space where memories

¹³² Translation: “Because we are also what we have lost.”

are posited is ripped from the city and from our minds. Our points of reference disappear. As the *Ajuntament* tries to fill this absence with a new cultural identity, but it doesn't carry the same meaning; it only pleases the naïve or apathetic, and it "can no longer act as a guide or exemplar" (Crimson xiii). Therefore the new image does not even carry a meaningful meaning. Also known as "the present," the new image is like a massive smiley-face balloon hovering over the city. The sensitive run away from it. To where? They will seek out familiar spaces. A memory makes a space familiar. But if they no longer exist? They seek to recreate them, to "hyperremember," with their senses acute for minuscule quotidian details that only bring pain. Their senses are acute in order to find and put together remnants of the past—mental images, smells, objects, photographs, stories, social relations—to construct some kind of narrative (Clewell 44). Whether the narrative is credible or not, coherent or not, may or may not be an issue; for, in many cases, the individual does not even know exactly what he/she is looking for. Hence, the ambivalence and paradox of nostalgia: *one is fervently desiring something that he/she cannot completely name* and consequently "there is no escape because one cannot flee from what cannot even be reached" (Agamben 6).

As the individual sorts through the pieces, regardless of what is ultimately sought (a logical narrative, truth, comfort...) he/she will pick and choose which remnants to include, which to exclude. Hence, the search is a very subjective and individualistic process, but, it is also inevitably and intimately linked to "the collective framework of memory" (Halbwachs 39). In the modern period, the most influential constructor of this collective framework, or writer of this subjective narrative of the past (after the individual him/herself) is the spectacle, the media, the image, where "truth is a moment of

falsehood” (Debord 14). Ubiquitous and created for economical profit, the spectacle constructs a false image of the past that is cut-off from the present and intensifies longing. Hence as modern time passes, the nostalgic’s search is made more complicated, less satisfying, and less likely to reach a truth.¹³³

Before I go on, I think it’s necessary to clarify some definitions because many terms and metaphors are often used interchangeably to describe an individual’s psychological and/or humoral response to a personal loss, for instance: nostalgia, mourning, grief, melancholia, *acedia*, depression, *hikikomori*, “black bile”... What I have defined thus far is a general mix of these symptoms of these diagnoses. The terms have different general, everyday, clinical, and physiological etymologies and connotations that are worth looking at in order to historically contextualize the condition with what theorists have said about this condition. This will help us analyze the subjects’ condition in a larger historical and dialectical scope and trajectory with other times and periods.

So it’s a feeling, a condition, a humor, it’s black, what is it? And who does it affect? Let’s move forward chronologically.

Giorgio Agamben in his book Stanzas (1993), traces discourse on melancholy back to Aristotle who asked in the fourth century BC, “Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry, or the arts are melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are infected by the disease arising from black bile?” (Agamben 12). Agamben doesn’t dwell on the early philosophy, rather on medieval humoral cosmology. In the

¹³³ Life is easier when one is unconscious of the hegemony of the image. Guy Debord, like the protagonist of Iván Zulueta’s film Arrebato, tried to supersede the spectacle and it ended up killing him.

Middle Ages there were four humors or vices: “*acedia* (sloth), *tristitia* (sorrow), *taedium vitae* (weariness, loathing of life), and *desidia* (idleness)” (Agamben 3). *Acedia*/sloth, also named the “noonday demon” was the gravest. It drove devote Catholic males to contemplate in isolation and feel useless, sad, confused, and anxious for answers to the questions of their spiritual being, but that, if found, they would be unwilling to act on. Agamben points out that in the Middle Ages those inflicted with *acedia* were not necessarily frowned upon, but rather thought of as possessed by

“a kind of sorrow” “conferred on him by God. What afflicts the slothful is not, therefore, the awareness of an evil, but on the contrary, the contemplation of the greatest of goods.” [. . .] Hence, the slothful is not in need of “salvation,” but the way that leads to it. (Agamben 5-6)

Agamben and Julia Kristeva in Black Sun translate this condition into the sixteenth century engraving “Melancholia I,” by Albrecht Dürer, which shows a man sitting in contemplation, resting his elbow on his knee, his head on his fist (see fig. 3.1).



Fig. 3.1. “Melancholia” by Albrecht Dürer.

According to Agamben, after the sixteenth century melancholia falls out of discourse until the nineteenth century when it reappears with the birth of modern psychiatric science, primarily with the work of Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century (19).

In “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) and “The Ego and the Id” (1923), Freud, without historicizing, divides the psychological condition primarily by severity: on one hand there’s mourning and on the other is melancholia, and both are dominated by narcissistic love.¹³⁴ Mourning is common. It occurs when a person suffers a loss, feels sadness and grief, knows specifically what has been lost, is conscious of his/her emotional condition and is making an effort to improve his/her emotional state. The mourner is usually cured when he/she “splits with its emotional attachment and reinvests the free libido in a new object” (Clewell 43). Melancholia, on the other hand, is more rare and clinically treated. It occurs when the subject is no longer conscious of what the lost object (“love-object”) is nor of the love-hate relationship he/she has with it. The melancholic individual loses self-esteem, becomes egocentric, and feels useless and suicidal. Because he/she can no longer identify the lost love-object, consequently he/she is incapable of improving his/her condition.

In the seventeenth century, a concept not so different from melancholia emerges: nostalgia. Svetlana Boym points out in The Future of Nostalgia that nostalgia (*nostos*: return home; *algia*: longing), which began in the seventeenth-century as a “curable disease” of homesick Swiss soldiers, has since become a universal and “incurable”

¹³⁴ For more information about Freud’s deduction of the object love to narcissistic love see pages 45-46 of Clewell’s “Mourning Beyond Melancholia” and/or “On Narcissism: An Introduction” by Freud.

“ailment” of the “utopian dreamer who had higher hopes for humanity,” “a side effect of critical reason” (xviii, 5).

I mention nostalgia because it is more similar to than different from melancholia or mourning. All three terms signify a sentimental longing for a lost object that over time becomes more and more ambiguous and impossible to obtain. Further, they tend to affect similar subjects—those contemplative and creative beings. In the following texts we will discuss how this lost object lies with an abstract period: the pre-transition-to-democracy. We will begin our discussion with Juan José Lahuerta’s essay “La destrucción de Barcelona.”

3. Juan José Lahuerta in his essay “La destrucción de Barcelona”

Born in Barcelona in 1954, Juan José Lahuerta, is an architect, writer, and professor of twentieth-century European History of Art at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona. His most recent publication is a little book titled La destrucción de Barcelona (2005). As the title suggests, this work, which we could call social commentary or essay, laments and condemns the destruction of Barcelona. While he metaphorically criticizes the post-Francoist urban transformations: the sterilization of the city (especially the markets), the Forum¹³⁵, mass tourism, and gentrification, he yearns for the palpable life that used to exist in the public space of Ciutat Vella (the Historic Quarter). He compares the work of “nuestras administraciones” in the city to that of a crude mechanical surgeon who sees the city as “un cuerpo enfermo [. . .] un cuerpo

¹³⁵ For information on the Forum, see the previous chapter dealing with the city’s image.

dormido, anestesiado, al que aplicar friamente unos instrumentos de acero para cortar y coser aquí o allá” (7, 15).¹³⁶ Contrasting with this “cadaver,” “fantasma,” “maqueta,” of a city, Lahuerta revives and discusses two “endangered” public spaces: the markets and “huellas”—surfaces whose textures wear the history of human contact (12, 13).¹³⁷

Let us delve into the literary image of the former—the old market—in order to approach Lahuerta’s reflection of time and space in Barcelona. The following passage, rich in meaning and detail, embodies Lahuerta’s voice and merits a lengthy dissection.

Imagínate, lector, por un instante el mercado, lo que era: gran representación de la abundancia, el lugar en el que todo rebosaba. Íbamos y veníamos por unos pasillos en los que los productos, verdaderos productos de la granja, del corral o de la tierra, y no sólo de la pura producción, del proceso, salpicaban y nos manchaban. Estrechos y repletos de gente cargando cestos o arrastrando carros, en esos pasillos no había escapatoria. Todo era necesariamente cercano. Aquí se cortaba la carne o se partía un hueso a golpe de cuchillo, y una esquirla roja volaba hasta nuestras ropas; allí se colgaba de un gancho los animales enteros y, aunque desollados, bien reconocibles; de allá nos llegaban las salpicaduras del pescado, del hielo picado en el que yacía, que iba deshaciéndose, de su agua más bien turbia, ensangrentada; allá en los cubos, en aguas cuyo tinte recordaba, como he dicho otras veces, el de la bañera de Marat—pongámonos trágicos—se acumulaban raspas, vísceras y cabezas; pisábamos los charcos que desbordaban los canalillos entre los mármoles y también todos los restos que iban quedando por los suelos, caídos de las cajas y las carretillas, desprendidos del borde de los mostradores por el roce de los codos de las gentes, atrastados por sus pies: frutas aplastadas, hojas de verduras podridas, malditas pieles que nos hacían resbalar para que representásemos cómicamente el instante peligroso: hacíamos equilibros, nos abríamos paso, y todos los puestos nos llamaban y atraían; nos guiábamos por la vista, pero al final era el tacto o, aún mejor, el olfato, ese sentido animal, bajo,

¹³⁶ Translation: “our administrators” in the city that of a crude mechanical surgeon that sees the city as “a sick body [...] asleep, anesthetized, upon which one needs to coldly apply some iron instruments in order to cut and sew here and there.” His analogy reminds me of the book El modelo Barcelona: un examen crítico in which the author Horacio Capel also metaphorically highlights the careless destruction carried out in the historic quarter in the 1980s and 90s. After addressing several cases of cruel gentrification, Capel advocates that “se trabaje con un pencil muy fino y no con la brocha gorda (66).” Translation: “that [the *Ajuntament*] work with fine lines not fat strokes.”

¹³⁷ Translation: “dead body,” “ghost,” “maquette.”

la comprobación más segura, la que distinguía sin mentir entre todas las gradaciones de lo podrido y lo fresco, de lo verde y lo maduro”(6).¹³⁸

It’s sticky, it’s smelly, but it’s colorful. Lahuerta has portrays “the market, what it used to be.” But, which market, and, when? He says he’s speaking from memory (“hablo sólo de lo que recuerdo”)(7).¹³⁹ No doubt he is trying to recreate the collective image of the typical Barcelonese market of his and his readers’ past. The time period he revives for us is not certain. Whether significant or not, his description resonates with many other representations of old markets, for example the rich sixteenth-century Dutch paintings of urban markets, and the bustling and jolly “consider yourself at home” scene in Carol Reed’s interpretation of the Dickens’s novel (1837) in the musical Oliver! (1956) when Oliver arrives in London for the first time in mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴⁰ It’s a time of baskets, wheelbarrows, and recently-slaughtered meat. We could temporally

¹³⁸ My translation: “Imagine yourself, reader, for a moment in the market, what it used to be: a grand representation of abundance, the place where everything was overflowing. We came and went through little aisles in which the products, real products from the farm, from the country or from the earth, not only of pure production, from the process, splashed about and stained us. [Aisles] narrow and replete with people filling their baskets or pushing carts, in those aisles there wasn’t any way out. Everything was necessarily close. Here they were cutting meat or parting a bone with a bang of a knife, and red splinters were flying around our clothes; over there whole animals were hanging from pegs and, though skinned, well recognizable, from above we were hit with splashes from the fish, from the chopped ice in which they were laying, which was melting, from their warm water, bloodied; there, in the cubes, in the water whose color reminded one, as I have said before, of the Marat bathtub—let’s get tragic—scraps, guts, and heads were accumulating; we stepped in the puddles that were overflowing from the canals between the marble, and also all the leftovers that were piling up on the floor, fallen from the boxes and the wheelbarrows, having fallen off the edge of the counters from the brush of people’s elbows, dragged by their feet: smashed fruit, leaves from rotten vegetables, darn feet that made us slip so that we comically showed the dangerous instant; we balanced, we made way for others, and all the stalls called us and attracted us; they guided us by our sense of sight, but in the end it was by touch, or even better, by smell, that animal sense, under, the most certain approval, was that which distinguished, without lying, between all the gradations from the spoiled and the fresh; from the green and the ripe.”

¹³⁹ My translation: “I’m only talking about what I remember.”

¹⁴⁰ I am referring to the paintings of Joachim Beuckelaer and Pieter Aetsen.

frame his image between the early days of refrigeration at the turn of the twentieth century and the increase of mass-produced processed food in the 1990s. I question the temporal frame in order to emphasize that *there is no real answer*. This “tiger’s leap into the past,” as Benjamin calls it, has no concrete place to land (“Theses” 261 [XIV]). Lahuerta’s mental image of the past evades specificities because it is not realistic. He sees the market not like a camera, but like a modern intellectual whose desperate imagination brings old photographs to life. Pained by the substitution of meaningful historic places for what Marc Augé calls “non-places,” Lahuerta imagines a lively hypersensual Rubensesque market scene.¹⁴¹ He highlights the sounds, smells, textures of elements that have diminished from the European city. The use of fine details of everyday life makes the image more intimate and effective in alluring his readers to join the collective mourning of Barcelona, *what it used to be*. In this sense his text is like a eulogy, giving hyperbolic praise to the wonderful life of a dead friend.

In addition, with the constant repetition of “nosotros” (we), Lahuerta creates an “imagined community,” to use Benedict Anderson’s term. A happy collective effort—*we are working together, we are comically tripping over one another, we are making way for our fellow citizens—physical and organic closeness to the point that it’s nearly smothering*. Lahuerta longs for a space of community, solidarity, intimacy, the human

¹⁴¹ Marc Augé in Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity defines “non-spaces” as “a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity (77-78).” He is referring to a space formed to network commerce by means of signs that lacks a fixed or profound affective or historical meaning. Non-spaces belong to an alienated elusive neocapitalistic system, such as the state or an international corporation and so are generally mass-produced. They can be anything from places of transport (train station, airport) where the signs direct the flow of people and replace the actual place, to refugee camps or chain corporations (supermarkets, hotels...). In a non-space an individual’s identity consists in nothing more than numbers (on a ticket or a credit card). Their globalizing effects (when working properly) are time-convenient, money-conducive, homogenizing, and dehistoricizing.

touch, the rub of shoulders; he wishes to have the obligation to tread through blood and guts in order to be able to *recognize something for what it really is*.



Fig. 3.2. “Mirar pero no tocar...(13 Lahuerta)”¹⁴² Shimmering picture-perfect fruit display at the Boqueria Market. Megan Saltzman, 2003.

In the last chapter we saw the historical implications of the space in the Raval neighborhood represented in the film *En construcció*n. Lahuerta’s mention of the Born market aligns itself with the same implications of transformation, renewal, and ephemerality regarding the functions and meanings of space over time. Initially a Roman cemetery and Paleochristian basilica, in 1219 the medieval convent “Santa Caterina” was built on the location of the Born market. Six centuries later, in 1844, the convent was razed to construct the city’s first covered market in the glass and iron Moderniste style. In the 1970s the space ceased to exist as the city’s main market, and in 1997, upon

¹⁴² Translation: “Look but don’t touch.”

beginning construction for a public library, the Roman ruins were discovered; and consequently, plans for the library were replaced with plans to construct a cultural center, scheduled to open in 2007.

I mention this history to show that, in the larger historical scope, Lahuerta's nostalgia, like the changing functions of this specific locality of the Born market, is neither exclusive nor unique. Urban dwellers have no doubt been lamenting spatial loss for millennia. So how is this nostalgia new? What's different? What has changed? I believe that what is exclusive and unique, new and different, are: on one hand, the increasing *velocity* and the *abstraction* ("alienation" to use Marx's term) of *change*; and on the other hand, the individual's *increasing* and *overwhelming awareness* of these changes and consequently his/her feeling of *impotence* and *hopelessness* in being able to apprehend *something* or change *anything*!

We can see the same desires and disillusionings implicitly prevalent in Lahuerta's next analysis of another fleeting urban space: *las huellas*. Unlike the market's imaginary past temporality, *las huellas'* temporality is more concrete and present. *Las huellas*, or "marks," can be found on the worn-down step of a threshold; the hand-worn surface of a doorknocker, a railing, a church statue and holy water stoup (recipient).¹⁴³ They are the holes on the side sidewalk in front of certain doors on the Rambla de Santa Mónica, where years of prostitutes' heels, tapping the ground, anxiously waiting or walking back and forth, have left their signature. Similar to Marshall Berman's Marxist definition of the modern man as one who is "longing to create and hold on to something real even as everything melts" (13), Lahuerta "agarr[a] a lo que tiene huellas [. . .] suaves [. . .]

¹⁴³ Translation: "the truth;" "residues;" "low quality [. . .] architecture." "frivolous, vulgar, insignificant new homes."

redondas [. . .] producidas por el peso de un cuerpo absolutamente real” (21).¹⁴⁴ For him these overlooked *huellas*, *the real*, “la verdad,” leave their mark by means of the quotidian human touch, slowly, gradually over time. Although these “residuo[s]” are being replaced with “arquitectura [. . .] de ínfima calidad,”—“nuevas casas, frívolas, vulgares, insignificantes” (21, 22, 16, 17).

In another instance, Lahuerta takes a critical stance on urban policies when he elaborates on a symbol for what remains after the markets change clientele and the *huellas* are paved over: the.

[E]sas fachadas, en verdad, son como sus caparazones después de que haya sido sorbida su carne, aspirado todo lo blando y jugoso, succulento, sustancioso, que tenían dentro. Las manzanas, los bloques y las casas de algunos barrios de BCN han sido vaciados también de esa carne y esos jugos de que está hecha, al fin y al cabo, la vida, una vida atesorada por el tiempo, acumulada. Las fachadas no son más que lo duro, el caparazón, el hueso que está afuera, una triste armadura. A veces, en las marisquerías, uno encuentra langostas disecadas, rojas y brillantes, no muy distintas de las de plástico: ¿qué puede haber más cruel, de más feroz, que aspirar toda la carne de un barrio conservando sus huesos o caparazones, y de más vergonzado que usarlos como signos de supuesto respeto, de recuerdo o de memoria? Memoria: ¿de qué o de quién? (16)¹⁴⁵

The shell (“el caparazón,” or the empty façade) is pretty, but no longer contains life. This “life,” for Lahuerta is obviously that vague idea of what the city “used to be,” what no longer exists in the market or on the new pavement. Like Paris’s nineteenth-century

¹⁴⁴ Translation: “holds on to that which has marks [. . .] soft/smooth [. . .] round [. . .] produced by the weight of an absolutely real body.”

¹⁴⁵ My translation: “those façades, really, are like shells after their meat has been slurped out from them, the soft and juicy parts sucked out, succulent, nourishing, that they used to have inside. The blocks and the houses of some neighborhoods in BCN [new fashionable abbreviation for Barcelona] have also been emptied out from their meat and juices, in the end, life, a life treasured by time, accumulated. The façades aren’t more than the hard part, the shell, the outside bone, a sad armor. Sometimes, in the seafood shops, one finds a dissected lobster, red and shiny, not too different than plastic: can there be anything more cruel, more ferocious, than to suck out all the meat of the neighborhoods leaving just the bones or shells, and even more shameful—to use them as sign of supposed respect, of recollection or memory? Memory: of what or of whom?”

Hausmanization, which razed medieval buildings preserving only their ornate façades, the same has been occurring in the historic quarter and the Eixample neighborhood of Barcelona. We read history in these façades like we read history in a textbook. And not too different from the textbook, the façades increasingly narrate a superficial, partial, simplified, and deceiving history. The façades of the Eixample speak old age, beauty, of the bourgeoisie, and the ornate history of the artistically rich nineteenth-century *Modernisme* movement. But the tenants who will live there in the future will be new, and the ugly history of what happened to the previous tenants who lived there for generations will be illegible.¹⁴⁶

Like the space of the spatial tactics of the last chapter, when the façades are emptied out—usually standing merely by means of the steel bars of the supporting scaffold—they *very briefly expose a moment of truth* before the gaping hollow windows are filled with brand new flats. Benjamin explains the historical importance and urgency of this ephemeral space:

The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. [. . .] To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger (Benjamin, “Theses” 255, [V]).”

I “seized” these “memories” in the following photographs (figs 3.3 and 3.4):

¹⁴⁶ This alludes to Fredric Jameson’s and Jean’s Baudrillard’s idea that, in postmodernity and late capitalism, what you see is no longer what you get, that everything publicly visible is simulacra (Postmodernity and “Simulacra and .Simulations” respectively).



Fig. 3.3. Gran Via and Calabria, in the Eixample. Megan Saltzman, August 2005.



Fig. 3.4. Comptal Street with Via Laietana, in the Gothic neighborhood. Megan Saltzman, August 2008.

As one of the symptoms of nostalgia and/or melancholia is an abstract, equivocal, or entirely absent verbalization of specific origins or agencies of the malaise, accordingly, although Lahuerta does identify one concrete problem (the Forum) he doesn't suggest any solutions nor does he identify any agents of this destruction. Who is to blame? "Nuestras administraciones" "nuestros administradores," he suggests, but he doesn't get any more specific than that (7).

So does Lahuerta succumb to nostalgia and what does it matter if he does or doesn't? The keen sensual details of his revival of the market and *huellas* (hyperremembering), the cries of "ays,"¹⁴⁷ the exclamation marks, the endless use of metaphors, the unidentifiable loss and desire, the lack of the Freudian "working through" to improve conditions, the glorification of the misery of prostitutes, the quixotic idealization of—and longing for—an imagined time and space made out of memories, fictional films (simulated spectacle), and an imaginary victimized "nosotros." What should the reader make of his condition? Lahuerta displays the symptoms which Aristotle, Freud, Boym, Kristeva, to Agamben, might diagnose respectively as "acedia," "mourning," "nostalgia," or "melancholia." And to this universal atemporal diagnosis, Lahuerta responds:

Y no lo digo por nostalgia, porque sé muy bien que a la ciudad también le llega su momento y también sabe vengarse de sus habitantes, sino por oposición a lo que se quiere completo y acabado, por oposición a esa esencia kitsch que exige que todo tenga solución, esencia de una política que presenta la destrucción física, la banalización y la venta de la ciudad, como el camino sin remedio hacia la felicidad de vivir en una tienda, éxtasis del escaparate, de la "modernidad". Aunque tampoco me quejaré si alguien interpreta todo esto como una *vanitas*. (14).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ "Ay" is like a heart-felt "oh!"

¹⁴⁸ Translation: "And I'm not saying it [all this about the old city] out of nostalgia, because I know very well that the city's time comes and it also knows how to get revenge on its inhabitants,

I don't think we've interpreted him or his text as a *vanitas* painting.¹⁴⁹ The “nostalgic” label should not in any way devalue him or his text. Let's return to the topic of the time frame of the text. This will allow us to on one hand contextualize where Lahuerta historically fits amongst his fellow intellectuals and, on the other, what disadvantages do lie within his nostalgia.

Considering three factors: Lahuerta's depiction of the Santa Catarina market along, his birth year (1954), and the fact that in his essay he mentions two Barcelonese films from the 60s: Juguetes rotos (1966) and Los tarantos (1963), convinces me that he is recalling the years of his youth, the years of late Francoism (1950s-1975). As he abstractly casts blame on the present, he mythifies the past. Has Lahuerta forgotten about the other side of that not-so-far-way time, of that place, Francoist Barcelona, “what it used to be”? Has he forgotten the overall lack of basic freedoms, the poverty, the sexism, the despotism, the everyday oppression of those subjects who were not Catholic, or not heterosexual, or not male or not right-wing, or those who did not speak or want to speak Castillian Spanish. Making those *huellas* outside the markets, excluded from those same markets, were also the empty-stomached homeless people and prostitutes. So what seems to be Lahuerta's social stance in his essay? He is sympathetic of those who have lost their homes in recent gentrification projects, but yet blind to the injustices committed against these same subjects in “the old” Barcelona. I think we can gather from

rather out of opposition to what one wants complete and finished, out of opposition to that kitsch essence that demands that everything have a solution, essence of politics that present physical destruction, the banalization and selling of the city, as the only path towards happiness to living in a store, ecstasy of the storefront window, of “modernity.” Though I'm not going to complain either if somebody interprets all this as a *vanitas* painting.”

¹⁴⁹ *Vanitas* was a type of still-life painting that came out of Northern Europe in the eighteenth century. It generally depicted elements that symbolized the transience, brevity, and futility of life, such as rotting fruit and skulls.

Lahuerta's text that, while he is a social conscious intellectual, he is also stuck in a mythified past, and his immobile nostalgia impedes his political or social potential.

Anyone familiar with twentieth-century Spanish history could point out the similarities between Lahuerta's diagnosis and the *Desencanto*. The *Desencanto*, translated in English to "disillusionment" or "disenchantment," refers to many of the same symptoms that Lahuerta's text implies: mental immobility, idealization, dwelling on past illusions, disappointment with the present, and without plans or interest in political improvement. The psychological state of the *Desencanto* isn't attributed to a lost mode of urban life, but rather to three political occurrences: the unrealized of the progressive promises that the transition to democracy (the democratically elected Socialist party) made in the 80s; the disintegration of social activism and solidarity which thrived strongly during the later Franco years (usually underground or abroad) and in the early years of the transition to democracy; and finally the wide-spread and easily-approved political strategy known as the *pacto de olvido* and *consenso de silencio*,¹⁵⁰ which censored public discourse about the ugly side of history—specifically, the Civil War (1936-1939) and dictatorship (1939-1975)—in order to enable a peaceful transition to democracy. Hence Lahuerta's text can be seen as a product of that political strategy. It's possible that after the pacto de olvido began to fade, the pendulum began to swing to the opposite extreme—from the *abolition* of the past in the 80s to the obsessive/unrealistic *attraction* to the past.

Thinking in Freudian terms, one could also add that this text in itself could be "sublimation" expressing one's negative feelings through the creative process. In this

¹⁵⁰ My translation: "pact of forgetting/oblivion" and "consensus of silence."

sense Lahuerta would be in effect not a case of melancholia, but a mourner who is “working through” his problems.

Let us now move on to another individual, Carvalho, who in many ways is like a fictional version of Lahuerta.

4. Carvalho in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s Carvalho series

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939-2003), writer of all genres—poetry, essay, detective novels, chronicles, journalism, cookbooks—is a political activist and a well-known critic of contemporary Spanish culture. Between 1972 and 2000 he wrote a series of 24 detective novels, 22 of which take place in Barcelona. I’ve chosen to base this section primarily on the five novels that are most relevant to post-Francoist public space in Barcelona: Tatuaje (1974), La soledad del manager (1977), Los mares del Sur (1979), Sabotaje olímpico (1993), and El hermano pequeño (1994). Like most novelistic series, the main characters, home bases, and narrative structure remain the same throughout. In this series, the novels follow the standard formula for detective fiction—the crime, the steps it takes of solving it, and a subtle resolution. The main differences between one novel and the next are the type of crime and a step forward in time. Although the novels run chronologically in time (1972-2000) and space (primarily Barcelona), and they together represent, what Vázquez Montalbán calls an “evolución de la sociedad Española desde la muerte de Franco hacia el infinito,” I will not take the reader through each novel chronologically; rather, I will think of the series as a palimpsest from which we will put

in relief the main relationship at stake—between everyday public space and the individual’s wellbeing (Bayó 114).¹⁵¹

Before we look at the novels, I want to highlight two points about the detective genre and its role in facilitating social critique.

a. Urban Space and the detective genre

First, this repeated formulaic structure (the crime, the process to solve it, and the resolution) is not due to lack of creativity or originality on Vázquez Montalbán’s behalf (which he has been criticized for), rather the contrary. In the most comprehensive study on the series: Theory, Genre, and Memory in the Carvalho Series of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, the author Susana Bayó Belenguer explores in depth the function of Vázquez Montalbán’s use of the detective genre. Drawing from Antonio Gramsci, she argues that “intellectuals [like Vázquez Montalbán] should employ popular genres as a way of raising the political consciousness of the masses” (Bayó 147). Similarly, as Vázquez Montalbán claims in the prologue of his early book Una educación sentimental (1967), “los soportes artísticos de los géneros populares pueden ser utilizados como elementos de transgresión” (Bayó 39).¹⁵² That’s to say that the lack of creativity or originality in structure is compensated by the (original) utilization of the (unoriginal) structure in order to channel historical consciousness to a wider audience.

¹⁵¹ Translation: “evolution of Spanish society from the death of Franco to the infinite.”

¹⁵² Translation: “the artistic supports of the popular genres can be utilized as elements of transgression.”

Since the 1950s when the detective genre, also known as the “novela negra,” began to proliferate in Spain, many writers besides Vázquez Montalbán have used Barcelona as the setting, such as Eduardo Mendoza, Manuel de Pedrolo, Jaume Fuster, Juan Marsé, and Xavier Moret.¹⁵³ However, unlike the detective novels of these writers, the Carvalho series stands out for its prolific use of the genre as a marketable, entertaining, and popular vehicle for socio-political and moral critique, particularly on cultural censorship, the erasure of historical memory, and the *pacto de olvido* during the transition to democracy. As he states in an interview with Bayó Berenguer in 1996,

Yo organizo mis materiales para intervenir socialmente, aún siendo consciente de la poca influencia de la literatura. Por eso cultivo precisamente el género policíaco, porque me permite aproximarme al problema de la lucha entre el bien y el mal a través de un filtro de ambigüedad. (Bayó 164)¹⁵⁴

I believe the ambiguity he mentions refers to the entertaining aspects of the genre (that allow the social critique to be communicated in an amusing way) and less with the censorship at the time. Although the series coincides with the years of the *pacto de olvido*, Vázquez Montalbán openly manifests his political critique. It comes out in Calvalho’s comments and interior reflections, even in the earliest books of the series from the seventies and eighties. Hence, his use of the genre is not an attempt to circumvent censorship or historical taboos, but rather to explicitly highlight them. Vázquez

¹⁵³ For more information on the detective novel in Spain see [The Spanish Sleuth](#) by Patricia Hart.

¹⁵⁴ Translation: “I organize my materials in order to intervene socially, still conscious of the small influence of literature. That’s why I cultivate the police genre, because it allows me to approach the problem of the fight between good and evil through a filter of ambiguity.”

Montalbán makes sarcastic remarks about the *pacto de olvido*, and even mocks it by feeding his fireplace with books.¹⁵⁵

Consequently and effectively, at a time when many critics frowned upon the popular genre for being too low-brow and experimental, the Carvalho series was highly successful, winning several national awards and being translated into several languages, making the socio-political critique more accessible to the public regardless of the readers' cultural or economic capital.¹⁵⁶ In Spain his books are widely available in libraries and for sale in *bolsillo* (inexpensive paperback) editions.

So around what issues does Vázquez Montalbán wish to raise “political consciousness”? The erasure of historical memory of those on the margin, especially those which have been affected by the Franco regime and the *pacto de olvido*. And what does this have to do with public urban space? The answer to this question lies in my second point about the detective genre. In my last chapter about spatial tactics I stated that, although everyone is capable of discovering spatial tactics, certain subjects are more likely to do so than others. One of the subjects I named was the detective. The detective maintains an intimate relationship with public everyday space. Typically, and with keen

¹⁵⁵ Some examples of open condemnation of censorship in both early and later novels in the series: in *Los mares del Sur*, Carvalho's friend Artimbau “le enseñó [a Carvalho] los cuadros y un álbum de dibujos sobre la agonía de Franco. No. Sabía que aún era impublicable” (35). Also, in *Tatuaje*, upon thinking about with what piece of literature to start a fire, Carvalho chooses *El Quijote* over his new Dutch porno magazine—“no quería sacrificarlo tan pronto, después de haber conseguido colarlo por la aduana” (124). Further, he often openly critiques the *pacto de olvido*, such as in *El hermano pequeño*: “Carvalho se metió por el túnel del olvido político y cuando llegó la transición, en el escaparate de los políticos catapultados...” (11).

¹⁵⁶ See pages 18-21 and 144-148 of Bayó Belenguer's book for a long list of genre-related criticism (both positive and negative) that the Carvalho series received. The series has been categorized as “experimentalism (19),” “novela policíaca (143),” “subliterature (144),” “novela negra (144),” “a new form of ‘Realism’ (143),” not “detective fiction or traditional realist novels (145),” “mestizaje (142),” “critical realism (144),” and “realismo abierto” (147).

senses, the detective explores this space for undermined, clues, details, stories that will enable him/her to solve the crime. Donald McNeill in Urban Change and the European Left points out the similarities between the detective and the *flâneur*. They both walk around through the city in order to “read society through a physiognomy of the streets” (25). Further, because crime is nearly always related to capital inequality, the detective genre exposes us to the other side of the tourist image and monumental spaces. The Carvalho series discloses the underrepresented side of the city, spaces that pertain to the lower socio-economic class—the impoverished neighborhoods, *los barrios bajos*, the ghettos, abandoned or uninhabitable areas, construction sites, and the periphery.¹⁵⁷ And of course as these spaces are presented so are those subjects that inhabit them—the poor, the prostitutes, pimps, thieves, and homeless.¹⁵⁸

Because Carvalho realizes this occupation and possesses this sensitivity and skeptical stance, he is able to present us with a critical plethora of postmodern elements in public space—diversity anachronism, segregation, fragmentation, simulacra—and I will soon show how several of the new spatial phenomena are critiqued for deteriorating historical consciousness and the well-being of citizens, particularly Carvalho.

b. The Historic Quarter and Carvalho’s nostalgia

While Lahuerta’s text focuses on the discontent caused by the loss of familiar spaces to insensitive urban policy, the Carvalho series does this as well, but as part of a larger critique of—and discontent with—the transition to democracy, which has

¹⁵⁷ Translation: “the lower-income neighborhoods.”

¹⁵⁸ These are also the same subjects who create spatial tactics.

functioned to propagate a city with values that play out effectively in the global economy. Since the Carvalho series traces the late twentieth-century history of Spain, let us extrapolate what Vázquez Montalbán has to say about its *urban* history and how it relates to nostalgia. We will find that what primarily links the two is the loss of historic leftist memory.

Though Vázquez Montalbán generalizes his critique to all of Spain, his case at study is Barcelona. Barcelona's critical urban history is unfolded by Carvalho's itineraries through the city, described by both Carvalho himself and the narrator (his omniscient alter ego). As a full-time self-employed detective, Carvalho actively moves about the entire city at his own pace. His activities consist of interrogating suspects, eating, drinking, and copulating (sometimes the four activities simultaneously). Accordingly, the spaces to which we are exposed are more often than not private spaces, such as bars, restaurants, kitchens, and bedrooms. But more interesting to me is that as Carvalho travels from one private space to the next; his walking functions as what de Certeau calls a "space of enunciation" and everyday public spaces—streets, alleys, plazas, trash bins, and ruins—come to life (98).

Carvalho and the narrator are descriptive of and sensitive to material space. Like all the other texts thus far analyzed, public space and personal intimacy go hand in hand. In the series, public space is presented as anthropomorphized: "el paisaje" sticks to Carvalho's "cuerpo como una vestimenta habitual"¹⁵⁹ (*Tatuaje* 156). And sometimes taking human body forms, the Ramblas, the main street that runs through the history quarter, are referred to as "pulmones intrusos en el oxígeno podrido de las ingles de la

¹⁵⁹ Actual quote: "el paisaje volvia pegarse al cuerpo como una vestimenta habitual."

Barcelona” (Sabotaje 13).¹⁶⁰ As follows, space retains memories. Lefebvre, in The Production of Space, makes the unidirectional and Hegelian-influenced claim that: “Space is nothing more than the inscription of time in the world” (Writings 16). But it is something much more, especially in art. A humanized space, as Vázquez Montalbán presents it, is dialectical as well; it is an exchange of social signifiers. Contact with this assumed-to-be-solid material is like socializing with an old friend or a talking safe-deposit box. In space, memories of us are deposited, and in us, the contrary: memories of space are deposited. In the series, these memories consist, on one hand, of Carvalho’s childhood memories growing up in the Raval neighborhood (just like Vázquez Montalbán did). On the other hand, the memories consist of the city’s collective history of marginalized subjects, such as the proletariat, the prostitutes, leftist heroes, and emigrants like Carvalho, who is from Galicia. As Caragh Wells says, “the topography of the city contains the topography of Carvalho’s (and space’s) identity. The streets, squares and buildings that surround Carvalho act as a secure referent in his conception of who he is” (qtd. in McNeill 29).

Who is Carvalho? Carvalho, who is self-defined as “un ex-poli, un marxista y un gourmet,” is a disagreeable character, not only because he’s pessimistic, but also because he’s a sexist (Soledad 193).¹⁶¹ Though it has already been pointed out by other critics, for the sake of the love-hate relationship that characterizes nostalgia, it’s important to mention that Carvalho loves Barcelona. He is particularly fond of the old quarter, where high-end gastronomy, childhood memories, and his loved ones reside. Carvalho is a

¹⁶⁰ Translation: “intrusive lungs in rotten oxygen of the crotch of Barcelona.”

¹⁶¹ Translation: “an ex-cop, Marxist, and gourmet.”

flâneur at heart; he enjoys aimlessly strolling through Barcelona, particularly around the Ramblas area. “Cavalho amaba aquel paseo como amaba su vida, porque le parecía insustituible”; “le gustaba dejar el coche al comienzo de las Ramblas para poder recorrerlas a pie hacia abajo, hacia el territorio de Charo. Bajo los plátanos Carvalho andaba con descuido, parándose aquí y allá, dejándose atraer por los más imprevistos reclamos (Tatuaje 201, 33).¹⁶² On another ocasión, “le apetecía ramblar y también meterse por el laberinto de calles viejas que salen de las Ramblas” (Hermano 159).¹⁶³

The series is speckled with detailed passages like this one describing a mundane scene in the Raval neighborhood:

Un borracho calcula la distancia más corta entre la calzada y la acera. Un reguero de niños vuelve de algún colegio de entresuelo donde los urinarios perfuman la totalidad del ambiente y la fiebre del horizonte empieza y termina en un patio interior repartido entre el país de las basuras, los gatos y las ratas y algunas galerías de interior donde parece como si siempre colgara la misma ropa a secar. Macetas de geranios en balcones caedizos, alguna clavellina, jaulas de periquitos delgados y nerviosos, bombones de butano. Rótulos de comadronas y callistas. Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya, Federación Centro. Maite Peluquería. Olorosa peste de aceites de refritos: calamares a la romana, pescadito frito, patatas bravas, cabezas de cordero asadas, mollejas, callos, capipota, corvas, sobacas, mediatetas, pantorrillas conejiles, ojeras hidrópicas, varices. Pero Carvahlo conoce estos caminos y estas gentes. No los cambiaría como paisaje necesario para sentirse vivo [. . .] Y no hay precio para lo que aparece en cualquier bocacalle del distrito quinto abierta a las Ramblas: la brusca desembocadura en un río por donde circula la biología y la historia de una ciudad, del mundo entero.¹⁶⁴ (Soledad 48)

¹⁶² Translation: “The archeology of the buildings that showed three centuries of history of a city with history. Carvalho loved that walk like he loved his life, because it seemed irreplaceable.” And: “He liked to leave his car at the beginning of the Ramblas in order to walk down them by foot towards Charo’s territory... Under the plantain trees Carvalho used to walk carelessly, stopping here and there, letting himself be guided by unexpected lures.”

¹⁶³ Translation: “He enjoyed strolling and getting lost in the labyrinth of old streets that departed from Las Ramblas.”

¹⁶⁴ Translation: “A drunk is calculating the shortest distance between the roadway and the pavement. Schoolchildren are returning from some mezzanine school where the toilets perfume the whole environment and the children’s horizons begin and end with an internal patio divided between the section for the dustbins, a playground for rats and cats, and a number of inside

This passage resonates with Lahuerta's essay. Carvalho is attracted to the city for many of the same reasons that Lahuerta is attracted to Barcelona "lo que era." (Lahuerta 6) Within it lie spontaneity, diversity, abundance, familiarity, history, humane sensuality, authentic grotesque, and personal vitality.

However, description of the city is not always painted with so much affection and color; Barcelona is hardly a happy home for Carvalho. What appears to be solid around him is increasingly ephemeral and fragmented. The neighborhood that Carvalho holds close at heart is one of the main targets of physical transformation since Franco's death. Vázquez Montalbán, as a fervent critic who has told us he wants to "intervenir socialmente" has chosen to include the injustices of the city, not relating to the finicky crimes that his clients send him to investigate, but to the injustices in the everyday life and historical memory of the marginalized subjects of the present-day city (Bayó 164). These injustices consist particularly in references to personal memories and the leftist past, both silenced by a *pacto de olvido* and a destructive urban policy. Dozens of references to corrupt urban policies appear in the Carvalho series. They offer us a critique of Post-Francoist urban history that cover four main periods—the early democratization and modernization of the city in the late seventies; globalization and gentrification of the city starting in the mid-eighties; the continuous corruption,

passageways where the washing lines seem to be perennially full. Pots of geraniums on rickety balconies; the occasional carnation; cages containing them, nervous budgerigars; and butane gas bottles. Notices advertising the services of midwives and chiropodists. An office of the leftwing PSUC. Maite's hairdresser's. A vile smell of frying oil: squid à la romana, fried seafood, spicy potatoes, roast lambs' head, sweetbreads, tripe, rabbit thighs, watery eyes and varicose veins. But Carvalho knew these people and their ways. They made him feel alive, and he wouldn't have changed them for the world [. . .] There was nothing to beat the backstreets and alleyways that gave onto the Ramblas—tributaries feeding into a river which carries the biology and the history of a city, of the entire world." (qtd. in McNeill 33)

speculation, and peripheralization of the lower-class during the Porcioles period (1957-1973); and the simulacra of the post-Olympic period.

In order to highlight the mechanicalization and pain of these destructive phenomena, Vázquez Montalbán, like Lahuerta, utilizes the metaphor of surgery:

los bulldozers regeneradores que abr[en] los caminos de la modernidad a través de las brechas de las casa derribadas. (Hermano 93)

Su mundo [el de Carvalho] se hundía a medida que la piqueta abría espacios higiénicos en las viejas carnes de la ciudad de su infancia.” (Hermano 44).¹⁶⁵

La ciudad se ha hecho la cirugía estética y de su rostro han desaparecido importantes arrugas de su pasado. (Sabotaje 12)

sin darse cuenta había llegado a las Rondas. Repasó su destruida geografía. Le dolió cada violación de su paisaje infantil” (Los mares 59)

And the pain hits where it hurts most—at the personal roots of his identity. The repetition of the possessive pronouns and violent verbs (his geography is destroyed, his infancy is drowning, his childhood landscape is violated) implies that his flâneurish commentary goes beyond standing on the outside looking in. Carvalho is also a victim, a personal witness to the affective bond that is being broken between himself and his material past. But, sharing the common suffering of destroyed space does not make Carvalho sympathize with his counterparts in practical ways. He is too self-centered, wealthy, emotionally repressed, politically inactive, and preoccupied with theorizing about his surroundings. If it weren't for the narrator, we wouldn't know much about the space of the aforementioned marginalized subjects. In fact, often Carvalho and the narrator misanthropically humanize space more so than people. The characters are

¹⁶⁵ Translation: “the regenerating bulldozers open the streets of modernity through the gashes of the razed houses. [. . .] His world [Carvalho's] was drowning while the pickaxe opened hygiene spaces through the old flesh of the city of his childhood.”

usually represented as comical types (the drunk, the prostitute, the rich or poor man or woman...), whereas public space is treated in meticulous detail.

Travels through the city also reveal the invisible boundaries between neighborhoods and social classes. Perhaps this is most visible in Los mares del sur for which Carvalho traverses the city to figure out who killed Stuart Pedrell, a wealthy contractor of Construcciones Iberisa whose body has been found in the basement of an apartment in the working class peripheral neighborhood of his own creation: San Magín. The search takes us to San Magín and provides us with a critical portrayal and juxtaposition between the historic quarter and the periphery. When Carvalho examines the neighborhood and questions its inhabitants to see if they recognize a photo of Stuart Pedrell, both the neighborhood and its inhabitants are portrayed critically. The narrator is interested in unveiling the inferior conditions in which the inhabitants live. The descriptions carry an undertone of ironic sympathy for the cheap kitsch of their ways. In San Magín where many of the inhabitants are left-wing emigrants from other parts of Spain, all the buildings look alike and are falling apart from flooding and poor construction and materials. Here is an example of one of these descriptions:

San Magín crecía al fondo de una calle desfiladero entre acantilados de edificios diferenciables, donde coexistía el erosionado funcionalismo arquitectónico para pobres de los años cincuenta con la colmena prefabricada de los últimos años. San Magín era un horizonte regularizado de bloques iguales que avanzaban hacia Carvalho como una promesa de laberinto. [. . .] *La ciudad satélite de San Magín fue inaugurada por Su Excelencia el Jefe del Estado el 24 de junio de 1966.* Constaba en una lápida centrada sobre el obelisco que entorpecía la desembocadura de la urbanización de doce manzanas iguales, diríase que colocadas por el prodigio de una grúa omnipotente. Las aristas de hormigón cortante dolían en los ojos y no compensaban el intento de humanización de las mujeres vestidas con batas de nailon acolchadas, ni el sordo rumor de humanidad que salía de cada nicho, un rumor que olía a sofrito y a humedad en armarios empotrados. Repartidores de butano, mujeres en seguimiento de una cotidiana senda de supermercados, pescaderías llenas de peces con ojos grises y tristes, Bar

el Zamorano, El Cachelo, Tintoría Turolense, Ocasión: hay blancos murcianos [. . .] Cada una de estas palabras era un milagro de supervivencia, como si fueran vegetación crecida del hormigón. Cada fachada era un rostro lleno de cuadrados ojos despupilados condenados a ir oscureciendo sobre una lepra granulada.¹⁶⁶ (110-111, emphasis original)

The scene that the narrator paints of San Magín matches all the characteristics typical of those during the 1960s when Spain experienced the *milagro económico*—an influx of industry and emigrants to the big cities. The resulting urban policy is known as *desarrollismo* or *Porciolismo*, deriving from the period under Porcioles, the mayor of Barcelona from 1957-73). Porcioles promoted laissez-faire speculation, passing a blind eye over the cheap construction around the periphery of the city of accommodations for the mass wave of emigrants: dense apartment complexes and *barracas*.

San Magín is not depicted as a non-space. The space is sensual—the narrator makes many references to the abundance of sounds, smells, and grotesque corporality. San Magín is overwhelmingly impregnated; it is materially dense and oppressive to the point that a fresh breath of clean air or politics would be considered rare survivors of the contemporary concrete. The neighborhoods pupils have been torn out by the inhumane

¹⁶⁶ Translation: “San Magín was growing at the end of a narrow strip between cliffs of differential buildings, where eroded functional architecture for poor people from the 1950s and a colmena [enormous circular-shaped public housing project] prefabricated in the last couple years coexisted. San Magín was a horizon regulated by equal blocks that were advancing towards Carvalho like a labyrinth’s promise. [. . .] *The satellite city of San Magín was inaugurated by His Excellency the Head of the State on the 24 of June of 1966*. It consisted in a centered slab on top of an obelisk that slowed down the exit of the suburb of twelve equal blocks, one could say laid by the prodigy of an omnipotent crane. The edges of cut concrete hurt ones eyes and didn’t compensate the humanizing attempt of the women dressed in quilted nylon robes, nor the deafening murmur of humanity that was coming out of every niche, a murmur that smelled like fried onions and garlic and like the dampness of interior closets. Butane deliverers, women on their daily trip to the grocery stores, fish markets full of fish with gray sad eyes, Zamorian Bar, El Cachelo, Teruelian Dry Cleaners, Occasion: there are white people from Murcia [. . .] Each one of these words was a miracle of survival, as if they were vegetation grown out of the concrete. Each façade was a face full of square unpupiled eyes condemned to darken over a granulated leprosy.

urban conditions. The neighborhood's political activity will end up like the fish at the fish market. When Carvalho returns to the Barrio Chino from San Magín, he compares the two:

...se metió por la calle Conde de Asfalto en busca de las Ramblas. Recuperó rincones habituales como si volviera de un larguísimo viaje. La fea pobreza del Barrio Chino tenía pátina de historia. No se parecía en nada a la fea pobreza prefabricada por especuladores prefabricados prefabricados de barrios prefabricados. Es preferible que la pobreza sea sórdida y no mediocre.¹⁶⁷ (179)

Again highlighting the dichotomy in material and affection between the historic quarter and the periphery. The Raval, no matter how repulsive it can get, maintains that romantic link with the personal past, that beloved familiar texture: Lahuerta's worn-down step Lefebvre's oeuvre, Benjamin's aura, Van Gogh's boots.¹⁶⁸

Another common geographical social segregation presented in Carvalho's travels is between the historic quarter and the richer districts like the Eixample, Sant Gervasi, Sarrià, and Valvidrera. Carvalho's clients live in these upper-class neighborhoods, and ironically, so does Carvalho. Over a century later, symbolically, there still appears to be a medieval wall surrounding the historic quarter. Due to this economic segregation, McNeill refers to Barcelona as a "dual city," in which there are few characters and spaces that fit between the polarized rich and poor, luxurious and cramped (34). Since the Olympics, the segregation has gained force; and the population of the historic quarter

¹⁶⁷ Translation: "he went down Conde de Asfalto street searching for the Ramblas. He reunited with familiar corners as if he had come back from a long trip. The ugly poverty of the Barrio Chino wears the patina of history. It didn't look anything like the ugly poverty prefabricated by prefabricated speculators prefabricated prefabricated of prefabricated neighborhoods. It's preferable that poverty is sordid rather than mediocre."

¹⁶⁸ Here I'm referring to Lefebvre's The Right to the City, Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and Jameson's Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.

continues to decrease as the elite push out the lower-classes. By the early nineties, gentrification in the Historic Quarter is in full swing. In the novel Hermano pequeño, which takes place during this time, “las piquetas [. . .] están convirtiendo [el Barrio Chino] en un barrio para señoritos” and the “nuevos edificios” are trying to “expulsar de aquella Barcelona vieja la arqueología humana de sus pobladores lumpen” (22, 70).

The fractures in the urban space are reflected in Carvalho’s contradictory desires that split between fervent idealism and hopeless apathy. On one hand, he is disgusted with authority’s power and corruption, with the demolition of history-rich space, and the expulsion of the poor to the periphery where living conditions are unsustainable. But on the other hand, in spite of the fact that the author’s objective is “la recuperación de la memoria para la construcción de esta ciudad democrática,” Carvalho, like his author (who has admitted to be a near carbon copy of Carvalho), is apathetic to what goes on, as is reflected in this interview in 1995 in which Vázquez Montalbán states:

I don’t have any feelings of nostalgia for saving the degraded physiognomy of the Raval, even though I have occasionally written ironically and irrationally that they are taking away my city. I don’t have nostalgia that these streets are disappearing since you can’t live in them. (Aranda qtd. in McNeill 36)

And two years later in another interview that appears in Barcelona 13 by P. Arenos and J. Saladrigas:

What surprises me most of the latest changes that Barcelona has gone through is that where before there were prostitutes now you find the Universidad de Pompeu Fabra...it’s one thing not to be nostalgic, you can’t glorify houses without electricity, without running water, but you’re dealing with the landscape of your childhood. If I now had to explain to you where I went to the cinema when I was a child...well there is no cinema left. It’s all been destroyed. I’m not complaining. I’m just stating a fact. (qtd. in McNeill 29)

Carvalho possesses a semi-suppressed love-hate and apathetic relationship with his surrounding space which depresses him. He conceptualizes the city as “ciudad que se

le moría en la memoria y que ya no existía en sus deseos” and claims that the present-day city is “inasequible para la esperanza de ninguna juventud, presente o futuro”¹⁶⁹ (Bayo 224, 237). While Vázquez Montalbán’s denies his own nostalgia, he denominates Carvalho (his alter ego) as “deprimido,” “ensimismado,” “melancólico,” “un animal ahogado en la tristeza histórica” (Hermano 42; Soledad 90).

Carvalho’s apathy and pride could be interpreted as a façade to conceal his failure as a detective. Carvalho is aware that his depression paralyzes him from acting on his wishes for social change. As Balibrea has already pointed out

su nula capacidad para implementar un cambio positivo en la realidad, para jugar un papel social activo. Como hemos visto, su competencia para restaurar la verdad nunca revierte en una transformación del orden establecido.¹⁷⁰ (Tierra 156)

Before continuing this diagnosis of Carvalho’s spatial mourning, we need to look at another fundamental aspect of space that has emerged in the last two decades and has taken a toll on Carvalho’s welfare: simulacra.

As early as 1979 in Los mares del sur, Carvalho comments, “Esta ciudad no es lo que era. Antes una puta era una puta y un chorizo era un chorizo” (174). This comment resonates with Jean Baudrillard’s essay “Simulacra and Simulation” in which he argues that postmodern space “blurs the lines between what we believe to be ‘true’ and ‘false,’ ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’” (171). This ambiguity culminates 13 years later in Sabotaje Olímpico. El País, Spain’s most widely-read newspaper, commissioned Vázquez

¹⁶⁹ Translation: “unattainable for any young person’s hope, present or future.”

¹⁷⁰ Translation: “his null capacity for implanting a positive change on reality, to play an active social role. As we have seen, his competence to restore truth never reverts in a transformation of the established order.”

Montalbán to write Sabotaje Olímpico to coincide with the 1992 Olympic Games, and the novel was first published in weekly installments that summer (156 Bayó).

The novel is set up to critique the emptiness of a simulacra society. For example, the novel contains national stereotypes and cartoonish international figures and the social critique is purposely watered down to slapstick buddy jokes. Nothing has any meaningful depth. And there is no temporal or spatial structure—Carvalho warps from one half-empty setting to the next as if he were in a videogame. Even the plot and mystery are frivolous: to figure out why Michael Johnson was able to run the 100 meters in 6.4 seconds and why 40% of the black athletes are actually white. The answer is that the Olympics have been *staged*. They were all a *farse*, like Baudrillard's simulated robbery in "Simulacra." These features as a whole can be interpreted as deliberate examples *par excellence* of several postmodern theories—specifically Jameson's "postmodern logic," Baudrillard's "simulacra," and Augé's "non-space." Looking at the represented space through this theoretical lens will illuminate the role that global events, like the Olympics, play in the creation of simulacra, nostalgic space, and depression.

As I already mentioned, in Sabotaje Olímpico one scene warps to the next like it does in a comic strip, cartoon, or videogame. When the spatial continuity is not clear in the novel (for example, how Carvalho gets from one place to the next) the reader gets confused and wonders if he/she has missed something. For example, at the beginning of the novel we find ourselves in Carvalho's house. There's a knock at the door; and a motley crew of famous figure enters. Someone frisks the detective and then "la furgoneta llegó a su destino"—an underground interrogatory room, "KGB *style*"—where Carvalho is interrogated and the Minister of Economy pops out of nowhere to demand Carvalho's

collaboration in the case (23, 27 emphasis and English original). The next thing we know “[the Minister of Economy] volvió a desaparecer entre las sombras y Carvalho creyó haber vivido una ensoñación, pero no, estaba en el corazón de la Fortaleza olímpica...” (31).

Postmodern theorists would be quick to point out that this space is “fragmented,” as this is the adjective that is commonly used in postmodern and modern theory to describe temporal and spatial configuration in a capitalist society. We can see another example of this spatial fragmentation and its affective outcome in the following passage:

Casa Leopoldo era el restaurante mítico del Barrio Chino al que Carvalho acudía en momentos de nostalgia del país de su infancia, cuando era un miserable pequeño príncipe del *Pais de Posguerra*. Allí se producían encuentros con Parra [an old guerrilla friend]. El barrio había sido pasteurizado. La piqueta había empezado a derribar manzanas enteras. [...] Las putas más viejas fueron incitadas a reconvertirse por el procedimiento de matricularse en la Universidad Pompeu Fabra o irse de vacaciones, y los bares más cutres, una de dos, o clausurados o reconvertidos en *boutiques* de la cadena *Il pensiero devole* (El pensamiento débil), dado que buena parte de las instalaciones de la nueva Universidad se ubicarían en lo que habían sido ingles de la ciudad. Convenía que el mirón olímpico no se llevara de Barcelona la imagen del sexo con varices y desodorantes insuficientes. Era como recorrer un barrio condenado a la piqueta y al no ser, y desde esta melancolía no le costó demasiado a Carvalho penetrar en la zozobra...¹⁷¹ (72 author’s italics)

Here in this stinky place of refuge where Carvalho used to meet with his friend, we are again presented with an intimate anthropomorphized space, one that is violently ripped

¹⁷¹ Translation: “Casa Leopoldo was the mythical restaurant in the Barrio Chino where Carvalho would go in moments of nostalgia for the country of his childhood, when he was a miserable little prince in the Post-war Country. There he used to meet Parra [an old guerrilla friend]. The neighborhood had been pasteurized. The bulldozer had started to tear down entire blocks. The oldest whores were driven to reconvert themselves for the procedure and enroll in the University of Pompeu Fabra or go one vacation, and the most tasteless bars were either shut down or reconverted into boutiques of the chain *The Weak Thought*, given that most of the University’s installations would be located in the groin of the city. It was best for the Olympic onlooker didn’t take with him an image of Barcelona of varicose veined sex and lack of deodorant. It was like going over a neighborhood condemned to the bulldozer and inexistence, and from this melancholy it wasn’t very hard for Carvalho to sink into despair...”

apart and sprayed down by postmodern urban policy for the sake of the city's international image. Throughout the entire series Vázquez Montalbán highlights an incompatible dichotomy between the overpowering new world and the fading old one. Expensive boutiques and university students replace cheap bars and the prostitutes. The new spaces are represented as non-spaces, impersonal and meaningless and the old ones as consoling and meaningful. In the aforementioned quote it's the old space that provides a refuge for Carvalho's sadness. Like an old friend amongst cold strangers, the restaurant is one of the few places that still represents his past, a better time, and welcomes him with open arms. The passage is referring to the gentrification in the Raval during the years before the Olympics, when historic buildings were razed to construct the private University of Pompeu Fabra and the MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona) designed by the famous American architect Richard Meier. Memory-filled spaces continue to be destroyed and replaced with new places for tourist and managerial class. These new spaces are devoid in meaning, they dispirit Carvalho and cause him to yearn for the past, which in return puts him in a dead-end and cyclic melancholic situation because the place that he "acud[e] en momentos de nostalgia" just causes him more nostalgia (Sabotaje 72).¹⁷²

To conclude. The Carvalho series presents many social injustices that have occurred in urban policy since the transition to democracy. The city is increasingly economically segregated, and the new construction is cheap and meaningless. Contemporary gentrification, and simulacra diminish and distort the space of his memories and the spaces those with whom he shruggedly sympathizes—the proletariat,

¹⁷² Translation: "he goes to during nostalgic moments."

leftists, and those marginalized by past and present politics. Carvalho depends on these disappearing historic spaces for the stability of his own identity and wellbeing.

In comparison to Lahuerta, Carvalho and Vázquez Montalbán are more realistic (and hence effectively critical) about the present day city. Carvalho, as a detective serving neocapitalist society, he is able to keep his head more in the present than Lahuerta, a historian. However, as an unexpressive *machista* or as a result of a silencing democracy, he refuses to confront his pain. Carvalho holds a grudge against the past. He corresponds perfectly to Moreiras Menor's definition of the melancholic subject: "el sujeto melancólico es incapaz de enfrentarse a la pérdida del objeto y, en consecuencia, lo canibaliza devorándolo y se ensimisma en una perpetua e imposible autocontemplación" (Moreiras Menor 128).¹⁷³ Carvalho doesn't face the loss of his past; he tries to avoid it by withdrawing from politics (as Vázquez Montalbán also did), burning his books, and living away from the transformation of the historic quarter in the upper-class outskirts. While Carvalho's constant recollection and contemplation of memory-rich spaces depresses him, for us readers it demonstrates the personal and historical value of public space. Accordingly, from San Magín to the Raval, the series advocates the need for a balance to be carefully struck between improving precarious space and preserving historical space.

¹⁷³ Translation: "The melancholic subject is incapable of confronting the lost object and, as a result, he/she cannibalizes it devouring it and withdraws him/herself into a perpetual and impossible self-contemplation."

5. The intellectuals in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *El pianista*

Let's switch now to another novel by Vázquez Montalbán, one that also critiques contemporary cultural transformations in Spain and attempts to recuperate historic memory, but whose structure, characters, and political discourse are more creative, original, and verisimilar than the Carvalho series: the award-winning El pianista, published in 1985. The entire novel traces the life of a left-wing pianist, Albert Rosell, in three temporally disjointed chapters— from when he is realizing his hopes as a successful pianist in Paris before the Spanish Civil War, to a quiet tenant during the Franco regime, and finally to an old solemn pianist in a bar in the Barrio Chino during 1983. Each one of these three chapters takes place in a different urbanized setting: in a protest in Paris, across the rooftops in Barcelona, and around the Barrio Chino.

In this novel I will primarily address the first chapter and a portion of the second because together they provide us with a dialectical juxtaposition between the city in the 1940s and later in the 1980s. The literary structure, in which time periods are separated between chapters, will allow us to juxtapose two main thematical differences: the differences between historical awareness and well-being.

Whereas in Lahuerta's essay and the Carvalho series a failed urban policy is blamed for the production of nostalgic subjects, in El pianista, Vázquez Montalbán makes a more general claim by blaming an unsuccessful transition to democracy (which also includes an ineffective urban policy) as the main producer of nostalgic subjects. Another way of looking at the structure of urban nostalgia in the novel is that it presents two interdependent critiques that result from the urban transformations in post-Francoist Spain—one of degenerating public space and the other of degenerating subjects—both of

which are presented legibly in the presented public everyday space of the Historic Quarter of Barcelona.

The novel starts off in the apartment of Ventura and Luisa who live in the Historic Quarter in an apartment that belongs to Ventura's parents and that is kept for "sentimental reasons." Luisa and Ventura are both unhappy with their jobs—Luisa as a young professional and Ventura as a freelance translator and stalled writer. The general atmosphere of the apartment is ethereal, sickly, and stuffy like a hospital. Ventura's body is "todo lamido por la penumbra o tal vez por la humedad o una viscosa grasa helada" (14).¹⁷⁴ The smell is adequately "estancado" (14).¹⁷⁵ Ventura feels like he is rotting, and maybe he is. Supposedly he is sick; references to his sickness are repeated throughout the chapter. But we are never told what sickness he has, and we wonder if he is really terminally ill; perhaps he is just temporarily depressed, or has the flu. Adding to the dysfunctionally calm atmosphere is that the communication between the couple is poor. They talk at each others' backs, hollering from different rooms, and when Luisa speaks, "no hay energia en su voz" (16). But they are tender to one another in the traditional and Oedipal way: Luisa fulfills the role of the mother (cooking, shopping, and telling Ventura what to do), and Ventura fulfills the role of the sick male child. The apartment is definitely not a non-space, but nevertheless it is nothing welcoming. Unlike the ambivalent qualities of Lahuerta's and Carvalho's historic quarter, this old and familiar atmosphere is entirely negative—sickly, weak, and depressing. As the novel continues, and in a couple paragraphs below, the reasoning for this mood becomes clear.

¹⁷⁴ Translation: "everything is thinned by the dim light or perhaps by the humidity or an icy sticky grease."

¹⁷⁵ Translation: "stalled."

But first we should meet the other central characters of the first chapter: Luisa and Ventura's five friends. They are also intellectuals like Lahuerta and Carvalho (but even less agreeable!). They are high-chinned, wide-smiled, obnoxious, well-read and their everyday Castilian is embellished with words in French, English, and Catalan. The males make jokes about homosexuals, women, drunks, and a black man. The women are childless, professionals, pseudo-feminists, who tolerate their male counterparts. They pertain to the middle-upper end of society and have friends in high places, such as government officials working in the Generalitat, the *Ajuntament* and the University. And they were all formerly members of different leftist political parties. These are the pretentious intellectuals that Vázquez Montalbán makes fun of in Los mares del sur in the scene in which Carvalho attends a literary talk—strutting their knowledge like “vedettes,” speaking in “macanas” (nonsense), and provoking Carvalho to leave the talk in search of a drink (55-57). Accordingly, as we will soon see, the particular personalities of these protagonists play a fundamental part in Vázquez Montalbán's critique of post-Francoist urban society.

There is one scene in the novel that represents much of what I have to say about El pianista, and that which will clarify the initiating mood of malaise. In this scene the group of intellectuals, led by one of the friends, the sexist know-it-all Schubert, embark on a historically-informative stroll—a “paseo crítico por las Ramblas.” The Ramblas provides the strollers with 2000 years of diverse social history, and from this infinite hat of stories, Schubert, like a travel guide and magician, pulls out the following narrative (31):

Empezaríamos por la hamburguesería que han abierto en el viejo Canaletas. Podríamos hacer allí una reflexión sobre la degeneración de la gastronomía y la

penetración cultural imperial norteamericana a través de la hamburguesa. A dos pasos están los corrillos de *culés* y podríamos meditar amargamente sobre la pérdida de señas de identidad de un club como el Barcelona, en otro tiempo vanguardia épica de la Cataluña resistente. Luego pasaremos ante el cine Capitol, el viejo Can Pistola, donde sólo proyectan basura porno o pseudoporno, con lo que podremos lamentarnos sobre la corrupción de la cultura de masas y la desinformación sexual generalizada. A continuación el reformado Moka¹⁷⁶, obligada parada en el *via crucis* para considerar el qué se hizo de los cafés de antaño, sustituidos por la ambigüedad formal de los establecimientos actuales en los que las farmacias parecen cafeterías y las cafeterías farmacias... ¿Queréis que siga? En las Ramblas cabe una visión cósmica y si alzamos la cabeza seguro que vemos un ovni de la Internacional Socialista Planetaria, y así hasta el puerto, donde con un poco de suerte podemos toparnos con un grupo de alegres muchachos de la Navy, evidencia misma de que somos una provincia del imperio. Y si hay luna llena, aguas podridas del puerto, podridas sugestivo adjetivo, podridas. Este inventario en otro tiempo nos hubiera llenado las venas de sangre revolucionaria y hoy nos las llenas de horchata de chufa.¹⁷⁷ (30, emphasis original)

Before I analyze about this scene, I should add that, even though the passage is spoken by only one person, I'm going to interpret it in collective terms. Although the author creates as seven different individuals, in my reading, because we barely get to

¹⁷⁶ Café Moka, made famous in George Orwell's Homage to Catalonia. It is where Nationalists once awaited to attack the Republicans during the Civil War. Nowadays it's a generic tourist restaurant.

¹⁷⁷ Translation: "We could start by the hamburger place that they have opened in the old Canaletas. We could reflect about the degeneration of the gastronomy and the penetration of the imperial North American culture through the hamburger. Two steps away we have the groups of *culés* [fans of the Barcelona soccer team] and we could bitterly meditate about the loss of signs of identity in a soccer team like Barcelona, which in other times was the vanguard of Catalonian resistance. Then we could walk in front of the Capitol cinema, the old Can Pistola, where they only show porno trash or pseudo-porno, with which we could lament about the corruption of mass culture and the generalized sexual disinformation. Continuing on to the renovated Moka, obligated stop on the *via crucis* in order to consider what happened to the cafés of yesteryear, substituted by the formal ambiguity of the current establishments in which the pharmacies looks like cafeterias and the cafeterias like pharmacies... Do you want me to continue? On the Ramblas there's a cosmic vision and if we raise our heads we might see a UFO from the International Socialist Planetarium, and like that up to the port, where with a bit of luck we might run into a group of happy Navy boys, more evidence that we are a province of the empire. And if there's a full moon, rotten waters of the port, rotten a suggestive adjective, rotten. This inventory, which in other times would have filled our veins with revolutionary blood, today fills them with *horchata* [a cold sweet traditional drink from the Valencia region consisting of groundnut]."

know them as individuals and because they are always together, in a general way, they represent an undifferentiated unit. With the exception of Ventura, they more or less blend together as one, as a type. Considering this collective voice, the walk that the passage narrates is important because it is a selective representation of history. With this stroll, Vázquez Montalbán is showing us the historical consciousness that is representative of leftist intellectuals in Spain at the time.

On this “recorrido a la vez simbólico y conmemorativo,” Schubert puts together a narrative mediated by public space that is immersed in *loss* (35). A better past has been lost to a new frivolous and homogenizing imperial culture. The quality of culture has been degraded in gastronomy, film, information, and architectural diversity. But what precisely has been lost and why? There is an unexplained and detested temporal *something*, something related to time, that goes beyond food and architecture and provokes both the intellectuals’ critique and nostalgia for the way things used to be. By zooming in on what determines their cultural judgments of present-day urban culture, we will come closer to the fundamental roots of the malaise felt by these seven individuals and the real-life “type” they represent. Accordingly, from this passage we can extract two interrelated factors that determine their judgment and critique (and perhaps happiness). I’m going to call these two factors social identity and historio-political consciousness, and these intellectuals are dissatisfied with both of them.

Let us start with the first, social identity. According to Schubert and/or the intellectuals—the global (American) culture is replacing the local (Catalan) culture. We can assume that these subjects have a preference for local culture because it once provided a meaningful and exclusive solidarity and identity; it circumscribed a place of

culture (Catalonia) and gave it a personal and collective meaning and distinction amongst other places and other national identities. This fulfilled their needs for “belonging” and “self-esteem,” hence giving them what Benedict Anderson calls an “imaginary community” with which to identify and from which to grow. More specifically, this social identity, as represented in the passage, alludes to Catalan nationalism. Schubert’s imperialistic arrogance, the comments about Catalonia being invaded by an empire, their affinity for Catalan culture and “catalanes universales,” and the fact that all the friends are so categorically similar (in nationality, age, profession, general politics and religion) suggest that the disappearing social identity that determines the sufficiency of local culture equates an exclusive social identity: Catalan nationalism. And as we’ll see in a moment, the problem with Catalan nationalism is that it contradicts the other interrelated factor that lies beneath their critique and discontent (historio-political consciousness).

Besides being cultural elements that the intellectuals disapprove of, what else do soccer, pornography, and horchata have in common? They are cultural elements that don’t require nor provide any historio-political consciousness on the part of their consumer. From this originates the intellectuals’ critique of mass culture. Their critique is evident in the references to the horchata drinkers, *culés*, and Navy boys. The masses are the consuming prey of this depoliticized and dehistoricized culture that disregards historical memory and results in an ignorant, apathetic, and yet happy group.¹⁷⁸

Such discontent with society only exists because the group has a better reality in mind. The many allusions to the way the city used to be suggest that this better reality is *the past*. However, the intellectuals’ rationale regarding the agencies that have diminished their past is incorrect. Their present-day or postmodern culture cannot be

¹⁷⁸ Translation: *culés* are fans of the Futbol Club Barcelona (Barcelona’s main soccer team).

blamed on a unilateral influx of homogenized global culture into Spain or an actual invasion of Spain by the United States. One must look inside Spain's history, to see how the democratic period, with all its historical baggage, has chosen to receive and negotiate the tension between the globalizing market and historical consciousness. Doing so, one will find that democratic Spain chose to politically negotiate in what Federico Galende (referring to Claus Offe's term) calls the "catch all" strategy. That is, the social-democrats chose to implement negotiate the past in a multinational-businesses fashion, one that produces apathetic, apolitical, and consumption-oriented citizens via an "active erasure of the social memory" (Galende 46, Cardús i Ros 19).

Hence the temporal difference between the present and the past triggers the reader to question or make sense of the gap. We can make sense of this duality by returning to Vázquez Montalbán's literary objectives. As we have seen in the social critiques of Carvalho and the intellectuals, Vázquez Montalbán is manifesting the politically-active function of culture to reconstruct social memory. His works advocate a culture that is historically aware and politically active, more inclusive, fervent, and progressive, one that strives to rewrite the official history in order to recover the lost narratives of those who were marginalized by the Civil War and the Francoist regime.¹⁷⁹ The transition to democracy in theory was the long-awaited opportunity to reconcile conflicts of the past in order to realize a new historically-conscious future. Because none of this occurred when it was most possible, we can conclude that the detested and implicit temporal *something* that lies beneath the nostalgia and critiques of these intellectuals is a failed transition to

¹⁷⁹ In La literatura y la ciudad democrática Vázquez Montalbán states: "la literatura es un arma cargada de futuro, que puede transformar la realidad cuando se apodera de ella, cuando llegue a la mayoría, una profecía un tanto idealista, no muy lejana de la tesis de Mathew Arnold convencido de que la cultura por sí misma, formaría una sociedad sin clases" (72).

democracy. This transition was reflected in the disintegration of political solidarity and opted for an erasure of all things related to Franco and the Civil War, while at the same time maintaining a “continuity of the fundamental institutions and apparatuses of the state” (21 Cardús i Ros).

Accordingly, the intellectuals suffer from the absence of what Abraham Maslow calls the “belonging” and “esteem” needs. As their Catalan culture, local identity, political motivations, and goals are devalued, they feel displaced and hopeless in their own city. They yearn for what is waning: Catalan nationalism and a progressive historical-political consciousness. It should be pointed out that their discontent may also be attributed to the contradictory tension between their desires. They desire both an intimate local identity embodying their pride as well as social equality and justice. However, social equality and justice would require a reconciliation of unresolved issues from the past as well as the elimination of national parameters. Eliminating national parameters would entail including the masses and hence it would conflict with their desire for exclusive Catalan nationalism.¹⁸⁰

Further, as the intellectuals disregard masses for their ignorance, Mari Paz Balibrea in her book En la tierra baldía, disregards the intellectuals for the same reason:

los amigos de Ventura, especialmente Schubert, son incapaces de reconocer los monumentos más significativos, los *lieux de memoire* donde se concentra la memoria de la Barcelona vencida, que es además la obrera: “--¿Y esa iglesia? [. . .] –Es la iglesia del Carmen. La construyeron después de la Semana Trágica, sobre el solar de un antiguo convento de jerónimas que quemaron los revolucionarios” (32-33). Por contraste, los personajes se sienten atraídos por Las Ramblas, “donde cabe una visión cósmica,” o sea, donde se concentran las coordenadas de su visión de un mundo antes esplendido y ahora segregado. Ni la

¹⁸⁰ This translates into two debates that interest Vázquez Montalbán: the debate between history verses historical fiction, and the tensions between open political consciousness verses closed highbrow art.

plaza del Padró, ni la calle Obispo Laguarda, ni la de la Riera Alta, ni la del Carmen ni la plaza de los Ángeles, detienen al grupo de expedicionarios en su camino hacia las Ramblas.¹⁸¹ (146)

Post-Francoist Spanish culture hinders the historical consciousness of even the most historically knowledgeable and politically active subjects such as these intellectuals once were. Monumental or not, the space of the oppressed is present in the intellectuals' historical consciousness only in the form of what Joan Ramon Resina has coined an "after image": a collective image which become synonymous with a city's name and history. One of Barcelona's after-images is "the rose of fire" ("la rosa del foc") the revolutionary image of burning churches, anarchy, and priest-killings originating primarily from the events of the *Semana Trágica* and later fortified by the Civil War years (made famous by the opening of George Orwells' Homage to Catalonia) (After-image 76).¹⁸²

Now let's step outside of temporal dichotomy structured by Schubert in the first chapter and look at the temporal dichotomy structured by novel's disjunction between the

¹⁸¹ Translation: Ventura's friends, especially Schubert, are incapable of recognizing the most significant monuments, the *lieux de memoire*) where the memory of the defeated Barcelona is concentrated, which is, beside the working class: "And that church?" [. . .] "It's the church of Carmen. They constructed it after the *Semana Trágica*, on top of the abandoned lot of an old Jeronim convent that the revolutionaries burned down" (32-33). Instead, the characters feel attracted to Las Ramblas, "where there's a cosmic vision", it's to say, where the coordinates of their once-splendid-vision-and-now-segregated-world concentrate. Not in the plaza del Padró, nor the Obispo Laguarda street, nor the Riera Alta, nor Carmen street, or the plaza of Los Angeles, did the group of expeditioners stop on their walk towards the Ramblas."

¹⁸² There appears to be a contradiction in Balibrea's claim. On one hand, Balibrea states that the intellectuals are not capable of recognizing the "*lieux de memoire*" (places of memory) which refers to Pierre Nora's concept of collective places, rituals, and objects that represent a collective memory. This definition leans more towards the major monumental spaces than the minor everyday. But on the other hand, she then completes her sentence qualifying the places of memory as the spaces of the defeated—those defeated by the Civil War—the leftists on the roof. This is a contradiction because the *lieux de memoire* are rarely ever those tactical spaces of the defeated.

first and second chapter. As the space (the Historic Quarter) remains constant between these two chapters, this temporal juxtaposition between the city in 1942 (represented in the second chapter) and 1983 (represented in the first chapter) highlights the historical similarities and differences between the times and also provides a better historical understand of the intellectuals' nostalgia and/or melancholia.

In the second chapter the protagonists also feel displaced in their city. But what different historical circumstances! While the intellectuals of the first chapter don't feel comfortable with their city due to cultural and historical degeneration, those in the second chapter, in the same location, but 41 years earlier, don't even feel comfortable enough to carry out something as basic as using the public space to walk in the streets.¹⁸³ Instead, they end up creating their own streets—the rooftops—to move from one place to the other. Hence, an obvious temporal difference that the juxtaposition puts in relief is that more ideological tolerance in public space existed in the eighties than in the forties. The juxtaposition highlights two other less obvious transformations between the 1940s and 1980s which, Vázquez Montalbán, being concerned with historical memory, has no doubt wanted to suggest. The first is the transformation in historio-political consciousness from. From this difference follows the second: the transformation in collective political vision. First I will explain the former.

Historio-political consciousness. The intellectuals of 1983 show little recognition of the political values of the earlier group and virtually no practice of these values, while

¹⁸³ Vázquez Montalbán mentions a regulation in the novel that supposedly applied to everyone: that it was prohibited to congregate in groups greater than five individuals in both public and private space. (*El pianista* 178) “Habida cuenta de que. Según las disposiciones sobre orden público vigentes en el Séptimo Año Triunfal, está prohibida toda reunión pública o privada de más de cinco individuos, sean cuales fueren las razones del encuentro, de no haber solicitado previamente permiso en el Guberino civil.”

the leftists of 1942 not only know Spain's history of social inequality, but also fought and died against it, and want to document it so that it's not forgotten.

In Cultura herida, Cristina Moreiras Menor gives a psychoanalytic response to the historio-political consciousness in El pianista. Accordingly to Moreiras Menor, it is not that the intellectuals are ignorant of the past, but that, like Carvalho, they prefer not look back anymore because they associate the past with utopian ideas which are useless and disappointing in a dehistoricized present (130-32). Since those years gave their life meaning and energy; without it, they feel useless, stalled, and depressed. Like Lahuerta and Carvalho—the longer their lives are on pause, the more they dwell on the past; their imagination strays from what really happened and creates not just an after-image, but also “un pasado sobreinflado, hiperbólico” (128).¹⁸⁴ Further, Moreiras Menor claims that, unlike the leftist of 1943, the intellectuals of 1983 have lost their object of desire. Although they are unable to name the lost object, we implicitly know that it consisted of the hopes and solidarity necessary to create the utopian democratic city (132). Moreiras Menor interprets their temporal immobility as the Freudian melancholy in which expression is inhibited and the only way one could improve would be to confront the situation through the Freudian “working through” (134).

Further, psychologically speaking, we can add that their nihilistic state of not only historical but also intellectual and political immobility could also be due to the fact that another one of Maslow's basic needs is not being met—that of “self-actualization.” If this is the case, then, in order to improve, they would need to be able to express and act on their desires. Hence, we are back to the downward spiral and paradox of melancholy:

¹⁸⁴ Translation: “a super-inflated past, hyperbolic.”

one is fervently desiring something that he/she cannot completely name and consequently “there is no escape because one cannot flee from what cannot even be reached” (Agamben 6). Therefore, they don’t go anywhere or do anything self-fulfilling. While the intellectuals, in theory, dwell in a conflictive past that they simultaneously love and hate, in practice, they live and float on the stalled yet comfortable surface of the present.

The leftists on the rooftops in 1942 translate to marginalized subjects and places of any other époque. In 1983 in the Historic Quarter of Barcelona they would be Ventura and Luisa’s working class neighbors—immigrants, prostitutes, and their spaces and spatial tactics—all of which exist in the same neighborhood as Luisa and Ventura, but with whom the intellectuals do not interact. (Surely Luisa and Ventura would show little resistance to packing up their books and joining Carvalho in Vallvidrera.) They intellectuals recall the politically antagonistic spaces from before (Café de la Opera, Iglesia de Carmen), but are ignorant and/or evasive of the present-day ones. The historical idealization and rupture caused by the *pacto de olvido* in the eighties, along with their bourgeoisie superiority, isolates the intellectuals both mentally, politically, and socially. Hence, there are heroes and historic possibilities right under their noses, in the form of residual spaces and people, but they don’t recognize or take an interest in them, with the exception of Ventura’s recognition of the pianist Albert Rosell. But even this encounter is a failed one. Ventura is unable to overcome the historical difference that separates the pianist from Ventura and the elitists at the bar—in Rosells’s “*hieratismo había una declaración de incomunicación*”¹⁸⁵ (74). Another example of this segregation

¹⁸⁵ Translation: “sacred solemnity there was a declaration of incommunication.”

between cultural classes is evident in the scene in which the group walks to the club Capablanca and the omniscient narrator recounts the following:

en otro tiempo habrían paseado esta zona solidarios con sus miserias, con una ética invulnerable en sus ojos de redentores, y ahora pasaban de puntillas para que no se despertaran los navajeros y demás ratas rabiosas de la cloaca del sistema.”¹⁸⁶ (48-49)

Although the cynical narrator and the intellectuals are separate testimonies, based on the Vázquez Montalbán’s objectives, we can assume that the author is implying that the loss of historio-political solidarity is not only rooted in historio-political rupture but also in a general contempt, or at least complete disinterest, in the present-day marginalized citizens, history, and spaces of the cityscape.

In comparing the two urban trajectories from the first two chapters (the intellectuals through the Ramblas and the defeated leftists over the rooftops), Balibrea and Moreiras Menor coincide in claiming that the social disintegration is not so much attributed to the replacement of the local with the global, nor the contempt for the lower class, rather an extreme form of Nietzsche’s “inwardness,” a profound “ensimismamiento narcista” (Nietzsche 81, Moreiras Menor 132).¹⁸⁷ In other words, it’s not that they don’t care about the lower class, but that they don’t care about anyone, not even themselves; the friendships and intimate relationships between one another are artificial. It is ironic that they are even presented to us as “a group.” They are detached from the past and from their counterparts in the present; and their shared mourning for collective after-image of the past does not even unite or console them.

¹⁸⁶ Translation: “in other times they would have strolled this zone with solidarity, with their misery, with an invulnerable ethic in their redeeming eyes, and now they were walking on tip-toes in order to not wake up the thugs and the other rabies-infested rats of the cloacae system.”

¹⁸⁷ Translation: “narcissistic self-absorption.”

In the passage below, Balibrea, referring to the urban trajectories in the first two chapters, attributes this shift—from solidarity to individualism—to the loss of collective memory:

El motivo de este viaje [over the rooftops] surge de la solidaridad de los vecinos con el recién llegado, con quien comparten una memoria común de vencidos, y que de esta manera lo adoptan como a uno de los suyos. Es, pues, un viaje integrador. Por el contrario, el itinerario a través de las Ramblas con final en el club Capablanca sirve para marcar diferencias irreconciliables entre el grupo de expedicionarios y como consecuencia acaba en total desbandada.¹⁸⁸ (Balibrea, Tierra 148-9)

I think it's more precise to denominate the loss as *political solidarity* or *collective memory that has no political use in the present*; instead of *collective memory* or “una memoria común” because the groups of the 1980s do possess some collective memories and after-images, as we will see in the following passage. Schubert will recall a collective memory that mythifies the atmosphere in the city after Franco's death, but, as Balibrea suggests with the symbolism of the Ramblas stroll—one that no longer unifies. According to Ventura's collective memory, the main difference between now and then is that then a common enemy and goal to defeat it unified him with his companions:

Veníamos aquí, a las Ramblas, arriba abajo, Can Boadas, plaza de Sant Jaume, Café de la Ópera, casi todos nos conocíamos, éramos la *resistencia interior*, los que habíamos forcejado con el franquismo desde la universidad o desde las fabricas. Nos reconocíamos con la mirada y nos cruzábamos la misma pregunta: “¿Y ahora qué? Pero tal vez mirábamos más a nuestro alrededor, por si llegaban los incontrolados de Cristo Rey a meternos una manta de hostias o cualquier provocador que nos echara encima las mesnadas de policías que vigilaban nuestra silenciosa, secreta alegría. (43)¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Translation: “The motive of this trips [over the rooftops] emerges from the solidarity of the neighbors with the recently arrived guest, with whom they share the common memory of defeat, and in a way they adopt him as if he were one of their own. It is, so to say, an integrating trip. On the other hand, the itinerary down the Ramblas with its destiny in Capablanca, functions to demarcated irreconcilable differences between the group of expeditioners and as a result it ends in total helter-skelter.

¹⁸⁹ Translation: “The motive behind this trip [on the rooftops] emerges from the solidarity between the neighbors and the recently arrived, with whom they share a common memory of

Here we see the public space of the past functioning as a place of affective unification. Returning to Maslow, what fulfilled Ventura and his friends in the past was that their basic needs of “belonging” and “self-esteem” were being met. Ironically, what made this affective fulfillment possible was the existence of a common enemy. Solidarity is more often than not, says Maslow, “motivated by the profound hunger for contact, for real togetherness in the face of a common enemy, *any* enemy that can serve to form an amity group simply by posing an external threat” (44). Accordingly, the group appears to only be able to come up with frivolous reasons for solidarity. For example, while the intellectuals are in Capablanca drinking together at the table, Schubert proposes a toast:

¡Por la caída del Régimen!

Propuso Schubert.

-- ¿De qué régimen?

Schubert se desentendió de la perplejidad de Irene.

-- Da igual. Los regímenes siempre tienen que caer. Siempre hay que brindar por la caída del Régimen.¹⁹⁰ (39)

In regard to the second difference highlighted by the juxtaposition between the two chapters representing 1942 and 1983, that of historio-political vision for the future—the intellectuals are without one. In a way their postmodern culture conditions them to live in what Jameson calls the “perpetual present,” the perpetual present because they

defeaters, and in this way they adopt him as one of theirs. It’s, so to say, an integrated trip. On the other hand, the itinerary through the Ramblas ending at the Capablanca club function to mark the irreconcilable differences between the group of expeditioners and as a result it ends in total disintegration.”

¹⁹⁰ Translation: “For the fall of the Regime!

Schubert proposed.

-- What regime?

Schubert didn’t understand Irene’s perplexity.

-- It doesn’t matter. Regimes always have to fall. One always has to toast to the fall of the Regime.”

don't conceptualize the future nor reconcile with the past (Postmodernism 144). We can conclude this from the many references that imply a better past, such as: Ventura's mysterious sickness, his self-pitiful reference to his generation as "una generación de parados" and the previous generation as having grown "intelectualmente para la nada, lo poco a la mediocridad," the repetition of "hubo un tiempo..." and "en otro tiempo," the intellectuals' withdrawal from political parties, and their conscious temporal displacement in the city (22, 69, 29).¹⁹¹ They bury themselves in the past, in history, in the way the city and politics used to be, in traditional gender values and behaviors, in Shakespeare and Thomas de Quincey's writings. Throughout the novel, the author refers to the loss of political compromise, the failure of history, the failure of the left to achieve its vision, as well as history repeating itself before coming to a hopeless standstill (69). For the intellectuals, "cualquier tiempo pasado fue mejor, el compromiso se ha decretado imposible, el futuro no existe (el único futuro que le espera a Ventura es la muerte)" (Balibrea 150).¹⁹²

As we have seen, the city adopts the role of an ideological platform on which the loss of historic memories is displayed and read. Its anachronistic residues speak of parallel interrelated discourses of physical, historio-political, and affective or psychological degeneration. Global culture is replacing the spaces of unifying memories and future visions.

History is being fragmented, depoliticized, and idealized in after-images, by the *pacto de olvido*, and an increasingly global and consumer-oriented culture; all of which

¹⁹¹ Translation: "a generation of stalled," "there once was a time..."

¹⁹² Translation: "any time in the past was better, the compromise has turned out impossible, the future doesn't exist (the only future that awaits Ventura is death.)"

has had a direct influence on the urban mentality. The intellectuals are withdrawn from any political compromise and comradeship, their basic needs having been met, and they are left to fend for themselves against the deceiving enjoyments of neocapitalism. Their life has become a boring “nostalgia oculta bajo el parapeto del cinismo y el sarcasmo” (Moreiras Menor 133).¹⁹³

Furthermore, in regard to their disinterest in the future, Jon Juaristi claims that these intellectuals, representative of those subjects and texts of the *Desencanto*, lack not only desire for the future but desire in general. Their desire has diminished which serves as a defense mechanism masking their melancholy (Moreiras Menor 133). What do these intellectuals want? Is it to return to the magical day when Franco died? They don't offer us any explicit problem or possibility for improvement.

However, according to Moreiras Menor and Balibrea, the possibility for improvement does exist within the dialectic structure of the novel, from chapter to chapter and between temporal fragments. Balibrea claims that “A través de la comprensión del presente proporcionada por esta dialéctica, se abre la puerta a una concepción progresista y esperanzadora del futuro. Por eso es erróneo hablar de *El pianista* como novela nostálgica, o posmoderna” (En la tierra 151).¹⁹⁴ The fragmentation within this novel, the degenerating urban space, and the weak communication between Ventura and his girlfriend encourage the reader to re-connect the fragments and question why they are fragments to begin with. However, this type of stylistic structure results in an ongoing tension between the creation of open political consciousness verses closed

¹⁹³ Translation: “a hidden nostalgia beneath the cover cynicism and sarcasm.”

¹⁹⁴ Translation: “Through the comprehension of the proportioned present by this dialect, the door is opened to a progressive and hopeful future. That's why it's erroneous to speak of El pianista as a nostalgic or postmodern novel.”

highbrow art. A dialectical reading of El pianista between the two chapters places the historio-political meaning on a high shelf, one that the general public that takes pleasure in reading the Carvalho series may not be able to reach.

Before I conclude, I'd like to put the last chapter on spatial tactics in dialogue with this one. There I claimed that creating a spatial tactic requires four factors: non-fulfillment of a basic need, creativity, an element of transgressive will (doing what one is not supposed to do), and regulated urban space with some autonomy. If this formula is applied to the two temporal groups comparatively—the intellectuals in 1983 and the leftists in 1942—my argument that spatial tactics are becoming more difficult to develop is strengthened. More importantly, an interesting relationship arises between the postmodern intellectuals' malaise and one of the variables of spatial tactics—*the non-fulfillment of a basic need*.

Let's start with the leftists of 1942 and what can be considered the non-fulfillment of their basic needs. Using Maslow's definition of basic needs, the seven levels of basic needs from most important to least are (from the bottom of the pyramid to the top), are: "physiological" (nutrients, sleep...); "safety"; "love, affection, and belonging"; "esteem"; "cognitive"; "aesthetic"; and self-actualization." In 1942 the leftists endure the postwar's "años de hambre"—not even their most essential physiological needs are met, which of course hinders the fulfillment of the higher-level needs.¹⁹⁵ It follows that they are not living in a secure situation (the "safety need"), as basic civil rights don't exist and individuals can be thrown in jail, tortured and/or killed without trial. They are not permitted to congregate in groups of more than five people (the "love, affection, and

¹⁹⁵ Translation: "years of hunger."

belonging need”). Finally, their freedom of expression is limited by a philistine hegemony (a restriction that fetters the attainment of all seven levels of basic needs).

In regard to the next factor—creativity—the group on the rooftop is presented as very creative. They are able to convert the rooftops into their own form of streets, create their own radio and tricycle, find a way to obtain foreign books and watch censored films. They also possess a transgressive will, as they congregate on the rooftops and obtain foreign entertainment, both of which are strictly prohibited. Finally, concerning regulated urban space with some autonomy, their space is strictly monitored by the Francoists. In fact, towards the end of the chapter, the leftists have found a piano for Albert, and he has begun to play it, authority arrives breaking up the mini-concert, because three additional people had joined in, breaking the five-person-only rule. And for autonomy, yes, a modicum of autonomy exists within their private space and the rooftops provide them with an alternative milieu.

Hence, all four factors are met for the 1942 group, and their creativity yields commendable collective productivity, which includes the creation of spatial tactics, as seen in the way they convert rooftops into sidewalks. With very little resources and limited freedom, the group of 1942 is able to come together and fulfill some of their most desirable basic needs such as self-actualization and aesthetics. So what good does it do to apply the list of requirements for spatial tactics? We’ll see now as we apply it to the post-Franco group.

For the intellectuals of 1983 that live in a culture of simulacra governed by the *pacto de olvido*, it’s trickier (less transparent) to determine what basic needs are being met and which are not. In addition, these melancholic intellectuals cannot directly

express their needs and desires. In any case, in this democratic period, if these seven employed Barcelonese with their accumulated cultural capital go hungry or don't congregate in public space to speak against their government, it's based on their own will, as these freedoms are at their disposal. Looking at the levels of basic needs, it seems that these intellectuals lack in the least vital basic needs. We have already mentioned their issues with belongingness as their Catalan culture and space are globalizing and they no longer have a "common enemy" to justify or make meaningful a collective identity. Accordingly, they are unsatisfied with their productivity and with their personal relationships (auto-actualization, esteem, and love needs).

The 1980s group is less creative and their transgressive will is moribund. Thus they don't bother or need to create spatial tactics. Regarding regulated urban space with some autonomy, with the exception of a change in agencies, the regulation of space has for the most part remained a constant over the period of forty years.

How does the fulfillment of basic needs in postmodern culture correlate with wellbeing? Now we have come to the most interesting part of this section. For me the answer lies in two premises. The first is that we have seen an inverse relationship between productivity and creativity (whether it be individual or collective) and the lack of basic needs. The postwar group lacks the most basic of needs and is yet the most creative; whereas the inverse is true for the postmodern group. Jameson would nod his head, as he believes there's nothing new left to create in postmodern art but to recycle old styles. And I'm sure Vázquez Montalbán would concur, as he grounds Jameson's claim in the case of Spain in La literatura en la construcción de la ciudad democrática:

por qué la llegada de la democracia constitucional a España no desarrolló la creatividad esperable ni derrumbó las murallas de Jericó que compartimentaban la cultura. Puede decirse que hoy, todavía como quien dice al día siguiente de la caída del franquismo, la inteligencia crítica española tiene que plantearse que la autentica creatividad cultural está paralizada [. . .]. (103)¹⁹⁶

The second premise is that there seems to be a parallel relationship between productivity and happiness, self-satisfaction and wellbeing. The group on the rooftops in more productive, they are resigned to mourning their lost freedoms, but they have more hope than the future generation. Further, there is a correlation between *the lack of basic needs and happiness, self-satisfaction, and wellbeing*.

This hypothetical logic holds true and leads to a frightful but thought-provoking conclusion: *once most basic needs are met, as hunger, enemies, and fears for our life disappear, and a veil of oblivion is laid over the past, we become more bored, more difficult to please, with less direction for the future, and our creativity, solidarity (altruism), interest, and wellbeing are more likely to wane*. What happens when the thinker no longer carries the weight of the world upon his/her shoulders? Could our contemporary happiness and human solidarity depend on the ongoing existence of suffering, injustice, hunger, and enemies?!

These questions interest me, but in a way they're useless because they're hypothetical. The misery *does* continue to exist, so whether or not we depend on them for our happiness doesn't create less misery. Hence the primordial question must be: *can basic needs be met in the contemporary period, while at the same time maintaining widespread leftist solidarity and activity?*

¹⁹⁶ Translation: "why the arrival of constitutional democracy in Spain didn't develop the expected creativity nor did it demolish Jericó's wall that compartmentalized culture. One can say that today, still like one would say the day after the fall of Francoism, critical intelligence in Spain has to confront that authentic creativity is paralyzed [. . .]."

According to Benjamin in The Arcades Project and Galende in “La izquierda entre el duelo, la melancolía y el trauma,” leftist or progressive movements have dissipated because individuals have fallen into the comfort of consumer-based society which has become the surreptitious vehicle for dehistoricizing the present by means of silencing the past, specifically the pasts of twentieth-century dictatorships (Jameson, “Postmodernism” 143). I believe both would give an optimistic and Freudian response to the last question by saying that we can be well off *and* revive a leftist movement but first we have to elaborate the mourning and establish a healthy relationship with the past.

6. Max Riera in Xavier Moret’s El último hippy (plus a photographic intermission)

Now let’s look at urban nostalgia in one more fictional text: the latest novel by Xavier Moret: El último hippy (2006). In this novel we will find many of the same critiques, feelings, and agents of nostalgia that I have discussed in the other texts. And with this repetition we will begin to see that nostalgia forms part of a wide-spread condition of post-Francoist culture. The setting for the novel is Barcelona, primarily the Historic Quarter’s Plaza Real, of the late nineties. El último hippy, published originally in Catalan under the title Qui paga mana, could be categorized as a comic detective novel.¹⁹⁷ It is similar to the Carvalho series, but without the sarcasm, aggression, pessimism, sexism, and proselytism. Overall, it’s a lighter novel and with a more lovable and laid-back protagonist.

As with the Carvalho series, again, we’re dealing with simple character-types. The protagonist and narrator is Max Riera. Max fulfills the hippy prototype. His hair is

¹⁹⁷ Translation: Whoever Pays, Rules.

shaggy, he's constantly smoking hash and/or drinking whiskey, he's a good friend to all, believes in free love, and could care less about money. He's a mix between the *Movida pasota* and Vázquez Montalbán's archetype of the post-Francoist melancholic intellectual. Max, like Ventura, is a writer who doesn't write. Pau Gispert, the antagonist and Max's old schoolmate, fulfills the antithesis—he's a materialistic, dishonest, and successful businessman.

Max is nearly unemployed when he receives an unexpected call from Pau Gispert. In grade school Pau was considered a nerd and nicknamed Dumbo. But since his childhood years, Pau has become a wealthy entrepreneur, undergone plastic surgery, and now currently has an unbeatable offer for his "old friend." Having learned that Max is a writer, Gispert contacts him to offer an enormous sum of 20 million pesetas to write a soap opera for TV3 (Catalonia's national television channel). Max is skeptical and dubious, but, as a starving artist, he finds himself reluctantly following the capitalist carrot. According to Gispert, the formula for the soap opera must be "lios, sexo, droga, persecuciones y muertos," and it should take place in "los ambientes marginales a fondo" (39, 44).¹⁹⁸ Gispert has chosen Max for the lucrative job for three reasons: because he's an "old friend," a potential writer, and because he lives in the middle of and hence is familiar with the *ambientes marginales*—La Plaza Real, the heart of the Historic Quarter. Max accepts the offer.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Translation: "messes, sex, drugs, persecutions, and death" and "deep marginalized environments."

¹⁹⁹ It seems that the media and urban planning agencies would conflict here in their economic use of the public image of Ciutat Vella, and is therefore an example of the messiness of the collective imaginary. As the media chooses Ciutat Vella's marginalized areas for the dramatic setting for the soap opera, speculators and the *Ajuntament*, through "limpieza social," are trying to project the opposite image (Tabakman). An explanation could be that public projection of marginalized

The following morning the police arrive at Max's door. They show him a photo of a beaten woman in an abandoned lot with a syringe in her arm. They inform him that she died of an overdose, and ask Max if he has any information. Max recognizes the woman. She's Paula—a prostitute, his neighbor, semi-friend, and last night's one-night-stand. The next day Max inquires about the case and learns that it has been closed and unresolved. And thus begins Max's amateur detective adventure to find out how and why Paula died. The crime scene is supposedly "right in his own backyard." As Max unhurriedly investigates the case and simultaneously tries to generate ideas for the script, the subsequent events in his personal life unfold to form the ideal soap opera Gispert is looking for. His motives in the city take him into two interrelated worlds. One world is visible, with which Max is already familiar, that of sex, drugs, death, evictions, poverty, and of those who make their home in the public space—"los gitanos, magrebíes, camellos, bongueros, yonquis..."²⁰⁰ The second world, absent from both the media and easily discerned public space, exists in the politics and corrupt business deals that lie behind the conflicts and destruction of the neighborhood (141).

As the novel advances and we become closer to solving the crime and finishing the script, a complex case of political despotism gradually comes to the surface. Let me highlight some of the critical nodes of this trajectory so we can later see how it plays out

neighborhoods in the media could create a trend-setting amongst young professionals, attracting them to live in the lively neighborhood and in the end helping speculators in their "limpieza social" project. (It is true that a large percent of young and/or foreign are increasingly moving into Ciutat Vella and it's generally taken for granted that the reason is for the cultural amenities the area has to offer (Balibrea, "Urbanism").

²⁰⁰ Translation: "gypsies, North Africans, drug dealers, bongo players, junkies...."

in producing nostalgia. We first hear about spatial despotism from Paula before she is found dead:

--El barrio ya no es lo que era --se quejó Paula chasqueando la lengua.
--¿Qué quieres decir?
--Cualquiera diría que molestamos...
Meneó la cabeza y me observó con una mirada cómplice, pero yo no lograba entender a qué se refería.
--Limpian fachadas, arreglan calles, renuevan casas... (22)²⁰¹

Before commenting on this passage let us look at one more. Max enters his friend Cipri's bar and tells us:

Me entretuve un rato leyendo los anuncios pegados en la pared junto a la entrada. Había señoritas que se ofrecían para hacer el amor (desde una mulata de ojos azules hasta una viuda-catalana-Visa sí) y trabajadores en paro que hacían remiendos a domicilio. También había una convocatoria para una manifestación de protesta contra la degradación del barrio: el día 21, a las ocho de la noche, en la plaza de Sant Jaume. Justo el mismo día que había quedado con Gispert.
--Habría lío --comentó Cipri al ver que estaba leyendo el anuncio--. Están subiendo los alquileres y echando a la gente. Dicen que quieren limpiar el barrio, pero lo que de verdad les interesa a ellos es que nos larguemos con la música a otra parte.²⁰²

Hence, we see that both Paula and Cipri, estranged in their own neighborhood, sense that their urban milieu is changing unfavorably, divisively. They have the intuition that an

²⁰¹ Translation: "--The neighborhood isn't the same anymore --Paula complained clicking her tongue.

--What do you mean?
--Anyone would say we're a nuisance...
She shook her head and observed me with a guilty look, but I didn't understand what she was referring to.
--They clean façades, fix up the streets, renovate houses... "

²⁰² Translation: I entertained myself for awhile by reading the ad posted on the walls by the entrante. There were young women that offered themselves for sex (from a mulata with blue eyes to a Catalan widow Visa yes) and workers on welfare that offered home repairs. Also there was a flyer for a protest against the degradation of the neighborhood: the 21st, at eight at night, in Plaza de Sant Jaume. The same exact day that I was supposed to meet with Gispert.

--There will be commotion --Cipri commented upon seeing that I was reading the flyer--. They're raising rents and throwing people out. They say they want to clean out the neighborhood, but what they're really interested in is that we and our music get out of here.

abstract authority, via general “degradación,” and renovation, is splitting their neighborhood socially and telling them to get out. The inclusion of a protest, and the fact that two people who are not acquaintances (Paula and Cipri) separately and randomly express their frustration to Max, suggest that the tension between speculators and citizens has formed an active and collective antagonism.

Later, similar discourse is re-mentioned during a meeting with Gispert at his home. Looking out over the city towards the sea, Gispert says to Max:

Si desde allí trazas una línea imaginaria hacia el mar verás el camino de la renovación del casco antiguo... La ciudad cambia y dentro de poco ni siquiera reconocerás tu barrio, Max.

Pensé en las quejas de Cipri y de Paula y en la manifestación contra la especulación convocada para el jueves. Sólo murmuré una palabra: lástima. No le gustó.

--¿Qué quieres decir --me interrogó con una mirada dura. Gispert estaba tenso, por mucho que se esforzara en disimularlo. No era el hombre seguro del otro día, quizá porque estaba fuera del despacho, su ámbito natural.

Le expliqué, procurando no exaltarme que no tenía ganas de que le dieran la vuelta al barrio como si se tratara de un calcetín y que tuviera que reconocerlo mirando viejas postales. Si la renovación suponía renunciar al encanto que había ido adquiriendo año tras año y que echaran a la gente de toda la vida, pasaba.

Gispert rió.

-- Los escritores no cambiaréis nunca --me rió entre dos caladas de habano--. Lo mejor que podría hacerse con la parte antigua es derribarla de arriba abajo y construir en su lugar nuevos edificios.²⁰³ (158)

²⁰³ Translation: “If from there you trace an imaginary line towards the sea you’ll see the renovating path of the historic quarter. The city is changing and soon you won’t even be able to recognize your own neighborhood, Max.

I thought about Cipri and Paula’s complaints and the protest against speculation scheduled for Thursday. I just murmured one word: pity. He didn’t like it.

What do you mean? He interrogated me with a hard look. Gispert was tense, for however much he was trying to dissimulate it. He wasn’t the strong man from the other day, maybe because he was outside of his office, in his natural environment.

I explained to him, trying to be modest, that I wasn’t interested in that they turn the neighborhood inside out as if it were a little sock and that would have to be recognized from old postcards. If the renovation meant renouncing the charm that had been acquired year over year and that they would kick out people who had lived there their whole life, I wasn’t interested.

Gispert laughed.

--You writers will never change—he scolded me through two puffs of his Havana--. The best thing that could happen to the old part is to raze it and construct new buildings in its place.”

Here Moret grounds and embodies all the abstract evil evident in Ciutat Vella within one concrete individual—Gispert—a supporter (who later turns out to be an agent) of the general destruction occurring below. Further, this passage is representative of the novel in the sense that it summarizes its simplified presentation of the gentrification debate. We learn of Max’s, Paula’s and Cipri’s counter opinion, but it’s not an argument; there’s no reasoning to it. While Moret provides us with two rational reasons to not raze the Historic Quarter—because it would turn its *encanto* into a commodity and evict its current inhabitants—he doesn’t provide Gispert with any rational reasons to destroy the Historic Quarter. Gispert is presented as a strictly money-driven and *mafioso* speculator, insensitive to any qualitative or collective value of space.²⁰⁴ The straight line he draws to the sea resonates with Horacio Capel’s description of the *Ajuntament*’s corrupt technique of renovating the city “con la brocha gorda” (66).

Also concerning the aforementioned conversation between Gispert and Max, as Gispert accuses Max and writers in general of not wanting to change, we see how the simple dichotomy between the hippy-artist and the businessman are not only split on economical and ethical values, but also temporal—Max values the past and Gispert the future.

In the end, Max’s initial skepticism and distrust of Gispert as a grade school kiss-up and present-day businessman prove to be well-founded. Two weeks after Gispert and

²⁰⁴ In spite of Gispert’s strictly quantitative-oriented vision, even he feeds his ego with the quality of elevated panoramic spaces. This is reflected in the location of his home, just like Carvalho’s, in Vallvidrera and his high-rise office on Diagonal, both which overlook the city and provide Gispert with a view of speculative potential, what Max refers to as Gispert’s “inmenso tablero de juegos” (158).

Max's reunion, Max, with the help of some friends, discovers that Gispert is behind an ambitious real estate business that is using "métodos poco ortodoxos con el objetivo de limpiar el barrio. [...] Amenazas, coacciones, desahucios irregulares, violencia... Juego sucio, en definitiva" (252). Part of this clean-up plan is linked to another dirty business Gispert runs—the production of overly-potent and lethal cocaine distributed in the Historic Quarter. This is what took Paula's life.

After learning Gispert's immoral enterprises and walking "por las calles cuadriculadas del Ensanche," Max, like Paula and Cipri, also ends up feeling like an "extranjero en [su] ciudad" (252, 252). Further, just like Carvalho's, Max's melancholy drives him unconsciously to seek comfort in the familiar yet sad historic neighborhood—"sin saber cómo, me encontré bajando por las Ramblas y entrando maquinalmente en la plaza Real" (252).²⁰⁵

This leads us back to one of the characteristics of nostalgia: of desiring something that one cannot possess. For Max and his counterparts, this familiar object of desire that is slipping through his hands is a place: the neighborhood, and more specifically: the Plaza Real, where he has lived for two decades. Similarly to the intimate way Carvalho's Barrio Chino sticks to his "cuerpo como una vestimenta habitual," Max's Plaza Real gives him the "extraña sensación de vivir la ciudad a fondo, de fundirte con ella, de dejar que cada uno de los bares te quedara marcado en la piel como un tatuaje" (Vázquez Montalbán, *Tatuaje* 156; Moret 79).²⁰⁶ The plaza is his daily inspiration, the place for

²⁰⁵ Translation: "without knowing how, I found myself going down the Ramblas and automatically entering the Plaza Real."

²⁰⁶ Translation: "the strange sensation of fully living in the city, of blending with it, of letting each one of its bars mark your skin like a tattoo."

resting and entertaining his eyes. Like we saw in the block where *En construcción* was filmed, Max's Plaza Real reveals an old close-knit, self-sufficient, and socially-diverse community. To write a soap opera TV series or live a fulfilling life, one needs not leave the plaza—"es una de las ventajas de la plaza Real [. . .] no es necesario salir, de hecho, para casi nada" (109).

Paula makes a comment that resonates with the other texts we've discussed thus far—"el barrio ya no es lo que era" (22). The novel presents many reminiscences of *the way things used to be* by juxtaposing two periods: the time in which the novel takes place—the late 1990s—and the way the neighborhood used to be from the late 1960s to the early 80s. In his artwork, for example, Max recreates, articulates, and sets in stone a fictional world of the identifiable way things were "before." He draws comics about

jóvenes melenudos que cultivaban plantas de maría y fumaban porros sin parar, visiones distorsionadas por los ácidos, viajes soñados, islas con palmeras, hongos alucinógenos y policías de gris con el fondo de una Barcelona perfectamente identificable. Fueron unos años en los que descubrimos la parte baja de la ciudad—la Rambla, la Ribera, la plaza Real...—y en los que estábamos convencidos de que todo era posible. Absolutamente todo, incluidas las utopías más alocadas. (40)²⁰⁷

Max remembers the past as if it were a paradise, insinuating that it was a time so different, so far and hallucinogenic from the present, that it was, or symbolically was, just another hallucinogenic trip.

But there is some truth in what Max recalls. Historically speaking, this "before" that Max misses and recreates in his comics, correspond to the hedonist and utopian years

²⁰⁷ Translation: long-haired youngsters that were growing marijuana plants and smoking joints non-stop, distorted visions caused by acid, dreamy trips, islands with palm trees, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and policemen wearing gray with a Barcelona in the background, perfectly identifiable. Those were the years when we were discovering the underground of the city—the Ramblas, the Ribera, the Plaza Real...--and we were convinced that everything was possible. Absolutely everything, even the wildest utopias."

of the 60s to 80s in Barcelona. In the 60s, in spite of the dictatorship, in the Plaza Real a unique period of progressive public culture and political solidarity began to surface. Bars stayed open later, Catalan cultural centers and festivals came back to life in the 60s to culminate in the 80s with the *Movida*. Public space took on a new human vitality. Local artists not only began to frequent the Plaza Real but also live in it, such as the painters such as José Ocaña and Pere Pruna and the writer Maria Aurelia Comany, and even the big urbanist Oriol Bohigas lived in flats during the seventies and eighties that flanked the plaza (Els barris 155).²⁰⁸

But the movement began to disintegrate after the city won the Olympics bid in 1986. Prices skyrocketed, the population began to decline, and public establishments began closing in order to accommodate the growing tourist sector (Els barris 139). For example, between 1986 and 2000, supposedly 200 cafés and bars closed in Ciutat Vella; (Magrinyà and Maza). And of course eliminating the bars and cafés, eliminates a space that fosters political solidarity and personal wellbeing. In the 80s, *esponjament* was supported initially even by the Neighborhood Associations of the Gothic neighborhood because of the lack of open spaces, the rise in drugs, gangs, prostitution, general delinquency, and the precarious, unhygienic conditions of the streets and buildings.²⁰⁹ In

²⁰⁸ Although not directly related to public space, the film movement *L'escola de Barcelona* and the literary movement *Gauche Divine* also emerged in the 1960s in Barcelona. Vázquez Montalbán is often considered to have formed part of the *Gauche Divine*. In general both groups consisted in left-leaning artists and intellectuals from well-to-do families. For more information on the *Gauche Divine*, see Vázquez Montalbán's article "Informe subnormal sobre un fantasma cultural."

²⁰⁹ In the Gothic Neighborhood for example, a study done in 1984 by the *Ajuntament* says that, at that time, 35% of the homes didn't have showers, 8.5% didn't have toilets, 83% didn't have natural light in the rooms, and 3,350 locals and immigrants were renting a room in a pension (Els barris 140).

1990, several formal and large renovation projects (PERIs) in the Gothic neighborhood commenced (Els barris 142). Today Max's basement flat on the Plaza Real has surely been renovated into an apartment for tourists to rent by the day, as is the growing tendency throughout Ciutat Vella.

Hence, within all this material transformation, Max is *the last hippy*. The identity of a "hippy," or a person who aesthetically and ethically embodies the atmosphere of the late 60s to early 80s is an anachronism, an identity becoming more and more an oddity like the old stones that peek out from underneath the new pavement. As we are told in this opening passage of the novel. Max moved into the historic quarter

en plena euforia hippy, cuando Barcelona bullía de entusiasmo y todavía se encontraban alquileres a precio de ganga en el casco antiguo. Un apartamento con vistas a la Plaza Real, por ejemplo: todo un lujo que ahora sólo estaba reservado a los elegidos. Era evidente que la ciudad había cambiado desde entonces—más yuppies y menos hippies, parecía ser la consigna. (23)

We see other examples of identity anachronisms in the novel. For instance, Max's best friend, Roc Duran, used to be a hippy too, although now he's a journalist. And when Max is talking to Luis Selva, a trumpeter who is one "de los históricos y echaba de menos los tiempos gloriosos de la Barcelona alternative," Max refers to himself and Luis as "supervivientes," (just like Ventura refers to Rosell as a "superviviente" in El pianista). His comments imply that they have remained the same—Max as a hippy and Luis as a freelance trumpeter through two decades of drastic cultural and urban change (73). Spatially speaking, we could say that while Max and Luis resist modernization like old solid buildings, Roc has conformed to the flow of urban modernization; he has gentrified himself and is fine with it.

Anachronism and heterogeneity can be expected of an urbanized neighborhood as are seen in Ciutat Vella's fascinating mesh of old and new buildings. However, what Moret is highlighting is the agitated split of the social scene in the contemporary neighborhood—the new rapidly and corruptly overpowers the old, while the old weakly tries to hang on. (I say weakly because Max is a *pasota* and the novel doesn't include any form of strong antagonist besides a supposed protest which doesn't occur within the timeframe of the novel.) Evidently, as discussed earlier, this shift in urban politics and social identity parallels the general cultural shift in Spain from hedonists to professionals, from the 80s to the 90s.

-- INTERMISSION--



Fig. 3.5. Biblioteca d'Arxius Històrics. Megan Saltzman, 2006.



Fig. 3.6. Eixample de l'esquerra. Megan Saltzman, July 2005.



Fig. 3.7. Plaça Angels. 2005, Megan Saltzman.



Fig. 3.8. Close-up of a school in the Plaça Angels. Façade from 20th and 16th century. Megan Saltzman, 2005.

-- END OF INTERMISSION --

To show nostalgia's connections with heightened capitalism, we should add that Moret does not present nostalgia in an isolated manner only through urbanism; rather, he also manifests the negative change in music, as we see in the following passage:

Sisa, Gato Pérez, dos fenómenos de una Barcelona que ya no existía. Un aire nuevo: como también lo fue Pau Riba. Un destello de alegría y de psicodelia en una Barcelona que se moría de aburrimiento. Gato murió demasiado joven, lanzando improperios contra todos los que le ignoraban y se vendían a la música yanqui, y Sisa enterró a su personaje y decidió refugiarse en el anonimato de Madrid. Barcelona mientras tanto, proclamaba a los cuatro vientos su modernidad pasada por agua. (73)²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Translation: Sisa, Gato Pérez, two phenomena of a Barcelona that doesn't exist anymore. A new air: as Pau Riba was too. A sparkle of happiness and psychedelics in a Barcelona that's

Sisa, Gato Pérez, and Pau Riba are three musicians who formed part of Barcelona's local music movement known as the *Catalan Nova Canço* in the sixties and seventies. Many of them singing in Catalan, still under the Franco regimen, the songs of the *Nova Canço* are associated with the city and its collective aspirations for cultural freedom and democracy. According to Max, who identifies with these cultural figures, globalization and capitalism of "modernidad" are turning local culture into stagnant water culture, a Water Modernity.

In addition, and akin to Vázquez Montalbán's Sabotaje olímpico, this watered-down culture is also accompanied by a bombardment of increasingly ubiquitous simulacra for economic (and often aesthetic) ends regardless of their negative effects on the urban populace. Part of what Max categorizes as fake ("falso"), as in hiding truth and spontaneity, is in tangent with what Baudrillard defines as simulacra and hyperreality. We see these phenomena extended throughout the whole novel—in Gispert's materialistic upper-class world of plastic surgery, and in the newspaper where they censor what goes on in the city for the sake of the city's image. For example, the newspapers keep silent about Paula's death and Gispert's corruption because Gispert is "un peso pesado de las finanzas de Barcelona con muchísimos contactos. Digamos que el director prefirió no meterse con él por miedo de las represalias" (189).²¹¹

dying of boredom. Gato died too young, insulting all those who ignored him and were catering to yankee (American) music, and Sisa buried his persona and decided to take anonymous refuge in Madrid. Barcelona in the meantime proclaimed the four winds of its watered-down modernity.

²¹¹ Translation: "a heavy weight in Barcelona's finances with a lot of contacts. Let's just say that the director preferred to not get involved for fear of the consequences."

Now let's examine how the novel portrays simulacra in television, academia, and political correctness; and then I'll explain what simulacra has to do with urban space and Max's nostalgia.

The topic of simulacra is addressed when Max visits a television studio to meet Proubasta, one of Gispert's cronies who will be in charge of adapting Max's script to television.²¹² Max describes the studio as "un mundo virtual en el que podría transcurrir toda una vida"; the set looks like "una casa de muñecas a escala real" (96). This dollhouse set is kept top-secret from the public behind "unas enormes puertas de hierro. Propias de un submarino, o de una prisión" (96). Once Max is in and observing, he comments that "Todo falso. Pensé en mi madre, tan adicta a las telenovelas. Debería verlo para desengañarse" (96).²¹³ His mother is a victim of what Baudrillard calls hyperreality; for her, representation has become more important than reality to the point that she is no longer aware of the distinction, or of the loss of reference to the real. The deceptive spectacle worsens Max's hangover. Suddenly, true organic nature returns and disrupts the falsity of the scene, and to the crew's disgust, Max unintentionally vomits on the set while the cameras are rolling.

On another occasion Gispert requires Max to attend an international conference at the Pompeu Fabra University about soap operas in order to absorb ideas for his script. Max is not an academic and is taken aback by their way of intellectualizing everything,

²¹² It could be that Moret chose the name Proubasta for its phonetic similarities with the name Procivesa, which is the name of the private construction contractor that is responsible for teaming up with the *Ajuntament* to realize PERIs (*Pla Especial de Reforma Interior/Interior Reform Plans*) razing many of the neighborhoods historic buildings.

²¹³ Translation: "the border marked by enormous iron doors. Like those of a submarine or a prison." [. . .] "Everything fake. I thought in my mother, so addicted to soap operas. She should see this to stop cheating herself."

including soap operas, by relating them to Shakespeare and Freud. Moret represents those who attend the conference with attributes that are similar to those that Vázquez Montalbán attributes to the intellectuals in Los mares del sur and the first chapter of El pianista. Max is annoyed by their “pedante,” exclusive, and ultimately “false” way of behaving—“sostienen la pipa con una mano mientras encajan el codo en la otra”²¹⁴—and the panelists read their papers in a language that is incomprehensible but yet provokes enthusiastic applauses and admiration (173).

However, the last panelist appeals to Max. He’s rebellious, claims to have never watched a soap opera in his life, condemns them in Marx’s words as “opium for the people,” and is not affected by the audience’s subsequent boos. This panelist runs into Max on his way out of the conference and admits to Max that “sólo he criticado los seriales para desmarcarme de los otros oradores y porque me lo han pedido los organizadores para combatir el aburrimiento” (183-184).²¹⁵ Hence, just as Max thinks he may have found some authentic spontaneity or antagonism, or someone to relate to, he learns it’s just another pre-planned farse, another performance.

So what do these cases of simulacra or hyperreality in television and academia have to with public urban space? The concepts in which they are grounded can be read in the urban milieu and they together form *a general culture of falsity* that repels Max and his counterparts (Paula, Cipri, Lahuerta, Carvalho, and even the annoying intellectuals). These concepts are Baudrillardian and Debordian—they pertain to the relationship between *spectacular reality* and (what we consider) *real reality* and the way it makes us

²¹⁵ Translation: “I only criticized the series to stand out amongst the other panelists and because the organizers asked me to in order to combat the boredom.”

think, feel, and behave. They foster simplicity, acquiescence, a money-mentality, and a blasé attitude or what Jameson refers to the “waning of affect” (Postmodernism 10).

We can see the amalgamation, fluidity, and legibility of these concepts in public space in the following nightmare Max has in which:

un joven corría como un loco por las Ramblas. Llevaba una bolsa de unos grandes almacenes en la mano, unos vaqueros recién planchados, una camiseta con publicidad por ambos lados, zapatillas de deporte, gafas de sol y una gorrita de béisbol. En todas las prendas era muy visible la marca comercial. Dos policías intentaban darle alcance. [. . .] En un momento de la persecución, el chico tropezaba, la bolsa se rompía y el contenido se esparcía por el suelo. La cámara lo enfocaba todo el detalle, lo que permitía identificar una gran variedad de productos de supermercado: pasta, cereales, leche, yogures, vino, detergente y un largo etcétera. Todo un glorioso escaparate de la sociedad de consumo. Uno de los policías se agachaba para examinar el contenido y, cogiendo un paquete de espaguetis con una mano, comentaba mirando a la cámara: “Cielos, la misma marca que compra mi mujer. No es tan estúpido como parecía el muy capullo.” (64)²¹⁶

Not a very creative scene but it calls to mind many others. Max’s nightmare is nearly identical to some of the scenes in Sabotaje olímpico, and it also brings to mind Almodóvar’s use of cheesy commercials in his films and Lahuerta’s contemporary plastic market of abundance. We see the ability of television and consumer reality to penetrate our subconscious as Baudrillard and Debord predicted. Here the spectacle and reality become indistinguishable creating a hyperreality. As the eye and the camera lens merge,

²¹⁶ Translation: “a young boy was running like a crazy person down Las Ramblas. He was carrying a bag from one of those department stores in his hand, wearing some recently ironed jeans, a t-shirt with advertisement on both sides, sneakers, sunglasses and a baseball cap. On all of his clothes the commercial brand was very visible. Two policemen were trying to catch up with him. [. . .] In one moment during the chase, the boy started to trip, his bag was breaking and the content was spilling out all over the floor. The camera was focuses on every detail, which allowed one to identify a large variety of supermarket products: pasta, cereal, milk, yogurt, wine, detergent and a long etcetera. A glorious display of consumer society. One of the policemen got down to examine the content and, picking up a package of spaghetti noodles with one hand, he looked at the camera and commented: “Good heavens, the same brand my wife buys. The jerk’s not as stupid as he looks.”

they process the world in terms of ubiquitous monetary symbols, and documents the Ramblas for what it's turning into: an "escaparate de la sociedad de consumo" (Moret 64).²¹⁷

There's a second dream in the novel, another Rambla chase. The night after the vomit scene in the studio Max dreams he's witnessing the filming of his unwritten script. A police officer is chasing a black man down Las Ramblas and yells out "¡Quieto, negro huevón, o disparo!" (103). The scene is cut and the "linguistic corrector" and "politics corrector" argue with the crew over the political correctness of the statement. They go back and forth about the consequences and connotations of using words like "negro," "huevón," "hijo de puta" "putas," and "maricón," and in the end they have to change the sentence to "¡Quieto, señor africano de piel oscura que das ligeramente asco!" (104).²¹⁸ Max evidently has this dream because he's learned of the strides the media has taken to be politically correct. Repetitively he is told that working in television is a "trabajo colectivo," merely meaning that once he turns in his script it will be rewritten to the directors' liking. Max interprets this editing process the same as he interprets the newspaper's coverage of Paula's death and Gispert's dirty business—as censorship.

Hence, this dream about political correctness (like the commercial dream as well as the scenes at the academic conference and the TV studio) is related to urban space in the sense that it forms part of the general production of a culture of falsity. The linguistic censors function in the same way the newspapers, television, and gentrification do. These three agencies, in order to attract investment, censor what for Max and his friends

²¹⁷ This is similar to Zulueta's film "Arrebato" and Cortazar's/Antonioni's "Las babas del diablo"/"Blowup" respectively.

²¹⁸ Translation: "Stop, black jerk or I'll shoot!" [. . .] "black," "jerk," "son of a bitch," "whores," and "fags," [. . .] "Stop, African dark-skinned sir, you are disgusting me!"

is the real neighborhood—the prostitutes and the lower-class and their cultural spaces. In the end they give a final appearance (whether on television, in the newspaper or in cement) of a pleasant economically-productive neighborhood, of a successful Barcelona Model. In the novel, gentrification has gone so far that it achieves what Baudrillard’s considers the worst level of simulacra and hyperreality—when the image (in this case of public space in Barcelona) “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (173).

If today represents falsity for Max, what happened to the truthful years? Why did things change, according to Max, for the worse? Max provides us with an explicit answer, one that resonates with what is written about the subjects of the *Desencanto*:

Después, sin que al tarado de Gispert le diera tiempo a percatarse de nada, llegó el desencanto. No falla. La ciudad recuperó su orden rígido y cuadrículo y la marcha permanente dejó paso a ese sentido común tan aburrido con el que los burgueses suelen llenarse la boca. A todos los que habíamos participado en la gran fiesta que era la Barcelona de aquellos años se nos quedó cara de no saber qué hacer, de naufragos que procuraban agarrarse a cualquier tronco a la deriva. Algunos optaron por la huida: el viaje sin fin o el retiro a un mundo rural, lejos de todo, aunque no tardarían en descubrir que la dureza del día a día en el campo no tenía nada que ver con el paisaje idílico que habían soñado. Otros en cambio, intentaron sobrevivir adaptándose a una Barcelona completamente distinta e intentando pactar con la realidad, con los nuevos dueños de la ciudad, con los Gisperts de turnos. A pesar de que algunos les fue bastante bien, la mayoría tuvo que conformarse con un tirando eternamente provisional. Exiliados en su propia ciudad. (40-41)²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Translation: Afterwards, without that jerk Gispert having time to realize it, the *Desencanto* arrived. It doesn’t fail. The city recuperated its rigid grid order and the permanent diversion made way for the boring common sense with which the bourgeoisies fill their mouths. All of us who had participated in the big party that was Barcelona during those years were left with a not-knowing-what-to-do face, like shipwrecked people who were trying to hang on to any loose branch. Some opted to flee: the never-ending trip or the withdrawal to a rural world, far away from everything, though it didn’t take them long to discover the hardships of day-to-day living in the country that didn’t have anything to do with the idyllic countryside they had dreamed of. Others, on the other hand, tried to survive adapting themselves to a Barcelona completely different and trying to come to an agreement with reality, with the new owners of the city, with rows of Gisperts. However, it turned out pretty well for some, the majority had to conform to an entirely provisional moving-forward. Exiles in their own city.

His passage is clear, self-explanatory, and reiterates some points we've already covered. Whether it be the way things used to be in Ciutat Vella or the way things could be in the countryside, Max is aware that a desire for something more authentic and solid has merely fostered idealism and disintegration. With the *Desencanto* there's a sense of helplessness, a loss of direction and something solid to hold on to. According to Max, whatever the route one chose, one got screwed.²²⁰ However, this awareness suggests that, unlike Lahuerta, Max is not (or is less) in denial about his nostalgia. Max recognizes that he is "ensimismado" and that his comics help him "fabricar la ficción de que aun había puntos sólidos a los que agarramos" (23, 52).

In my opinion, Max's awareness combined with his *pasota* attitude is what makes him a happier person. If we put Max in dialogue with Carvalho we see that his case of nostalgia differs in many ways. As El último hippy begins it seems as if we were going to plunge into a nostalgic testimony, but as it progresses, the entertainment value of the comic mystery genre supersedes the nostalgic polemic. Overall, and in comparison to the Carvalho series, El último hippy is a light critique of nostalgia and social injustices. It doesn't contain the more-poignant conditions to produce and justify a fatally nostalgic individual like Carvalho. Max's sadness is not comparable with Carvalho's suicidal potential or dark humor. Max deviates from this category because his melancholy is paired with an upbeat personality, and though his city transforms around him, he doesn't dwell in the negativity, nor does he move away from the Historic Quarter as Carvalho does or feel alone and helpless about the future. In fact, Max doesn't think much about the future at all. He has that hedonistic element of *pasotismo* and Jameson's "living in

²²⁰ I'm not familiar with the rural exodus Max mentions. The only phenomenon it brings to my mind is the loss of the city population to the residential towns and new suburbs.

the immediate present” that allows him to enjoy what is left of the city and even to participate collectively and politically, something Carvalho and the intellectuals lost faith in. And although the Historic Quarter forms part of both Max’s and Carvalho’s personal identity, the destruction in the Historic Quarter creates more of an identity crisis for Carvalho than it does for Max. This could be attributed to the fact that Max’s childhood space and memories are elsewhere (the novel doesn’t indicate where).

In conclusion, Moret and Max provide us with a city that is both precarious and rich, “identifiable” and unidentifiable, one in which “entusiasmo” and “aburrimiento,” “hippies” and “yuppies” both thrive. I have chosen to include this novel not only for its relation between humans and their deteriorating contemporary urban space, but also because it provides an example of a protagonist who conceptualizes his time and space into one of two abstract categories—before or after—without providing any concrete factors that display this division. So what good does it do us to witness another dual-minded protagonist? There is much more to say about Max. But because this is one of the many questions that applies to all of our nostalgic subjects, I want to first introduce all of them so that I can answer this question as well as others in an organized and inclusive fashion. So, now let’s meet our last individual: Remei.

7. Remei in Megan Saltzman's "Things that Remei told me on the afternoon of March 2, 2005"

Una catalana, viuda,²²¹ probably in her 70s, perfectly sane. She was sitting on the corner of Estel and Nou de la Rambla, between a vacant lot and a police station.

I didn't know Remi. I was walking around a descampado²²² in the Raval to take a picture. She was sitting nearby and without getting up she asked me if I was "desorientada." I told her no, I was just trying to take a picture.

She answered "porque todo ha cambiado y yo lo sé porque he vivido en este barrio toda mi vida."²²³

I thought, wow, divine academic intervention.

I asked her to elaborate and she told me to sit down next to her on the curb-bench.

She wore a winter coat and had a white plastic bag with a pack of light bulbs in it.

Then she turned in my direction and said: "Este barrio era la flor y nata de Barcelona y ahora es una mierda."²²⁴ I didn't say anything.

She continued: "Cuando yo era pequeña, esos bares estaban cerrados de día pero cuando las señoras abrieron las puertas para limpiar podíamos ver..."²²⁵

²²¹ A Catalan woman, a widow.

²²² descampado = abandoned lot/field.

²²³ because everything has changed and I know because I have lived in this neighborhood my whole life.

²²⁴ This neighborhood was the sweet cream of Barcelona, and now it's a piece of shit.

²²⁵ When I was little, those bars were closed during the day but when the cleaning ladies open them to clean we could see what was going on inside...

“Antes había pobreza pero había honradez.”²²⁶ She said this twice.

“Y cuando yo era pequeña había prostitutas pero en esa época las prostitutas no querían que los niños las vieran—no como ahora. Ahora pasan.”²²⁷

I repeated her sentences in my head to try to remember them because I didn’t have a pen or paper with me.

Pointing behind her, she asked me if I knew where the Sant Pau church was. I answered yes. Then she said “ahora la Iglesia de Sant Pau está tan dejada que da tristeza, no da ganas de entrar”²²⁸

Where the police station is now there used to be “pisos guapos”²²⁹ and calle Tapies passed right through.

“pero todavía en este barrio hay sitios muy bonitos tanto como en el Gótico.”²³⁰

“pero ahora están abarcando todo como en el barrio judío del Gótico.”²³¹

En esta calle [calle Nou de la Rambla] se podía comprar de todo, de todo.”²³²

²²⁶ Before there was poverty, but there was honor.

²²⁷ And when I was little there were prostitutes but back then the prostitute didn’t want the kids to see them—not like now, now they could care less.

²²⁸ now the Sant Pau church is so abandoned that it makes one sad, one doesn’t feel like going in.

²²⁹ pretty flats.

²³⁰ but there still are pretty places in this neighborhood, just as many as there are in the Gothic Neighborhood.

²³¹ but now they’re taking over everything like they did in the Jewish quarter of the Gothic Neighborhood.

Places that used to exist in the neighborhood that she mentioned during our conversation:

“Casablanca”

“Cine Apolo”

Un cabaret

Mobles

Un bar de travesties “allí el sexo débil no existía.”²³³

I asked her if I could get a picture of her. She dryly agreed.

I asked her what her name was and she told me Remi. I didn't get the name at first. She repeated it and explained that it's Catalan for Remedios.

I asked her if she would like me to send her a copy of the picture and she said that she doesn't give out her address.

And we said goodbye, and I went home to write this down before her words were forgotten.

²³² On this street [Nou de la Rambla] one used to be able to buy anything and everything.

²³³ A travesty bar “there the weaker sex didn't exist.”



Fig. 3.9. “Remei.” Raval Neighborhood. Megan Saltzman, March 2, 2005.

8. Some historical contextualization and concluding thoughts

What all these protagonists have in common is that they are responding in similar ways to the shift in the last four decades in Spain from the local to the global, from believing that the transition to democracy would meet their long awaited needs to realizing that democracy caters to a global economy. The latter has infringed upon the sentimental relationships and hopes that the protagonists possessed within their urban milieu, creating a culture which they find superficial, frivolous, ephemeral, meaningless, and devoid of memory.

As a result, this has produced a loss of solidarity, of meaningful places of memory, of quality culture, and of collective local and personal identity, and has left them with feelings of impotence, hopelessness, insignificance, and to sink or swim at their own discretion. These individuals, with the exception of some of Ventura's successful friends and Max's friend Roc, have chosen to sink down to the residues of their memory. Similar to exiles in a foreign country, Lahuerta, Cavalho, the intellectuals, Max, Cipri, Paula, and Remei experience feelings of disorientation, nostalgia, melancholia, displacement, disappointment, disinterestedness, and inwardness. And they are all anachronisms that are going extinct. Carvalho, the intellectuals, and Max have low self-confidence and tend to think of themselves as failures. Psychologically, they are masochists; their urban landscape is painful for them to inhabit, but they don't quit relishing themselves in it by remembering it and strolling through it.

Accordingly, the *pacto de olvido* and the general postmodern culture have driven them to conceptualize in a dualistic way. That is, they think in terms of: before and after, past and present, and positive and negative. None of our protagonists, except Carvalho,

mentions any negative aspects about the past. This is because nostalgia has an all-enveloping comfort to it, as the urban activist Jordi Borja states in La ciudad conquistada:

Mitificar el pasado es demasiadas veces el opio y el consuelo de los que buscan y encuentran un fácil eco popular, para justificar así el lamento sobre el presente. La ciudad del pasado no era casi nunca ni equilibrada territorialmente, ni cohesionada socialmente, ni integrada culturalmente, ni democrática políticamente. (47)²³⁴

Foucault says something similar in “Space, Knowledge, and Power”:

some cheap form of archaism or some imaginary past forms of happiness that people did not, in fact, have at all. [...] There is in this hatred of the present or the immediate past a dangerous tendency to invoke a completely mythical past. (165).

As we have seen in this chapter and in Borja’s and Foucault’s passages, nostalgia idealizes the past and forms a kind of collective safety net protecting one from the cumbersome historical and political weight we as individuals carry. The reconstructed nostalgic reality of Barcelona’s historic quarter, the marvelous Catarina Market, or the paradisiacal Plaza Real is merely an exaggeration of the positive characteristics of a place and an easy way of making sense of our contemporary dislikes, particularly changes and losses.

The mass media have capitalized on this softspot of ours, perpetuating a dualistic and nostalgic way of conceptualizing time. While we can see this nostalgic trend in all facets of popular culture (television, expositions, clothing styles...), it appears to be most prolific in the publishing sector. In the last decade dozens of books have been published on Barcelona’s pre-1975 history. Many of them are impacting photographic archival

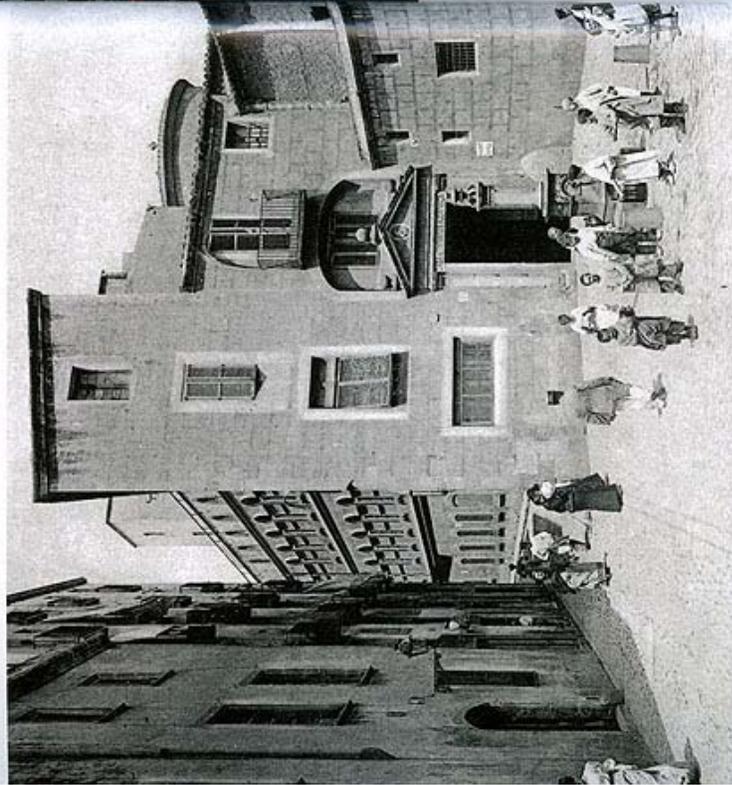
²³⁴ Translation: “To mythify the past is too often the opium and comfort of those who are searching and finding an easy popular voice in order to justify the lament of the present. The city of the past was hardly ever territorially balanced, nor socially integrated, not politically democratic.”

books that portray a bygone era, slow-paced, lively, in black and white such as (notice their nostalgic titles) Catalunya destrüida (2005) by Xavier Barral i Altet, Barcelona desapareguda (2004) by Josep and Gui Huertas, Barcelona en blanc i negre (2003) by Xavier Miserachs, and Barcelona: Com es, com era (2005) by Huertas and Maristany. Huertas work juxtaposes areas of the city before and after the transition to democracy (see fig. 4.10). While these books are valuable as archival documentation, and while they could be interpreted as an antagonistic to postmodern urban renewal, they were either funded partially or entirely by the *Ajuntament* or in response to Barcelona-based editorials. Nostalgia is now a booming market. It is analogous to the opposite of Benjamin's phantasmagoria and dream image of progress; today's city displays a dissembled and hazy reverie of the past, as Crinson says generalizing to many emerging global cities:

'post-modern urbanism' or even 'posurbanism,' as it has come to be called, treats the past as something to be quoted selectively, something already deracinated: the "villaging" of city centres to evoke loss or mythical forms of public life, historic buildings that are little more than the carcasses of former functions, loft spaces with cleaned brick and stripped interiors filled with new fittings, "historic interiors" that are preserved as if in aspic façades saved while their inners are gutted and completely rebuilt, and new museums established in old mills, steelyards and power stations. (Urban Memory xi)

LA PLAÇA DELS ÀNGELS

l'indret actual no té res a veure amb el que va existir fins el 1995, quan en una decisió de nou ric l'Ajuntament de Barcelona va carregar-se la seva estructura de los segles enrerre perquè el nou Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona tingués més perspectiva. La plaça antiga estava conformada per la Casa dels Infants Orfes, del segle XVI, una font enmig de la calçada i el carrer de Montalegre. AH



La nova plaça forma part d'un gran pla presentat l'any 1981 sota el títol "Deu al Seminari", i que pretenia obrir un corredor cultural –i físic– entre Ciutat Vella i l'Eixample. Els Àngels és la plaça dels emblemes: el Convent dels Àngels forma de Clotet i Paricio) és avui la seu del Foment de les Arts Decoratives (FAD) el MACBA (Richard Meier) és referent nacional de l'art contemporani i el Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCBB) és un dels punts d'exposició més valorats a la ciutat. La Universitat Ramon Llull i la recentíssima ciutat de Geografia i Història de la Universitat de Barcelona completen aquest conjunt dedicat a la cultura. Els veïns que anteriorment tenien casa a l'actual plaça van ser traslladats a d'altres punts del districte com la veïna plaça de les Ramelles. PE

Fig. 3.10. The Plaça dels Àngels at the beginning and at the end of the twentieth-century. Pages 32 and 33 of the book Barcelona: Com es, com era by Josep Maria Huertas and Gerard Maristany.

While Carvalho, Lahuerta and some of Ventura's friends may aspire to critique postmodern destruction, in the end both the market and the critics-of-the-market are fortifying the reproduction of falsified images of the past, which eradicates any efficacy of the intellectuals' original critique.

These temporal, spatial, and affective dichotomies in the city between a "before" and an "after," better and worse respectively, have been recognized and discussed by many cultural theorists such as Benjamin, Lefebvre, Baudrillard, and Jameson. For example, capitalism also has eliminated Benjamin's "oeuvre" ("Work of Art"), Lefebvre's "aura" (Right to the City), Baudrillard's "real" ("Simulacra"), all those palpable sentimental qualities of a city that has ceased to exist.

This dichotomy is also seen in Jameson's theoretical distinction between modernism and postmodernism. He exemplifies the difference with two famous paintings: Van Gogh's "A Pair of Boots" and Andy Warhol's "Diamond Dust Shoes" (Postmodernism 8-12). The boots are like Lahuerta's worn-down step, Carvalho's patina in the Barrio Chino, and Max's old Plaza Real. The boots are earthy with mud and humane with wear-n-tear. They convey an eternal memory of the past. On the other hand, the flat and flashy plastic heels, similar to Barcelona's new stark and balcony-free architecture, Gispert's office, and Proubasta's television studio, denote emptiness, superficiality, sterility, and flimsiness; they reflect the latest ephemeral fashion as witnesses of small talk at a cocktail party.

So, why us? Returning to the question Aristotle posed at the beginning of this chapter: "Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry, or the arts are melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are infected by the disease a rising

from black bile?” I’d like to propose a simple Nietzschean or perhaps Buddhist response in suggesting that the philosopher, poet, and artist suffer because they embark on the impossible task of encapsulating, and often reproducing in language/art, his/her attachments to the past (“Untimely”). It is we who document things, who get tangled in Freud’s paradox of desperately wanting to grasp something impossible or unidentifiable (“Mourning”). Lahuerta revives the Caterina market of his youth with his essay; Max recreates the Plaza Real of the 1960s with his comics, and I document Remei’s description of the Barrio Chino so that it’s not forgotten.

In Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory, Andreas Huyssen talks about “the explosion of memory discourses at the end of the twentieth century” (4). Nearly all academic scholarship on historical memory published in the last two decades advocates resurrecting the memories and histories that have been lost whether due to past dictatorships, wars, exile, and censorship. While I agree with Huyssen that

memory discourses are absolutely essential to imagine the future and to regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination in a media and consumer society that increasingly voids temporality and collapses space” (6)

it is also apparent that memory discourses, fed by the mass media, turn into mass nostalgia, which in return results in socially regressive effects on artists, history, and social justice.

Given this phenomenon, I wonder when will we begin to combine memory discourse with practical solutions for the present? *When will the process of reconstructing historical memory be complete?* When a certain quota of monuments that commemorate marginalized historical subjects in the center of the city have been

realized? When utopia is achieved? What is needed to demystify and defragmentize urban history? These are important questions to think about if we want to alleviate the psychic pain that urban-nostalgia inflicts and/or attempt to inculcate more underrepresented historical consciousness in theory and practice. Perhaps a solution lies in the hypothetical?

Related to the retrieval of lost memory, I'd like to share a hypothetical or imaginary scenario that has amused my imagination for several years. *What if nothing was ever destroyed in the city?* Let us use our imagination to rewind Barcelona for a moment. Imagine if the turn-of-the-century textile factories returned to the Raval and the SEAT factory to Poble Nou. The cheap *desarrollismo* construction in the periphery would be visible, Franco's equestrian statues would be taken out of military museums and restored to plazas. The shabby *barracas* would reappear along the coast, and the trolleys would retrace their routes from Gràcia to the Plaza de Catalunya. Next to the glimmering modernists buildings of the Eixample the pigs and sheep would graze in the wheat fields. Three layers of walls, each from a different period, would surround the historic quarter, and the medieval synagogue on Call street would still serve the faithful. If the streets were dirt, cobblestone and slick asphalt at the same time? And if the Greek and Phoenician tombstones rose to the surface? We would hear a rumble of many languages, animals, and forms of transportation.

The imagined situation provokes many questions: by what names would we call the streets? Would there be unemployment? What currency would be used? What would happen with spaces whose function is out-dated, such as dirt roads and the Roman cloacae? How would authorities of different *époques* settle their conflicting systems?

With so much ethnic and architectural diversity would there be more social tolerance?
How long would the farm animals survive in the Eixample?

So much unknown and unjust history would be disclosed. It's a hypothetical translation of Benjamin's and Klee's famous angel, the ultimate palimpsest, historical residues accumulated before us. Architects, students of art history, architectural preservationists, sociologists, and tourists would have an unprecedented glimpse of the past and they'd be eager to capture everything with their notepads and cameras.

Some more serious issues that rise from this imaginary situation: What would the scenario teach us about history or the definition of history itself? How would the state redefine cultural heritage (*patrimonio cultural*)? How would the situation make us feel? Would we be in shock, overjoyed, dumbfounded, overwhelmed? Would we simply grow accustomed to it, developing an even thicker layer of Simmel's numbing blasé attitude to protect ourselves from the abundance of stimuli and surprises? Most importantly, my main reason for positing the scenario: could one still critique censorship, fragmentation, and mythification of history and memory if all its material references reappeared in public space?

A solution beyond the hypothetical exists. While the idea is fanciful, elements of the palimpsest-city exist in today's city. An anachronistic mix of times, traditions, and modernities are reflected in all facets of the city. (I often recall the anachronistic scene in En construcción in which a man becomes frustrated trying to turn his car around at an intersection of medieval streets in the Raval.) In practical terms, I believe that the process of reconstructing historical memory will be more complete *when authority stops exerting its hegemony over history*, when memory is liberated to take on its own organic

narrative and duration. This could be reduced to our basic need for “belongingness” which we spoke of in the section on El pianista. This need relies on social competition and the creation of divergent enemy forces. With competition and enemies, memories of different political ideologies, different religions, and different genders conflict ubiquitously, and one position will continue to override the other. Even if the city were able to regain everything it had ever lost, it would begin to censor, destroy, and repress again. If we could abolish the competitive instinct, then perhaps we would be able to strike a more peaceful rapport with temporality (and our neighbors).

Conclusion

Inditex will open about 600 stores around the world in 2008 (Hernández). In Barcelona while the local population continues to decrease, tourism reached 7 million last year, an 8% increase from the previous year (“Barcelona tuvo”). The Historic Quarter increasingly resembles a generic amusement park; and the peninsula is drying up.²³⁵ Granted that change is inevitable, and space has to transform, but historic space is disappearing more than is warranted. We have explored many texts that lament the loss of spontaneity, solidarity, community, memory, and the historical and political consciousness in the city, often as a result of modifications to the urban milieu, the city-space, and usually to the detriment of the citizenry.

As I close this dissertation, the city will go on differing from what I’ve captured in these chapters. Now that we have this superimposed representation of the city, what can we conclude about it other than that the future looks foreboding? All of the local issues that we have discussed here have implications that extend beyond Barcelona. Barcelona is but one example of what is happening globally, where regional city centers, medium-sized European cities, have joined the main urban network of the global

²³⁵ Spain is currently suffering its worst drought in 40 years (Nash; Rosenthal).

economy in the last few decades (Križnik 12). Considering that this has become a universal phenomenon, we can see the enormous breadth and the issues and implication at stake.

On this universal note, I believe social improvements could be made if space began to take on a new definition. I have tried to advocate that space is not “a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things” (Foucault, “Of” 23). Rather, space is ephemeral, historical, ever-changing, fluid, socially produced and that is represented mentally, physically, and virtually. This broadened definition considers the periphery as well as the center, the everyday and residual as well as the sacred and monumental. It recognizes and utilizes space’s unique potential for providing narratives, history, memory, identities, tactics, nostalgia, resistance, and refuge. Today this is more important than ever because truth is buried under an ever-increasing proliferation of urban debris, simulacra, apathy, and consumer values.

Perhaps asking an urban population to understand a complex definition of space is too difficult or theoretical? After extensive critical analysis, I don’t want to conclude without modestly providing an alternative that does not yield to apathy or acquiescence or an understanding merely within an academic circle. A universal and practical proposal would be for citizens to simply become more conscious of the humane values implicit within our common space. If this could occur, then most likely civil injustice occurring in public space would be uncovered and collective concern and skepticism would be renewed and most likely acted upon. It would regenerate an interest in expressing a voice in urban politics and a return to neighborhood organizations. The local government would be forced to reassess the needs of the entire city, giving priority *not* to the tourists

and managerial class, but to those who, according to Sanz's article, are in the most precarious situations—women, immigrants, and children. As a result, I believe that we would come closer to striking the urgent balance needed between global economic pressure, local democracy and historic preservation.

Through skepticism we must maintain optimism. In spite of onerous regulations, the people are the city. Possibilities for change lie within what they provide: diversity, communication, and ideological and geographical solidarity; and all these culminate in the metropolis.

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