



**The Urbanization of Subjectivity:
Ildefons Cerdà's *Urbanización* and Catalan
Narrative Fiction**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2024

Abstract

This thesis examines the construction of ‘urbanized’ subjectivity in four works of Catalan narrative fiction. The concept of ‘urbanized’ subjectivity is assembled from the ideas of Catalan engineer Ildefons Cerdà as outlined in his *Teoría general de la urbanización* (1867), a text which is both a historical overview of how humanity has become urban and a speculative blueprint for future urbanization. The thesis identifies the implied human subject of Cerdà’s process of *urbanización* and explores the use of this particular take on subjectivity as a critical framework in literary studies.

Discussion is structured into five chapters, the first of which analyses Cerdà’s key concepts, while the next four chapters are dedicated to analysis of the literary texts. The corpus of texts includes: Narcís Oller’s *La febre d’or* (1890-92), Caterina Albert’s *Un film (3000 metres)* (1926), Josep Maria de Sagarra’s *Vida privada* (1932) and the satirical novel *Retorn al sol* (1936), by Josep Maria Francès, with further illustration provided by Llorenç Villalonga’s *Andrea Víctrix* (1974). The chapters ask the following questions: does Cerdà’s concept of *urbe* mirror the praxis of novel writing?; to what extent does *urbanización*, in both its psychological and material dimensions, regulate the social order?; and how does *urbanización* characterize the tension between the individual and the collective?

The thesis argues that placing Cerdà’s theory in dialogue with literary texts offers two substantial contributions. First, authors of fiction implicitly critique *urbanización*, challenging Cerdà’s claims and helping to iron out the ambiguities in his theory. Second, analysing literature using the principles of *urbanización* elucidates the unstable nature of the urban experience in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Barcelona, which *urbanización* is designed to regulate. By reading Cerdà alongside narrative fiction, the thesis finds that Cerdà’s project constitutes part of the expansion of liberalism and capitalism, which, in varying degrees, limit the successes of the implementation of *urbanización*.

Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to complete this thesis without the help, support and belief of many people over the years, and to whom I owe a serious debt of gratitude.

Firstly, I owe a huge thank you to my supervisors, Dr Louise Johnson and Professor Phil Swanson, whose guidance has been invaluable in steering this thesis along its winding course. You have refined my critical thinking and my writing over the years and I will value these skills for a long time to come, so thank you for all the time you have dedicated to me.

I would like to thank WRoCAH for generously funding my research and the numerous projects and conferences I have been fortunate to have taken part in. I would also like to say thank you to the administrative staff at Sheffield for helping me on many occasions, often at the last minute. My thanks go also to the Anglo-Catalan Society and the Institut Ramon Llull for supporting my activities over the years. Moltes gràcies.

Thank you to all my friends in SLC and those in the Jessop West office; the PhD would not have been the same without you. Sometimes a firm word and a different perspective, probably shared over a pint (or several) really helped to move my project along. I am so grateful for your friendship.

To my Mum and Dad, the unsung heroes of this journey, without whose unwavering trust in and support for my academic career from the very beginning would not have brought me to languages, let alone a PhD: it is because of you that I am here submitting this thesis and for that I am immensely grateful.

Lastly, thank you Jas, for your constant encouragement and for always being there, through all the highs and lows. Doing a PhD, as I (we) now know, is not a 9-to-5 job, and you deserve a medal for bearing with me throughout all of this, especially towards the end. Your patience, kindness and love mean more than I can express.

Note on Referencing

This thesis uses the fourth edition of the MHRA's Author-Date referencing system (2024). Cerdà's *Teoría general de la urbanización* (1867) is referred to as the *Teoría general*, as opposed to the *Teoría*, to avoid confusion with Cerdà's *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades* (1859), which I also cite. The *Teoría general* consists of two volumes: 'Tomo 1' and 'Tomo 2', which I cite in the text as '(1867/1)' and '(1867/2)', respectively. Literary works are referred to with their full titles.

Declaration

This work was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/R012733/1) through the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities.

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Introduction

Ildefons Cerdà (1815-76) was first and foremost an engineer, whose contribution to urban planning theory and practice is unparalleled. He is best known for his plan for the extension of Barcelona, which began construction in the 1850s, and which he supported with enormously detailed empirical studies of Barcelona and Madrid. Cerdà channelled this practical and theoretical expertise into his considerable volumes of writing, which outline his theory of *urbanización*, a term that he coined. This thesis introduces Cerdà's theory of *urbanización*, as outlined in his longest and most comprehensive theoretical work, the *Teoría general de la urbanización* (1867), to the domain of literary criticism. The motivation for the thesis lies in the attempt to take a text not typically used in literary studies and see how useful it could be for our discipline. This is, in essence, the primary research question: Is it possible to use a text from engineering productively in the analysis of narrative fiction? To explore this question, the thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, bridging the social-scientific field of urban studies (to which Cerdà's texts would nowadays belong) and the humanities. This disciplinary distinction may, however, be largely artificial given that Cerdà's work is reflective of a much broader current of thought belonging to the nineteenth century, a period in which new scientific fields were established, and liberalism and capitalism brought serious changes to the social order.

In this thesis, I examine Cerdà's *Teoría general de la urbanización* (henceforth referred to as the *Teoría general*) with a view to constructing a suitable framework for the analysis of literary texts. I base this framework around the idea of an 'urbanized' subjectivity, by which I mean that should the built environment be reformed along the lines Cerdà proposes, the result will produce a new conception of subjectivity, one that has been – to use Cerdà's own term – 'urbanized'. As the theory of *urbanización* is based around the opposing poles of mobility and stasis, and Cerdà proposes new terminology – *urbe* and *la gran vitalidad universal* – as foundational concepts underpinning his theory, 'urbanized' subjectivity is understood as the particular kind of subjectivity that emerges when people are seen and interpreted through the lens that Cerdà provides us. In other words, the 'urbanized' subject is the subject implied by Cerdà's *urbanización*. The concepts mentioned here will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 1.

The paradigm of urbanized subjectivity provides greater insight into the corpus of literary texts – all of which are novels written in Catalan and published between 1890 and 1974 – helping us to view them in a new light. The rationale for selecting a corpus of

exclusively Catalan novels is the prominence of Barcelona in Catalan literature. Barcelona is directly connected to Cerdà's work, as the city is the object of study in the *Teoría general* and his *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades* (1859) and his ideas were directly implemented (albeit imperfectly) in the construction of Barcelona's extension. It therefore makes sense to use Cerdà's test case as the grounds upon which to base this thesis, even though the *Teoría general* is written in Spanish. This is not unusual given that in the 1860s it was still prohibited to use Catalan in official contexts, and funding for the project was granted by the Spanish Crown.

This thesis works towards achieving a fuller understanding of Cerdà's concept of *urbanización* and it is able to do this because of its engagement with literature. Cerdà was an engineer whose scholarly interests spanned many disciplines, such as history, philosophy, science and technology. These interests are distilled into the *Teoría general*, which is, in essence, a piece of creative writing in which Cerdà works out his ideas as he writes. This gives us an insight into the mind of an intellectually inclined man living in nineteenth-century Spain and Catalonia. At the same time, and as a consequence of Cerdà's many varied interests, the text presents us with numerous ambiguities and contradictions that require full explanation. Reading Cerdà alongside literary texts is therefore an effective way of examining these complexities, as fiction permits the kind of inconsistencies that Cerdà's theoretical text cannot. For instance, the notion of subjectivity is inherently fluctuating and mobile, and this justifies the approach taken, whereby the literary works and Cerdà inform the reading of each other.

A core challenge in the methodology of this thesis is the positioning of theoretical frameworks vis-à-vis the primary material. Indeed, which texts count as the primary material? The response to this is that the analytical material in this thesis has a twofold purpose. On the one hand, Cerdà's *Teoría general* is appraised using critical theory while, at the same time, the primary literary texts are analysed in light of the insights provided by an exegesis of *urbanización*. When referring to Cerdà's specific concept, I use the Spanish word and italicize it so that it can be distinguished from the general idea of 'urbanization'. The Introduction lays the groundwork for the context of Cerdà's life and work, setting out the biographical details that inform his outlook on the world and which explain the impetus behind his vocation to drive social and technological progress through a programme of urban reform. This is followed, in Chapter 1, by an exposition of Cerdà's main concepts as laid out in the *Teoría general* and an appraisal of these in the manner of a literature review, leading up to the production of the framework of

‘urbanized’ subjectivity. Chapters 2 to 5 contain the ‘applied’ aspect of the thesis, namely, the exploration of the primary research question and of *urbanización* as a critical framework for the analysis of literary texts.

Starting with Catalan literature’s most well-known nineteenth-century novel, Chapter 2 begins the analysis of literature through the lens of *urbanización* with an application of Cerdà’s concept of *urbe* to Narcís Oller’s *La febre d’or* (1890-92). The chapter asks if *urbe* can be considered aesthetically as a model for the nineteenth-century realist novel; in other words, is the way of thinking that underpins urbanized subjectivity common also to the praxis of novel writing? I argue, with recourse to Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, that the narrator’s loss of omniscience over the narration parallels in certain respects the *urbe*’s attempt to reprogramme urban social relations along the lines of the liberal or capitalist order. Chapters 3 and 4 concern the impact of urbanized subjectivity on the regulation of the social order. Given that one of Cerdà’s stated aims is to deploy *urbanización* as a means of harmonizing the world’s peoples and neutralizing conflict, this aspect of the theory is put to work in the analysis of Caterina Albert’s *Un film (3000 metres)* (1926) and Josep Maria de Sagarra’s *Vida privada* (1932). The former novel is the subject of Chapter 3, which focuses on social regulation from a cognitive perspective, engaging in a psychoanalytical reading of *urbanización* to explain the behaviour and psychology of the novel’s protagonist, while at the same time using the novel to demonstrate that *urbanización* produces the opposite effect of what Cerdà intends it to achieve. In the case of *Vida privada* in Chapter 4, the critical lens of *urbanización* is narrowed to Cerdà’s concept of the *intervías*, a particular conception of interior space that blends public and private spheres. The chapter argues that the *intervías* plays an important role in the construction of the characters’ identities in the novel, although it is unable to stabilize those identities and hence neither is it able to stabilize the social order. The primary focus of Chapter 5 is Josep Maria Francès’s science-fiction novel *Retorn al sol* (1936) with further illustration provided by Llorenç Villalonga’s *Andrea Víctrix* (1974). This chapter takes a more politically informed approach to investigate the relationship between the individual and society in each novel while also commenting on discourses of progress and perfection in *urbanización* and in the literary texts.

Urbanización: the origins of a new discipline¹

During the 1850s, Cerdà came into a considerable inheritance following the deaths of his father and two brothers, and dedicated the rest of his life to the analysis of cities and the construction of a universal theory of urbanization. Cerdà set out to study how civilizations had become urban, a process which entailed considerable historical research on two cities he was intimately familiar with: Madrid and Barcelona. His first work, *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades*, was published in 1859, the same year in which his plan for the extension of Barcelona was approved by the Ministerio de Fomento in Madrid. His second major study was the *Teoría de la viabilidad urbana y reforma de la de Madrid* (1861), which constitutes a meticulous piece of historical and economic research on the capital city. These two volumes laid the foundations for his most exhaustive and innovative work, the *Teoría general de la urbanización*, published in 1867. In this two-volume, 1500-page work, one of the earliest and most comprehensive works of urban planning, Cerdà elaborates a theory of city planning, which he called *urbanización*. The work builds on the historical and philosophical underpinning of the extension plan for Barcelona, called the Eixample, and represents the culmination of Cerdà's life's work on research into city planning. There was a continual interaction between the evolution of the Barcelona plan and Cerdà's building of a body of theory, such that it is unclear whether the ideas presented in the *Teoría general* predate the plan or vice versa (Hall 1997: 135). Moreover, the text attempts to unite the disciplines of architecture and engineering, which at the time competed to have dominant influence in municipal construction projects (Aibar and Bijker 1997: 11).

Cerdà's theory of *urbanización* proposes a holistic solution to the burden that the industrial revolution was increasingly placing on towns, creating cramped, unhygienic places for workers to live. It hinges around planning a new way to organize and construct cities in order to improve the quality of life for those living in industrialized urban centres. Cerdà sought to combat the arbitrary nature in which the construction of towns had so far taken place by devising a theory informed by logic and rationality that would cover all areas of planning. Striving to give his all-encompassing theory an 'extremada generalidad' (Soria y Puig 1979: 142), he divided it into five key areas: economic, legal,

¹ Sections of this biographical overview are significant reworkings of material from Matthew Oxley, 'Cerdà's *Intervías* as Literary Praxis: Constructing Barcelona in Novels by Oller, Sagarra and Laforet', unpublished Master's dissertation (University of Sheffield, 2019a), pp. 7-10.

administrative, political and technical. Cerdà argued that by fully justifying his reasoning for every planning decision (or by *theorizing*), he could eliminate the arbitrariness inherent in so many cities' layouts which was detrimental to the health of city dwellers (Soria y Puig 1995: 17). He intended for his theory to serve a practical purpose by offering governments a complete guide to constructing cities that could guarantee a high standard of living for all residents of every social class, thereby satisfying his ambitions as a public official in favour of liberal policies.

Yet urbanization responds to much wider concerns than the health of a city's workers. Cerdà recognized that the movement of people and goods played an essential role in humanity's progress, and identified the emergence of a new social class, the bourgeoisie, which embraced liberalism to accumulate capital, presenting a challenge to the established aristocratic order. With this in mind, Cerdà aimed to devise a total theory not just for city planning but for the reconfiguration of the entire surface of the Earth. Furthermore, Adams (2019: 36) argues that Cerdà strives towards the Enlightenment's goal of achieving universal peace and harmony by aligning the *Teoría general* with the literary form of utopian critique, a genre consisting of subversive narratives on moral and political themes which seek to find a way towards universal peace under absolutist regimes in Europe. Building on Kant's strictly moral and legal idea of the 'right to the earth's surface' and the Enlightenment's general pursuit of universal rationality, Cerdà proposes a 'pragmatic programme' that would materialize these aims and bring the Enlightenment utopia into modernity (Adams 2019: 28).

Cerdà's project appears to often straddle scientific objectivity and a more subjective discourse on religion, moral values, progress and perfection. We see this in his detailed statistical studies of Barcelona and the mathematical fine-tuning of his plan for its extension, while at the same time he evokes utopian motifs that often border on pseudo-science or scientism.² In short, Cerdà's concept of *urbanización* is a scientific field that views all of human development as the result of evolving forms in the built environment, which is reduced to the concepts of habitation and circulation, and a proposal for reorganizing space in order to perpetuate that chain of development towards eventual perfection. In the first chapter, I outline the major concepts that are at the root of

² Contrasting definitions of scientism and their use in interpreting Cerdà's work are given in Chapter 1 in the section titled 'Cerdà's approach to history'.

urbanización: the *urbe* (Cerdà's theorization of habitation, or static space) and *la gran vialidad universal* (his theory of mobility and circulation).

A biographical overview of Cerdà follows, providing the basis for understanding his perspective on the world which necessarily informs the ideas compiled in his major theoretical works and therefore significantly contributes to my examination of them. Cerdà innovated not just in terms of city planning but also in the field of urban studies more generally, compacting a complex theory on the relationships between urban space, infrastructure, architecture and power into his neologism *urbanización* which gave rise to its English and French variants, 'urbanization' and 'urbanisation'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* agree that these English and French terms originate from Cerdà's *Teoría general*, the French dictionary dating its first use to Cerdà in 1861 ('urbanisation a sans doute subi l'influence du terme espagnol *urbanización*, créé par l'ingénieur I. Cerdà en 1861 [avec le verbe *urbanizar*]' [2011: n.p.]) while the English dates it to the *Teoría general* of 1867 (2023: n.p., online).

Cerdà was born in 1815 in the rural village of Cerdà de la Garga, Catalonia into a minor-aristocratic family who had made a considerable fortune conducting business in the Americas. As the third-born son, he would have no right to the management of the family's estate upon his parents' deaths, according to the laws of the time, and he was therefore obliged to find his own career path. Constrained to enter the Church or the liberal professions, he went to the seminary in Vic on his father's orders to study Latin and philosophy, although this education offered him little fulfilment. Cerdà moved to Barcelona with his father's reluctant permission in 1832 to study architecture and mathematics at the Escola de la Llotja, a prestigious school of fine art that had broadened its curriculum in the nineteenth century to include training in industrial professions. However, three years later, in 1835, he abandoned his architectural training and moved to Madrid to study at the Escuela de Ingenieros de Caminos, Canales y Puertos which had recently reopened after the death of Fernando VII in 1833 (Estapé 2009: 34). During Fernando's reign, many universities were closed down, however they reopened under the reign of Isabel II, which brought something of a national renaissance as the armistice signed by queen regent María Cristina returned exiled liberals to Spain, who remained highly active in government and in the elite professions, and the title of *ingeniero de caminos* could once again be conferred (Estapé 2009: 35). This is an important fact to bear in mind as the liberalizing nature of Isabel II's reign was highly instructive in forming the Cerdà who eventually became such an influential engineer.

We may infer from the change in direction of Cerdà's career that he considered architecture to be an insufficient discipline for rectifying the social problems he had been exposed to in Barcelona, a mission that is also conveyed through his experience in political groups in Madrid, where he arrived at the age of nineteen. His time in the capital (as in Barcelona) was characterized by a severe shortage of money, as his father could only afford to send him eight *duros* a month, and so Cerdà supplemented this meagre income by giving maths lessons (Angelón 1880: 325). While in Madrid, he also joined the local branch of the Milicia Nacional, reaching the rank of lieutenant ('teniente') of a battalion of grenadiers. His time with the Milicia Nacional was a very decisive period in his life as it gave him contacts and took him to important political events that would instil a political conscience and orient his future career. The Milicia comprised groups of volunteer troops under the command of municipalities and although these groups would be led by various ideologies as governments changed, they were usually associated with liberal and even radical ideas. Having been established by the constitution of 1812, the Milicia was then abolished by Fernando VII in 1814 when absolute monarchy was restored. It was reestablished during the *trienio liberal* (1820-23) and then abolished again during the so-called 'década ominosa' of 1823-33, which restored the king to his absolute powers. It was restored during the reign of Isabel II, during which time it was supported by the Partido Progresista and opposed by the Partido Moderado. The Milicia Nacional was something of a victim of its own success, which Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón explains by way of Marx and Engels' claim in *The Communist Manifesto* that 'the weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself' (Marx and Engels 2018: 13). Having been initially 'forjada por la burguesía en su lucha contra el feudalismo', this position was turned on its head, as the Milicia 'devenía simultáneamente portadora de los aspectos democráticos que cuestionaban el nuevo orden social' – i.e., the bourgeoisie now feared for the safety of their own property – and it was henceforth dissolved by the Moderados, with the Guardia Civil taking on the role of protecting private property (Pérez Garzón 1978: 481, 407). This is relevant because it clearly establishes an ideological framework within which Cerdà operated and which he used to orientate his career and his writing.

Cerdà's political affiliation is useful to us in interpreting his future intellectual endeavours, as is the insight into his character. He was a dedicated, tireless scholar and a rational, logical thinker: 'Cerdà pensó como un sabio, demostró como un matemático y sintió como un niño' (Angelón 1880: 318). He could be counted on as a man who cared

and who would do things properly. This tendency towards rationalism is characteristic of the Escuelas de Caminos in both Spain and France, which gave the engineering profession an ‘aire de superioridad, de convicción irrefragable, que constituyen el ápice del racionalismo en la vida y en la obra’ (Estapé 2009: 28-29). In Spain, the Escuela was also a bastion of liberalism and defence of the constitution. This left its mark on Cerdà, as did his stable family upbringing and his unmistakably liberal political inclinations.

Cerdà graduated as a qualified engineer in 1841 and automatically entered the services of the state as an engineer in the Cuerpo de Caminos, part of the Ministerio de Fomento, where he remained for eight years. During this period, he worked on engineering projects in Catalonia, Valencia and Aragon, including the construction of the Barcelona-Mataró railway, the first passenger railway line on the Iberian Peninsula, which opened in 1848. Circumstances then aligned, meaning that he could dedicate himself full-time to his project of urbanization. The Cerdà’s family’s first-born son, Ramón (Ildefonso’s oldest brother), had died in 1838 and the second-born son, José, died a decade later in 1848. This left Cerdà, as the third-born, with the necessary resources and stability inherited from the family’s estate, to allow him to leave his post in the Ministerio de Fomento the following year and devote himself to his intellectual work.

In the ‘advertencia’ to the *Teoría general*, Cerdà writes at length about the personal experiences that inspired him to dedicate his life to this endeavour, giving further clues to his personality. He acknowledges that it may seem like a reckless move to abandon his high-flying career to fulfil his personal ambitions, but describes his project to study urbanization as an ‘afición [...] irresistible’ (1867/1: 9) that he could only work on if free from even the slightest distraction, as passionate and obsessive as he was about it. He also describes some key experiences that left a great impression on him: his observations of steam-powered industrial machinery, steam ships and railway locomotives. The industrial machinery is likely to have been that of the Bonaplata, Vilaregut y Compañía, whose Barcelona textile factory was nicknamed ‘El Vapor’ as it was the first steam-powered textile factory in Spain (Estapé 2009: 95). Cerdà contrasts the technological innovation with the relatively economically stagnant character of Spanish society at the time: ‘todavía bastante apegada a sus antiguos hábitos de quietismo’ (1867/1: 6). He describes, in lively prose, the surprise he had at seeing a steam ship’s motor in action. The main impression it had on him was that the engine, the mechanism and all the objects attached to it moved simultaneously upon a fixed platform: ‘un sistema completo de movimiento y de locomoción, más cuantioso, más seguro, más

rápido y más cómodo que todos los anteriormente conocidos' (1867/1: 6). Here he again makes reference to advances in technological progress made since the previous era, while the string of superlatives demonstrates the giddy and at times hyperbolic tone of his writing style in this section.

Cerdà also mentions his later trip, in 1844, around the south of France where he witnessed passenger railways for the first time. This made a significant impression on him, as he had only learned about the railways theoretically while studying, and it directed his amazement not to the mechanism and operation ('manera de funcionar') of the locomotives but to the sheer number and diversity of the passengers who travelled on them, which seemed to him 'poblaciones enteras ambulantes, cambiando precipitadamente de domicilio' (1867/1: 6). He had difficulty reconciling the expansive mobility of the train with the adversity the travellers had in squeezing through narrow streets before reaching their destinations in the 'mezquinas casas de las antiguas poblaciones' (1867/1: 6). This sparked an interest in steam power and movement more generally, which was to remain a key part of his theoretical works on city planning. This period of his life concretized the 'idea urbanizadora' that he refers to in the *Teoría general*; his formative experiences working as an engineer exposed him to a variety of social problems and the technology that could be used to solve them. Impressively, he does not stop at wonderment but casts a critical eye over what he has witnessed. He demonstrates concern about the integration of the railways into the urban fabric, stating that his main concern is not so much the phenomenon of rapid movement or mechanization of travel, but wider problems in the social order that require some sort of holistic solution. We may attribute the development of his critical faculties to his earlier studies in social philosophy, which he carried out of his own accord, as the curriculum at the Escuela de Caminos, though, broad, did not include teaching on this subject.³ We therefore see how Cerdà's thinking on mobility and transport evolves over time, from mere excitement at the application of steam power to industrial activity, to the analysis of the place of new technologies in society.

³ We might call the Escuela's curriculum 'interdisciplinary' in contemporary parlance. The required subjects for the degree of engineering included architectural studies ('complemento de arquitectura'); stereotomy (a kind of technical drawing also called descriptive geometry); mechanics applied to engineering science; a course in construction, mineralogy and geology; design; and administrative and civil jurisprudence of public works (Etapé 2009: 35). It is clear that this education, spanning science, engineering and law, translates into the so-called 'five bases' of Cerdà's theory of *urbanización*: the technical, administrative, legal, economic and political.

In addition to engineering and technology, politics was a significant aspect of Cerdà's career, and his political position strongly influenced the *Teoría general* and its preceding works. As mentioned, while in Barcelona and Madrid, Cerdà frequented liberal circles whose ideas formed his awareness of and commitment to social issues affecting urban populations during a period in Spain's history where political power oscillated between liberal constitutionalism and absolutist monarchy. The engineers of the Escuela de Ingenieros supported liberal ideas and aligned themselves against absolutist political regimes, in contrast to architects, who were given royal patronage and were therefore more inclined to feel allegiance to the establishment. Cerdà aligned himself with the progressive liberals, one of the two main political groupings in nineteenth-century Spain, the other being the moderate liberals. Cerdà entered national politics in 1851 as a member of the Congreso de Diputados following an election in Barcelona in which the Progresistas won against the governing Partido Moderado (Etapé 2009: 249). In his first address to the Congreso in Madrid, Cerdà strongly opposed himself to the prime minister Ramón Narváez's Partido Moderado and highlighted his outsider status as an inexperienced orator and a Catalan speaker.⁴ He then became a *regidor*, or council member, in the Ajuntament de Barcelona during the *bienio progresista* of 1854-56. He was *regidor* again from 1863 to 1866 and then vice-president of the Diputació de Barcelona, or the regional council for the province of Barcelona, between 1873 and 1874.

We may deduce that these experiences were crucial in forging Cerdà's social conscience and his concern for the welfare of urban residents during a period of rapid industrialization in Spain, a concern that is visible in his theoretical writings in addition to the course of his life events. First of all, it is important to note Cerdà's change in vocation following the abandonment of his architectural studies at the Escola de la Llotja in Barcelona, which can be explained with reference to the schism (or the 'lluita') between engineers and architects that was typical in nineteenth-century Spain (Magrinyà 2008: 114). Understanding the broader professional context, including the position, role, strategy and influence of the engineers in this period contextualizes Cerdà's achievements as part of a professional community. That is, he was not a lone wolf scholar but part of an

⁴ Upon addressing the Congreso de Diputados for the first time on 24 July 1851, Cerdà described himself as 'hijo de un país en el cual se habla un dialecto muy diferente del idioma nacional; extraño completamente a los estudios de nuestra literatura, y más ajeno todavía a los ejercicios de oratoria' (quoted in Estapé 2009: 250).

influential elite, and this should qualify some of the hyperbolic praise often lavished on him.

Architects had traditionally enjoyed royal patronage and thus aligned themselves with the monarchy. In contrast, engineers relied on the liberal constitution for their education and to gain influence in society. Whereas architects worked on private projects, engineers had a higher level of education and ‘se convertían en instrumentos al servicio del Estado, abanderado de la idea de progreso en la escena urbana y promotor de las iniciativas más importantes en la evolución hacia la ciudad moderna’ (Antigüedad del Castillo-Olivares 1997: 219). Darina Martykánová and Juan Pan-Montojo (2022: 39-46) give an insightful overview of the position of the engineering profession in the nineteenth century. As there was no clear notion of engineering as a specific field, an engineer was basically anyone who could get paid for working as an engineer, and what was considered engineering was negotiated on transnational and national levels, often influenced by the creation of state schools and corps. Engineers acquired a reputation for arrogance in the nineteenth century, positioning themselves as ‘exceptional and underappreciated’ to protect their fragile place among the elites (Martykánová and Pan-Montojo 2022: 42). They saw the importance of science in a country where the elites did not appreciate science as contributing towards the nation’s development and saw themselves as responsible for making Spain compete with Europe’s major powers. They promoted the education of the working classes in urban areas where it was easy for them to organize politically, and clearly had an awareness of their own self-image, taking opportunities to be photographed beside their works, wearing attire (a hat and a walking stick) that signalled they could command workers to do the dirty jobs. Keeping their elite profile, while difficult, was profitable. With the help of the Cuerpo de Ingenieros, engineering was transformed from a military career of a few hundred to one of the most prestigious and best-paid professions in Spain.

Cerdà in the context of nineteenth-century science and politics

Political and scientific developments elsewhere in Europe also had a decisive impact on Cerdà’s outlook. Accordingly, this section begins with an overview of the poor living conditions in mid-nineteenth century Barcelona, which Cerdà was intimately familiar with, before assessing the broader European background, placing Cerdà in the context of

relevant scientific developments, socialist ideas (Saint-Simon, Fourier, Cabet) and urban planning progress (Haussmann, Castro, Mesonero Romanos, Fernández de los Ríos).

Major scientific disciplines and their corresponding theories emerged and were consolidated in the course of the nineteenth century, such as Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, the same year as Cerdà's *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades*. Indeed, one of Cerdà's aims was to originate the science of urbanization as a scientific discipline. Cerdà was prompted to this topic by the process of rapid industrialization that occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In general, industry had become fully mechanized by the 1840s, and cities expanded as rural populations migrated to urban areas, which quickly became overcrowded, dirty and disease-ridden.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Barcelona was the most densely populated city in Europe – with 856 inhabitants per hectare, over twice as dense as Paris – constrained by its fortified surrounding walls (Aibar and Bijker 1997: 5). By the end of the century, the walls had been demolished and an urban expansion had begun to take shape between the eighteenth-century historical centre and the towns at the foot of the Collserola hills. The walls were fortified as part of the Nova Planta decree, which came into effect in 1716 following the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714. The Catalans had allied themselves with the Habsburgs against the Bourbon-supporting Castilians, led by Felipe V, who enacted a decree that severely restricted the rights and freedoms of the Catalans, delegitimizing their institutions and placing them under direct control of the government in Madrid. In addition to the city walls, the Nova Planta decree brought about other changes in Barcelona's urban fabric, namely the construction of a military citadel. The citadel, one of the largest military fortresses in Europe at the time, had a capacity for eight thousand soldiers by 1854. It was strategically situated outside the walls to allow a swift response to quash the riots that frequently swept through the city (Benet and Martí 1976: 27-28). Barcelona had been turned into 'una plaza militar totalmente amurallada y fortificada' (Soria y Puig 1979: 25) in the period from 1719 to 1854, when the walls began to be demolished in a process that would not be completed until the revolution of 1868 in which Isabel II was deposed and the citadel was demolished.

During the one hundred years or so prior to the demolition of the citadel, Barcelona had been rapidly industrializing. A report of the Junta de Comercio in 1785 read: 'ya es rara la calle de esta ciudad y sus arrabales, en que no se vean y oigan señales

de fábricas de pintados' (Izard quoted in Soria y Puig 1979: 26). In the same year, the Audiencia de Cataluña remarked that the influx of manufacturing businesses to the city had caused rents to double in ten years and warned that the large concentration of workers in the city would be difficult to contain should anything ill-fated occur ('a los que sería difícil contener en un momento desgraciado') and proposed that no new businesses should be granted permission to operate within the city's boundaries (Izard quoted in Soria y Puig 1979: 26). Barcelona's intramural zone – the only area where it was permitted to build, given that a no-build zone extended beyond the walls – became even denser as gardens and patios were built on and existing buildings were extended vertically to provide enough housing for the workers of the city's industries. Between 1772 and 1791 the percentage of buildings with five or more floors increased from 13.3% to 73.5% (López and Grau quoted in Soria y Puig 1979: 27). In addition to the extremely high density, which gave each inhabitant just ten square metres of space, the sewer system and water supply were poor, leading to disease epidemics (Aibar and Bijker 1997: 5). Cerdà's own studies provide a wealth of data from which to paint a picture of the harsh living conditions of the time. For example, in 1821 an outbreak of yellow fever killed six per cent of the city's population (Cerdà 1867/2: 487). In addition, during the period 1836 to 1847 there were more deaths than births in the city and the population only increased due to a very high number of immigrants: 52,712 over this period, an increase of 40% (Cerdà 1867/2: 508). By 1859, the average population density of Barcelona was 859 inhabitants per hectare (the minimum and maximum figures are 378 and 1761) (Soria y Puig 1979: 30). We can compare this with Madrid and Bilbao's population density figures from 1860, which were 534 and 546 inhabitants per hectare respectively, while French industrial cities were even less densely populated: Paris had a density of 400 inhabitants per hectare in 1856 and Lille had 411 (Soria y Puig 1979: 30).

Barcelona was therefore one of the most overcrowded cities in Europe at the time and it had the mortality rate to match. However, the mortality rate was not the same in every part of the city or even in every street. Cerdà's statistical surveys of the city (for example, see Cerdà 1867/2: 273-76) show that richer, less dense areas had a lower mortality rate while the denser, poorer areas had a higher rate of mortality. He collected detailed statistics on the number of deaths on individual streets along with other characteristics that he thought might have some bearing on the mortality rate: the orientation of the street, its length, average width and distance to the centre. It is these conditions that Cerdà responds to in his extensive studies of the city. Yet he was far from

the only social investigator in nineteenth-century Europe. The theme of hygiene, which is crucial to the *Teoría general*, was the object of numerous studies at the time. Jason Corburn argues that the early nineteenth century gave rise to the view of the city as a ‘field site’, that is, a place in which to carry out fieldwork (2013: 36), and this certainly correlates with the way in which Cerdà treated the city. Research undertaken by epidemiologists had implications for city governance and urban developments. Louis-René Villermé investigated disease and mortality in Paris in the 1820s and concluded that environmental factors had little relationship to mortality and social forces such as economic poverty were much stronger drivers of ill health than contagions and miasmas. Friedrich Engels came to a similar conclusion based on his observations of industrial workers in Manchester in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845). In England, Edwin Chadwick’s 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population in Great Britain* concluded that the only way to reduce death rates was to improve sanitary conditions, making no mention of economic factors. Chadwick’s report, along with recommendations put forward by the Health of Towns Association, implied that the diseases caused by filthy living conditions resulted in poverty and immoral behaviour, and therefore the sanitary improvements they recommended (improved drainage, water supply and waste removal) would remedy disease outbreaks as well as the moral health of the population.⁵ However, these proposals were often overlooked. For example, Villermé’s findings were ignored by the Parisian authorities, as usually happened: epidemiological studies tended more often than not to reify prevailing theories that epidemics were caused by contagion and miasma as authorities were reluctant to intervene in the economies of their most productive cities (Corburn 2013: 36). This perhaps explains why Cerdà compiled his findings into a ‘general theory’, or a holistic compendium integrating proposals for reform that meant that only urban layout had to be changed, rather than entire economic structures, and Cerdà believed that this would have later knock-on economic benefits. Indeed, Brad Epps indicates that Cerdà is concerned ‘with the displacement and partial undoing of class conflict through a redistribution not so much of wealth, or of the means of production, as of space’ (2011: 154).

⁵ As John Ashton and Janet Ubido explain, the Health of Towns Association (which worked in conjunction with the Health of Towns Commission led by Edwin Chadwick) was formed in 1844 ‘with the purpose of sharing information gained from recent enquiries made into the terrible living conditions of much of the population. The aim was to assist changes in the law which would allow for improvements to be carried out by preparing the public for such changes’ (1991: 174).

Several themes emerged from the ‘field site’ view of the city, including the removal of physical blight, reliance on technical rationality and moral environmentalism. However, public initiatives were often at odds with private interests. For example, the Health of Towns Association wanted to open up streets and pave, sewer and redesign them to guarantee sufficient air flow (Corburn 2013: 45), yet landlords, responding to industrialists’ eagerness for their workers to live close to their workplaces given the increased competition for labour, subdivided properties and developed gardens, yards and alleyways in order to increase the supply of housing. Cerdà engaged with the themes that came out of the ‘field site’ view, most notably moral environmentalism, as he believed that providing for a healthy population would reduce conflict. In the *Teoría general*, he is also highly aware of the limitations posed by the economic and political conditions of the age in which he lived. Instead of proposing a radical overhaul of the urban economic system, he is careful to situate his vision within contemporary capitalism, taking into account the interests of private developers and landowners in addition to government authorities.

Importantly, these scientific findings were worked into political proposals for new societies organized around new urban settings by a new group of intellectuals: the utopian socialists, in particular, Etienne Cabet (1788-1856), Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). The following discussion aims to ascertain how Cerdà’s philosophy intersects with that of the utopian socialists, who are analysed by David Harvey in *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (2003). It is my view that elements of utopian socialism are at play in Cerdà’s *Teoría general*, even though he explicitly decried their ideas as unrealistic and unachievable, due to their reliance on religious and mystical themes. Religious elements certainly appear throughout Cerdà’s *Teoría general*, although the extent to which he was influenced by, for example, the pantheistic writings of Etienne Cabet has not been investigated.⁶ Utopian socialism can also help us to situate Cerdà within the nineteenth-century cultural context and, as I suggest, similar tendencies such as Krausism – a philosophical movement that emerged in Spain in the mid to late nineteenth

⁶ The influence of the Kabbalah on Cerdà’s project for the expansion of Barcelona has been investigated by F. Xavier Hernández Cardona in *La Barcelona de Cerdà: la càbala i la construcció de l’Eixample* (see Hernández Cardona and Pongiluppi 2015). However, Hernández Cardona admits in a televised interview ([Anon.], ‘Francesc Xavier Hernández Cardona’, *Terrícoles*, Betevé, 4 December 2016) that he is unable to prove that Cerdà did in fact use Kabbalistic ideas and symbols in his work, which is why he publishes his research in a popular format (as a ‘llibre de divulgació’) rather than as an academic publication.

century and which aimed at providing a modern education free from religious doctrine – connect with the aims of both Cerdà and the utopian socialists.

The utopian socialists were highly active in France and their ideas spread from there to Barcelona, where Cerdà came into contact with them. Facilitating this contact was his friend, the inventor Narcís Monturiol, who is credited as having invented the first submarine and who was very much involved with progressive political movements in Barcelona (Stewart 2004: 55).⁷ One such progressive current was influenced by Charles Fourier, whose *The Theory of the Four Movements* (1808) describes a transition from ‘social chaos to universal harmony’ (Harvey 2003: 70), a movement paralleled in Cerdà’s aim to rid current city planning of its arbitrary, piecemeal nature and create in its place a single, unified theory. Fourier’s work is an attack on civilization, which he saw as a ‘system of organized repression of healthy passionate instincts’ and whose enemy was commerce, which was ‘parasitic upon and destructive to human well-being’ (Harvey 2003: 70-71). He offered an organizational and architectural solution to this, arguing for the collective organization of production and consumption in communities called ‘Phalanstères’, housed in distinctively shaped buildings of Fourier’s design, which would offer a variety of work, social and sexual engagements to guarantee happiness (Harvey 2003: 71).⁸ However, we might question the true innovation of such a design, as ‘early Western utopias imitated the everyday communities of the time’, with Fourier’s phalanstery resembling the factory/dormitory complex of industrial towns (Abbott 2016: 7). Both Saint-Simon and Fourier considered themselves to be universalists, in the sense that their ideas demonstrate a tendency towards reorganizing the whole of humanity (Harvey 2003: 67). Their supporters tended to be educated professionals, while Cabet drew most of his support from the working classes (Harvey 2003: 77).

Etienne Cabet (1788-1856) was a prominent utopian socialist who, unlike Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65), the influential theorist of anarchism, was in favour of the

⁷ Curiously similar to Cerdà, Monturiol had also initially been destined for the church and left his studies of the Classics at the Universitat de Cervera to attend law school in Barcelona, where he also taught himself science, although he abandoned studying in favour of participating in radical politics and never practised law (Stewart 2004: 18, 21-22).

⁸ The word ‘Phalanstère’ is composed of ‘phalanx’ (*phalange*) and ‘monastery’ (*monastère*), and Frank Cunningham admits that ‘in some respects a phalanstery does exhibit the strict orderliness of the ancient military unit or a monastery’ (2017: 2-3). Inhabitants of the ‘Phalanstère’ are sorted into groups based on personality type, enabling them to find the most suitable outlet for what Fourier calls the ‘passions’ (which pertain to the senses and to relations, such as respect, friendship, love and parenthood), thereby eliminating the need for authoritarian governance and encouraging society to self-regulate, balancing order and freedom (Cunningham 2017: 1-2).

notion of ‘community’. Of all the utopian socialists, it was Cabet whose ideas made the greatest impact in Catalonia (Ainaud de Lasarte 2009: 112). According to Cabet, ‘the community suppresses egoism, individualism, privilege, domination, idleness and domesticity, transforming divided personal property into indivisible and social or common property’ and modifying all of commerce and industry (Harvey 2003: 77). He advocated traditional family life and, in a similar vein to Fourier (a committed feminist), argued that the negative aspects of women’s lives would disappear if production and consumption were organized communally (Harvey 2003: 77). In 1847, Cabet turned to Christianity to formulate his most well-known work, *Voyage en Icarie* (1840), which describes the utopian community of Icaria and the urban layout of its capital city, Icara. In Spain, Cabet’s ideas were printed in Narcís Monturiol’s newspaper *La Fraternidad* (1847-48) which ‘aimed at spreading Cabet’s teachings and the European revolutionary movement in general, and to fund Spain’s contribution to the founding of the utopian settlement of Icaria’ (Puig-Pla and Roca Rosell 2009: 148). Similar to Cerdà (although for different reasons: Cerdà wanted to avoid upsetting the bourgeoisie, to whom his work was addressed), Cabet wanted to avoid violent class struggle at all costs, a sentiment echoed in workers’ journals, in which street demonstrations were considered ‘undignified’ (Rancière cited in Harvey 2003: 78). Whereas Marx had his eye on total revolution and the upheaval of the entirety of the current system, Cabet focused on local, small-scale, face-to-face communities (Harvey 2003: 78). This might lead us to question Epps’ assertion (2007: 117) that Cerdà’s utopianism most closely resembles Cabet’s, as Cerdà was very keen for his vision of urbanization to totally transform society from the top down, rather than from the ‘bottom up’ as with Cabet’s small communities. Cabet’s approach failed to capture the attention of the scientists and engineers of the ‘technical elite’ as it was too small in scale and frequently designed for ‘empty’ spaces such as the Americas (where Cabet’s short-lived Icaria was built) or the French colonies in North Africa (Harvey 2003: 83).

Etienne Cabet’s Icaria project was to have considerable influence on certain prominent figures in Catalonia, such as Narcís Monturiol and Republican politician Abdó Terrades, as Genís Barnosell Jordà (2015) has established. The reception of utopian socialist ideas in Spain was made possible by the installation of the liberal regime after the retreat of Napoleon’s troops in the early nineteenth century. The death of Ferdinand VII in 1833 enabled liberal ideas to take a strong hold, and ‘between 1836 and 1841, Spain abolished the entire legal and political structure of the old regime’ (Lawrence 2020:

87). In 1840, the liberals won the First Carlist War and installed General Baldomero Espartero, a member of the Partido Progresista and hero of the war, as leader (Espartero was also a trained engineer). Throughout the 1830s, Spanish liberalism had defended a model of the state founded on a certain degree of political and economic liberties, ‘avec une sphère publique limitée au minimum, le tout devant garantir le développement économique et le progrès scientifique et technique’ (Barnosell Jordà 2015: 134).

However, the rise of industrialization in Catalonia in the mid-1800s gave rise to widespread inequality as a result of the proletarianization of workers occupied in the factory system (Brea-Martínez and Pujadas-Mora 2017: 263). This was accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of unions and workers’ associations which were established in response to the shift in relations of production, or to the ‘progresiva reificación urbana’ (Romero Marín 1999: 287). The proletarian is defined by Bernard Stiegler as ‘one who has lost [...] his *savoir-faire*, [becoming] pure labor-power (*force de travail*)’ (2014: 34) via a ‘process through which an individual or collective knowledge, being formalized through a technique, a machine, or an apparatus, can escape the individual – who thus loses this knowledge which was until then *his* knowledge’ (Ars Industrialis 2010: § 6, online; emphasis in original). The recording of previously unrecorded knowledge (such as technical methods or practices, but also music and games) means that it can be reproduced by someone else and hence it loses its specific significance to a singular person or group, which could otherwise be described as ‘immanent’ for its spontaneity and horizontal structure of power. The fact that cultures began recording this kind of knowledge meant that the state could then impose social organization in a ‘transcendent’ way, i.e., via a hierarchized, ‘top-down’ structure of power (Holland 2006: 195).⁹ The workers’ associations of this period did indeed fight against ‘la “cosificación” de las relaciones sociales en [...] el] trabajo’ and for the ‘restitución o mantenimiento de las viejas relaciones comunales’, which was ‘fundamental para los trabajadores cualificados, para mantener su posición social y profesional’ (Romero Marín 1999: 287), a position which was no longer guaranteed because of the new social division of labour. The situation of discontent came to a head in 1855, when fifty thousand textile workers went

⁹ To illustrate this, Eugene Holland cites the phenomenon that hierarchizes intellectual labour as superior to manual work, based on Francis Bacon’s efforts in founding the scientific method. In the employ of the state, intellectual labourers recorded manual labourers’ practices in the interest of advancing scientific knowledge, only for this knowledge ‘to be eventually reapplied to the production process in the form of technology, thereby liquidating the autonomy of the workers and subjecting them to technico-managerial control’ (Holland 2006: 193).

on strike in Barcelona to protest against increasing mechanization (Lawrence 2020: 125), in what amounted to the first general strike in Spanish history, ‘que alcanzó una extraordinaria fuerza y se extendió por todas las zonas industriales de Cataluña’ (Fontana 2007: 276). The high point of the liberal political climate therefore showed itself to be insufficient to solve social problems. Growing republicanism in Catalonia led to revolts against the government in Barcelona, to which Espartero responded by bombing the city.

Cerdà did not tackle these political or economic issues head on but disguised them in the form of a purely urbanistic proposal. Cabet’s proposal for Icaria is similarly urbanistic in focus but does explicitly address economic concerns. Cabet believed that nature had made all men equal, but the poor organization of society prevented them from enjoying their rights and fulfilling their duties, with the result that the world was dominated by vice and suffering. His solution aimed to restore harmony and virtue to the world through the abolition of money and private property, central planning of production and social life and a geometrical territorial organization ‘qui ferait table rase du passé’ (Barnosell Jordà 2015: 138). These aims are very similar to those of Cerdà (although Cerdà was not in favour of the abolition of private property) and, like Cerdà, Cabet’s ideas propose a spatial, territorial solution to social problems. Cabet’s famous plan to build the utopian city of Icaria in the United States divided opinion. Abdó Terrades dismissed it, at that time preferring instead a revolution, having concluded that social well-being remained a distant goal that propaganda alone could not supply (Barnosell Jordà 2015: 139). On the other hand, Narcís Monturiol was the most well-known representative in Spain of the minority who truly embraced Icarian socialism (Barnosell Jordà 2015: 140). Monturiol translated Cabet’s *Voyage en Icarie* into Spanish (as *Viaje por Icaria*) between 1848 and 1856 and contributed to many socialist pamphlets and publications. Strongly influenced by Rousseau by way of Cabet, Monturiol defended the idea that human beings are perfectible but remain limited insofar as they are guided by instincts. It is therefore necessary to provide humanity with a moral education, responsibility for which fell to the utopian socialists. Followers of Terrades also held a view of education as an instrument of human perfectibility, which is also reminiscent of Krausism.¹⁰ Similarly to Cabet, Monturiol envisaged a family hierarchy in which the man

¹⁰ The Krausists believed in ‘la educación integral del hombre’, which comprised excursions to the country and physical education in addition to a secular academic education, and which would result in the cultivation of the ‘hombre nuevo’ (Capellán de Miguel 2006: 212). Responsibility for the provision of this rounded education fell principally to the Institución Libre de la Enseñanza. For more on Krausism and

protected and directed the woman who carried out her duties as spouse and mother. (A similar attitude to the family and gender roles has been identified in Cerdà's work by Pilar Cano [2008], as discussed in Chapter 1.) Monturiol's traditional views regarding the family distanced him from the other utopian tradition popular in Barcelona at the time, Saint-Simonism, which gave greater autonomy to women.

Both Cabet's and Monturiol's ideas are similar in that they represent two projects that fuse terrestrial matters and divinity, and in which secular and supernatural elements are inseparable. Christianity was to become a fundamental element of Cabet's socialism upon his return to France in 1846, and his writings are considered to be 'clouded [...] by his free, and often pantheistic, associations with Christianity' (Corcoran 1986: 476). The Icarians saw themselves as Jesus's disciples seeking to found a new world where they could build the kingdom of God (Barnosell Jordà 2015: 142). Monturiol's group of followers treated Icaria as a new religious movement destined to regenerate the world and they took religious readings of Icarian works to the extreme, as evidenced by *La Fraternidad*; indeed, Barnosell claims that 'leur acceptation du communisme peut être considérée comme une véritable conversion religieuse' (2015: 144).

Francesc Magrinyà (2008: 92) points out that Cerdà was actually very much against utopian writers, even though he was familiar with them. Cerdà wrote that 'los célebres proyectistas y utopistas del siglo XVI, XVII y aún del XVIII, serían justamente la burla y el escarnio del siglo nuestro' (1867/2: 459). For the new generation of educated liberals, 'era fonamental entendre l'evolució de la ciutat com un procés, en el qual una actitud positivista havia de canalitzar la millora de la civilització, en lloc de quedar-se tan sols en un disseny idealitzat' (Magrinyà 2008: 93). We might trace this positivist attitude to Cerdà's following of Henri de Saint-Simon, namely in his faith in steam power and its application to locomotion. Magrinyà assumes that Cerdà would have read Saint-Simon's ideas in *Le Globe*: 'en l'ordre material, el ferrocarril és el símbol més perfecte de l'associació universal. Els ferrocarrils canviaran les condicions de l'existència humana' (2008: 89). He was also influenced by his visits to various French cities with large working-class populations (Lille, Mulhouse, Nîmes) and his close connection to Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French engineer and diplomat in Barcelona at the time who contributed to railway engineering projects in Spain and whose magnum opus was the

pedagogy, see Gonzalo Capellán de Miguel, *La España armónica: el proyecto del krausismo español para una sociedad en conflicto* (Biblioteca Nueva, 2006), pp. 211-40.

design of the Suez Canal. Magrinyà (2008: 94) underlines that Spain underwent a political, professional, social and economic transformation during the period between 1833 and 1875, and Cerdà, as a progressive liberal, had an important role to play in it that goes well beyond the debates between architects and engineers.

Isabel Moretó Navarro picks up these debates. When the walls surrounding Barcelona began to be demolished in 1854, the population demonstrated a desire to modernize their city. In the absence of an aristocracy, this entailed a ‘liberal revolution’ that demanded progress and modernity in an atmosphere of repressed creativity as a result of state policies (Moretó Navarro 2008: 23). A generation of optimistic industrialists, bankers, politicians, architects and engineers came together to decide what kind of city they wanted (Moretó Navarro 2008: 24). Central to this debate was the Escola de la Llotja, Barcelona’s architecture training school. At this time, architects had to obtain their professional title in Madrid or Valencia, but they could study in Barcelona at the Llotja’s Classe d’Arquitectura. Between 1854 and 1874, many Catalan architects participated in its classes, and they made use of the opportunity to discuss how they wanted their new city to be. Several of these architects participated in the competition for the design of Barcelona’s extension. Miquel Garriga i Roca, for example, is notable for his ‘coherència intel·lectual’ (Moretó Navarro 2008: 25) and his division of the city into ‘quarterons’ through the use of boulevards, which let the old medieval centre ‘breathe’, rather than forcing it into the overall design as in Cerdà’s plan (Moretó Navarro 2008: 39). Another Llotja architect, Josep Fontserè, produced a plan featuring houses grouped together that resemble, in plan view, the coat of arms of Catalonia and Barcelona. This is reminiscent of the street nomenclature implemented by Víctor Balaguer, but in material form. Balaguer was tasked with giving names to the newly created streets and decided to name horizontal streets after former colonial territories of the Crown of Aragon and vertical streets after prominent figures in Catalan history and culture (Subirana 2013: 255). Antoni Rovira i Trias, the winner of the competition, came up with a radial design that Josep Puig i Cadafalch likened to a hand that joined the suburbs to the ‘mare Ciutat’ (1927: 16).¹¹ Moretó Navarro remarks, however, that Puig i Cadafalch is more likely referring here to Léon Jaussely’s entry for a subsequent competition for the design of new roads in 1905 (2008: 39). Rovira’s plan is firmly situated in the school of urban planning

¹¹ Josep Puig i Cadafalch, an architect and president of the Mancomunitat de Catalunya from 1917 to 1924, disliked Cerdà’s plan so much that he ordered all the copies of the *Teoría general* to be burned. In 1967 there were only four copies remaining (Magrinyà 2008: 83-84).

fashionable in France at the time, as outlined in Léonce Reynaud's *Traité d'architecture* of 1858, whose first line ('Le tracé d'une ville est oeuvre du temps, plutôt que d'architecte') Rovira takes as the slogan for his design (Moretó Navarro 2008: 39).

In this panorama of architects, the fact that Cerdà (an engineer who had not even taken part in the competition) had his design realized, caused something of a scandal. He had been working on a design for the Eixample since 1855, so when the Ministerio de la Guerra passed responsibility for Barcelona's extension over to the Ministerio de Fomento in 1858, he saw his opportunity. He was on good terms with the engineers in the Ministerio de Fomento, having already carried out some topographical surveys of Barcelona for them. In 1859, he asked the Ministerio if he could carry out some studies for the extension of Barcelona. They agreed, and soon after he presented them with his plan, supported by various allies in the government (Magrinyà 2008: 95). The plan was approved by *Real Orden* on 7 June 1859, almost two months before the competition was even held (31 July). The Ajuntament de Barcelona fought the decision but eventually conceded, agreeing instead to put on an exhibition of the winning designs alongside Cerdà's.

Cerdà therefore had considerable technical expertise and political clout gained over many years which he used to his advantage. Arturo Soria y Puig (1995) explains how Cerdà's thinking developed over time in his various published works, which serves to highlight his interdisciplinary thinking. When Cerdà begins to put together his theory, he tells us that he has read widely across many subjects (architecture, law, society, sanitation, statistics, geography, political economy, morals, religion, philosophy), which, we recall, he distils into five 'bases': technical, economic, legal, administrative and political. This thorough and holistic approach helped him to find solutions to all kinds of problems that would crop up during the implementation of his plans, for example how to finance a new road and ensure it was of good quality. He took advantage of openings in legislation, extending their scope to permit his proposals, always adapting to changing political and economic scenarios (Soria y Puig 1995: 20).

As Soria y Puig summarizes, Cerdà was frustrated that professionals in different disciplines did not communicate with each other, so he collected a remarkably comprehensive set of statistical data on Barcelona. He set out to solve the housing problem. He wanted to restore sanitation and dignity to every inhabitant and, writing in 1855 in his notes for his plan of 1859, thought the ideal way would be to make sure each family had a detached house in which to live. This was, of course, financially impossible,

so he used his economic data to find a trade-off and came up with three-storey housing blocks instead. These developed into the large open blocks of his famous 1859 plan. However, the financial problem remained. He proposed that this would not be solved until a means had been found to standardize a prefabricated industry of construction, until building became as simple as assembling the parts of a machine, otherwise society would not be able to find housing cheap enough for its needs (Soria y Puig 1995: 26).

These financial concerns also applied to his proposals for urban streets. He believed that all streets should be the same width because the width of the street affected land value. Having narrow or wide streets would increase or decrease the importance of certain land in relation to other land, and Cerdà believed it was not the planner or the government's place to determine the importance of land: 'the future could not be foretold and any attempt to predict it was not only useless, but also detrimental to the freedom of citizens and to justice' (Soria y Puig 1995: 28). Therefore to make a street wider or narrower was an arbitrary action from a logical point of view, and the very point of Cerdà's theories was to eliminate arbitrariness. Another benefit of streets of equal width was that traffic would be distributed more evenly and so would flow more freely. Cerdà's use of data and statistics and his multifaceted approach enabled him to find creative, effective and, above all, realizable solutions to urban problems. He was insistent on the importance of uniting politics and practice; things had to be well theorized (politics) but also achievable and concrete in the real world (practice): '[Cerdà] consideraba la política como una ciencia práctica, y cuanto no es práctico no era política para él' (Angelón quoted in Magrinyà 2008: 86).

Nineteenth-century urban discourses

Cerdà's approach to city planning played a key role in the establishment of a new turn in conceiving the city which emerged in the nineteenth century. The increasing importance of urban areas led to the rise of what Françoise Choay, in *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, calls 'critical planning', a discipline underlined by radical plans for the redevelopment or construction of cities in response to the enormous social problems caused by industrialization (1969: 10). Choay identifies three phases in critical planning: regularization, pre-urbanism and urbanism, and places Cerdà (along with George Eugène Haussmann, famous for his renovation of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century) in the

regularization phase, which has three main characteristics. The first of these is the conception of the city as an object. Whereas towns before the Industrial Revolution resembled a 'semiotic system' in which citizens and city plans were integrated into the structure of a given society at a particular moment in time (Choay 1969: 7), the city of the Industrial Revolution became semantically impoverished, 'its organisation derived solely [...] from capitalist-industrialist production' (Choay 1969: 9). Space was replaced by increasingly abstract means of communication such as the railway, daily press and the telegraph, and the organizing force of the economic drive alienated citizens from their surroundings, which were now 'devoid of their traditional richness of meaning' (Choay 1969: 8). The second characteristic of the regularization stage is the use of an analytical method to survey and plan cities whose key words are 'classification' and 'system' (Choay 1969: 27). Cities are discussed in terms of their function, an idea borrowed from the contemporary development of biological science, from where terms such as 'circulation' and 'nucleus' entered the lexicon of urban planning. Choay's final defining characteristic of this stage is the exclusive priority given to the objectives of traffic and hygiene, elements that planners had identified as demanding their immediate critical attention. A further aspect of emerging discourses of urban planning in the nineteenth century is the development of the language of planning. This scientific language, or metalanguage, came out of the critical analysis of cities, and Cerdà was one of its main contributors as his theories introduce, with considerable care taken over the accuracy of their definitions, a body of words to describe urban circulation. Circulation (or 'locomoción') is an element he uses to classify the various stages of urban development, which begins with 'locomoción pedestre', progresses through the 'ecuestre' and 'rastrera' stages, and moves into 'rodada', which has both 'normal' (horse and cart) and 'perfeccionada' (railway) stages.

Returning to post-revolutionary France, the aristocracy of money had taken over from the aristocracy of position (Harvey 2003: 65). Accordingly, capital was the driving force in Haussmann's Paris (Clarke in Harvey 2003: 59). Whereas the reformers of the 1830s and 1840s had 'paid attention to the city as a form of political, social, and material organisation – as a body politic – that was fundamental to what the future good society was to be about', these images of the city were destroyed by the reigning category of bourgeois thought, 'positivist, managerial and tough-minded', along with the increasingly scientific path that socialism was taking under Marx (Harvey 2003: 64, 59-60). Coincidentally, Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* was published in 1848, which is

an important date for urbanism in the nineteenth century. The Barcelona-Mataró railway line was inaugurated in that year, while outside Iberia, the revolution of 1848 signalled the end of liberal hope in France. This event was to prove decisive in the future of Paris's urban form. A presidential election in December of that year was won by Napoleon III, who seized power by force in 1851 to create the Second French Empire. One of the most notable features of Napoleon III's reign was the renovation of Paris, led by Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine. Haussmann's proposals were not developed from scratch; instead, he inherited the works of the utopian socialists who had preceded him, but altered their ideas so they appealed more to the privileged elite, which, I would argue, Cerdà may have also done. For example, Perreymond's *Études sur la ville de Paris* (1842-43) was a project equal in magnitude to Haussmann's, complete with full engineering specifications and financial calculations. Yet, while the 'Fourierist' (Jenkins 2006: 336) Perreymond's text is 'modernist in tone' and 'eschew[s] appeal to the circulation of capital and private speculation in land and property' (Harvey 2003: 84), this would not fly with the Emperor. Haussmann's Paris reflects this 'tough-minded' attitude guided by capital, becoming a site of commodification and spectacle. According to Harvey, 'capital preferred the city not to be an image – not to have form, not to be accessible to the imagination [...] – in order that it might mass-produce an image of its own to put in place of those it destroyed' (2003: 59). This process can be seen in Cerdà's *urbanización*, as the grid Cerdà proposed for Barcelona's expansion can be considered as 'el símbol per antonomàsia de la Barcelona moderna' (Moix 2009: 50), representing 'the urban materialization of the political and cultural renaissance of the Catalan nation' and providing 'an open terrain for capitalist expansion' (Illas 2012: 138).

Madrid also had its share of urban commentators and planners, the most important of whom are Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, Carlos María de Castro, Ángel Fernández de los Ríos and Arturo Soria y Mata. Mesonero was one of the more influential among them, leaving a legacy of urban reform programmes, and being personally responsible for initiating the rebuilding of Madrid, which was later further developed by Castro's expansion plan. Mesonero's *Manual histórico-estadístico de Madrid* (1831, updated 1833, 1844, 1854) proposes solutions to improve

sanitation, water supply, and public baths; covered markets; the building of new residential districts ('ensanches'), and of long, wide avenues and squares with central parks; hackney cabs; paving and street lighting; regular numbering of houses; street names and public monuments; new cemeteries; the elimination of

begging and the creation of asylums, hospices, hospitals, and prisons; public safety; savings banks and reformed Montes de Piedad (pawnbrokers); the encouragement of commerce through the building of shopping arcades [...] plus restaurants and inns; improved educational facilities [...]; improved public entertainment; town planning and public health regulations, and revised municipal ordinances. (Labanyi 2000: 15-16)

He also proposed regulations for town planning and public health and for regular censuses and city maps, overall aiming for Madrid's 'total rationalization in the best Benthamite panoptical tradition' and many of his proposals were implemented by the Marqués de Potejos in the mid-century (Labanyi 2000: 16).¹² In 1833 and 1840 Mesonero toured major European cities to study modern town planning. He was elected to the Ayuntamiento in 1846 and put forward his *Proyecto de mejoras generales de Madrid*. He was also a writer in the genre of *costumbrismo*, which portrays scenes of everyday life. He wrote the *costumbrista* work *Escenas matritenses* in 1842, which would oddly seem to be a protest against his own political efforts at renovating the city (Labanyi 2000: 15). Benjamin Fraser connects Mesonero to capitalism and the drive to 'sell place' by marketing Madrid as an attractive destination for bourgeois travellers and thus betting on Madrid's saleability as a product (Fraser 2011: 67). Making Madrid more competitive in a larger market

in which the specificities of place are playing an ever more important role in circuits of exchange [...] entails an intense longing for days gone by, a certain romanticization of the past in which Mesonero engages consistently throughout his works, but nowhere as extensively as in his later *El Antiguo [sic] Madrid* (1861). (Fraser 2011: 64)

Labanyi describes *El antiguo Madrid* as 'a guide to the city he himself was instrumental in demolishing' (2000: 16). While we might describe Cerdà as displaying a similar wistfulness towards previous societies which he thought had urbanized better than the society of his time, nostalgia of the kind identified by Fraser is not found in the *Teoría general*. We can attribute this to the fact that Cerdà did not engage in the kind of expressly literary writing that Mesonero did, thus indicating the divergences in perspectives on city life that the different genres portray. Mesonero's portrait is far more

¹² The Panopticon is Jeremy Bentham's (1748-1832) design for a prison layout in which the cells are arranged in a circle around a central guard's tower from which a guard could communicate with any cell, but the inhabitants of each cell could not see each other. Labanyi applies the principles of Bentham's Panopticon metaphorically to Mesonero's proposals for urban reform, the inference being that Mesonero's plans exhibit a view of the city which has been subjected to the exclusive control of the planner, as in Choay's regularization stage in the history of city planning.

imbued with romantic sentimentalizing, whereas Cerdà's descriptions are less affected by (albeit not entirely devoid of) this kind of emotional or aesthetic angle.

While Mesonero came up with plans to improve the existing urban fabric of the city, the first plan for the expansion of Madrid was drafted between 1857 and 1859 by engineer Carlos María de Castro, who was expressly instructed not to reform the historic city. The plan was adopted by royal decree in 1860 and this act set up the *Comisión de Ensanche de Madrid*, which placed the central government in charge of Madrid's growth (Neuman 2010: 95). Castro's plan imposed a grid of square blocks on the city that increased its area threefold to accommodate the immigration that had resulted from the 1850s' economic and technological boom. In a very similar fashion to Cerdà's plan for the extension of Barcelona, Castro's plan remedied the lack of open space, and relieved the high densities and unsanitary conditions of the existing city by providing parks, open blocks, wide streets and sanitation infrastructure (Neuman 2010: 95). Castro was familiar with Cerdà and his plan for Barcelona, having also attended the *Escuela de Ingenieros*, and he cited Cerdà's plan approvingly in his own texts. He had in fact also beaten Cerdà in the competition to design Madrid's extension (Neuman 2010: 96). The draft plan that was approved by royal decree in 1860 detailed specifications similar to those found in Cerdà's extension of Barcelona. These stipulations set the width of main streets at thirty metres, with other streets fixed at twenty or fifteen metres wide depending on their importance; private buildings could not have more than three floors; and private gardens had to occupy as much space as buildings in each block (Neuman 2010: 96). Castro also had his eye on future urban expansion and included provision for an aqueduct and road and rail connections to provincial cities to accommodate further population growth. Castro's plan, along with the commissions and royal decrees that provided its political impetus, looked only to the future and not to the city's past (Neuman 2010: 95). Although the plan left development to private initiative, the order and pattern that the city's extension was to take was guided by public intervention, which ensured that the city cohered and did not develop in a piecemeal fashion (Neuman 2010: 96). Madrid's extension was built in line with Castro's specifications, although building heights were later increased. The same happened in the implementation of Cerdà's extension of Barcelona, as landowners increased the height and density of buildings constructed on their plots to make them more profitable, suggesting the pursuit of greater profits was a generalized trend.

Another writer who commented frequently on urban issues in Madrid, particularly the Castro plan, and put forward his own ideas for urban reforms, was Ángel Fernández de los Ríos (1821-80). Professionally, Fernández de los Ríos was a politician, serving as an elected member (*diputado*) in the Cortes and as Spanish ambassador in Lisbon, while also contributing prolifically to Spanish journalism.¹³ One of his most important standalone publications was the 1868 *El futuro Madrid*, published by the city government while he was in political exile in Paris. The book is a series of recommendations for the improvement and development of Madrid ‘including detailed instructions about the creation of residential areas, the development of public spaces, widening and lengthening of specific streets, and, inevitably, the demolition of others’ (Lawless 2011: 150). The date of its publication is significant as it coincides with the revolution that ended the reign of Isabel II, under whom the Castro plan had been approved and implemented. Fernández de los Ríos was therefore hoping to exploit the liberal political attitudes at the time more prevalent in the capital and on which he was banking to bring his vision to life. He calls for complete reform of the existing city and its expansion in order to improve the health of the inhabitants, yet he decries the grid form, arguing instead that new development should be sympathetic to the terrain and ecology. Against the grid’s abstraction of the landscape, he proposed that ‘growth should occur in *cercanías*, garden cities separated from the urb by a green belt and connected by rail to the center’, blending ‘a global view of the city with specific project reforms’ (Neuman 2010: 97).

Arturo Soria y Mata was another Madrid-based urbanist. He moved within similar circles to Cerdà and Fernández de los Ríos, at the more radical progressive end of the political spectrum. He is most well known for the concept of the linear city, best exemplified by the Ciudad Lineal in Madrid, originally proposed in 1892. His scientific training and work at the Cuerpo de Telégrafos made him enthusiastic about designing new communication and transport projects, even if they were rarely realized. For example, he wanted to install an underground telephony network in Madrid and he designed a horse-powered tram system for the city, however these were never fully implemented. His writings demonstrate a firm belief in progress, as the opening paragraph of his 1898 *El progreso indefinido* makes clear: ‘Creemos en el progreso

¹³ Fernández de los Ríos founded the publications *Las Novedades* (the weekly edition of *Ultramar*) and *El Agricultor Español*; directed *La Ilustración*, *Semanario Pintoresco Español* and *El Siglo Pintoresco*; edited *El Espectador*, *La Iberia*, *La Soberanía Nacional* and *Los Sucesos*; and directed the *Biblioteca Nacional* collection of cheap editions of historical, scientific and literary works (Ossorio y Bernard 1903: 132).

indefinido, sin límites, ni término, ni fin; creemos en la aparición de cosas nuevas más perfectas potencialmente contenidas en las cosas menos perfectas que conocemos'. He turned his attention to urban problems and expressed his opinions and ideas through fifty-six articles under the title 'Cosas de Madrid' in the progressive, Republican newspaper *El Progreso*, in a guise which he considered to be a continuation of the work of Mesonero Romanos and Fernández de los Ríos. He followed in a similar vein to these reformers, by concentrating on issues such as hygiene, affordable land, regular geometric shapes and rapid communication and eventually formulated his idea of the 'ciudad lineal'. He believed in a city based around the straight line, which could accommodate the new inventions of the era – railways and telephones – and therefore reduce the distances that people, goods, words and thoughts had to travel. A 'ciudad lineal' in the eastern outskirts of Madrid was constructed following his proposal for a boulevard five kilometres long and forty metres wide with single family lots at twenty metre intervals along its length.

These projects, which are more or less contemporaneous with Cerdà, demonstrate that his ideas form part of a general intellectual thrust in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. While the thinkers mentioned in this section all attempt to improve the hygiene of their cities and eliminate the diseases and hazards which were common in daily life in highly dense and impoverished areas, their plans and writings also indicate a desire to impose order via urbanistic means. The city was getting too big and too chaotic, so they submitted it to their precise calculations, following rational principles aiming to control and regulate urban space.

Criticisms of Cerdà and the legacy of *urbanización*

Cerdà's life came to a sad end. He died penniless, having taken on huge debts to pay for his scholarly endeavours, and was ruthlessly berated in both the serious and satirical presses: 'la censura pública, no es que fuera solo dura, sino que, muy a menudo, fue infame y además amplísima, apasionada y duradera' (Soria y Puig 1979: 70). His reputation remained tarnished until 1959, when *La Vanguardia* published a pair of articles which portrayed Cerdà as 'un urbanista competent i meritori' (Puigsech Farràs and Ginesta Portet 2010: 550).¹⁴ This is the same year in which Franco implemented the

¹⁴ The articles in question are 'Solemne sesión académica en honor de Ildefonso Cerdà', *La Vanguardia*, 5 November 1959 and R. Giral, 'El Ensanche de Cerdà', *La Vanguardia*, 16 December 1959.

Plan de Estabilización y Liberalización, ending Spain's autarky (that is, its policy of economic self-sufficiency) and starting a 'process of economic liberalisation and international market integration' (Prados de la Escosura, Rosés and Sanz-Villarroya 2011: 55). In Barcelona, this period was presided over by the city's Francoist mayor, Josep Maria Porcioles, who initiated a period of slum clearance and rampant property speculation (Sendra Ferrer 2022: 48, 91). Cerdà was lauded by Porcioles, who 'fou qui trencà una llança en favor de Cerdà i la seva obra; en recuperà el seu llegat i projecte' (Puigsech Farràs and Ginesta Portet 2010: 554). Cerdà and his ideas therefore have a complicated legacy, being championed or disparaged from various angles, as will be described in this section.

As Epps explains, several influential voices in the intellectual elite had strong views on Cerdà's Eixample at the turn of the twentieth century. These include Josep Puig i Cadafalch and the journalist and novelist Carles Soldevila. On the whole, their views are negative, accusing the Pla Cerdà of monotony, uniformity and geometrical abstraction (Epps 2007: 110). Puig i Cadafalch interprets Cerdà's conception of cities as a mineral crystallization, resembling the colonial cities of the Americas. Puig assumes that Cerdà is ignorant of the Hellenic origin of the grid form, which he believes would have 'donat un gran argument a la seva mentalitat de demòcrata pseudoclàssic' (quoted in Epps 2007: 110). In Barcelona, Cerdà's urbanization extended over the whole terrain, between the old city and the more distant towns, wiping out anything in its path, and subsequent efforts to reform this, such as the plan of Léon Jaussely to construct a new network of roads connecting the old city to the Eixample, failed to elevate (or return) the 'crystallized city' to the 'organic city' (Epps 2007: 110). Carles Soldevila thought the Pla Cerdà was bad to begin with ('és dolent *ab initio*'), but the avarice of certain sectors of the population, including the government, had made it even worse (Epps 2007: 110). Soldevila considered that if Cerdà had foreseen that his grid system would have been filled up so completely with buildings, he would not have made it so expansive. He writes in his column 'Fulls de dietari' in the newspaper *La Publicitat* that: 'En arribar a la meitat hauria decidit variar una mica... Va tirar al dret i va dibuixar quadros i quadros amb tanta monotonia perquè mai va creure en la utilitat de la seva previsió' (Soldevila quoted in Epps 2007: 110). It is worth bearing in mind that Soldevila frequently speaks flippantly and is probably aiming at being witty here. We can see that Soldevila's opinion does indeed display little real criticism of Cerdà's plan and points out its obvious flaws

(although Cerdà was not responsible for the exploitation of the land by developers) with the benefit of hindsight.

Soldevila also wrote a guide for Barcelona residents on how to flaunt their city to foreign visitors, entitled *L'art d'ensenyar Barcelona* (1929). The narrator of the guide addresses the reader in the second person, and describes four days of excursions with a visiting German family, the Kaufmanns, in tow. When driving from La Pedrera to the Sagrada Família, Soldevila advises that one must explain that Barcelona 'ha tingut la desgràcia de fer bona part del seu Eixample [sic] a compàs de l'anomenat "modernisme"' (1967: 1436). Modernisme is glossed as a period when neoclassical norms were abandoned in favour of an original style of architecture 'sense precedents... i sovint sense solta' (Soldevila 1967: 1436). In contrast to Cerdà, Soldevila advises local guides to resist the quickest and most efficient routes to various landmarks, giving the impression that the city should instead be appreciated as an aesthetic object. This falls in line with the Noucentista philosophy of creating a 'civilized' Catalan nation through the consolidation of urban culture, its moral and aesthetic values inspired by neoclassicism. I will say more about Noucentisme in relation to Albert in Chapter 3 and Sagarra in Chapter 4.

Liberalism played a key role in Cerdà's plan, which was selected by the central government in Madrid and not the local economic elite in Barcelona, thus demonstrating the triumph of bureaucracy over the bourgeoisie. In *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image*, Resina highlights the 'panoptic relation' between the capital and the provinces, as 'liberalism sought to make society transparent to an ever-expanding bureaucracy' (2008: 64, 63). Considering whether Cerdà's project demonstrates a bureaucratic conception of space, Resina argues, like Isabel Moretó Navarro (2008), that his education outside Barcelona (in Madrid) allowed him to conceive of the extension of the city in terms of abstract space 'without a priori determination of value' (Resina 2008: 64). As an engineer, he conceived of the city as 'a transitional space in a network ruled by the new supremacy of speed', which contrasted with the bourgeoisie's view of the city as a historico-geographical entity on which they could stamp their own hierarchy (Resina 2008: 64-65). The extension plan of Antoni Rovira i Trias, which had won the popular vote in the competition for the design of Barcelona's extension arranged by the local authorities, was therefore much preferable to Cerdà's in this regard. Streets emanate out from a historically significant urban core (the old city and a new Plaça Catalunya) and the bounded circle of the radial network made it a manageable, comprehensible unit.

In terms of Cerdà's legacy, his comprehensive approach to planning long outlived him. Ángel Martín-Ramos, in the article 'The Cerdà Effect on City Modernisation', discusses the 'Cerdà effect' on city planning, which is the influence that Cerdà's planning intervention in Barcelona had on other Spanish cities that also built extensions in a grid pattern such as Madrid, Bilbao, San Sebastián and Alicante, among others. Cerdà had such a strong influence because he was highly qualified and had many contacts in the engineering profession and in government, and was an extroverted and persuasive speaker. His ideas were also written into legislation that was passed throughout the nineteenth century. This begins with the Real Orden of 25 July 1846, which outlined a series of requisites (further refined in 1848) to ensure that large and medium-sized cities had geometric floor plans to accommodate future growth (Martín-Ramos 2012: 698). This was for reasons of defence, not urban transformation for the benefit of sanitation and health, and had limited influence. Cerdà's studies and proposals were enthusiastically adopted by his colleagues in the Cuerpo de Ingenieros, and the authorities and the Ministerio del Interior drafted its first bill for the remodelling, sanitation, extension and other improvements to towns and cities in 1861, which was defended by Minister Posada Herrera; this was a direct application of many of Cerdà's ideas (Martín-Ramos 2012: 699). This bill was replaced by the watered-down *Ley de ensanche de poblaciones* in 1864 but a succession of more comprehensive bills were passed, addressing these shortcomings, in 1867, 1876 and 1892, creating a lasting legal framework for extension projects in Spanish cities (Martín-Ramos 2012: 699).

Key to these laws is the intertwining of public and private interests in the development of land, as the authorities now had a stake in it. While on the one hand this could be used to further an agenda of sanitation, equal access to services and employment, greater access to housing for the least affluent, and so on, it also had negative consequences which arose from speculation over land value which had the opposite effect of driving less desirable inhabitants away from the newly extended urban areas.

Cerdà also exemplifies a shift in thinking in urbanistics in nineteenth-century Spain. The elements of this shift, as listed by Solà Morales (quoted in Martín-Ramos 2012: 700), are: a new conception of the city as predominantly residential and associated with technical advances, hygiene, equity and the real estate market; a new methodological approach to the city, which took the ordering of the land as its basis and guaranteed administration by the public powers while entrusting construction to private initiative;

and a new theory based on the rationalist city idea in which growth is subject to planning and implemented by means of legislative and executive instruments. Cerdà was part and parcel of this shift in thinking as a person who helped create this attitude and also benefited from it by seizing the moment to promote his own plan for city extension. He succeeded in preventing the use of purely economic arguments to build cities cheaply for land and business owners. His *ensanche* model reflects the fashionable political zeitgeist: ‘the incontrovertible expression of the qualities of the European city of the time, in a shift from non-interventionism to public control of the co-ordination and distribution of spaces’ (Martín-Ramos 2012: 702). This is particularly visible in the non-hierarchical nature of Cerdà’s grid, which presented a ‘challenge to the *ancien régime*’ (Martín-Ramos 2012: 706). Yet this also had a downside: planners treated the *ensanche* as a catch-all solution, employing it with the blind faith that it would solve any and all urban problems. Martín-Ramos clearly argues that Cerdà’s idea of the *ensanche* had such a successful legacy because of its adaptability and flexibility yet he indicates that this adaptability could be made to work in the advantage of either the state, the landowners or the people, and it could therefore give rise to negative consequences.

Michael Neuman also analyses Cerdà’s success and legacy, but from a different point of view. To Neuman, Cerdà was a pioneer because of his view of cities as integrated networks or systems and the sense of unity and wholeness in his plan for Barcelona. This integrated, systematic view of the city is reflected in his practice. The theoretical building blocks of his plan are ‘logical-rational thinking, analysis before action, engineered technological solutions, and a belief that coordinated and integrated thinking and action across a range of disciplines and scales would result in a more healthy, functional, and appealing city’ (Neuman 2011: 126-27). This rigorous and holistic approach produced a plan ‘robust and flexible enough’ to handle Barcelona’s expansion from 1860 to 1930 and beyond (Neuman 2011: 132). Like Martín-Ramos, Neuman makes reference to external factors that boosted Cerdà’s popularity, including the way he was able to explain, defend and persuade others of his plan by using his own theory. His thorough technical knowledge combined with his political savvy and backing by the Spanish state made his plan realistic, which we may take to mean as straddling a middle ground between private and public. His multi-disciplinary approach, in which architects and engineers (representing the arts and the sciences) worked together, is his most enduring legacy to urban planning. While he was a ‘hyper-analyst’, he did not try to treat urban problems from a purely scientific perspective with data divorced from the human beings they

represented. Cerdà remembered the human scale of his endeavour: he was ‘a humanist clothed in engineer’s garb’ who ‘sought to improve the human condition using science, engineering and planning’ (Neuman 2011: 138) as evidenced in sentences from the *Teoría general* such as: ‘no es seguramente la locomoción pedestre la más importante. Como no obstante, tiene esa importancia el hombre que la verifica; hemos preferido empezar por ella para rendir ese homenaje de respeto al que es origen y objeto de todo lo urbano’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 611).

Cerdà’s concerns for social equality and sanitation are investigated in an article by Montserrat Pallares-Barbera, Anna Badia and Jordi Duch entitled ‘Cerdà and Barcelona: The Need for a New City and Service Provision’, which begins from the standpoint that Cerdà’s aim was unquestionably to improve the health and welfare of all urban inhabitants using urbanism as a tool. They give a thorough overview of the statistics he collected about Barcelona’s working-class population which he used to construct a theory of ‘how people should live’, which he achieved by ‘evaluating the needs of the entire population and the need to implement economic activity in a modern “futuristic” city’ (Pallares-Barbera, Badia and Duch 2011: 133). Similarly to Ángel Martín-Ramos, the authors say that Cerdà’s proposal for Barcelona’s extension ‘changed the way in which people thought about urban space, and introduced the idea of changing people’s behaviour by modifying public space’ (Pallares-Barbera, Badia and Duch 2011: 133). He achieved this by conceiving of the city as a self-generative organism capable of solving its own problems. Cerdà innovated by bridging the gap between the urban roles and functions of a metropolis and a healthy population. In other words, he connected humanity and its structures by providing the city with mechanisms for its own self-defence and self-protection, creating a framework for the city’s ability to generate the information needed to solve inner-city problems by itself (Pallares-Barbera, Badia and Duch, 2011: 133). This connects with ideas about progress and the future of humanity expressed in the corpus of novels in this thesis, some of which include the idea of the Noosphere, a future evolutionary state of humanity that exists as pure information and consciousness with no material counterpart.

Chapter 1

***Urbanización* as a Critical Framework in Literary Studies**

The aim of this chapter is to explain in depth certain features of *urbanización* in preparation for the literary analysis chapters. This chapter is largely theoretical in nature, as it prepares the critical framework to be used throughout the thesis, clarifies my reading of Cerdà and gives a sense of the applications of Cerdà's thought to the corpus of texts examined in Chapters 2 to 5. Discussion is structured around Cerdà's two main concepts, which each give rise to specific terms that Cerdà uses to communicate his ideas: *urbe* and *la gran vialidad universal*. Below, I provide an outline of these concepts (*urbe* as Cerdà's theorization of habitation or static space and *la gran vialidad universal* as his theory of circulation), teasing out the contradictions and ambiguities in the writing. These two notions, when put together, create the heart of Cerdà's general theory of *urbanización*. In the manner of a literature review, I summarize a number of critical appraisals of these ideas and advance the argument that Cerdà's *urbanización* is a theory that is in service to the development of capitalism in the nineteenth century and is therefore an example of a broader current of scientific and philosophical thought. This argument is set out with a view to establishing the parameters upon which to base my framework for literary analysis in subsequent chapters.

As we saw in the Introduction, Cerdà's relation to liberalism and capitalism is discussed by Françoise Choay, Ross Adams and Isabel Moretó Navarro. Choay evaluates Cerdà's broad, global approach to the investigation of the socio-economic problems of Western society (as opposed to focusing on them individually) through which he identifies the malady of the urban organism not just as a pathology of space but as a 'hypertrophy' of capitalism (Choay 1997: 244). Choay reads Cerdà differently to Moretó Navarro and Adams. Whereas Choay sees Cerdà as denouncing the hypertrophy of capitalism, Moretó Navarro likens Cerdà's grid to an instrument of capitalist expansion and Adams says the moral value of *urbanización* can be measured in its sprawl (Adams 2019: 71). Cerdà denounces the exploitation of the working class in the reduction of wages to the bare cost of reproducing the work force and in real estate speculation (1867/1: 458-59). He gives a 'remarkable' overview of the 'dysfunctionality of urban space', which is both symptom and cause of the social malady, describing systematically the diseased aspects of the city that are the result of an urbanization that is 'viciosa,

corruptora, impolítica, inmoral y [...] anacrónica' to the intricacies of the urban fabric, namely suburbs and houses turned into slums by the 'logic of exploitation' (Choay 1997: 245).

Choay and Adams are of crucial importance in the preparation of Cerdà's *urbanización* for use in literary analysis. In the first place, Choay's literary-historical reading of the *Teoría general* treats the text not as an engineering document or philosophical doctrine but as a text that is the product of the imagination and therefore requires explanation with reference to literary and essayistic genres of writing. Secondly, Adams' political reading of the *Teoría general* is based on an analysis of Cerdà's use of movement, which is seen to condition the philosophical underpinnings of the theory of *urbanización*. These two critical interpretations are important because of the particular angle from which I approach Cerdà. I critique Cerdà from within a critical theory framework and go on to use his theory in my own literary criticism. I therefore treat the *Teoría general* as a text to be set against other texts. This therefore requires that Cerdà's text be, in a sense, 'naturalized' within literary studies and, as such, the engineering, architectural and urban studies approaches to analysing and explaining Cerdà are less helpful because they often focus on the scientific aspects of his theories in relation to the Eixample of Barcelona. Choay and Adams, on the other hand, provide highly detailed and rigorous analyses of Cerdà and thus offer fertile ground for further exploration as regards the aims of the thesis.

Cerdà's conception of the city as *urbe*

Cerdà is often rightly credited as having been the first to coin the word *urbanización*, a coinage at which he arrives after sharing with the reader a lengthy process of debate in which he discusses the faults of the word *ciudad* (and semantically related words such as *pueblo*, *población*, *villa*, *lugar*, *aldea*, among others) and the merits of the word *urbe*, which captures his particular view of what constitutes the city. Arguing that the term *ciudad* does not accurately reflect the object of his study, he strips the word of its established meanings. This philological process depoliticizes contemporary attitudes to the city, reducing it to its earliest and most literal meaning, before re-politicizing it as he develops his theory of *urbanización*. As will be argued in this section, Cerdà's overarching project in the *Teoría general* can be described as philological in nature, meaning that it has to do with the meanings of words and their histories and uses. It is a

discursive project rooted more firmly in the imaginative exploration of a theoretical concept than it is in strictly scientific or historical discourse.

In the introduction to the first part of the work, ‘De la urbanización en general’, Cerdà sets out his object of study, which is ‘[el] modo de funcionar el hombre en esos grandes colmenares que se llaman comúnmente ciudades’ (1867/1: 28). He summarizes the great range of dynamic human relationships that exist in the city as a ‘*mare-magnum* de personas, de cosas, de intereses de todo género, de mil elementos diversos, que [...] vienen a formar una unidad’ (1867/1: 29; italics in original). He notes that we refer to all these elements taken together, and especially in their material aspect, as the *ciudad*, but this word does not accurately reflect Cerdà’s project because he intends to examine beyond the physical dimension of the city. The main focus of his investigation is to scrutinize how human activity causes groups of buildings to come to exist and how the built environment ‘expresses’ the lives of the inhabitants. This is summed up as follows:

como mi objeto no era expresar esa materialidad, si más bien la manera y sistema que siguen esos grupos al formarse, y cómo están organizados y funcionan después todos los elementos que los constituyen, es decir, que además de la materialidad debía expresar el organismo, la vida si así cabe decirlo, que anima a la parte material. (Cerdà 1867/1: 29)

He shifts the emphasis that the word *ciudad* places on the city’s material form onto the behaviours and relationships of the inhabitants of urban areas, in short, the ‘organismo’ that gives life to the material city. In other words, humans and their actions are what condition urban form. This notion is at the heart of Cerdà’s idea of form, which is that the form of the city obeys no logic other than that required to fulfil the needs of urban inhabitants, as he says: ‘para la urbanización, la forma es nada; la satisfacción cumplida de las necesidades humanas es todo’ (1867/1: 55).

Cerdà also finds *ciudad* inappropriate because it denotes the highest moral and intellectual development of humanity, but this contradicts the impulse motivating his work, which is to find a cure for the ills that are holding humanity back from reaching perfection; for him, humanity has clearly not reached that point yet. Instead, Cerdà considers the Latin word *urbs* to better reflect the needs of his project, as it had not been widely transmitted throughout the Romance languages and therefore offered him a blank slate to fill with his own concepts (1867/1: 29). Cerdà tells us that *urbs* derives from *urbum*, the Latin word for plough, which is the instrument the Romans used to demarcate a new territory and in so doing ‘urbanized’ the enclosed space and all its contents (‘con la

abertura del surco *urbanizaban* el recinto y todo cuanto en él se contuviese' [1867/1: 30; emphasis in original]). *Urbanización* is therefore the act of converting an open field into an *urbs*, and it is in this act that Epps interprets the *Teoría general* as a utopian project that generates a non-place (*ou-topos*), or an area that has not yet had a place (2007: 114). Epps sees a 'reminiscència adàmica' in the opening of a furrow with a plough, yet Cerdà reassures his readers that his concept is rooted in a purely linguistic, rather than biblical, tradition (2007: 113), although we will see later in this chapter and in Chapter 5 that Cerdà draws on Genesis and the motif of the pillars of Hercules in his development of *urbanización*. The metaphor extends conceptually: as Cerdà is consciously trying to establish *urbanización* as a new science, he is thus 'breaking new ground' in the fields of science and philosophy. This contributes to his abandonment of existing terms, which come loaded with too much semantic baggage and which push him to create instead 'los neologismos que le ganaron la celebridad' (Cavalletti 2010: 29). To take a cynical view, we might venture that Cerdà invents new terms purely to enhance the originality of his project and hence guarantee renown for posterity.

Urbe is the first step achieved in what Cerdà professes is the construction of a truly general theory. The main point of his selection of the word is the fact that it is able to apply to the whole city and all the people, activities and buildings that constitute it. *Urbe* is a universal term that 'pre-exists and is pre-supposed by the historically and politically overdetermined "city"' (Adams 2019: 41). Ross Adams comments on Cerdà's effort to remove the layers of historical and political signification from the *urbe*: 'in reducing the city to its bare, material immanence of cohabitation and movement, dismissing the political forms and relationships that constitute it, he defines the *urbe* as a completely depoliticized entity; the *urbe* is in fact *without* political form' (2019: 41; emphasis in original). In my interpretation, this is a surprising conclusion to reach given the resonances that Cerdà indicates the word *urbe* may provoke. For instance, Cerdà acknowledges that 'urbano' signifies the more highly refined qualities associated with city dwellers, which gives a clear distinction to certain sectors of society over others, yet he explains the unimportance of this discrepancy by arguing that this definition occurred as an extension of the meanings of *civis* and *civitas* and arose out of the need to make a distinction between people living in urban and rural areas: '*urbanus* y *urbanitas*, urbano y urbanidad, llegaron a tener una acepción moral análoga, por no decir idéntica, a *civilis* y *civilitas*; pero esto fue por extensión, efecto de una comparación tácita entre las costumbres o cultura de los habitantes del *rus* (campo) [...] y los moradores de la *urbs*,

que siempre se reputaron más cultos y más civilizados’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 505; italics in original).

This discrepancy reminds us therefore not to take Cerdà’s assertions, which appear to be based on little historical research, at face value. Andrea Cavalletti’s study of Cerdà’s ‘problema filológico’ illuminates Cerdà’s omissions and factual errors in the process of discounting *ciudad* and cognate words, and bolsters the argument that the *Teoría general* is a lexical, rather than a truly scientific theory. Considering Cerdà’s example of the unacceptable terms *pueblo* and *población*, Cavalletti cites the historical dictionary of Joan Corominas, which defines *pueblo* as a settlement of the size ‘menor que una ciudad y mayor que una aldea’, while *poblamiento* (a derivation of *población*) denotes ‘la forma en que se distribuye y se establece la población en un cierto territorio’ (Corominas cited in Cavalletti 2010: 37). The former designates a certain type of urban agglomeration within a hierarchy of size, while the latter definition is much more ambiguous, referring merely to an unspecified form in which a group of people organize their built environment. *Poblamiento* could therefore well serve as the appropriate name for Cerdà’s theory, as Cavalletti notes, because its very ambiguity ‘permitiría pensar hipotéticamente en *población* como en el lugar de un *pueblo*, y a este, como en el lugar de una *población*. Es decir, permitiría incluir los términos siempre en un movimiento recíproco y más amplio, que haría coincidir la historia de uno con la del otro’ (2010: 38). The validity of *urbe* and *urbanización* as authentically reflective of Cerdà’s project is therefore placed in doubt.

According to Cerdà, *urbs* is the only Latin word that refers to the material construction of the city without referring to its inhabitants. *Urbe* is the word he uses to describe any group of buildings no matter how large or small, magnificent or humble (Cerdà 1867/1: 481). Even two houses next to each other constitute an *urbe*, which leads us on to another of Cerdà’s defining features of urban life: the necessity of inhabitants to provide mutual services. Providing reciprocal aid happens independently of the means by which that community is connected. Cerdà tells us that Chinese societies that live on water are just as urban as those connected by land, for example. Inhabitants need to be able to help each other to guarantee their mutual survival and development, as this, according to Cerdà, is a hallmark of a successful civilization. Cerdà combines these elements in the final definition of *urbanización*, understood as a set of values that underpin a process oriented towards improving society:

es un conjunto de conocimientos, principios, doctrinas y reglas, encaminados a enseñar de qué manera debe estar ordenado todo agrupamiento de edificios, a fin de que responda a su objeto, que se reduce a que sus moradores puedan vivir cómodamente y puedan prestarse recíprocos servicios, contribuyendo así al común bienestar. (Cerdà 1867/1: 31)

This definition contains two elements: on the one hand, the ‘conocimientos, principios, doctrinas y reglas’, the ‘causes’ or concrete principles of urbanization, which describe how groups of buildings have come to be organized in a certain way in order to produce, on the other hand, a higher standard of welfare and well-being for the inhabitants of such buildings, which is to be measured by the number of reciprocal services inhabitants are able to provide each other.

Henri Lefebvre also prefers the term ‘urban’ to ‘city’, because, as he explains in *The Urban Revolution* (*La Révolution urbaine*, 1970; English translation 2003), the latter defines an object, whereas his theoretical approach to studying urban life requires critique of that object as well as a more complex notion of the virtual or possible object (2003: 16). For Lefebvre, ‘the urban’ is a horizon, an illuminating virtuality, as opposed to an accomplished reality behind the actual in time: ‘it is the possible, defined by a direction, that moves toward the urban as the culmination of its journey’ (2003: 17). This is in some ways a more convincing line of argument than Cerdà’s because it foregrounds the state of possibility with which Cerdà implicitly characterizes *urbanización*. It is the blueprint upon which progress will be obtained and is therefore ‘virtual’ in the sense outlined by Lefebvre: it is not a set of definable, empirical material conditions but a set of *potential* conditions geared towards the achievement of greater material and moral progress.

In a later work, *The Production of Space* (*La Production de l’espace* 1974; English translation 1990), Lefebvre outlines his theory of the social production of space. In summary, social space is, for Lefebvre, ‘constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, and [...] it is irreducible to a “form” imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality’ (1990: 27). Instead, it is a process, it has to be produced, as encapsulated in Lefebvre’s repeated phrase ‘(social) space is a (social) product’. Space is therefore the product of the social interactions of the organizations that populate it. Lefebvre divides these such interactions into three inseparable categories, which, taken together as a triad, are what produce space. The three categories are as follows:

1. *Spatial practice*: The spatial practice of a society secretes that space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. [...] 'Modern' spatial practice might thus be defined [...] by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project.
2. *Representations of space*: conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.
3. *Representational spaces*: space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. (Lefebvre 1990: 38-39; italics in original)

These can be glossed in the following way: spatial practice is the the routines of a society, dictated by the conditions of production and reproduction, which shape the way given spaces are formed; representations of space are linguistic, visual or otherwise coded maps, plans or diagrams of specific spaces; and representational spaces are spaces as they are experienced by those who use them. What interests us here is not whether Cerdà's own ideas about space can map onto Lefebvre's triad, but the way in which both writers construct an epistemology of space dialectically. That is, space is made up of two contrasting sides of the same coin: it is both abstract and social (Gottdiener 1993: 131). It is produced both through coded representations of spaces that stipulate how spaces are to be used in a 'top-down' manner (Cerdà's plans for the extension of Barcelona would be a good example) and through the actual ways in which spaces are used and imagined (in my view, Lefebvre's second point corresponds to an abstract view of space, his third point to social space and his first point a cross between these two). Lefebvre's work makes clear that 'space is both a medium of social relations and a material product that can affect social relations' (Gottdiener 1993: 131). This is what Cerdà picks up on in the *Teoría general* around a century before Lefebvre elaborates his own theory of space.

Having identified *urbanización* and distinguished it from the mere study of the city, Cerdà turns his attention to its origin and cause. He ascribes the origin of *urbanización* to man's need for shelter. This is indeed the title of the first chapter of the first book of the *Teoría general*, in which Cerdà begins his urbanistic take on Genesis, first describing man as 'el ser privilegiado entre todos los seres de la naturaleza, el ser que Dios había creado a su imagen y semejanza, el ser predestinado a dominar el mundo, el

rey de la creación' (Cerdà 1867/1: 37). After being created, finding shelter is the first need that man must satisfy: humanity has a 'necesidad imperiosa' for shelter, which 'se nos presenta como el apéndice indispensable y complemento preciso de su existencia'; thus the home is the necessary extension of man's physical being (Cerdà 1867/1: 41). The need for shelter is the 'origen primero y causa única, pero poderosa, de la urbanización'; 'el origen de la urbanización arranca desde el origen mismo de la humanidad' (Cerdà 1867/1: 41). The creation of the human being therefore also marks the creation of urbanization, and this emphasis on the central role of the human figure is reiterated in Cerdà's methodology for his investigation of the history of urbanization. According to Cerdà, we can find all the data we need to learn how man sheltered himself in the first ages of the world's history in man himself (1867/1: 58). In examining his nature, instincts, inclinations and physical, intellectual and moral faculties, we can use *urbanización* to observe where 'la antropología tan sensiblemente ha olvidado' (1867/1: 58). In my view, this methodology is highly flawed and unscientific. Cerdà claims that history books will not help him here as they do not go back far enough to the days of primitive man. He instead advocates the use of assumptions, treating nineteenth-century human beings and their behaviours as representative of all of human behaviour since prehistory.

Cerdà's thesis is that civilization and urbanization are the same thing: 'la cultura de los pueblos viene grafiada por la construcción de sus viviendas, [...] la civilización y la urbanización corren parejas, son una misma cosa' (Cerdà 1867/1: 40). This would appear to negate his earlier argument that *urbe*, as the root of *urbanización*, should be understood independently of civilization, which has its linguistic roots in *civis* (which is, of course, also the root of *ciudad*). We can try to understand this contradiction in terms by looking at Cerdà's account of the development of human civilization, which runs in parallel to the development of urbanization to such a degree that Cerdà credits the urban organization of previous societies as the sole factor that enabled them to grow and develop. He sings the lofty praises of urbanization, whose origin is 'tan noble, tan antiguo y elevado' and which 'sirvió de cuna [...] al hombre', as protector of man, giving him rest and tranquillity to develop his intellectual and moral faculties and eventually driving him towards the formation of a society:

ella le enseñó la cultura: ella le civilizó. En una palabra, el hombre debe a la urbanización que nació con él, y con él creció, todo cuanto es, todo cuanto puede ser en este mundo, la conservación de su existencia individual primero, su

desenvolvimiento moral e intelectual después, y por fin la existencia social.
(Cerdà 1867/1: 41)

Man therefore owes everything he is to urbanization.¹ This idea is explored further in the first chapter of the second book of the *Teoría general*, in which Cerdà investigates various types of urbanization from primitive humans to the industrial society of his day. The corresponding section, titled ‘Bosquejo histórico de la marcha que en su progresivo desarrollo hubo de seguir la urbanización elemental y primitiva’, outlines the emergence of a civilization that is driven by the intellect. Cerdà describes how early settlements grew: ‘obedeciendo el hombre a la ley de su Criador, creció y se multiplicó’ (1867/1: 58), which forced groups to explore new lands on which to settle. In their journeys through valleys, they saw large rocks that had fallen down the mountain sides leaving craters where they had fallen, and this gave them the idea to build shelters half above the ground, an improvement on their former shelters, which, until now, had been completely underground. Cerdà believes that the transition of humanity’s dwellings from below to above ground marks the transition from one stage of development to another, an analogy that is to be explored in the case of *Retorn al sol* in Chapter 5.

A biopolitical reading of Cerdà helps to explain why the origin of *urbanización* lies in the need for shelter. In Cavalletti’s interpretation, urbanization and civilization, which can stand for protection and sociability, ‘coinciden precisamente en nombre de la seguridad’ (2010: 43). The explanation for this again recurs to semantic and lexical concerns. As we have seen, this is because *urbanización* is constructed dialectically as both a fact in and of itself (an ‘hecho concreto’) and a theory (a ‘teoría general’), and therefore provokes an oscillation between theory and praxis. It is within this constant fluctuation that ‘deberá buscarse el presupuesto biopolítico de la forma disciplinaria moderna’ (Cavalletti 2010: 40). M. Gottdiener draws attention to the resemblance of Lefebvre’s (and, by extension, Cerdà’s) dualistic approach to defining (urban) space in sociologist Anthony Giddens’ concept of the duality of structure (Gottdiener 1993: 131). For Giddens, structures are dual because they are ‘both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems’ (1981: 27). As glossed by William H. Sewell, Jr.: ‘structures shape people’s practices, but it is also people’s practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures. In this view of things, human agency and structure,

¹ We might ask to what extent the grandiose and overblown tone of Cerdà’s rhetoric is perhaps suggestive of an attempt to justify and ennoble his own urban projects.

far from being *opposed*, in fact *presuppose* each other’ (1992: 4; emphasis in original). This presupposition (it is hardly coincidental that Sewell and Cavalletti use the same term) is inherent to the project of *urbanización*. The word itself always refers to opposite terms, denoting as it does both the material form of civilization, and civilization as the practices of the people who make up the urban population. This is summarized by Cerdà thus: ‘el instinto de socialización ha producido la urbanización y, en la urbanización, la inteligencia y los buenos sentimientos han encontrado el impulso necesario para crear los elementos civilizadores’ (1867/1: 45). As the ultimate goal of *urbanización* is to achieve the perfect urban form, it therefore requires the sublimation of the *oikos* in the *polis* – and vice versa – in order to have a chance at reaching that goal: in Cavalletti’s words, ‘la palabra *urbanización* designa así el doble movimiento que, podría decirse, expande el *oïkos* en la *pólis* y constriñe a la *pólis* en el *oïkos*’ (2010: 41).² *Urbanización* is therefore a two-way process whereby the material form of the city is the way it is because of the activities of the population operating within it, and vice versa.

Cerdà’s approach to history

A considerable amount of Cerdà’s theory of *urbanización* (the first and second books of the first volume of the *Teoría general*, constituting around two hundred pages in the original edition) takes a historical approach to urban development. He positions *urbanización* as a force or principle that, over time, is the sole factor that has conditioned humanity’s general development. María A. Castrillo Romón and Víctor Pérez-Eguíluz have called Cerdà’s lengthy discourses on the history of urban expansion ‘an exercise in extreme positivism’ (2023: 346). This conclusion is based on Cerdà’s purported reliance on historical evidence for his sources, which he admits is often scant: ‘los datos concretos, hartos escasos por desgracia, que nos suministra la historia’ (1867/1: 154). This would seem to constitute a positivistic approach to historiography, defined as ‘a careful and disinterested study of history based on the rational criteria required by positivism – absence of authority and of hearsay, avoidance of wishful thinking and of mere legend’ (Munz 1993: 94).

² The terms *oikos* and *polis* come from ancient Greek civilization. *Oikos* is generally considered to stand for the household, while *polis* refers to the group of households which make up the city. The *oikos* is therefore seen (especially by Aristotle) as ‘the basic social unit of the *polis*’ (Roy 1999: 1).

Aside from the positivistic interpretation, we move on to Cerdà's use of history as discussed most extensively by Françoise Choay in *The Rule and the Model* (1997). Choay's work explores Cerdà's *Teoría general* from a literary-historical perspective and places it within a history of urban writing based around three genres. These are: the architectural treatise, or the 'rule' (whose founding work is Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* [1485]); the utopia, or the 'model' (inaugurated by Thomas More's *Utopia* [1516]); and urbanism. Works that Choay (1997: 233-34) considers representative of 'urbanism' do the following:

1. Identify themselves as scientific discourse, claiming autonomy for a specific domain within the social sciences.
2. Contrast positive and negative images of the city.
3. Relate a narrative in which the hero is a builder.

Along with Cerdà's *Teoría general*, Choay identifies the following texts and projects as also belonging to the genre of urbanism: Camillo Sitte's *Der Städtebau* (1889), Tony Garnier's *Une Cité industrielle* (1917), Le Corbusier's urban design project *Ville radieuse* (1930) and Christopher Alexander's *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (1964). Cerdà's *Teoría general* occupies a more important position, however, as urbanism's 'inaugural work' which, at the time of Choay's writing (the original French version of her book was published in 1980), had been read neither by historians nor by urban planners (with the exception of Spanish urban planner Arturo Soria y Mata, who developed the *ciudad lineal* and its implementation in Madrid around the turn of the twentieth century) (1997: 235). Cerdà's *Teoría general* precedes the works of these other urbanist writers who cast their writings in the same textual figuration as Cerdà because of their 'common grounding in an epistemic stratum', i.e., their texts are similar because they respond to the common nineteenth and twentieth century themes, not because they have read Cerdà: they have not (Choay 1997: 235).³

Choay comments on Cerdà's uses of history and science in his account of the development of urbanization. In describing cities as a product of history, Cerdà displays a positivist or structuralist attitude: for Cerdà, history is a 'discontinuous succession of constellations of social practices' of which urbanization is symbolic (Choay 1997: 239). Developments in technology are what structure the history of urbanization, as social

³ Djamel Chabane remarks that the *Teoría general* 'a été ignorée de la plupart des auteurs', including Sitte and Le Corbusier, in addition to Ebenezer Howard (author of *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* [1898]) (2022: 127).

practices are determined by technology and thus ‘human settlements evolve as a function of technological change’ (Choay 1997: 239). Cerdà identifies locomotion as the primary indicator of technological change: it gives meaning to the development of urbanization, functioning in Cerdian history in the same way as the means of production in Marxist history (Choay 1997: 239-40). Christian Hermansen Cordua infers from the *Teoría general* that Cerdà believed in a universal history, ‘understood not merely as a random succession of events but as a linear development which follows a pattern or grand design’ through which humanity will eventually reach perfection (2016: 94). According to Hermansen Cordua, Cerdà’s understanding of modernity is also closer to Marx’s than to Baudelaire’s, as he saw the city in terms of relations between its citizens, using conflict as a motor for social change, rather than as an aesthetic experience (Hermansen Cordua 2016: 95).

The argument that Cerdà’s conception of time and history finds a correlation in Marx’s historical materialism is convincing and can be explained by virtue of the role Cerdà assigns to *urbanización* as the motor driving further material and intellectual progress for humanity. As is made clear from the historical survey of urban development given in the *Teoría general*, Cerdà understands time as a linear progression, with each civilization making improvements on the methods of habitation used by the civilization before it. This conception of time is of crucial importance in the use of the theories of *urbe* and *urbanización* as frameworks for literary criticism. The idea that the *urbanización* paradigm is based on and engenders a capitalistic understanding of time is central to the construction of what I term ‘urbanized subjectivity’. We will see how this manifests more concretely in the analysis of Narcís Oller’s *La febre d’or* in the following chapter.

Cerdà collected a huge amount of data on urban life in Barcelona which he compiled in the second volume of the *Teoría general*. Commenting on his reliance on anatomy and physiology, Choay connects Cerdà to Balzac, who had turned to naturalists Georges Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire earlier in the nineteenth century to learn how to view society with the scientist’s eye, drawing on elements such as dissection of the body, homeostasis, nucleus, genus and species. In this manner, Cerdà treats the city as both a body and an object, but he manages to solve this contradiction ‘by means of a bold conception of the (urban) body as a machine’ (Choay 1997: 242). The underground channels of the city, for example, look like the veins of a colossal and mysterious being,

however in reality they are nothing other than ‘un verdadero sistema de aparatos que sostienen el funcionamiento de la vida urbana’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 306).

Choay problematizes Cerdà’s use of scientific discourse, which she argues comes across not just as scientistic but also utopian rather than truly scientific. Modern-day scholarship outlines that ‘scientism’ is employed in various ways, from ‘a serious philosophical position’ to an insult (Ridder, Peels and van Woudenberg 2018: 2). Susan Haack, for example, describes it as ‘an exaggerated kind of deference towards science, an excessive readiness to accept as authoritative any claim made by the sciences, and to dismiss every kind of criticism of science or its practitioners as anti-scientific prejudice’ (2007: 17-18). It is clear from Choay’s analysis that she uses the term ‘scientism’ along the lines of the latter, pejorative interpretation. She points out that Cerdà produces science’s linguistic signs without producing much original scientific thought (Choay 1997: 242). Indeed, many of Cerdà’s ideas hark back to antiquity and the Renaissance – resembling, for example, Aristotle’s idea of ‘psychology’⁴ and Cartesian *animaux-machines*⁵ – and he speaks too mysteriously, aware of the ‘magical and religious weight’ that cities have carried across centuries (Choay 1997: 242-43). The use of a mysterious tone and discourse on spiritual aspects contradict somewhat Choay’s own assertion that Cerdà’s work is scientistic or reproduces the language of scientific texts. Cerdà’s work certainly counts as scientism if we agree with Rik Peels’ definition of the term as given in his chapter contribution to *Scientism: Prospects and Problems* (ed. by Jeroen de Ridder, Rik Peels and Rene van Woudenberg, 2018). For Peels, scientism is ‘the view that the boundaries of science should be expanded in order to encompass other academic disciplines and/or other realms of reality, such as human cognition in general or morality’ (2018: 29). Cerdà’s *Teoría general* does indeed expand the boundaries of science to include his own, new science of *urbanización*. Nonetheless, whichever direction we take

⁴ I assume that Choay is referring to Aristotle’s idea of hylomorphism as explained mostly in *De Anima*, which investigates the relationship between form and matter (in this case, specifically body and soul) in a process whereby, when pertaining to humans, each side of the dichotomy is inextricable from the other. For Aristotle, the ‘development of every organism was governed by a substantial form that arranged matter for the sake of the perfection and reproduction of the form’ and ‘matter was nothing apart from form’ (Brown 2018: 192).

⁵ According to Descartes, animals do not have souls and they cannot feel pain. Descartes describes the formation of an animal ‘in wholly mechanical terms [...] and while this development tends to follow a regular pattern’, irregularities do occur, and from these we form ideas of what is ‘normal’ (Brown 2018: 208). Furthermore, there is no implied failure in the existence of a monster, as to think so we must attribute such failures to God, which is heresy (Brown 2018: 208). Descartes therefore introduces the very beginnings of ‘secular approaches to biology as we understand them today – divorced from considerations of deliberate design or universal intelligence’ (Brown 2018: 208).

the charge of scientism in, the point still stands that the *Teoría general* fails to meet the requirements of a scientific theory. It is far too general in scope and does not adhere strictly enough to facts.⁶ It lacks predictive value and is ‘presented as a fixed and immutable truth in terms that might be imputed to scientism, but which instead belong to a utopian approach’ (Choay 1997: 243).

In Choay’s thinking, science and utopia converge in their shared view of the city as an object. Cerdà’s use of science develops into the medicalization of both the city and the role of the urbanist, as he takes on the roles of physiologist and physician. Making frequent use of medical terminology, Cerdà ‘transpose[s] the notions of the normal and pathological to the social realm – without exhibiting any apparent methodological qualms’ (Choay 1997: 244). He ignores the fact that the organization of space answers to different cultural and ethical norms to those of medical science. According to Choay, Cerdà therefore runs the risk of turning the city – a body of knowledge based on a medicalized science with reformist goals – into a utopian object (1997: 244). Furthering the argument that *urbanización* is a utopian project is its reliance on utopian characteristics. Cerdà seeks to advance the argument that the current state of cities is prohibiting humanity from progressing towards perfection. This impediment needs to be remedied because it is humanity’s divine purpose to become perfect, as Cerdà frequently reminds us that God created man in his image, and urbanization is inextricable from the creation of humanity: ‘su historia [la historia de la urbanización] es, pues, la historia del hombre’ (1867/1: 50). Cerdà evokes the idea of endless progress towards perfection: ‘la urbanización [...] ha ido siempre marchando y adelantando por la senda de su perfeccionamiento, al cual no quiso el Omnipotente señalar los límites que impuso a las olas del Océano’ and indicates that this journey to perfection will only end ‘hasta que en la consumación de los siglos desaparezca el último hombre de la superficie de este globo’ (1867/1: 49-50).⁷ Chapter 5 will explore this idea alongside discussion of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s theory of the Noosphere, a stage in the future evolution of humanity in which humans progress from occupying material form to existing as pure consciousness.

⁶ This seems like a reasonable conclusion to make in the present day, however in the nineteenth century such standards may not have been as rigorously applied to emerging scientific thought, as Cerdà’s *Teoría general* makes clear.

⁷ ‘Los límites que impuso a las olas del Océano’ is reminiscent of the pillars of Hercules in the Atlantic Ocean, which marked the limit that sailors should not cross. The boundary was of course crossed by Odysseus/Ulysses in the *Odyssey* and its various subsequent iterations.

As discussed in the Introduction, the latter quote reveals the utopian thrust at the heart of the project of *urbanización*. Utopia, deriving, as we know, from the Greek *eu-topos*, literally means ‘no place’, and therefore designates a place that is impossible to realize in material form. Cerdà condemns his own project to utopian impossibility by admitting that the perfect urban form can only be achieved when humans have disappeared from the face of the Earth. The ‘clinical portrait’ that Cerdà attempts to paint in his work is thus ‘so lacking in detachment’, being the product of both a factual discourse and a politically engaged discourse, framed and organized by the reformist critique typifying the utopia, in which a positive image opposes the image of the object under observation (Choay 1997: 246). The positive image of the healthy city that does not exist should logically have no place in the first section of the *Teoría general*, which deals with the history of urbanization. However, this ideal city is evoked with the same intensity and linguistic means (using the present indicative) as the real city (Choay 1997: 246). The rhetorical devices Cerdà uses – applying concepts of truth to ideal figures and concepts of perfection to an urban norm judged to be positive – ‘confound scientific statement and utopian description’, which, ultimately, is confusing for the reader (Choay 1997: 247).

So far, Choay has demonstrated the extent to which the *Teoría general* corresponds with the characteristics of the Morean utopia: Cerdà does evoke a model city, an ‘urbe modelo’, yet this sometimes designates an object and at other times it refers to a method and system of rules (1997: 247).⁸ She now turns her focus to the Albertian traits in the *Teoría general*, i.e., those which pertain to the genre of the architectural treatise which began with Alberti’s *De re aedificatoria*.⁹ Alberti (1404-72), a humanist architect

⁸ Choay (1997: 36) lists the following characteristics of the utopia:

1. The work is presented as a book signed by its author.
2. It is written in the first-person singular.
3. The narrative contains description on the present indicative of a model society.
4. The model society is opposed to a historically real society, and criticism of the latter is linked to description of the former.
5. The model society is supported by a model space which is an integral, necessary part of it.
6. The model society is located outside of our system; it is elsewhere.
7. The model society is not subject to the constraints of time and change.

⁹ Choay (1997: 16) lists the following characteristics of the architectural treatise:

1. The work is presented as a book, which is an organized whole.
2. It is signed by the author who recognizes it as his [*sic*] own and speaks in the first person.
3. The author’s approach is autonomous and not subordinated to any discipline or tradition.
4. His [*sic*] objective is a conceptual method, the elaboration of universal principles and generative rules that enable creation, not transmission of formulas.
5. These principles and rules span the built domain in its totality, from house to city and building to architecture.

and writer, produced ‘a text that aims to systematically embrace the art of building in its totality’, focusing (in contrast to Cerdà) on architecture and not the mechanics of the city (Pearson 2011: 2). At times, Cerdà views his object through the lens of the architectural treatise, envisaging the model city as a methodological problem (Choay 1997: 248). However, in contrast to Alberti, whose principles and axioms are given the exclusive right to govern building and are used to structure his text, Cerdà’s principles and rules have semantic and not semiotic value (Choay 1997: 248).¹⁰ The ‘semantic value’ Choay identifies refers to Cerdà’s constant parallel evocation of the existing diseased city and the future model city, which she believes is characteristic of the utopia. Instead, the ‘textual architecture’ of the *Teoría general* is entirely structured by ‘a dual relation that is characteristic of the utopia: the relation between the critique of the existing city and the description of the model city which is to replace it’ (Choay 1997: 248-49).

However, Cerdà does make use of an origin narrative (a key element in most treatises) in the first part of the *Teoría general*. Taking up the first book and a substantial part of the second, ‘ruralized urbanization’ emerges as an arche or ur-model, ‘which supposedly once existed, but in a time outside of history’ (Choay 1997: 249). It emerged as a single-family house surrounded by a network of paths or roads and was capable of unlimited reproduction. It is both cause and effect of progress and ‘a point of departure for a fall from grace, the origin of a process of corruption which has henceforth perpetually undermined our built environment (Choay 1997: 250).

Yet the elaboration of the ‘ruralized urbanization’ narrative does not proceed smoothly, as Cerdà does not draw a line between primeval (mythical, imaginary) time and a second kind of time: real and yet still innocent (Choay 1997: 251). At first, he attributes ruralized urbanization to imaginary tribes and then associates it with the real, but long disappeared, city of Babylon (a shining example of a civilization’s mastery of urbanization), but he cannot firmly situate the moment when or the reason why this age of innocence was shattered. He makes reference to a process of corruption but does not quite attribute this to the ‘hypertrophy of capitalism’ or patterns of migration and colonization that he identifies (Choay 1997: 251). This would suggest he agrees with Rousseau, whose ideas he roundly (and directly) refutes, yet he shows no awareness of the apparent

¹⁰ In the case of Alberti, Choay lists three practical principles, or ‘meta-mythic operators’ which establish and generate the entire project (1997: 107). These are economy (buildings should cost as little as possible), duration (they should be built with ample time) and dialogue (building requires the interaction of several parties). In addition, she lists five axioms (or ‘theoretical operators’), which are ‘presented as propositions which are indisputable, fundamental and possessed of generative power’ (1997: 105).

contradiction he makes here, as a champion of progress and industrialization (Choay 1997: 251). As a result, Cerdà's text 'substitutes an eschatological narrative for an origin narrative', because his ur-model of ruralized urbanization 'cannot sustain itself within the continuity of abstract time' (Choay 1997: 252). Choay contends that 'it can support a model, and hence an axiological choice, only by introducing a "real" time and recounting the story of a fall' (1997: 252).

Choay compares Cerdà's origin narrative to the description of building in the original narrative of the *De re aedificatoria*, which is presented as a 'universal cultural invariant, which can be attributed to human nature' (Choay 1997: 252). Human nature is further defined as 'a potential power to perform in a variety of fields, such as building and language' (Choay 1997: 252). By contrast, in Cerdà's *Teoría general* the original activity of building refers from the outset to an objective datum: the human body ('el hombre está, el hombre se mueve') (Choay 1997: 252). While the treatise deals with inanimate buildings, the utopia deals with human activities, and so Cerdà 'seeks to reconcile the denaturation called for by the treatise writer in him with the natural habitat demanded by his utopian [...] motivations' (Choay 1997: 253). Human nature remains in the *Teoría general* the 'original datum' that allows him to connect an apparently scientific discourse with features of the utopian genre (Choay 1997: 253). The 'operation of this concept' removes any function for the origin narrative, which is reduced to a 'sham' or a 'pseudo-origin narrative' (Choay 1997: 252). Cerdà seems unaware of the utopian nature of his text, as he unquestionably believes that science is the basis for a new spatial model. This renders his pseudo-origin narrative superfluous, and it becomes merely 'an unassimilated reminiscence of a textual tradition Cerdà knew well' (Choay 1997: 252).

Cerdà's conflation of urbanization and humanity as one and the same thing is at times confused. For example, he frequently feminizes urbanization as humanity's 'compañera' (Cerdà 1867/1: 32, 55) or 'amiga fiel del hombre' (Cerdà 1867/1: 50) that follows man on his journey through life. The characterization of man as the active explorer who is accompanied by a passive, feminized impulse to urbanize as he explores and gains knowledge is both surprising and not surprising. While Spain's political landscape in the nineteenth century was particularly turbulent, oscillating between absolute monarchies and liberal democracies, Cerdà was a product of his time. 'Hombre' may well be shorthand for 'humanidad', but it reflects the patriarchal concerns of his day, which were largely inherited from Catholicism. However, Cerdà, as an engineer, was more faithful to liberal ideas and demonstrates a keen desire to achieve equality in his

society. Given the contradictions in his ideology (to create the optimum conditions for humanity's development by improving public hygiene and working conditions for all, versus his uncritical adoption of a binary active/passive stance on gender) begs the question: what kind of equality does he want to see and for whose benefit is that equality? His constant focus on urbanizing new territories leads us to think that his vision is based around economic equality among men and not women.

The political dimension of Cerdà's ideas also invites discussion of their contradictory nature. Throughout the *Teoría general*, Cerdà sings the praises of man's autonomy ('árbitro supremo de sí mismo' [1867/1: 682]) and attributes the development of urbanization to man's sociability and provision of mutual services among a community. Yet, at the same time, he strongly believes that urban areas should be planned, i.e., receive some sort of 'top-down' planning such as was the case for Barcelona's extension, in order to avoid the disorder of narrow, twisting streets that he saw as the symptom and cause of society's stagnation and malaise. This elicits a tension between individual freedom and authoritarianism that Cerdà does not address, or is seemingly unaware of. In the section of the *Teoría general* in which he discusses urban function in relation to the various elements of the *urbe* (the street, the pavement, the house and so on), he rails against the state of 'comunismo' in which many urban residents are forced to live. 'Comunismo', for Cerdà, is the sharing of common facilities such as a kitchen and a space to wash in one building between many families, rather than the ideology of Communism explained by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848.¹¹ These tensions, which are of a more political nature, will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 5 alongside a reading of *Retorn al sol*.

Movement and circulation: *la gran vialidad universal*

In addition to the historical and textual aspects of the *Teoría general*, the work also has considerable spatial and political elements, which are the focus of this section. Cerdà places movement and circulation at the heart of his plan to achieve universal peace, and he understands the importance that movement and circulation play in the technological

¹¹ 'Comunismo', in Cerdà's sense was, however, a characteristic of More's *Utopia*. 1848 was also the year that marked the inauguration of the French Second Republic and the political system that led to Haussmann's pro-bourgeois reforms of Paris, as David Harvey argues in *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (2003). It is also interesting to note that the *Teoría general* and Marx's *Capital* (1867) were both published in the same year.

advancement of humanity. He shows tremendous foresight in his belief that the process of urbanization must take into account the widespread use of mechanized locomotion in the form of railways. As mentioned in the Introduction, Cerdà begins the *Teoría general* with an anecdote about seeing a steam train in France after he graduated in 1844 and he connects the use of steam power to humanity's transition to a new era: 'comprendí que la aplicación del vapor como fuerza motriz señalaba para la humanidad el término de una época y el principio de otra' (1867/1: 7). In Europe, the railway and capitalism were to develop hand in hand from the 1840s. As cities continued to expand, 'railways became the new economy's most powerful weapon, causing the new urban type to prevail' (Choay 1969: 11). Cerdà recognizes that mechanized transport (*locomoción rodada*) could bring enormous advantages to the city, and would help to advance humanity's progress. He characterizes the city as an intangible network of 'encuentros, encruces y enlaces' (Cerdà 1867/1: 362) and its defining features are 'movimiento' and 'comunicatividad' (Cerdà 1867/1: 8).

Cerdà coins another term – *la gran vialidad universal* – to describe the system of flows of movement that connects every point on the earth's surface. Materially, this exists in the form of roads, tracks, pavements, entranceways and corridors. Sometimes referred to as the *gran sistema viario* or more generally as *locomoción*, it is both an idea and a physical entity. It is the process of unencumbered movement and circulation that drives humanity's progress. *Vialidad* counters the arbitrary political structures that have shaped modern *ciudades*, and in Cerdà's explanation it knows no hierarchies and its movement is unimpeded; circulation is constant and unstoppable.

Cerdà comes to the conclusion that the orthogonal grid is the form most suited to urbanization because it allows for the most efficient journeys: you can get from point A to point B in the most straightforward manner possible, taking into account all the other journeys of the fellow road users around you. As humanity developed, the urban spaces it occupied took many different forms over the centuries, and these forms have been adapted to the satisfaction of human needs over everything else:

Para la urbanización, la forma es nada, la satisfacción cumplida y adecuada de las necesidades humanas es todo. En este mismo libro destinado a graficar su desarrollo, vamos a verla activa, incansable, presurosa, adoptar diversos sistemas, tomar varias formas, buscando ingeniosamente el medio más a propósito para servir al hombre en cada una de sus situaciones. (Cerdà 1867/1: 50)

However, in the modern age, Cerdà noticed that other considerations had come to influence urban development, and these were now restricting humanity's progress. His description of these as 'tiránicas cadenas de mampostería' (Cerdà 1867/1: 13) alludes to infrastructure built to restrain populations, and evokes images of the medieval walls surrounding Barcelona:

ese organismo con los defectos capitales de que adolece, incompleto en sus medios, mezquino en sus formas, siempre restrictivo, siempre compresor, aprisiona y mantiene en constante tortura a la humanidad, que orgullosa con los medios y elementos de acción de que dispone, y ávida de seguir adelante por el camino de su perfeccionamiento que el dedo de Dios ahora con más fuerza que nunca parece indicarle, forcejea sin cesar para romper esas tiránicas cadenas de mampostería que la aprisionan. (Cerdà 1867/1: 12-13)

Ultimately, *vialidad* is the principle around which the grid is organized, because it encourages humanity, with its eagerness to plough onwards, to circulate freely. The *urbe* is therefore designed according to this principle of absolute circulation, as attested by Cerdà's discussion of the development of *urbanización* over time from the particular vantage point of locomotion, which is found in Book IV ('Razón histórico-filosófica de la manera de ser de la urbanización actual'), Chapter 1 ('De la formación de las urbes, considerada bajo el punto de vista de las necesidades de cada época, de conformidad con los medios de locomoción de que en cada una de estos ha podido disponer el hombre') (1867/1: 681). *Vialidad* is therefore the organizing force behind the urban form of civilizations over time.

The theory of urbanization therefore places considerable emphasis on the development of technological infrastructure to facilitate transport and movement. Cerdà envisions a global process of urbanization manifesting itself as a single, interconnected urban network, joining neighbouring states in a cosmopolitan unity capable of permanently neutralizing conflict through the disappearance of political absolutism and the arms of state control which that requires. Individuals would instead be bound by the natural, fraternal law of universalism. Cerdà believes the orthogonal grid is the best urban form to support the communication and circulation of people, goods and capital because, according to him, it allows for the shortest and most direct route from A to B.

The grid form, however, is nothing new. While the Ancient Greek architect and philosopher Hippodamus of Miletus is often credited as being the first to discuss the grid plan, it is believed to predate even him. Hippodamus divided his grid based on a tripartite system that split land, laws and occupations into three sections that would be kept

separate. This numerology, which is characteristic of Greek ideas about city and social planning, recurs in Plato's formulation of the utopian city of Magnesia in the *Laws* (Cahill 2008: 6). Plato calculates that the ideal number of 5040 households should be divided into twelve sections, and he is equally preoccupied with the moral well being of the citizens of his ideal city, giving his ideas a moral edge similar to that of the Health of Towns Association and Cerdà. In order to prevent dissension (or *stásis* in Greek), Plato believed that no citizen should be in a position of extreme wealth or poverty and thus he devised a system of 'proportionate inequality' whereby wealth is distributed according to four property classes (Cahill 2008: 8). Plato's description of how the city and countryside should be divided may well have followed that of genuine city planners, and he strove towards a perfect correspondence between the social and physical organization of the polis (Cahill 2008: 9).

The Greek word *stásis* can be translated as, among other things, stationed or standing in addition to dissension or disruption. This polysemic word may indicate that immobility has been associated with chaos and moral decay since ancient times. In this respect, Cerdà's ideas seem hardly revolutionary or even original, and indeed in isolation they are not. It is the holistic nature of the *Teoría general* and Cerdà's confidence in the power of technology to build better cities that makes it stand out within the canon of critical planning. He was, along with French architect Pierre Patte, one of the first to propose a truly universal theory of urbanization that could serve as a manual for governments everywhere. He not only coined the word *urbanización*, but invented the science of urban planning which thoroughly interrogates the nature of what it means to be human in an urbanized world.

As indicated earlier, I draw on Ross Adams' *Circulation and Urbanization* (2019) to elucidate Cerdà's view of mobility. The overarching concern of Adams' book is Cerdà's theorization of the *urbe* as a new kind of spatiality that replaced the city, which Cerdà then attempts to depoliticize. This leads to Cerdà's (and Adams') subsequent re-politicization of the *urbe* through an interrogation of: a) the political nature of Cerdà's efforts to cure society's ills (which Adams discusses in relation to Enlightenment thinkers); b) the 'formless form' of the grid; and c) the repercussions of this re-politicization on freedom, sovereignty and subjectivity in the *urbe*. Adams refers mostly to Cerdà's 1867 *Teoría general de la urbanización*, but he also makes reference to the 1859 *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades* and the 1861 *Teoría de la viabilidad urbana y reforma de la de Madrid*.

Adams begins his political analysis of Cerdà's new spatial order by describing the strong Kantian influence on the *Teoría general*. According to Adams, Cerdà displays an emphatic drive towards a universal conception of history, a belief in civilizations governed by the rational force of law and the desire for the establishment of perpetual peace (Adams 2019: 27). Yet Cerdà also criticizes Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant and especially Rousseau who do not deal with the material conditions of the built environment and focus instead on notions of 'civilization'. Rather than attacking civilization, Cerdà calls for an overhaul of the way in which society is physically organized in order to bring about improvements to its moral health. It is worth quoting a passage from Cerdà's 1859 *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades* in full:

Los ferrocarriles y los telégrafos eléctricos vendrán a uniformar el idioma, las pesas, medidas y monedas; destruirán las antiguas odiosidades de nación, y afianzarán el imperio de la paz universal, borrarán ese antagonismo de clases debido a la falta de civilización y de justicia, y vendrán a producir la debida armonía entre las diversas clases de la sociedad. (Cerdà 1991 [1859]: 403)

Adams likens Cerdà's call for total urbanization to Kant's creation of a federative association of states, or a 'universal state' (2019: 29).¹² Both consist of universal arrangements 'in which relations between individuals would be bound by natural law' (Adams 2019: 29). Cerdà takes Kant's moral and legal framework and builds it into a physical, infrastructural theory: 'an interconnected network spanning the entire globe' (Adams 2019: 29).

It can be seen from this that Cerdà is beginning to broach something of a political form here. To explore this further, we return to Cerdà's discussion of the etymological concerns underpinning the term *urbe*. As a political term, *ciudad*, from the Latin *civis* and *civitas*, expresses the legal and political status of citizenship in relation to a particular town and represents administrative, political and social hierarchy, in addition to denoting an urban settlement of a particular size. As we have seen, *urbe* is a far more appropriate term for Cerdà's project because, as he explains, 'los romanos aplicaban la palabra *urbs* para significar *cualquier agrupamiento de edificaciones*, combinado con el fin de que sus moradores pudiesen vivir asociados, prestándose recíprocos auxilios' (1867/1: 505; emphasis added). Whereas *civitas* (and its derivatives meaning 'citizen') had, in Roman times, 'llegado ya a ser un título altamente honroso y de grandísima importancia,

¹² Kant outlines his idea of a universal federation of republics in *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (*Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, 1795).

reservado única y exclusivamente a ciertas familias romanas’ (Cerdà 1867: 505), *urbe* avoids such hierarchy: it is a universal term that ‘pre-exists [...] the historically and politically overdetermined “city”’ (Adams 2019: 41). Adams summarizes his analysis of the term: ‘in reducing the city to its bare, material immanence of cohabitation and movement, dismissing the political forms and relationships that constitute it, he defines the *urbe* as a completely depoliticized entity; the *urbe* is in fact *without* political form’ (2019: 41).

Form is an important issue for Cerdà, despite his claims that ‘la forma es nada’: ‘[p]ara la urbanización, la forma es nada, la satisfacción cumplida y adecuada de las necesidades humanas es todo’ (1867: 50). Adams references Cerdà’s launch into a critique of the ‘deplorable magnificence’ of baroque plazas – the epitome, for Cerdà, of excess and empty space of little use – beyond which lies a critique of form itself: ‘form, for Cerdà, was the meaningless remnant of a corrupt mode of repressive politics’; indulging in something as ‘useless’ as form represented the embodiment of injustice itself (Adams 2019: 44). Cerdà counters this by posing the grid as a formless form. The grid represents a ‘minimal investment in a “form” that would absorb all others in its cool rationality’ and, because it is expandable, it is a form that ‘dissolve[s] in itself’ (Adams 2019: 44). This returns us to the distinction Cerdà makes between the ‘container’ and the ‘contained’. If form is the ‘deplorable representation’ of the container, the grid is the form most suited to the content in its revolution against it (Adams 2019: 44).

Cerdà’s idea of form is also discussed by Isabel Moretó Navarro, who indicates that the grid form is the logical outcome of a new approach to building that took hold in Spain in the nineteenth century. Building and architecture proceeded from being considered in all three dimensions and anchored to a specific location, to being primarily conceived in two dimensions, in their ‘planimetria bidimensional’ (Moretó Navarro 2008: 28). Moretó Navarro reads the Cerdà plan in line with Hume’s empiricism or ‘qüestió de la desconexió sensorial’ in which rational superstructures are uncoupled from sensory experience (2008: 41). While this is a convincing explanation, I suggest that this shift in conception also harks back to Kant’s Copernican Revolution. One of Kant’s major contributions to Western philosophy is the idea that our sensory perception of reality is necessarily mediated by our consciousness and therefore knowledge and reality are constructions of the human mind rather than merely representations of the external world. In other words, both knowledge and the subject that does the knowing are the same thing,

an idea which introduces a priori factors into the constitution of knowledge: what we know cannot be detached from the way in which we receive sensory stimuli.

Moretó Navarro (2008: 28) turns this shift into an epistemological problem whereby ‘una construcció conformada en el lloc’ becomes ‘una arquitectura pensada en un dibuix’, which arose from the mathematical techniques of the military engineers of the Bourbon occupation in the eighteenth century. It can be seen from this distinction that under this new architectural-epistemological regime, ‘places’ lose their topographical significance and are viewed instead as ‘space’, broadly conceived of as lacking in local specificities. The binary distinction between space and place has been elaborated on by numerous scholars, such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1979), who differentiates between the two concepts in terms of the ways in which humans impute meaning into their environments. Whereas ‘place’ is full of meaning in terms of the intimate sense of security and stability that it afford us, ‘space’ has a much more abstract quality that gives us openness and freedom but it is also threatening as it provides us little in the way of social connection (Tuan 1979: 6).¹³ Cerdà was able to propose such a design due to his training in engineering, whereas architects had been educated ‘en l’imaginari oposat, el de l’arrelament al lloc’, which they fiercely defended (Moretó Navarro 2008: 41). Cerdà the engineer was able to remove the ‘placeness’ of architecture, disconnecting the materiality of the urban fabric from the city as lived on the streets.

Moretó Navarro draws a connection between the placelessness of the grid and its use by colonizing populations such as the Greeks in the Mediterranean, Europeans in the Americas, and now Barcelona’s industrial bourgeoisie in the expansion of its own city (2008: 40). Javier García-Bellido also refers to the colonizing impulse in *urbanización*, which results from its universal scope: ‘Cerdà llega a identificar que el espacio geográfico-territorial global es el referente físico necesario de una función pública de actividad planificadora a gran escala, a la que llama *colonización general*’ (2000: § 21, online; italics in original). The plan’s iconicity and its modernity (which may be otherwise termed its capacity for the territorial expansion of imperial capitalism) gave it

¹³ As seen earlier, Lefebvre (1974) alters this binary, adding a third dimension to describe how these two aspects – the a priori (representations of space) and the lived (representational spaces) – combine to produce space in the notion of spatial practice. This triadic interpretation of space is developed by Edward Soja, who proposes the term ‘thirdspace’ to describe ‘the space where all places are [...], a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood’, it is a space in which ‘*everything* comes together [...]: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable’, and so on (1996: 56; emphasis in original). Interestingly, from a Hispanic perspective, Soja arrives at this definition having made a reading of Borges’ story ‘El Aleph’ (1945).

the qualities required to be mass produced worldwide: ‘creixement il·limitat, isomorfisme igualitari, versatilitat d’un traçat tan abstracte que és capaç d’acollir qualsevol arquitectura, protagonisme de les xarxes en l’estructuració del territori’, and so on (Moretó Navarro 2008: 26).

Adams ultimately reaches a similar conclusion. He points out a confluence between the *urbe* and liberalism, an evaluation he reaches by analysing Cerdà’s efforts to depoliticize the *urbe*, which conversely ends up creating more political divisions: the grid, while formless, is still a structure and it thus obeys an organizational principle. Cerdà finds this principle in *vialidad*, the unencumbered process of movement and circulation that drives humanity’s progress. *Vialidad* counters the subjective, political significance that served as the ‘container’ of the *ciudad*, and represents the *urbe*’s ‘true essence’ (Adams 2019: 44). In *vialidad*, Cerdà discovers the *urbe*’s ‘repressed container’, ‘one that, in the Kantian sense, emerges from within the human being’ (Adams 2019: 44). I infer that by ‘Kantian’, Adams is referring to Kant’s concept of transcendental idealism, mentioned earlier in the context of the Copernican Revolution. In this reading of Cerdà, Adams argues the case that *vialidad* is therefore also subjectively perceived and constructed by the mind.

Benjamin Fraser, in *Henri Lefebvre and the Spanish Urban Experience: Reading from the Mobile City* (2011) picks up on the nature of the ‘formless’ (Adams 2019) and ‘placeless’ (Moretó Navarro 2008) grid and the reliance on *vialidad* as the *urbe*’s ontological force and organizing principle. Fraser reiterates that Cerdà establishes movement as the characteristic that allows for the evolution of cities, identifying new modes of locomotion that usher in new urban eras in the following succession: *locomoción pedestre, ecuestre, rastrera, rodada* (both *normal* and *perfeccionada*). However, the emphasis that Cerdà places on movement is at odds with his static dissection of the city, ‘such that he effects a tidy distinction between space and time’ that transforms the city-as-organism into the city-as-cadaver (Fraser 2011: 92). The excessively spatial, quantitative method he uses in employing the medical paradigm reconstitutes his cadaverous subject as static and immobile (Fraser 2011: 93). Whereas movement is the phenomenon that drives the arrangement of the city’s objects and their relations, Cerdà’s overly spatial analysis begins with the object and tries to work backward towards the process (Fraser 2011: 93), a similar reading to that of Castrillo Romón and Pérez-Eguíluz, who view the *Teoría general* as ‘an attempt to legitimize his

theoretical views and justify the preference for checkboard layouts’ only after he had proposed the grid as the ideal urban form (2023: 348).

Fraser concludes that Cerdà’s use of the city-as-organism approach is naive – Cerdà predicts the mere arrival of the steam train will yield class harmony – and it is used to support the idea of an overly rational, geometric space detached from city life as lived on the streets (2009: 375). Fraser contrasts his interpretation of Cerdà’s approach – the reproduction of the object ‘the city’ into a series of streets and buildings spread out in a ‘gridded Kantian *apriori* abstract space shaped through the unsentimental enunciation of static Cartesian coordinates’ – with an alternative approach promoted by Lefebvre: isolating human practices and relationships and labelling these the ‘city’ (2011: 78). Christian Hermansen Cordua disagrees with Fraser’s analysis of Cerdà’s approach to form. Hermansen Cordua (2016: 100) argues that Cerdà ‘criticizes those that give primacy to the urban fabric and argues that the city is made up of a multitude of interacting elements, functional, ideological and formal, that constitute a unity’. ‘For Cerdà the form of the city emerges from the needs of an epoch: ““form follows function””’ (Hermansen Cordua 2016: 100). Fraser agrees with this approach, which Lefebvre develops into ‘rhythmanalysis’, which is a method for analysing the rhythms of urban spaces and their effects on the inhabitants of those spaces.¹⁴

The *urbe* is thus designed against the principle of ‘absolute circulation’ (Adams 2019: 44). Designing the city along this principle results in highly theorized elements of the urban fabric (which also produce their own neologisms) such as *vías* and *intervías*. Cerdà calls the dwelling space the *intervías* (which Adams writes as *intervia*), and this is framed by biological reproduction. The dwelling is both the site of life’s rest and repose and also precisely the opposite: it is the primary source of toxins and disease (Adams 2019: 52). Cerdà sees it as his job to ensure the family dwelling is a healthy place, and his tool to achieve this is the process of ruralized urbanization: the *intervías* ‘was the site in which the unification of the rural with the urban would take place, the locus of ruralized urbanization’ (2019: 56). As mentioned above, ruralized urbanization, in other words, refers to Cerdà’s vision to incorporate green space into his urban ideal with equal parts built space and green space. The *intervías* receives further treatment in Chapter 4 where it is used as the lens through which Sagarra’s *Vida privada* is analysed.

¹⁴ Lefebvre gives a detailed overview of the concept of rhythmanalysis in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (Continuum, 2004).

Perhaps counter to Cerdà's stated aims, ruralized urbanization has political ramifications. In Cerdà's effort to depoliticize the city, the *urbe* annuls the spatial distinction between public and private worlds, replacing these with a single, universal space of non-distinction whereby ruralized urbanization smooths out the city and the territory (by which Cerdà means the broader area of space or the region) (Adams 2019: 57). However, as we have seen in the case of the *intervías*, this dissolution of boundaries and distinctions does not leave a 'seamlessly confluent spatial whole' (Adams 2019: 57). Instead, a whole new set of boundaries emerge, distributed uniformly across the domestic space of the *urbe*, producing infinitesimal registers of 'exterior' and 'interior', which are mostly divided into spaces of human production (the urban, with its focus on notions of supply and economic transcendence) and its reproduction (the rural, with its notions of exhaustion and biological necessity) (Adams 2019: 57-58).

This is to have important ramifications for the production of subjectivity. The subject of urbanization, produced through the fractal organization of the *urbe*, is reflected not in the individual but in the *dividual* (Adams 2019: 63). Reinterpreting Hobbes' inner division of the human, split into public and private halves, the subject of urbanization is divided in terms of economic productivity (bourgeois, property owner, entrepreneur) and biological species (human being). Adams calls these 'irreconcilable entities that nevertheless reinforced and naturalized one another through the gendered relationship between male labour power and its isolated, unwaged reproduction in the feminized space of the *intervia* [sic]' (2019: 63).

While Adams' discussion of gender goes no further, Pilar Cano provides a gendered interpretation of Cerdà's 1859 *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades*, which remains relevant to his 1867 *Teoría general*. For Cerdà, the family is the 'cell' of society, and the home is the family's small 'city' (Cano 2008: 138). Cerdà's view of the family is patriarchal, as it is controlled and organized by the father ('rey de su casa') who governs 'según los eternos principios del derecho natural' (Cano 2008: 138). Cerdà structures his organization of the family home around hygiene, which he uses as a pretext to formulate a familiar and social order. He was greatly influenced in this regard by Pere Felip Monlau, a doctor whose writings Cerdà cites in the *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades*.¹⁵

¹⁵ The works cited are *Abajo las murallas!!! Memoria acerca de las ventajas que reportaría a Barcelona, y especialmente a su industria, de la demolición de las murallas que circuyen la ciudad* (1841) and *Elementos de higiene pública* (1847). In the pamphlet, *Abajo las murallas*, Monlau demands that Barcelona be expanded to fill the plain between the Besòs and Llobregat rivers, which is the area it covers to this day. Monlau's pamphlet was one element among many that gained widespread popularity and inspired groups of

One of Monlau's main contributions was the promotion of 'buenos hábitos sexuales' as prescribed by Catholicism; he crusaded (with no scientific support) against 'perversities' and sowed fear of 'lo anormal', 'lo otro' and 'lo desconocido' (Cano 2008: 143).

In light of this, Cerdà distributes the rooms of the house along gendered and political lines. The distribution of rooms corresponds not to needs but to personal characteristics (age, gender, civil status) for the bourgeois purpose of obtaining enough intimacy to procreate (Cerdà frequently mentions humanity's biblical mission to populate the earth in the 1867 *Teoría general*) while preventing sex among unmarried couples. For these reasons, Cano (2008: 141-42) situates Cerdà's writings within the genre of moral hygiene, which uses religion to connect moral health to physical health: if the gospels are correct from a moral point of view, then they must also be correct from a physical point of view.

In contrast to these small-scale divisions, Adams discusses the larger divisions implicitly created by Cerdà's grid. Cerdà's pursuit of more freedom only created (new, distinct) restrictions: 'liberty unravels into law, obligation and regulation' (Adams 2019: 67). Cerdà finds liberalism's accompanying sense of justice in equality, as reflected in the grid. The grid is the material form that reflects the idealization of a universally distributed system of law by which all of society should abide; it is, in a sense, the material incarnation of Kant's immaterial 'universal state'. As we have seen, Adams makes the case that Cerdà's aims of achieving universal peace and moral justice are analogous to those of Kant, a reading which I explain further here. Kant's short text *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View (Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht, 1784)*, organized into nine 'principles', sets out the thesis that nature is forcing humanity into evolving inevitably towards a state of universal association, in other words, nature has a 'plan' which 'aims at the perfect civic union of the human species' (2006 [1784]: 14).

Kant's conception of the state is neither utilitarian (the state provides benefits for me and I therefore consent to its authority) nor based around fairness (it would be wrong for me to accept the state's benefits without contributing towards their provision), rather it is a moral conception of the state (Waldron 2006: 179). This is because Kant argues that the very presence of the state makes a difference to how we behave as moral subjects.

citizens to begin demolishing parts of the Ciutadella in 1842, which provoked violent repression on the part of General Baldomero Espartero.

The fact that we belong to a state changes the moral reasoning behind our decisions; the state is ‘an institution that makes a systematic difference to what it is morally permissible for ordinary moral agents to do’ (Waldron 2006: 183). Kant envisions a state that is therefore not based on a transactional relationship of individuals with the state institution, but one of natural, moral bonds between all of humanity (organized into a federation of republics as explained above). This would appear to match up with Cerdà’s vision of universal harmony, although of course Cerdà arrives at this vision via a different reasoning: he believes that the only way of achieving such aims is through the restructuring of the built environment.

The invocation of Kant’s moral and political philosophy is what enables Adams to conclude that there is no difference between law and *vialidad*, that is, justice on the one hand and an evenly distributed network of infrastructure on the other; they are one and the same thing (2019: 67). Viewed this way, both the material and immaterial aspects of the *urbe* coincide: the grid is law and justice. This is how Cerdà can make the claim that *urbanización* is not just building, it is the

conjunto de conocimientos, principios, doctrinas y reglas, encaminados a enseñar de que manera debe estar ordenado todo agrupamiento de edificios, a fin de que responda a su objeto, que se reduce a que sus moradores puedan vivir cómodamente y puedan prestarse recíprocos servicios, contribuyendo así al común bienestar. (1867/1: 31)

This quote from the *Teoría general* underlines the kind of sovereignty that comes out of Cerdà’s theories. ‘Sovereignty was now the convergence of a physical model and a legal edifice by which an urbanized society was meant to achieve a universal and global state of administered peace’ (Adams 2019: 68). Such administration acts as a caretaker intervening to resolve problems, uphold the law and manage perpetual circulation (Adams 2019: 69). Cerdà also proposed a ‘Council for Health and Construction’, whose job was to balance public and private interests in the construction of housing, ensuring that builders followed extensive by-laws, houses were connected to the underground sewerage system and even prosecuting unscrupulous developers. So, whereas Cerdà strove to remove the political and hierarchical qualities of urban space through the conception of the *urbe*, this new spatial order required political overdetermination in the form of municipal and state regulation (Adams 2019: 56).

We can see from this overview that in Cerdà’s formulation, *urbanización* is first stripped of all existing meanings before then being filled with new meanings that Cerdà

ascribes to it. This intellectual process is explained in Chapter 2 by means of Deleuze and Guattari's theories of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Urbanización as a critical framework in literary studies

The final section of this chapter focuses on how Cerdà's theory of *urbanización* can be used effectively in the analysis of narrative fiction. It introduces *urbanización* as a complement to theories of planetary urbanization, which is the idea that the entire globe is urbanized. Lefebvre is an important critical voice here, as his work *The Urban Revolution* is credited as having established the idea of planetary urbanization which subsequent critics (most notably Neil Brenner 2014, 2019) have developed. This is followed by a discussion of how critics in the field of literary studies, including those who label themselves as working in Literary Urban Studies, have used concepts from urbanism in their analyses of literary texts.

Urban theory is the attempt to understand urban life in terms of our interactions with the built environment and the practices that take place within it. It is, in essence, 'shorthand for a range of perspectives and interpretations of the urban world that aim, in their different ways, to provide a general understanding of city life that goes beyond the contingent and the local, while retaining a focus on the essential characteristics of the urban experience' (Parker 2015: 3). It is driven by 'a concern to explain rather than describe' through which 'urban theorists seek to make the city understandable or legible' and whose perspectives 'play an important role in influencing how we find out about urban life through the methodologies we use to research the urban experience' (Jayne and Ward 2017: 2). The studies quoted here view urban theory as a branch of social theory, as attested by the large number of sociologists and geographers who populate their works' indexes, and they take 'the city' as their object of study, defined in opposition to suburban or rural areas, which are significantly different so as to warrant their own kinds of theoretical investigation (Brenner 2019: 1; Williams 1973). Cerdà's view of urban life is not limited to densely built-up areas and is closer to Scott and Storper's term 'urban land nexus', which is used to 'distinguish between phenomena that occur *in* cities but are not generated by urbanization processes as such, and phenomena that are legitimately elements *of* cities in the sense that they play an active role in defining the shape and logic of urban outcomes' (Storper and Scott 2016: 1117; emphasis in original).

Cerdà's theory of *urbanización* sits alongside these such theories which are based in social scientific disciplines. However, as the previous sections of this chapter have shown, his theory is of sufficient philosophical character as to make it suitable for critical applications beyond the field of urban studies. Henri Lefebvre's theories (most importantly for our purposes, *The Urban Revolution* and *The Production of Space*) may be similarly described. While Lefebvre was a sociologist, his concepts present points of contact with those of Cerdà. Furthermore, his ideas are frequently employed within literary studies as a means of elucidating how texts and authors respond to urban conditions of life, most notably in Spanish studies in the work of Benjamin Fraser, specifically his *Henri Lefebvre and the Spanish Urban Experience* (2011).

Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution* is textually similar to the *Teoría general* in that it describes urbanization as a process that has resulted from the course of history, i.e., the political city of ancient Greece eventually became the industrial city of the nineteenth century, for example. The most important point of contact between Lefebvre and Cerdà's *Teoría general*, however, is the conception of all life as urban (or urbanized). *The Urban Revolution* opens with the following sentences: 'I'll begin with the following hypothesis: Society has been completely urbanized. This hypothesis implies a definition: An urban society is a society that results from a process of complete urbanization. This urbanization is virtual today, but will become real in the future' (Lefebvre 2003: 1).

It is not uncommon for texts from the domain of urban studies to be used in the analysis of literary works. Different schools of urban theoretical writing have made an impact on literary studies, such as the Chicago school, out of which developed the field of urban ecology, and the Los Angeles school, more aligned with postmodernism. The field of literary urban studies has established itself as a specific discipline within recent years and proposes a variety of approaches including emphasis on the study of the 'citiness' of texts and the use of urban planning documents in literary analysis. See, for example: Jason Finch, *Literary Urban Studies and How to Practise It* (2021); Jens Martin Gurr, *Charting Literary Urban Studies* (2021); Lieven Ameel (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Literary Urban Studies* (2022). While these works introduce the reader to the field more broadly, some scholars have used literary urban studies within more specific disciplines, such as James Joyce and Dublin (Lanigan 2014), planning and writing about the New York waterfront and Helsinki (Ameel 2019, 2021) and utopia in Ebenezer Howard and H.G. Wells (Čulek 2023). In addition to these, mobility studies, a branch of sociology, has also given rise to a new approach to the analysis of cultural products. Important texts

in mobility studies include: geographer Tim Cresswell's *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (2006) and sociologist John Urry's, *Mobilities* (2007); and their insights have been applied to literature by Stephen Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (2010) and the contributing authors in Marian Aguiar, Charlotte Mathieson and Lynne Pearce (eds) *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* (2019). This thesis builds on established scholarship by introducing a Cerdà perspective to literary urban studies.

One scholar in Hispanic Studies who uses some of Cerdà's theory in the analysis of literary works is the aforementioned Benjamin Fraser. Fraser's interpretation of Cerdà's idea of form as following the function of the lived experiences (or representations of space, to use Lefebvre's term) of urban inhabitants is used to analyse Luis Martín-Santos' *Tiempo de silencio* (1962) and Belén Gopegui's *La escala de los mapas* (1993). These novels focus on the city as lived on the streets, cutting to the heart of Lefebvre's distinction between the city and the urban which is similar to that of Cerdà: the city is a closed system, whereas the urban is more open (Fraser 2009: 380). Fraser also draws on another of Lefebvre's concepts, *rhythmanalysis*, which is a methodology 'rooted in an understanding of the human body as a complex organism in constant movement' (2009: 382). When applied to the city, 'it puts first and foremost how the city is experienced through the body' (Fraser 2009: 382). Martín-Santos and Gopegui put this into practice: by using chaotic prose, stream of consciousness and description of emotions through geography, they portray a city experienced through temporality and consciousness. Overall, these works oppose Cerdà's one-dimensional approach to city planning by inverting the image of the city as a body and using it to suggest that the city is made organic through its multidimensionality and contradiction, rather than its transformation into a body to be surgically dissected (Fraser 2009: 381).

My discussion of how Cerdà's theory of *urbanización* may be used in literary criticism will be structured around the following points:

1. *The epistemological process that Cerdà spells out in coming up with the concept of the urbe.* This is explored in Chapter 2 using Narcís Oller's *La febre d'or* (1890-92) as a case study through which the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are seen to play out as societal networks are reordered in service of new ends, namely, the accumulation of wealth via the stock market.
2. *The regulation of the social order.* Cerdà's claims that *urbanización* is capable of securing the smooth functioning of the social order is appraised

with reference to Caterina Albert's *Un film (3000 metres)* (1926), specifically from the point of view of the cognitive aspect of *urbanización*, i.e., the idea that *urbanización* provides the optimal conditions for urban inhabitants' mental faculties. Social regulation is also tested with reference to Josep Maria de Sagarra's *Vida privada* (1932), where the critical apparatus is narrowed to that of the *intervías*, which is used to investigate the interaction of public and private conceptions of space in the novel.

3. *The individual and the collective, and discourses of progress and perfection.* Finally, a political reading of Josep Maria Francès's *Retorn al sol* (1936) is made in light of Cerdà's ideas on progress and perfection as detailed in the theory of *urbanización*, with further illustration from Llorenç Villalonga's *Andrea Víctrix* (1974).

Chapter 2

***Urbe* as Praxis for the Novel: The Case of Narcís Oller**

As established in Chapter 1, the *urbe* essentially ushers in a new kind of subjectivity which I term ‘urbanized subjectivity’ (as opposed to ‘urban subjectivity’) to emphasize the ‘becoming urban’ of subjectivity. That is, it implies a process (a ‘procesualidad’ [Cavalletti 2010: 32] or a ‘becoming’) and not a static way of being. As Cerdà outlines, the major principle behind *urbanización* which conditions its form is circulation. Cerdà pursues the optimal means of providing for constant circulation in the most efficient manner, eschewing other concerns, such as aesthetics.¹ The city is not supposed to be beautiful, it is supposed to facilitate transport from A to B as efficiently and safely as possible.

The central objective of this chapter is to explore Cerdà’s concept of the *urbe* as an analytical tool for the study of literary texts. This investigation begins with an examination of Narcís Oller’s *La febre d’or* (1890-92) through the particular lens *urbe* gives us.² *La febre d’or* charts the rise and fall of Gil Foix, a carpenter-turned-stock trader who becomes a millionaire and ascends to the heights of Catalan society during the economic boom or ‘gold fever’ of the early 1880s before losing his fortune and returning to his former manual vocation. Reading the novel alongside Cerdà’s concept of the *urbe* calls to the fore the forms of social organization and changes in consciousness that occurred during the late nineteenth century in Spain. The *urbe* allows us to see how existing economic relations were reprogrammed (or ‘deterritorialized’) to take advantage of new opportunities that arose as a result of socioeconomic changes. However, as we will explore, the *urbe*, in service to the liberal capitalist order, ends up channelling these altered relationships into new structures that fail to progress beyond the parameters the *urbe* had initially set (that is, they are ‘reterritorialized’). In relating a literary text to an urbanistic concept, the chapter asks if the *urbe* can be considered aesthetically as a model for the nineteenth-century realist novel; in other words, is the way of thinking that underpins urbanized subjectivity common also to the praxis of novel writing?

¹ While Cerdà does indeed have other practical concerns, such as hygiene and social regulation, he believes that these other aspects will be remedied as a result of the improvement of circulation.

² Quotations from the novel are taken from the 2012 edition of the text published by Edicions 62. This is a reproduction of the first edition of the 1980 Edicions 62 text, however both parts of the novel are published together in the same volume. Citations refer only to the 2012 edition.

As explored in Chapter 1, Cerdà proposes that the term *urbe* should supersede *ciudad*. In brief, Cerdà defines the city not as a material entity but as a system of interactions and exchanges that take place among its inhabitants.³ He describes the city as a

maremàgnum de personas, de cosas, de intereses de todo género; de mil elementos diversos [...] que están en relaciones constantes unos con otros, ejerciendo unos sobre otros una acción a veces muy directa, y que por consiguiente vienen a formar una unidad. (Cerdà 1867/1: 15)⁴

In the third chapter of the *Teoría general*, these interactions are facilitated by what Cerdà calls, *la gran vialidad universal* (or *el gran sistema viario*), a concept that provides the ontological basis for the city, which owes its existence to this system of constant movement and communication, as explored in Chapter 1. Cerdà argues that this state of constant movement propels humanity forwards, connecting rural areas to urban centres and then connecting these with all other metropolises in the world in a kind of constant universal superhighway. The resulting form of urban area is therefore conditioned only by its provision for mobility, an essential human need, and as such *urbanización* is formless: ‘para la urbanización, la forma es nada, la satisfacción cumplida y adecuada de las necesidades humanas es todo’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 50).

The articulation of a virtual network founded on ‘movimiento’ and ‘comunicatividad’ that links all human activity irrespective of where it is located on the planet resembles Manuel Castells’ concept of the ‘space of flows’. This notion describes the interconnection of ‘the places where activities are located; the material communication networks linking these activities; and the content and geometry of flows of information’ (Castells 2009: 33). Gary McDonogh advises us to bear in mind that the structural logic of the space of flows is placeless and thus privileges intangible networks of power, capital and information over the physical form of the city itself (2014: 29). McDonogh writes from within the field of urban anthropology, a discipline that views the city as ‘an urban region made up of complex interrelationships of places and a space of flows dependent on the whims of global capital’ (Low 2014: 25-26), which correlates with Cerdà’s definition of the city. These notions will be critiqued in this chapter with

³ This and the following paragraph is reworked from Matthew Oxley, ‘Cerdà’s *Intervías* as Literary Praxis: Constructing Barcelona in Novels by Oller, Sagarra and Laforet’, unpublished Master’s dissertation (University of Sheffield, 2019a), pp. 11-12.

⁴ The word ‘maremàgnum’ is also used by Oller to describe the Borsa (2012: 21), Paris (2012: 356) and the convoluted web of tasks and obligations that Gil has to carry out (2012: 421, 472).

reference to *La febre d'or* and the concept of deterritorialization as developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (*L'anti-Œdipe*, 1972; English translation 1977) and discussed subsequently by Rosi Braidotti in *Nomadic Subjects* (2011).

Cerdà's elaboration of a 'space of flows' based entirely around the function of movement connects to a significant degree with Le Corbusier's famous statement in *Towards an Architecture*, originally published in 1923, that 'a house is a machine for living in' (2007: 151). A brief overview of Le Corbusier's ideas helps to orient this chapter towards the analysis of the novel, as architecture and novel writing are aesthetic disciplines, unlike Cerdà's field of engineering. While Cerdà's major works predate those of Le Corbusier by around fifty years, both figures would be considered Modernist by Françoise Choay, whose criteria for Modernist urbanism were discussed in Chapter 1, and hence they make for suitable comparison, which magnifies the tension between function and form. The house, as it is framed by Le Corbusier, becomes purely 'a functioning mechanism, which belongs in the world of function and engineering' and therefore to the non-aesthetic genre of engineering rather than the aesthetic genre of architecture (Ballantyne 2011: 46).⁵

Cerdà, as an engineer, was uninterested in the aesthetics of the grid form he proposed for Barcelona's extension, seeing the orthogonal form as merely functional. However, Le Corbusier finds aesthetic beauty in the functional creations of engineers who did not traditionally regard beauty as an integral element of their design. Speaking of the ocean liner, Le Corbusier contends that:

if we forget for a moment that a liner is a transport tool and look at it with new eyes, we will sense that we stand before an important manifestation of temerity, discipline, and harmony, a beauty that is calm, vigorous, and strong. [...] [We] will find in the liner a liberation from cursed enslavement to the past. (2008: 158)

Le Corbusier therefore finds beauty in pure function, whereby the well-oiled machine of mass production induces more aesthetic pleasure than traditional, rustic craftsmanship. These less mechanized and less efficient production processes which are organized

⁵ Gerald Steyn writes that the frequent misunderstanding of this oft-quoted line has meant that critics of Le Corbusier 'have ever since been relentlessly accusing him of dehumanising architecture and town planning, of alienating the public, and of neglecting basic human needs' (2012: 259). Steyn instead rehumanizes Le Corbusier's work, concluding that 'the human body conceptually pervades every conceivable aspect of Le Corbusier's work at all scales and in all its manifestations, from the purely physical, to perception, and to the spiritual' (2012: 271). An example of the 'human' aspect of Le Corbusier's work is the *Modulor* (1948), his system for devising anthropometric proportions for use in his architectural designs (see Chapter 2, note 6).

around the natural life cycle fail to represent the triumph of man's ability to subordinate natural processes to mechanical processes.⁶ In this sense, Le Corbusier's remarks also resemble the general aesthetic motifs associated with Futurism, namely: 'a hostility to the past and a denunciation of tradition; the celebration of the modern industrial city [...]; and an excited glorification of the violence these new objects could bring to the past by announcing a new order of values' (Martin 2018: 84).⁷

Excitement of this kind is found in *La febre d'or*, where the extraction of surplus value from industry is what drives the plot (although importantly, not the novel's aesthetic), causing the rise and fall of the protagonist. Yet despite many characters' consciousness of being on the precipice of a new era, two contrasting temporal formulae are at work in the novel. On the one hand, Gil rises and falls in a manner that mirrors the agricultural or pre-capitalist experience of time. Despite his best efforts, his wealth comes and goes, and he returns to his former trade, mimicking the change of the seasons from winter to summer and back to winter. Yet the opposite conception of time – the linear, capitalist time of the Modernists and Futurists, who consciously shunned the old in favour of the new – is equally present in the novel, symbolically represented by the market economy and the railway.⁸ Maria Nunes labels this conception of time 'historic' for the following reasons: it gears progress towards a final redemptive point, everything is conceived as irreversible and definitive, and humans are aware of their integration in a historical process unlike in cyclical, pre-capitalist, 'anti-historic' time (1987: 108-09). Gil also progresses from working as a carpenter – manual work with natural materials – to earning money through financial speculation, which inserts him into a self-consciously 'modern' industry as opposed to the artisanal nature of his previous trade. The

⁶ The gendered term 'man' as opposed to the more neutral 'humanity' is used deliberately here to reflect the dominance of men's voices in industry and architectural design. A telling and relevant example is Le Corbusier's *Modulor* (1948), which is based on the proportions of a six-foot tall man. The damaging legacy of this kind of approach and the male domination of architecture has since been challenged by feminist architectural practices such as the Matrix feminist design collective, whose manifesto reads: 'Buildings only affect us inasmuch as they contain ideas about women, about our "proper place", about what is private and what is public activity, about which things should be kept separate and which put together' (1984: 10). A gendered critique of Cerdà's *Teoría general* read in light of this would no doubt be a fruitful avenue for further research given Cerdà's theorization of public and private space (of particular concern in Chapter 3).

⁷ Joan Ramon Resina writes that following on from the high point of the international style of architecture (characteristic of architects such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, among others), 'Catalan architects [...] freed form from the principle of habitation', meaning they were no longer limited by the imperative to design buildings solely around the principle of habitation, making function dictate form (1994-95: 271). Notably, this can be seen in the works of Modernista architects such as Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Lluís Domènech i Montaner and Antoni Gaudí.

⁸ Maria Nunes admits that 'el "tren del progrés"' is 'una imatge poc original, si es vol (es tracta d'una associació d'idees molt corrent a l'època)' (1987: 111) and this concept is therefore generalized across much artistic production in the late-nineteenth century.

combination and reliance on these two contrasting conceptions of time in the novel demonstrates Oller's Romantic and positivistic spirit, or his 'fluctuació entre el positivisme i el romanticisme' (Nunes 1987: 113), as he attempts to work out how to reconcile both positions during a time of great societal change.

Before we explore the possibilities of using Cerdà's *urbe* as an analytical framework for *La febre d'or*, it is first necessary to outline its plot. The novel is based on real historical events that happened ten years prior to its publication, and as such its characters and themes bear resemblance to historical figures including Oller and Cerdà. This initial exposition will introduce the key details which enable us to discuss the interaction of urbanism and aesthetics in light of the theory of the *urbe*.

First of all, there are clear autobiographical elements pertaining to Oller in the character of Gil Foix. Both men lived between Barcelona and smaller towns and had a close relationship with an uncle. After the death of Oller's father when he was two years old, Oller grew up in Valls in the house of his uncle, Josep Moragas, who was a keen reader and supporter of the Partit Progressista. It was here that Oller was exposed to political ideas and a wide range of fiction, which Sergi Beser assumes to explain the presence in Oller's written works of 'una tendència al sentimentalisme romàntic en contradicció amb un pensar racionalista, i un clar eclecticisme ideològic' (1965: 5). While Oller's own political stance and ideas about art were likely influenced by this early exposure, his feelings towards democratic party politics became tinged with scepticism given the failure of the revolution of September 1868, following which the family moved to Barcelona (Beser 1965: 5).⁹ Where Oller is attracted to romantic sentimentalism, Gil is

⁹ The family's move to Barcelona was precipitated by Moragas' declining to take the presidency of the Junta Revolucionària de Valls upon the revolution of September 1868. Some months later, the family home in Valls was ransacked. Oller's ensuing political scepticism is novelized through the character of Albert in *Vilaniu* (Tayadella 1986a: 626, note 26). Oller's politics are characterized by a 'liberalisme moderat' and a 'catalanisme conservador', befitting his status as a lawyer in the Diputació de Barcelona and later as a 'procurador dels Tribunals' (Tayadella 1986a: 627). His disappointment in his country's politics following the 1868 revolution also reflects the general trend of the Catalan bourgeoisie's fixation on Paris rather than Madrid for their social, cultural and urban model of modernity (Cabré 2004: 11), as we explore later in the chapter. Despite Catalonia's leading role in Spain's economy, as a highly industrially developed region, the Catalan industrial class had failed to share in any commensurate political clout, which remained in the hands of the 'oligarquia semifeudal del latifundisme castellano-andalús' (Fuster 1972: 13). Catalonia therefore had 'protagonisme econòmic' without 'protagonisme polític' unlike the land-owning oligarchs of the rest of Spain (Murgades 1987: 11), which partially explains the bourgeoisie's attraction to the French political and economic model over that of Spain. This phenomenon also explains their later turn to Catalanism following the loss of Spain's final colonial possessions in the 'disaster' of 1898. Excluded from Spain's nascent bourgeois revolution, they instead turned to Catalanism as the political arena in which to assert their increasing authority.

captivated by the church altars that his carpenter father produces.¹⁰ His uncle Pere, a parish priest, takes him under his wing and prepares him for entry into the seminary. However, Gil turns out to be much more independent than his uncle or father had expected and on the point of entering the priesthood, he suddenly declines, no longer feeling the priestly vocation. This follows a similar trajectory to that of Cerdà, who studied at the seminary in Vic for one year before leaving to pursue architectural training at the Escola de la Llotja in Barcelona. Gil suffers a down-and-out existence in Barcelona (bearing some resemblance to the poverty in which a young Cerdà lived in Barcelona and Madrid until his graduation from the Escuela de Caminos [Etapé 2009: 23-26]) before Pere summons him to Vilaniu (Oller's fictional Valls), where he is now rector, and promises to turn Gil into a decent man if he returns to care for his parents in their old age. Gil accepts, and works hard as a carpenter for two years, a period during which his parents die and he marries Catarina, whom he had met while an apprentice.¹¹

The 'nova rauxa de misticisme' that resurfaces in him at this point soon becomes a 'desmesurada set de riqueses' upon the birth of the couple's daughter, Delfina (Oller 2012: 33). Where once he had dreamed of the accoutrements of the church's religious rituals (which are described with a sense of lavish ostentation that foreshadows the sumptuous furnishings of flat he later purchases on Carrer Ample in Barcelona), he now dreams of a chest of gold with which to regale his young family.¹² His desire and excitement to gain wealth is so overpowering that it causes him several nights of fever, which also foreshadows the fever he suffers towards the end of the novel as his business collapses. Gil's fever also undermines the heady exhilaration of the so-called 'gold fever' of the early 1880s with its medical resonances of disease and contagion. This gives us a flavour of the moralizing nature of Oller's narrative voice, which clearly colours actions and attitudes in either a positive or negative light. Gil promptly leaves for Havana where

¹⁰ I refer to Gil Foix by his first name only in order to avoid confusion with his brother Bernat Foix, who is also a central character in the novel.

¹¹ Catarina's name is spelled 'Caterina' in the 2013 edition of the book published by Cossetània. I retain the original spelling as used in the 1980 edition published by Edicions 62 and reissued in 2012, the edition from which quotations are taken.

¹² For example, the description of Gil's lofty clerical ambitions reads: 'es cregué, un dia, cridat a la tonsura, per arribar, potser, a lluir l'anell de bisbe, el bàcul daurat, la folgada capa de flama d'or i la mitra clavetejada de pedres fines, que duïen tants sants i venerables prelats de carn i ossos que ell de prop havia vist' (Oller 2012: 32). The exhibition of gold and precious stones bears resemblance to the decoration of the family's living quarters in the flat on Carrer Ample: 'els daurats de les cadires i consola Lluís XV, les lluentors de la seda blau de cel, els enrevessats dibuixos de la catifa, les fulgors tornassolades de la magnífica aranya', the monetary value of which Gil feels compelled to tell his visiting family members: 'els cortinatges, més de cent duros cada un. La *sillera* [*sic*], cinc-cents cinquanta. Aquella consola, veu?, tres-cents. L'aranya, cent cinquanta-cinc' (Oller 2012: 50-51, 56; italics in original).

he hopes to make his fortune, only for the Ten Years' War ('la guerra de Cuba' [Oller 2012: 33]) to break out and devalue business such that after four years away he returns to Vilaniu empty handed. He had, however, learned how to conduct business affairs, and so with encouragement from uncle Pere, he becomes a stockbroker. When Pere dies and bequeaths Gil a sizeable inheritance, he buries Pere at an expensive funeral befitting the debt of gratitude he owes the priest and moves his family to Barcelona where they live in a small, dark flat on Carrer d'En Gíriti in the historic centre of the city. As he takes on more clients whose stocks and shares he manages, his business progresses with increasing success and he moves his growing family (Catarina has since given birth to a son, Eudaldet) to a larger property on Carrer Ample comprising a flat for the family to live in and one in which to house his office and receive clients. The Carrer Ample is also located within the historic centre of the city and not the Eixample, where it was common for bourgeois families to migrate as the city expanded, as they preferred the cleaner and more spacious conditions of this newly constructed area. We might interpret Gil's failure to settle in the Eixample as one of his many attempts to fit into the monied classes that nevertheless misses the mark.¹³

Gil quickly ascends to the upper echelons of Barcelona society, becoming a famous millionaire whose renown opens up political opportunities for him at home and in Madrid. In particular, he is venerated by the population of Vilaniu, for whom he promises unbridled prosperity and whose name and reputation appear to guarantee the success of the railway project he embarks on. The railway is the brainchild of Josep Rodon (one of the protagonists in *Vilaniu*, another of Oller's novels, published in 1885), who proposes the construction of a new railway line linking Barcelona to Madrid via Vilaniu and Cuenca, a route roughly two-hundred kilometres shorter than the fastest route between Spain's two largest cities at the time. Gil seizes on the idea and sets up a company to finance the project. He travels to Paris, Brussels and London to raise capital investment for the project, a detail that reflects the historical reality of the development of the railway network in Spain, where it was necessary to procure capital from foreign sources, particularly France, Belgium and the United Kingdom (Ubalde 2020: 225). Gil takes a

¹³ Another of Gil's faux-pas include mistaking the historian Monfar, from whom he purchases a house, for a writer of popular novels, as he assumes the wrong definition of 'historiador' (Oller 2012: 237-38). The point of the clash between Gil and Monfar 'is for Oller to draw a distinction between "serious history" and "crude novels" and to associate his own novel with the former' (Yates 1975a: 76, note 3). Other instances are his tasteless invitation of associates from the business world to his mother-in-law's funeral and his earnest belief in a proposal to be given the title of marquès despite this being fairly clearly a joke at his expense.

mistress with him on his trip to Paris, where he also tours the city's popular attractions and, to his distress, the Bohemian districts around Montmartre, which his mistress, Mimí, who earns a living accompanying rich men on such tours, knows well. Although he had intended to keep Mimí a secret from Catarina, she finds out about the affair via an anonymous letter, and this leads to the temporary breakdown of the couple's relationship.¹⁴

This breakdown also coincides with the decline of Gil's business. Gil's moral unscrupulousness and his wild dreams – 'ple el cap de projectes, d'il·lusions i d'esperances' (Oller 2012: 361) – set his closest partners (his brother, Bernat, and his cousin, Jordi Balenyà) against each other. The philosophical and principled Bernat resigns from the business, leaving Gil vulnerable to Jordi's scheming. Rodon turns against him and he falls out of favour with the townspeople in Vilaniu, so he throws money at the problem, promising to finance the construction of a canal and a hospital in the town, quickly becoming 'l'ídol del districte' (Oller 2012: 384). Buoyed by his regained prestige, 'a Madrid se li obrien les portes de tots els ministeris' (Oller 2012: 384) and he has his own way in the capital, although we are given few specific details of his time in Madrid and none of the narration takes place there. In the frenzy to uphold his reputation, Jordi and his son Eladi seize an opportunity to take his fortune away from him by transferring clients' deposits into other investments. Financially ruined, Gil then slides into ill health that sees him having feverish dreams recounted in the first person. Oller's pairing of moral failures with Gil's business mistakes serves to underline the moralizing nature of the narrative voice. At the same time, the narrator's omniscience becomes progressively undermined by the incursion of the first-person narrative voice, epistolary

¹⁴ Gil's taking of a mistress results in personal disaster for him, as Catarina rejects him on his return to Barcelona. However, taking a mistress is not necessarily always considered a transgressive act, as it was often a natural consequence of capitalist economic development and the 'aesthetics of ostentation' in the nineteenth century (Peterson 2015: 20). In other words, one would have to take a lover in order both to prove and flaunt one's business acumen. Gil's employment of Mimí as his escort conforms to this social obligation (Mimí had previously been the mistress of his associate, Tomàs Llassada, a fact that those in Barcelona remark on with mockery) and at the same time transgresses the bourgeois morality that ties him to monogamy, as shown through Catarina's reaction to his infidelity. She does not meet him at the railway station upon his return as he was expecting, and when reunited the couple argue ferociously. Oller therefore uses morality rather than biology to punish Gil: a far cry from the determinism underpinning Zola's Naturalism, as we will see. In addition, Mathilde Bensoussan's analysis of the novel's familial structures implies that the family relations of Oller's characters are influenced by his own life. While this is not particularly helpful from a literary point of view, it may go towards explaining the moralizing nature of Oller's narration. See Mathilde Bensoussan, 'L'estructura de la cèl·lula familiar en Oller', in *Actes del quart col·loqui internacional de llengua i literatura catalanes*, ed. by Germà Colon (Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1977), pp. 348-68.

exchanges between Bernat and his artist brother-in-law, Francesc, and Gil's dream and memory narratives as he succumbs to a fever.

Furthermore, several striking historical similarities are also elicited by a comparison between Gil Foix and the figures of Cerdà and railway entrepreneur Francesc Gumà i Ferran. As mentioned, Cerdà studied architecture at the Escola de la Llotja, which was housed in a building that would later house the stock exchange where Gil makes his fortune, thus connecting the pair. The railway project also echoes historical fact.¹⁵ Montserrat Comas i Güell (2006), for example, notes the similarity of the plot to the real-life construction of the railway line linking Barcelona to Vilanova i la Geltrú and Valls, which was spearheaded by the Companyia de Ferrocarril de Valls a Vilanova i Barcelona on the initiative of Vilanova-born Francesc Gumà. The company was founded in 1878 and brought the railway to Valls five years later in January 1883.

Luis Ubalde gives a detailed overview of the history of the Vilanova line in *El ferrocarril de la rodalia de Barcelona* (2020: 145-58). All previous attempts to build a line between Barcelona and Vilanova had failed because of the difficult terrain, which meant tunnels would have to be built at a very high cost. However, Gumà was successful in raising the capital required to finance the ambitious project. He was awarded the licence to build and operate the line in 1877 with the support of Víctor Balaguer, then a *diputat* for Vilanova and whose proposal for naming the streets of Cerdà's Eixample had been approved by Barcelona's Ajuntament in 1863 (Subirana 2013: 252).¹⁶ The licence was granted without any financial sponsorship from the State and so Gumà faced a serious challenge to raise the necessary funds. He contributed his own savings, as did members of the Vilanova bourgeoisie, and the administrations of the towns and villages the future line would pass through. He also went to Cuba where he received a generous amount of support. Much of the land required was given by landowners in return for shares in the company. When the line entered service, Gumà was lauded as a hero by the people of Vilanova (Ubalde 2020: 148), as Gil is similarly lauded by the people of Vilaniu upon the granting of the railway licence.

¹⁵ The novella, *L'Escanyapobres* (1884), Oller's 'study of the miser' (Yates 1994) is considered equally rooted in historical fact. See Joan Ramon Resina, *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image* (Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 32.

¹⁶ Balaguer, a historian and writer as well as a politician, proposed in his book *Las calles de Barcelona* that all the street names 'fuesen acomodados a hechos, glorias e instituciones pertenecientes a la historia de Cataluña, a fin de formar un conjunto general, histórico y armónico' (1865: 434). He names the streets after the historical territories of the Crown of Aragon and past Catalan military heroes and monarchs according to 'una lògica historicista (en un període d'historicisme omnipresent), medievalitzant, catalanista i liberal, amb un clar biaix per la tradició de lluita a favor de les llibertats' (Subirana 2013: 256).

The company then planned to extend the line all the way to Madrid via a new route that bypassed Zaragoza. To finance this construction, in 1881 Gumà set up the company Ferrocarrils Directes de Madrid i Saragossa a Barcelona. He then created the Banca de Vilanova and acquired the Ferrocarrils Carbonífers d'Aragó, which operated one railway line and had a licence to build another, and Gumà planned to use the existing infrastructure for a future railway route and make use of the coal mines to fuel his locomotives. Fortunately the economic climate was very much in Gumà's favour at this time, as the 'gold fever' was in full swing. The rapid growth of the Borsa de Barcelona enabled Gumà, as it does Gil Foix, to make up his finances through the issue of shares instead of having to rely on loans (Ubalde 2020: 156). This coincided with a favourable situation for the wine industry, which had not been affected by the phylloxera outbreak that was going on in France at the time. However, the following year, his fortunes reversed. The Borsa suffered spectacularly as phylloxera entered Spain and ravaged the vineyards of the Penedès, as Oller novelizes in *L'Escanyapobres* (1884). Because of this, the company centred its efforts on the direct line between Barcelona and Zaragoza, abandoning its plans to extend all the way to Madrid (Ubalde 2020: 157). By 1886, the company was in financial difficulty due to the expensive infrastructural works required to navigate the harsh terrain, and Gumà, tired of fighting adversity, resigned as director. He did, however, remain leader of the Banc de Vilanova, which continued to contribute to the prosperity of Vilanova with other projects.

Gumà's likeness to Gil Foix has not gone unnoticed by critics. Josep M. Domènech i Gibert and Montserrat Martínez i Guerra claim that Gumà must have served as the model for Gil Foix because of the significant parallels between their lives which cannot simply be put down to chance (1987: 14). For example, both men have the same initials and share numerous biographical details, such as a lack of higher education, employment in manual occupations in their early lives (Gumà worked in a textile factory) followed by a period of time spent in Cuba, formative experiences which shape their careers. In addition, Pilar Cano's analysis of gender in Cerdà's *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades* shows that Cerdà also strongly advocated for a strong family unit headed by a father figure (although this is not in itself unusual in the nineteenth century [Gómez Urdáñez 2005: 73]). As we saw in Chapter 1, Cano attributes Cerdà's ideas on gender in the work to his reading of the pseudo-scientific pamphlets produced by the physician Pere Felip Monlau, who was also an advocate for the urban expansion of Barcelona (Cano 2006: 143). All three men therefore had a highly patriarchal conception of the family in

which ‘the phallus [...] anchor[s] familial meanings’ (Resina 2008: 29) and acts to guarantee the prosperity of family members as long as they depend on the dominant male leader (Domènech i Gibert and Martínez i Guerra 1987: 8). Gil Foix makes this sentiment felt for example when he says: ‘un dels goigs més grans que tinc és servir a la família’ and he is recognized by his family members as worthy of having ‘el dret a ésser cap i protector de tots, per aquell cor i aquell talent pràctic que tenia!’ (Oller 2012: 37, 48).

However, there is a significant difference between Gumà and Gil Foix. Gumà’s business was clearly successful up to a certain point, whereas Gil’s railway never materializes. While the points of comparison between the two are remarkable, it is important to remember that it was very common for realist authors to base their characters on real life figures. Prominent examples are the medical doctor Augusto Miquis, a recurring character throughout several of Galdós’s novels whose prototype is Manuel Tolosa Latour (Schmidt 1968: 91-93),¹⁷ and, infamously, Émile Zola’s artist character Claude Lantier, based heavily on Paul Cézanne (D’Souza 2004: 98).¹⁸ The fact that Oller based his novel on historical fact in this manner gives the contemporary reader anchor points with which they would have been familiar, and in so doing draws them into a shared space that contributes to the construction of a collective consciousness structured around a common territorial history. This is a pattern that began to emerge in the nineteenth century as a direct result of new technologies and the ramifications of these on subjectivity, both in terms of an individual’s own subjective experience of the world, and the collective sense of sharing a national territory, to which we now turn.

¹⁷ For studies of the real-life models for Galdós’s characters, see Walter T. Pattison, ‘*El amigo Manso* and el amigo Galdós’, *Anales Galdosianos*, 2 (1967), pp. 135-53 and Ruth Schmidt, ‘Manuel Tolosa Latour: Prototype of Augusto Miquis’, *Anales Galdosianos*, 3.3 (1968), pp. 91-93. Verisimilitude is one of Galdós’s key criteria for a successful novel. As made clear in his essay ‘Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España’ (1870), Galdós places higher value on observation than imagination, and encourages writers to dedicate themselves to the faithful representation of reality, which can also be seen in his works’ Madrid settings, based on real locations with which his readers would have been familiar. Rhian Davies argues that in Galdós’s novels, space and place are not employed as mere backdrop ‘but as a dynamic force that exerts a powerful influence in a manner that extends far beyond the impact of the environment as perceived by the Naturalists and displays the extent of Galdós’s imagination, his artistic flair and engagement with the future’ (2020: 355). This suggests that Galdós cultivated a greater interplay of observation and imagination than he perhaps initially aimed for. We may argue a similar case for Oller, as this chapter demonstrates.

¹⁸ D’Souza writes that Cézanne’s biographers ‘crafted their accounts first, without recognizing that Cézanne’s biography is itself a textual construction’, and failed to acknowledge that Zola’s fiction equally provided them with a model for Cézanne’s life, hence ‘there is a circularity, then, in the logic which compels the endless comparison of Lantier and Cézanne’ (2004: 98). The same may indeed be true for those who compare Gumà’s biography to that of Gil Foix, as the authors of that article admit that their knowledge of Gumà’s biographical details and the nature of his personality are taken from an interview given by his granddaughter, Isabel Gumà, published in the *Diari de Vilanova*, 12 December 1981, and are thus fallible constructions contributing to a similar circular pattern to that of Cézanne/Lantier.

The analysis of how an urbanized subjectivity might manifest itself within narrative fiction necessarily begins with an appraisal of the experience of subjectivity in the nineteenth century more broadly. Nineteenth-century subjectivity is often understood in strict relation to constant movement, as Cerdà's theorization of the *urbe* with its emphasis on unimpeded mobility and circulation partially attests. Larry Duffy argues that the nineteenth century was 'an era which ushered in unprecedented transformations in the relationship between the individual and the physical environment, occasioned and characterised by changing patterns of mobility, *to the extent that it could almost be identified with movement*' (2005: 14; emphasis added). Furthermore, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch reminds us, it was a commonly held belief in the nineteenth century that 'whatever was part of circulation was regarded as healthy, progressive, constructive; all that was detached from circulation, on the other hand, appeared diseased, medieval, subversive, threatening' (1986: 195). Such a characterization of circulation as inherently positive and constructive is also found in Cerdà's work. Schivelbusch's seminal text, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*, is a suitable starting point for the investigation of subjectivity in the nineteenth century, because it approaches a phenomenology of railway travel, which had a profound effect on how people interpreted the world around them.

Schivelbusch draws on Marx's observation of capitalism's 'annihilation of space by time', which, at its most basic, refers to the rapid shrinkage of distance based on the time savings introduced by new transportation and communication technologies, as made clear by this short passage from Marx's *Grundrisse*:

The more production comes to rest on exchange value, hence on exchange, the more important do the physical conditions of exchange – the means of communication and transport – become for the costs of circulation. Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it. (2015 [1857-61]: 449)¹⁹

Marx's observations on the changing political economy were of course instrumental in shaping how the nineteenth century thought of itself. In Schivelbusch's

¹⁹ The *Grundrisse* is a collection of notebooks in which Marx kept track of his thoughts on capitalism, and which he would go on to develop into his most important work, *Capital* (1867). The evolution of his writing in this way parallels that of Cerdà, whose shorter works written throughout the 1850s and 1860s are built on for his longest work, the *Teoría general*.

study, the ‘annihilation of space and time’ is the trope used to characterize the effect of rail travel in the early nineteenth century (1986: 33). Schivelbusch refers to the twofold process of time-space compression effected by the railway: ‘on one hand, the railroad opened up new spaces that were not as easily accessible before; on the other, it did so by destroying space, namely the space between points’ (1986: 37).²⁰ Space therefore expands as faraway places are brought into reach, yet the space traversed to reach those spaces is simultaneously made inaccessible. David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), famously elaborates on the concept of time-space compression in the context of technology and capital. Harvey observes that, between 1850 and the outbreak of the First World War, ‘new systems of credit and corporate forms of organization, of distribution [...], coupled with technical and organizational innovations in production [...], helped speed up the circulation of capital in mass markets’ in a process by which ‘the world’s spaces were deterritorialized, stripped of their preceding significations, and then reterritorialized according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration’ (1989: 264).

Harvey’s analysis of the impact of space-time compression on new forms of social organization correlates clearly with Cerdà’s *urbanización*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the nineteenth century took it upon itself ‘to re-launch the Enlightenment project of universal human emancipation in a global space bound together through mechanisms of communication and social intervention’ (Harvey 1989: 270). It was to achieve this through the very Cerdian mechanism of making form follow function. This is the kind of nineteenth-century thinking that Harvey discusses; the ability to conform to a specific function takes priority over extraneous concerns: ‘spatial rationality should be imposed on the external world in order to maximize individual liberty and welfare, [taking] efficiency and function [...] as its central motif’ (Harvey 1989: 271). These are the processes that Harvey uses to build his argument that the society of the latter half of the nineteenth century (a period that he terms the ‘rise of Modernism’) underwent profound changes in its way of relating to the world around it.²¹ *La febre d’or* registers the societal

²⁰ It should be noted, however, that Anna Geurts considers Schivelbusch to have been taken at face value by many critics. Geurts provides an overview of scholars who have challenged some of the glaring assumptions that Schivelbusch makes, for instance, his ‘shrinking world thesis’ is critiqued by George Revill, Scott Kirsch, Doreen Massey and Ronald Wenzlhuemer (2019: 171-72).

²¹ It is important to note that, while in Anglo-American culture, the term ‘Modernism’ is usually reserved for early twentieth-century cultural production, in the Spanish and Catalan cultural traditions, the terms ‘Modernismo’ and ‘Modernisme’ are used to describe late nineteenth-century works (as well as early twentieth-century works) that show a clear change in aesthetic paradigm as they respond to modernity.

changes occurring during this incipient phase of Modernism; Alan Yates describes it as the ‘document d’una època – la del primer Modernisme – les bases sòcio-econòmiques de la qual són vistes *des de* les possibilitats culturals que van potenciar i *a través* d’aquestes’ (1998: 287; emphasis in original). Resina almost paraphrases this: Oller’s novel ‘was not just *about* the city’s transformation but literally *part of it*’ (2008: 34; emphasis added). The novel form is therefore a key instrument in the construction of this new way of understanding the world.

Indeed, Spain is no exception to this change in subjectivity. Several critics have discussed the forging of a new type of ‘society’ in Spain in the nineteenth century, which arose as a result of changes in the political and economic systems of the country. These changes were depicted in the emerging realist novel, which came to be understood as ‘about society’ (Labanyi 2000: 52). ‘Society’, as a concept, was produced in the nineteenth century as thinkers came to the understanding that ‘society’ and ‘the state’ did not amount to the same thing, that is, ‘the practices and institutions that make up society are distinct in nature and function from those that define the political sphere’ (Neuhouser 2012: 651). Labanyi adds that this development in social thought ‘could not have been made before the nineteenth-century process of nation formation, which created the concept of “society” (meaning a particular “national society”) as a homogeneous whole’ (2000: 52). However, Spain, like many other nation-states of this period, was characterized by chronically uneven economic development and as such, ‘the effects of modernization were not in practice creating a homogeneous society but intensifying class conflict’ (Labanyi 2000: 52).

This was exactly the kind of situation in which Oller found himself, although the nation around which the ‘imagined community’ was to form was Catalonia rather than Spain. In Yates’s words, Oller ‘es trobava en la primera línia d’un procés clau de la modernització social de la literatura catalana, és a dir la presa de consciència professional (i, per descomptat, nacional) de l’artista-intel·lectual català’ (1998: 270). Following on from the resurgence of cultural production in the Catalan language known as the *Renaixença*, Catalan writers were gaining consciousness of their role as professionals equipped with the necessary talents to reinvigorate Catalan letters during a time when artistic works were beginning to form part of a market of commodities, albeit an unevenly developed one. In Oller’s case, ‘esdevé ofici conscient i topa de seguida amb totes les deficiències d’un mercat, d’un aparell editorial i d’una infraestructura cultural en vies de modernitzar-se, amb potència per a transformar-se en una xarxa de relacions culturals

normals [...], però encara assolint-ho només parcialment' (Yates 1998: 270-71). The realist novel was therefore to prove essential in raising the consciousness of a 'national' Catalan society, which was beginning to draw together groups of people who were related not by the same social class but by their belonging to the same nation in a process somewhat mimicking the time-space compression mentioned above. On the one hand, readers became conscious of members of their own 'national' society located in places they were unlikely to ever travel to, while on the other hand, as social classes began to form and increase the sense of class conflict, readers became alienated from those located physically closest to them.

This phenomenon is widespread and certainly not restricted to Catalonia. Benedict Anderson has shown that, in particular, the commercialization of print culture constructed a sense of shared values across a territory, between people of the same national space but who had never and would never meet. Composed of 'the reading classes', this bourgeois reading public espouses the values of civil society, or the imagined community around which the state and nationalism create the nation (Anderson 1983: 73); in Hobsbawm's formulation: 'nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round' (1990: 10). Labanyi writes that 'if we call a novel "realist" it is not because we believe it narrates events that really happened, but because it constructs an "imagined community" that corresponds to the illusion of a homogeneous society that is the modern nation' (2000: 7). The realist novel was therefore consumed by a different reading public than had characterized previous centuries. The movement towards market-based consumption produced a Spanish middle-class reading public late in the nineteenth century who sought to preserve 'culture' from the corruption and decay of the masses by seeking 'cultural authenticity' in both romanticized notions of uncivilized 'folk' culture and the artificial label of 'high culture' (Sieburth 1994: 5).²² In turn, T. S. Eliot, in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1949), 'advances the argument that Culture (with a big C) can be preserved only through the maintenance of class hierarchy and a strong attachment to place and region' (Cresswell 2006: 32).

However, the *urbe* seems to go against this. Its principal concern is to enable 'indifferent' movement over space, which Cerdà conceives of predominantly in the

²² According to Stephanie Sieburth, Galdós's novels (the first of which, *La fontana de oro*, was published in 1870) 'are still reacting' to the change in reading public in Spain (1994: 5). With regards to folklore, in the Catalan *Renaixença*, folklore was assigned greater value as it became a means through which to regenerate high-brow poetry ('la poesia culta'), which came to be the vehicle with which to discover 'el geni propi de la llengua autòctona' (Jorba i Jorba 1986: 13).

abstract, and as such its form is conditioned by this impersonal movement which would appear to destroy any sense of local specificity and therefore also national belonging. A priori, the *urbe* also cares little for class hierarchy; although the unfettered access to networks of global capital that it opens up access to would of course favour certain socioeconomic classes over others. It therefore relates well to the Catalan case. While Oller's contemporaries such as Galdós could articulate novel worlds that correspond to the illusion of a homogeneous modern Spanish society located comfortably within the Spanish state, Oller's 'materia novelable' (to borrow Galdós's phrase) was located in Catalonia, itself both a region within the Spanish state and an emerging national community of its own. In writing contemporary Catalan society into existence through his web of interconnecting novels which crossed many landscapes (urban and rural) and social classes and mores, Oller contributed to the creation of the idea of an emerging Catalan nation.

The geography of Oller's novel network centres on Barcelona and its connections with the Catalan hinterland (in particular with Vilaniu, Oller's fictionalized Valls, in *Vilaniu*, *La febre d'or* and *La bogeria*; and Puigcerdà in *Pilar Prim*); and where it extends beyond the Catalan periphery, it connects more closely with Paris than Madrid. The Catalan bourgeoisie did indeed look to Paris and not Madrid for 'patterns for a new way of life' (Resina 1994-95: 266), the Spanish capital forever remaining off stage in Oller's books, where it is alluded to but not employed as a setting for any decisive plot or character development. For example, when Gil is in the process of regaining his prestige in the second part of the novel, Oller dedicates only one short paragraph to summarizing the political gains he made in Madrid as a result of his wealth and influence. Despite having 'conquered' ('vençut') the capital through (among other actions) acquiring 'la voluntat dels ministres' and breaking off obligations procured through friendships and party loyalties, to our surprise we are given no further details of these dazzling achievements (Oller 2012: 384-85).²³ Joan Ramon Resina connects the amplification of Paris over Madrid not to 'a serial continuity in time but a temporal synchronization with those societies that had succeeded in entering a new historical order' (1994-95: 266), meaning that Catalonia could be established as a nation-state without the historical

²³ Yates attributes this kind of omission to Oller's haste to publish the novel, Oller having become aware of Zola's plan to publish *L'Argent* in 1890. He therefore wished to avoid any charges of plagiarism (1975a: 75). For details of other omissions, inconsistencies and factual errors in the novel, see Alan Yates, 'The Creation of Narcís Oller's *La febre d'or*', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 52 (1975a), pp. 55-77 (pp. 75-76).

‘baggage’ of an already-established state like Spain only by reconfiguring its own apparatus to mimic that of successful liberal democracies. A text like Catalan nationalist politician Enric Prat de la Riba’s *La nacionalitat catalana* (1906) makes this manifest with its conservative political standpoints anchored in an admiration for the United States and its imperial claims.²⁴

Cerdà employed the United States as a political and economic model to follow, taking note of the urban development of settlements in the Americas, in particular William Penn’s thoughts on establishing Philadelphia, as discussed in Cerdà’s *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades* (1859: 1479-80). As Resina indicates, the focus on temporal over geographical synchronization ‘was expressed in the establishment of spatial continuity’, in particular through the construction of the railway network (1994-95: 266). As we know, Catalonia lays claim to the opening of the first passenger railway in Spain, the line linking Barcelona to the industrial town of Mataró, which was to be the first leg of the longer route connecting Barcelona to Paris via Portbou on the French border. However, what is missing from Resina’s analysis is the fictional railway that is dreamt up by the group of investors represented by Gil Foix in *La febre d’or*. By 1880, when *La febre d’or* is set, the Barcelona-Mataró line is of course in full operation, as are lines between many major Spanish cities. As mentioned, the railway that Foix aspires to build would connect Barcelona to Madrid via a much shorter and quicker route. At first glance this might suggest that *La febre d’or*, through the character of Gil Foix, aims to reinsert Barcelona, and by extension Catalonia, into the Spanish national imaginary by ‘annihilating’ the time and distance between the two cities and pulling Barcelona into Madrid’s centralizing gravitational pull. It also suggests that the inhabitants of each city consider it important to be able to reach the other quickly, whether travelling for business, leisure or family purposes.

However, this interpretation does not hold. It is undermined by the fact that the natural extension of the Barcelona-Mataró line was towards Paris (via Portbou) and not Madrid (Resina 2008: 41). Yet the main element undermining this interpretation is the over-importance of Vilaniu in the route as portrayed in the novel. Vilaniu plays a central

²⁴ Interestingly, at the other end of the scale, contemporary Catalan architect Ricard Bofill (1939-2022) displays a similar attitude, having said in a televised interview: ‘Jo soc molt català perquè tinc relació amb Catalunya, Barcelona i després París. [... A Espanya hi] vaig com a estranger’, highlighting the predominance of Paris over Madrid as a model city for Catalans to aspire towards (‘Ricard Bofill’, *Pensadors catalans* [RTVE, 1982], season 1, episode 10, <<https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/pensadors-catalans/arxiu-tve-catalunya-ricard-bofill/5779688/>> [accessed 1 March 2024]).

role in the initial planning and financing of the route. We get the sense that the railway is to exist for the people of Vilaniu more than those of Barcelona (of course in real life the vast majority of the line's users would come from Barcelona or Madrid as the two largest population centres on the line). Vilaniu is in many ways the geographical heart of Oller's fictional world, a fact compounded by the word's semantic resonances: the town, or 'vila', is the nest, or 'niu', out of which some of his most memorable characters hatch and develop. The Galceran family, protagonists of *Vilaniu* and who maintain a minor presence in *La febre d'or*, and Daniel Serrallonga, the political activist and tortured idealist, live there, and the Foix family is closely linked to the town. Oller ties himself to the town through its loose fictionalization of Valls and the autobiographical resemblances between Oller and Gil Foix.

The two motifs of money, specifically financial capital, and the railway, are both tightly linked to the urban environment and are the vehicles Oller uses to articulate movement and mobility. The principal factor underpinning the *urbe*, that which conditions its form, is mobility, which critics have identified as a key trait in Oller's works. For instance, Toni Dorca remarks that mobility is 'a recurrent theme underpinning Oller's art' (2001: 62). Mobility is understood in various forms: physical mobility across distances, such as the journeys made around the city or the international travel the businessmen make, while also referring to mobility in a more metaphorical sense to describe the movements of capital in financial transactions that transfer ownership of bonds and shares through various actors.

The nineteenth century, if we are to take Oller's works as a case study, sees physical and metaphorical mobilities as inextricably linked. Kathleen Davis points out that 'in *La febre d'or*, progress requires that money move through as many hands and egos as possible' (1995: 45), and Maria Nunes concurs: 'la mobilitat és el tret que predomina. Les fortunes experimenten un creixement continu' (1987: 114). In other words, in order for wealth to increase, money must be kept mobile. Oller's oeuvre more broadly reflects the general increase in society's wealth, as the characters in *L'Escanyapobres* invest their money in land, whereas in *La febre d'or*, they buy houses, reflecting the progression from rural to urban society (Nunes 1987: 115). The city, too, is inextricably linked to mobility. Àlex Matas argues that the nineteenth-century city can no longer be described with recourse to the traditional representation of space (static, hierarchized and monochrome landscape) because everything is in movement; indeed, the

image of the city cultivated by Cerdà is one of continuous and uninterrupted movement (2011: 117-19).

The expansion of Barcelona, like that of Paris before it, and its connection with other locales via public transport, involved a huge operation of financial speculation, which also links physical and metaphorical conceptions of mobility. The programme of urban expansion and renewal could not have happened without the massive industry of financial enterprise which raised the funds (largely based on credit) to reconstruct the city. Oller himself engaged in debates concerning the state of Barcelona at the time. He proposed his own solutions to urban problems in the journalism he produced for the newspaper *La Renaixença*. Commenting on road use in the Eixample, he believes that to achieve a healthier urban environment, ‘no convé la uniformitat d’urbanització, ni la llibertat completa de circulació’ (quoted in Cabré 2004: 132), by which he means that heavier vehicles should be restricted to fewer streets, leaving the others for the use of lighter vehicles. Concerned with the reputation of Barcelona, he compares the city to a house: roads that are heavily used are like the entranceways, staircases and storage rooms of a house, and if all are as unkempt as each other, ‘fan l’efecte d’una casa bruta’ (quoted in Cabré 2004: 133). Unfortunately, Barcelona has succumbed to this effect ‘gràcies al sistema rutinari i imperfecte que s’ha seguit en la urbanització de son *Ensanxe* [sic]’ (Oller quoted in Cabré 2004: 133; italics in original), and the Ajuntament must now work hard to undo the damage caused by this effect. He locates certain flaws in Cerdà’s plan: ‘sa fatigosa simetria, la necessitat d’artístiques perspectives per a dar [sic] visualitat a monuments i edificis públics’, but he concedes that the new layout does bring numerous benefits and creates a much healthier and more pleasant environment: ‘És espaiós, suficient, harmònic i açó ens fa perdonable lo demés’ and the authorities should focus on carrying out Cerdà’s proposals (‘lo pensament de l’autor’) to honour both him and the city (Oller quoted in Cabré 2004: 123).

Oller’s concerns are reflected in *La febre d’or*, as the narrator remarks on the changing attitudes of Barcelona inhabitants towards the state of the city:

Començava el barceloní a condoldre’s de l’estretor de la ciutat antiga, de la imperfecta urbanització de la nova, de l’aspecte vilatà i la deixadesa que regnaven per sos carrers, de la manca de comoditats modernes, grans monuments, *squares* i estàtues: la febrada d’or congriava de seguida projectes per a transformar-ho tot. Els cossos populars i les autoritats rebien cada dia plans i més plans de projectes nous, acompanyats de memòries, l’hipòcrita mòbil d’especulació dels quals es

disfressava de patriotisme ardent, de previsor i paternal sol·licitud. (Oller 2012: 71)

Gil, in a manner somewhat resembling Oller's own ideas, imagines grand designs for the improvement of Barcelona's urban fabric: he wants to move the Santa Creu hospital outside the city, transplant the Sant Josep market to the space freed up by the hospital, and in the square left by the market, erect an equestrian statue surrounded by gardens. These renovations display similarities to those made in Paris: Haussmann's reforms required an astronomical sum of capital to be raised, reinforcing the link between capital and the city, which both came to depend on each other. In this passage, Oller refers cynically to the proposals presented to the Ajuntament, which hide their voracious greed for speculation and profit under the guise of paternalistic work in the interest of the public good. This practice would appear to be based to an extent on fact, as David Pinkney observes that it was unknown how Haussmann managed to raise such enormous quantities of money to fund his construction works, implying the use of unscrupulous business practices and a lack of public accountability (1957: 48).²⁵ In the case of *La febre d'or*, Gil Foix submits his ideas for urban renewal to the city council, only for them to languish unread in a bureaucrat's drawer.

Aside from the mechanisms of finance, this mutual dependence is also conveyed via the railway, which changes the way characters relate to time and space. Oller's short novel *L'Escanyapobres* presents us with the fictional rural Catalan town of Pratbell, which had flourished as a centre for the trading of grain, reaching its economic peak in 1850, but which, during the course of the novel, is almost wiped out entirely by emerging industries, represented by the railway. Trains pass through the town without stopping, and consequently the grain trade moves to Barcelona along with many residents of Pratbell and its surrounding villages. Oller positions the railway as the symbolic vehicle through

²⁵ These disreputable practices are novelized by Émile Zola – 'the Baron Haussmann of the novel' (Schor 1978: 129) – in *La Curée* (1871-72), translated into English as *The Kill*, whose protagonist, the property speculator Aristide Saccard, returns in *L'Argent* (1891) as a businessman heading up the establishment of a railway company. While the latter book has been compared to *La febre d'or* on account of the striking similarities of both novels' characters and plot (Casacuberta 1999), in my view, *La Curée* (1871) also displays certain strong resemblances to *La febre d'or*, suggesting either a deliberate borrowing on the part of Oller or simply testimony of the fact that urban change and reconstruction is a widespread trope of the nineteenth-century novel. Mercè Vidal-Tibbitts (1989: 173) indicates that Oller found inspiration in Zola's evocative descriptions of Paris as seen by his characters from raised vantage points in *Une page d'amour* (1878). In *La febre d'or*, part 1, chapter 16, a nameless man in the crowd at the horse races dreams of making changes in the landscape: 'ell hauria volgut poder, de cop, alçapremar la muntanya i arruar-la mar endins, on no hagués destorbat la vista' (Oller 2012: 217), resembling Saccard's fantasies of divvying up the landscape of Paris in *La Curée* (Zola 2008 [1871]: 69; this reference is to the English translation).

which to register the changing economic landscape. The railway is of course a result of economic development that in turn leads to the creation of further economic development; it is ‘both product and producer of the culture in which it is embedded’ (Soule 2019: 175).²⁶ As Resina points out, in post-Revolutionary Spain, ‘the train was in historical fact the protagonist of the economic downturn and its eventual pickup’ (2008: 32).

In *La febre d’or*, the railway project recalls *Vilaniu*, drawing it into the wider economy of Oller’s novels in a manner similar to the progress of economic development in the nineteenth century, as the railway drew towns into a network based on their economic relations (as is dramatically depicted in *L’Escanyapobres*). Oller demonstrates his awareness of the importance of Vilaniu in structuring his oeuvre, as shown by his decision to change the name of the novel from *Isabel de Galceran* (the name of one of its protagonists, a noblewoman of Vilaniu) (Yates 1975a: 59). Beser points out that for the characters, Vilaniu can refer only to the town, whereas for the reader it stands primarily for the novel (1967: 54), as it exerts a pull on Oller’s oeuvre taken as a totality. In this way Oller’s oeuvre comes to reflect the network nature of the railways, which, according to Jacob Soule, was drawn upon by novelists as they dealt with the arrival of modernity and the changes in consciousness that technology and commerce brought with them. Soule writes that ‘novelists gravitated to the world of the railway not just as mere convenient narrative function – getting characters from A to B – but as a literary symbol that stood for the shock-inducing arrival of modernization and modernity onto the terrain of everyday life’ (2019: 174). The railway connects people across a vast territory who were not previously connected, creating the sense of time-space compression mentioned above, and is therefore a highly evocative motif for representing the simultaneous sense of alienation and closeness within a newly determined national population that characterizes urbanized subjectivity. For Beser, Rodon is Oller’s foremost ‘character without a novel’, in the sense that in *Vilaniu* and *La febre d’or* his influence is so great and his treatment so unique (in that Oller does not treat Rodon with any of his characteristic sentimentalization or moralizing, instead relating the facts of his character without making value judgements or showing affection or contempt towards him) that it is surprising that Oller did not dedicate a novel to him as protagonist (Beser 1967: 56).

²⁶ Soule also quotes James Meek, who positions the railways as ‘more than new’ because ‘they set the terms by which future new things would be deemed new’ (Meek cited in Soule 2019: 174). Similarly, Resina (1994-95: 263) writes that the gold fever ‘was nothing but the euphoric transformation of the metal standard into the value derived from future labor’, thus financial capital can also be seen to dictate the terms by which future things would be deemed new.

Rodon is ‘el personatge que representa millor la limitació dels llocs de l’acció a Vilaniu i a Barcelona, la transferència de personatges entre la vila agrícola i la ciutat industrial’ (Beser 1967: 56). We can therefore see that Rodon is characterized by ‘in-between-ness’ in both literal and figurative senses. In the first place, he straddles the town-country binary, while secondly, he occupies a space outside the bounds of either novel while having a significant bearing on the plots of both.

This aesthetic concern can be further related to the *urbe*, as we see in a passage in which Gil Foix reports to his colleagues on the festival atmosphere that greeted his arrival in Vilaniu upon the granting of the concession to construct and operate the railway line. He reports that there were ecstatic celebrations and Rodon gave a tearful speech expressing his gratitude to Gil, ‘a qui hauríem d’aixecar una estàtua per gratitud’ and whom he calls ‘aquest gran català, que coronarà la seva obra patriòtica muntant la indústria de materials de ferrocarrils per emancipar-nos de l’estranger’ (Oller 2012: 291).²⁷ This corresponds to Gil’s ambitions expressed at the outset of his career. More than money, he craves fame: ‘ell no s’acontentava amb els diners: volia importància social, un nom; i aquest nom i aquesta importància els trobaria dins del món financer amb el carril de Vilaniu’ (Oller 2012: 79). He is able to market his own name, as it is that which makes the railway project feasible, rather than any intrinsic value of the project. In effect, he commodifies himself, turning himself into an object of value to be traded in exchange for the promise of further wealth creation. Furthermore, we might question Gil’s superlative tone in his account, as he exaggerates his own importance and assures Jordi that the newspaper reports do not do justice to the grandeur of the festivities. This also draws attention to Oller’s narrative construction of the scene. It is reported using a recurring device in the novel which consists of a blend of first- and third-person narrative perspectives. This is marked in the text by the use of quotation marks which enclose narration in the third person, thus suggesting a kind of free indirect speech that Oller ties more closely to his omniscient third-person narrative voice than the first-person perspective of his characters, although the style of the prose often mimics the spontaneous or non-standard language of an internal monologue. To illustrate this, I quote some of the text from Gil’s description above:

²⁷ Rodon’s reference to erecting a statue in Gil’s honour recalls Eduard Maristany, an engineer who led the construction of the railway tunnel at Argentera and the Estació de França in Barcelona. He was honoured with the title of Marquès de l’Argentera and a statue outside the railway station at Vilanova i la Geltrú. Gil Foix is also offered a marquesat, however Catarina believes the proposal is just a joke, ‘una burla grollera’, at Gil’s expense (Oller 2012: 263).

en Jordi volia detalls de les festes [...]; i en Foix, com que les idees tristes se li haven ja esvaït, parlà pels colzes. “Sa entrada havia estat triomfal, millor encara de com la pintaven els diaris. [...] En Rodon [...], plorant a llàgrima viva, en un cop de cor s’havia quedat amb les dues-centes accions que aquell i son bàndol volien retirar. —Jo no vull... —havia dit assenyalant en Foix— jo no vull que aquest home, que, foraster i tot, sacrifica son repòs i sos interessos per la nostra encontrada. [...] —L’espectec d’aplaudiments havia estat eixordador. Tot eren abraçades!” (Oller 2012: 291-92)

It can be seen that while the extract is mostly recounted in the third person, the narrator’s omniscience is undermined by the first-person style of the narration, as the informal tone (for example: ‘Tot eren abraçades!’) normally characteristic of direct speech, is placed into the narrative voice. The kind of narration that Oller cultivates in *La febre d’or* therefore frequently shifts between more objective and more subjective positions, which allows the sentimental and moralizing side of the narration to emerge.

These considerations enable us to view *urbe* as a kind of praxis for novel writing, in that Oller’s approach to the novel is to use the novel form to take a historical event and express it in a partial way. Rosa Cabré’s analysis of his aesthetics helps us to make this argument, as she demonstrates that in his works, ‘fins el paisatge no es pinta tal com és, sinó de la manera en què apareix a la retina del qui el contempla’ (2004: 69). What enables us to be able to distinguish between these two, to be able truly to say they are or would result in different depictions of the same landscape, is the perspective offered by the particular ‘retina del qui el contempla’, in other words, the individual consciousness who constructs the representation of the scene. The result is not simply a realistic portrait of a scene but an expression with semantic resonances beyond the visual plane. Oller therefore ‘no es vol retratar sinó expressar tal com es projecta en la sensibilitat íntima del punt de vista narratiu’ (Cabré 2004: 69; emphasis added). ‘Expressar’ implies the communication of meanings beyond the merely informational register (‘retratar’), such as emotions, opinions, value judgements and so on. It is this reasoning that Cabré uses to argue that ‘per a Oller, com per a Gil Foix, Émile Zola, o Josep Yxart [Oller’s cousin and mentor], la novella ha de ser un document històric viu, en contrast amb la història del passat que defensava el senyor Monfart [sic]’ (2004: 83). What makes Oller’s writing ‘alive’ is its novel form; by contrast, historiography such as that practised by Monfar (see Chapter 2, note 13) would not afford Oller the expressive possibilities he wishes to exploit.

The notion of the novel as a living document is also conveyed, for Sergi Beser, and in somewhat romantic fashion, through Oller's use of recurring characters. The inclusion of characters who originated in previous works relies on the reader's ample previous knowledge of the author's works, such that the mention of a single name 'ens obre perspectives inesperades de vides i ambients, en introduir el lector dades conegudes per altres obres, i ens fa sentir la novella que llegim com a part d'una unitat superior: la vida' (Beser 1967: 53). Beser frames the novelist's use of recurring characters as honouring life over and above art: 'aquestes reaparicions creen unes relacions entre lector i personatges pròpies de la vida i no de l'art – és el màxim elogi que hom li podia dedicar' (1967: 54).

Frank Kermode writes in a short article in *New York Review of Books* that 'the special fate of the novel, considered as a genre, is to be always dying' (1965: n.p., online), or, as Alan Yates paraphrases, it is constantly adapting to survive: 'el progrés de la novel·la, tant o més que el dels altres gèneres, és un constant refer de la seva pròpia tradició' (1975b: 83). The novel is therefore unique in that it must constantly reinvent and redefine itself in order to maintain any kind of longevity. In my view, this phenomenon has to do less with any intrinsic quality of the novel as a genre of literature, but as a result of the novel's commodification as part of the market economy (which enabled it to contribute to the creation of the 'reading classes', as Anderson shows). The novel is therefore positioned as a crucial element in the formation of national consciousness in the nineteenth century, the very idea of the European nation-state being bound up with capitalist economic development and liberal, democratic political development. To stay 'alive' the novel had to stay marketable. Oller began the novel tradition in Catalan (Beser 1977: 342) (although he only considered writing in Catalan in 1877 when he was around 30 years old [Beser 1977: 339])²⁸ and he drew heavily on models taken from Spanish and French novelists, the most important being Galdós and Zola, from whom, according to Yates, he inherited ideas about Naturalism (Yates 1975a: 66, 74).

Kai Mikkonen argues that Naturalism 'had defined the novel as a (technical) instrument in the investigation of reality' (2001: 33). Following on from Naturalism, in

²⁸ For Antònia Tayadella, *Vilaniu* is 'la novel·la de l'aprenentatge conscient d'Oller com a novel·lista realista' (1986a: 646). Toni Dorca considers that *Vilaniu* is a 'great' (2001: 70) novel because Oller recognizes that 'the protagonists' strife for authentic values in a degraded world is irremediably destined to fail. Neither is there in *Vilaniu* an attempt to redeem the protagonists from their shortcomings by resorting to a deus ex machina. Hence, when he detaches himself from the fate of his characters Oller is ushering in a historic moment in the evolution of Catalan fiction, that of the birth of the Realist novel' (2001: 69). This indicates the very high importance of Oller in Catalan literature.

late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century French literature, the novel was redefined as a machine because ‘many narrative conventions and types of the novel now appeared “mechanical”, i.e., their traditional nature was exposed in relation to new alternative forms and genres’ (Mikkonen 2001: 33). Novelists’ self-reflection on their art form demonstrates that Zola’s Naturalist paradigm opened up a new avenue for literary exploration, which was fruitfully mined by those who followed Zola’s aesthetic tenets. Cerdà performs a similar kind of reflection. By re-evaluating all existing analytical work on the city as falling at the first hurdle, namely, by relying on the outdated and unsuitable word ‘city’ to inaccurately describe their object of study, Cerdà positions these ways of approaching urban studies as mechanical or machine-like, for they automatically follow established convention, while his own method is situated as innovative. As we have seen, this is due in large part to the founding importance Cerdà places on circulation and public transport, specifically roads. Jonathan Grossman indicates that, ‘as part of a public transport system, roads help connect people by standardizing their interconnecting space. They smooth people’s common journeys from here to there. The road has thus ever figured as a place of public connection’ (Grossman 2012: 34). While each individual may be making a different journey with unique points of departure and arrival, the public transport system ‘makes not just the road but *the movement of individuals on the road* shared. [...] It lays down a network that standardizes motion across geographical space in order to allow for merged circulation’ (Grossman 2012: 35; italics in original). The transport system forces us to join our journey to those of others and conform it to the system’s routes and stations, to its ‘standardization of our merged movement’ (Grossman 2012: 35).

This has been explored in depth in the English and French literary canons, which I draw on to summarize the networked and machine-like structure that the novel can adopt in the nineteenth century. For instance, in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), ‘Dickens draws a circle around a community newly becoming linked together temporally by a public transport system’ (Grossman 2012: 27). According to Anna Gibson, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) demonstrates a kind of ‘network form’ by which Dickens cultivates ‘a novel form that could accommodate interactions among characters who change as they adapt to one another across the novel’s expansive serial formation’ (2015: 63). Gibson connects this form to Darwin’s contemporaneous use of the word ‘net-work’ in *Natural Selection* (1856-58): ‘all nature being bound together in an inextricable net-work of relations’ (Darwin 1975: 267, online). Later, in *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin writes

that ‘plants and animals, most remote in the scale of nature, are bound together by a web of complex relations’ (1860: 73, online). These remarks quite clearly bear a resemblance to the belief in interconnectedness that we find in Cerdà’s *Teoría general*, although Cerdà’s object of study is of course the interconnectedness of all places via *la gran vialidad universal* and not species of the animal and plant worlds. By drawing on Darwin, Gibson argues that Dickens likens human relationships to natural selection, reflecting a changing understanding of how humans relate to each other in society during a time of increased competition and standardization (2015: 75). ‘Network form’ therefore avoids the foregrounding of specific individual characters in favour of the articulation of networks of characters instead.

Railway novels produce a similar literary pattern. According to Jacob Soule, these novels ‘displace the historical novel’s traditional reliance on the protagonist, whether individual or collective, as the subject of history. They instead give us a history of capitalism entwined with a history of its infrastructure’ (2019: 196). After all, Jeff Nunokawa reminds us that the novel has a ‘tendency to identify capital with aspects of its own form’ (1994: 14). Reading *La febre d’or* in this light would appear to go against claims, such as that of Luis Fernández Cifuentes, that the novel is about one single person. For Fernández Cifuentes, ‘Oller’s *La febre d’or* is the rigorously documented story of an *individual*’s precipitous rise and fall at Barcelona’s “Borsa” (2020: 36; emphasis added). However, in my view, the rise (‘pujada’) and fall (‘estimbada’) – the names of the two halves which structure the novel – are manifestly those of an individual and not of a generalized societal rise and fall. This is because during the fall some characters actually rise, for example, the Balenyà family who cheat Gil out of his wealth to further their business interests. In order to read the novel as representative of society as a whole one must give credit to Oller’s moral posturing. Kathleen Davis comments on Oller’s critical narrative voice, which casts moralizing judgement on the characters for their ‘indiscriminate cultivation of people in order to feel popular and powerful’ but stops short of condemning or humiliating them (1995: 43). With this in mind, if society as a whole is ‘falling’, it must be because it is getting too carried away with financial speculation, which we infer must be a bad thing on account of the subheading ‘L’estimbada’. Oller therefore codes the rise in fortune of the Balenyà family negatively.

This brings us onto the deterritorializing effect of the *urbe*, which is also visible in *La febre d’or*. Rosi Braidotti reminds us that Castells’ ‘space of flows’ underplays the ‘concrete, material infrastructure that is concentrated on the sedentary global city’, upon

which the information society depends (2011: 7). For Braidotti (in contrast to Castells, McDonogh and, to an extent, Cerdà), advanced capitalism cannot claim to be immaterial, flowing or virtual because of the bodies of the ‘less-than-human subjects’ (i.e., refugees and those most disadvantaged by economic inequality and displacement) caught in the concrete conditions of advanced global society (2011: 6). Braidotti follows Adrienne Rich’s feminist ‘politics of location’ to make the claim that for all the talk of the modern era being placeless, it is actually very grounded or rooted in specific places.²⁹ Relying on theories such as these may in some senses run the risk of analysing Oller’s work through anachronistic critical apparatus, as Braidotti’s and Castells’ works explicitly respond to advanced capitalism in the twenty-first century. However, using their theoretical insights is valid because the late nineteenth-century city was also globalizing in a sense, albeit on a much smaller scale, and in a way that was arguably much less understood at the time.

Cerdà’s writings not only reflect these concerns relating to the embodied nature of the ‘space of flows’, but aim to offer a solution to the hardships that these conditions engender. However, Ross Adams indicates that by weaponizing his concept of ‘*vialidad*’ in order to ‘break open the walled city and materialize what he saw as a virtuous world of free and unlimited movement’, Cerdà is at risk of placing too much faith in the apparently natural circulation of people and capital, and being ignorant of the material reality of the urban fabric (2019: 73). He fails to address the networks of power that manipulate the space of flows and produce consequences that are detrimental to his desire for social justice and equality for all as a direct result of the reconfiguration of urban form. Cerdà imagines the *urbe* as a tabula rasa of pure movement and communication across both urban and rural topographies, in contrast to the *civitas* of the static walled city with its hierarchy of citizens’ status and urban land use. The *urbe* therefore enacts a deterritorialization, as the flows of people, goods and ideas inherent to the *civitas* are reconfigured, or reprogrammed into different flows in the service of capital.

Deterritorialization is theorized most thoroughly by Deleuze and Guattari, who write that ‘the prime function incumbent upon the socius [otherwise known as the ‘social machine’], has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channeled, regulated’ (1977: 33). Such flows are therefore ‘territorialized’. However, these flows lose their

²⁹ For more on the politics of location, see Adrienne Rich, ‘Notes toward a Politics of Location’, in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985* (Norton, 1986), pp. 210-31.

primacy over time, such that upon its emergence, capitalism comes to be ‘faced with the task of decoding and deterritorializing the flows’ (1977: 33). Capitalism’s new flows are organized around new relations of production and labour, ‘decoding’ the former into flows of money-capital and the latter into flows of the ‘free worker’. In this sense, it creates ‘an axiomatic of abstract quantities that keeps moving further and further in the direction of the deterritorialization of the socius’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 33).

Deleuze and Guattari point out that while deterritorialization decodes existing flows, these end up being reterritorialized, or reorganized into new codified flows. In their words:

The more the capitalist machine deterritorializes, decoding and axiomatizing flows in order to extract surplus value from them, the more its ancillary apparatuses, such as government bureaucracies and the forces of law and order, do their utmost to reterritorialize, absorbing in the process a larger and larger share of surplus value. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 34-35)

In my analysis, Cerdà’s failure to fully think through the implications of *urbanización*, in particular what the ramifications of the materialization of the *urbe* could be, ends up reterritorializing it. While the *urbe* promises a reconfiguration of the material arrangement of the city around pure movement and circulation, this deterritorialization necessarily entails new patterns of authority to be established to manage these new flows. In Adams’ words, *urbanización* ‘bore the seeds of its own demise, dissolving into, on the one hand, an assemblage of norms and regulations and, on the other, a governmental mechanism aligned with the forces of capital’ (2019: 25). This can indeed be seen in the case of the 1859 *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades*, in which Cerdà elaborates on the necessary presence of administrative bodies imbued with the power to oversee the financial and regulatory aspects of *urbanización*. It stands that by the publication of the *Teoría general* in 1867, his ideas had developed to the point where he considered *urbanización* capable of regulating the city on its own, without the explicit reliance on state bodies (as we will see in Chapter 3). Yet the very fact of *urbanización*’s role as a principle of spatial organization rests upon its deterritorialization of flows pertaining to traditional city organization and its reterritorialization of these in ways that exploit their potential for contributing to the new capitalist economic order. In this sense, the Barcelona-Mataró railway line is illustrative. It represents the incipient networking of Catalonia, and thus the standardization of journeymaking, in a way that specifically

facilitates the movement of workers between their homes and their places of work in the name of industrial progress.

This process of reterritorialization is manifest in *La febre d'or*. The city presents to Gil Foix unlimited opportunities for making money. Jordi Castellanos sees Gil Foix as the embodiment of the 'instrument of progress', whose story unfolds alongside that of the transformation of Barcelona into a modern metropolis, and the social and urban evolution of the city is far above the comprehension graspable by individuals (1995: 146-47). He expresses the desire to possess the city and make it his own in the manner of the spectator or financier, as he gets a sense of the march of progress and prospect of wealth the city can give him as he looks out over it. In other words, he sees the potential for the city's flows to be deterritorialized into new flows that will make him rich:

A l'esquerra, un tros de Barcelona, confosa ja amb sos suburbis, estenent-se al peu de Montjuïc, blanca, nova, immensa com un gran metròpolis. Sos barris de Llevant, salpicats d'alteroses xemeneies, es perdien en una boirada de vapor que la brillantor del sol fonia amb les tintes de la costa, rosses, nacarades, mig velades per una vapor d'or. [...] Un cel de blau desmaiàt, amb llapissades de perla aigualit, harmonitzava aquell conjunt de tons finíssims, que feia espurnejar els ulls d'en Foix i li travava la llengua. (Oller 2012: 169)

In this panoramic scene, Foix is symbolically placed above the city, from the viewpoint of his associate Giró's home in the hilly Pedralbes area. He views the city in a similar manner to Flaubert: as a stage set, a work of art, or a dead object; Flaubert's Paris belongs to the speculators and financiers who reshape it to their own ends, leaving the masses with a sense of loss and dispossession (Harvey 2003: 88). Another Flaubertian characteristic, identified by Castellanos, is the appearance of Barcelona as the backdrop to the family drama that is to be played out on it (1995: 147). The city appears as the messy blur of a metropolis rather than the carefully ordered and rationalized city of Cerdà's *urbanización*; the Eixample plays a secondary role to the hazy, ill-defined urban agglomeration represented by Barcelona (Castellanos 1995: 147). This corresponds to the capitalist drive to strip the city of its recognizable form and image in order to recreate a new image in the service of mass industry. Oller's panorama of modern Barcelona reflects this drive, the city is 'confosa', 'immensa', its edges blurred by a fog of steam reflecting all kinds of colours from the sky and coastline. A metaphorical layer is added to these descriptive elements: the coast is the colour of mother of pearl, the steam is gold and the sky is also streaked with pearl. These precious, valuable materials further connect

the capitalist vision of the city to money and the aspiration to acquire objects of high value as the symbols of wealth.

Georg Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* (*Philosophie des Geldes*, 1900; English translation 2004) can further elucidate the connection of the city to money. According to Simmel, money is an important mechanism that links individuals together on a large scale, and for the coordination of networks of people. Money allows human exchanges and interactions to be lifted out of the realm of community (such as in the small-scale, face-to-face interactions of Cabet's *Icaria*) and into society. As we see in the evocation of precious commodities in Oller's description of Barcelona, money is able to turn qualities into quantities (Simmel 2004 [1900]: 278). A value system based on concrete, visually perceived qualities is transferred to the mediating substance of money, which has no value of its own and is always in flux; as Leigh Mercer says, unstable capital becomes 'unhinged from the concrete and the signified' (2013: 121).

In the case of *La febre d'or*, the events of the bourgeois family drama epitomize the transition from a local, perceivable value system to one that is hidden and constantly changing. Gil's son-in-law, Eladi, remarks to him that '...tothom vol ser ric, i ho serà qui més sàpiga aprofitar l'ocasió', to which Gil replies: '—Sí, noi; però honradament, s'entén: amb lleialtat, amb honor' (Oller 2012: 44). Gil repeats his mantra of 'amb honradesa, amb lleialtat, amb honor!' throughout the book, and he demonstrates a steadfast belief that religious faith is a factor in his wealth: 'amb l'ajuda de Déu i la intercessió de mossèn Pere, tots serem feliços' (Oller 2012: 47, 201). However, the deeper he gets into the world of business and banking, the less he is able to remain true to these guiding principles, as the value system of the money economy only recognizes numerical values assigned by the logic of capital. Another of Simmel's influential works, the essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903; English translation 2002), refers to the sense of alienation the individual experiences in the modern city, which creates certain psychological conditions. In Simmel's observation, the mental life of the metropolis has an 'essentially intellectualistic character', meaning that, instead of resting on feelings and emotional relationships as in the small town, the citizen of the metropolis reacts rationally to the urban environment, behaviour is 'moved to a sphere of mental activity which is least sensitive and which is furthest removed from the depths of the personality' (Simmel 2002 [1903]: 12). This intellectualism protects the urban citizen from the domination of the metropolis and it occurs as a result of the money economy, the 'frightful leveller' which 'reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level' (Simmel 2002 [1903]:

14, 12). Money has therefore caused relationships in the city to become purely intellectual, in the sense that they treat people as numbers, 'which are of interest only insofar as they offer something objectively perceivable' (Simmel 2002 [1903]: 12). The urban citizen therefore succumbs to a 'purely objective existence', having been 'reduced to a negligible quantity' or a 'single cog' from whose hands everything connected with progress, spirituality and value is forcibly removed (Simmel 2002 [1903]: 18). Simmel acknowledges the ideas of Ruskin and Nietzsche, who scorn the metropolis and propose an extreme individualism to counteract the de-spiritualized intellectualism that characterizes urban life, which Simmel glosses in turn as 'the atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture' (Simmel 2002 [1903]: 19). City life also causes the citizen to have a perpetually blasé outlook, the result of the overstimulation of the nervous system that leaves the urban citizen drained of energy (Simmel 2002: 14).

Simmel's viewpoint represents an awareness of the shift in subjectivity that the expansion of cities brought with them in the nineteenth century, as societies reacted to and promoted in their turn, the developing capitalist economy. This urbanized subjectivity is prominent in *La febre d'or*, as evidenced by Gil's abandonment of traditional family values and his giddiness at the prospect of turning a profit from new business ventures without giving a second thought to the consequences of such ventures and the effect they will have on those around him. His in-laws, the Balenyà family, are similarly characterized by this urbanized subjectivity, exploiting the Foix family structure which provided Eladi with a well remunerated career and a windfall to put towards his marriage, by essentially embezzling funds from Gil's company until it goes bankrupt.

The turn away from the values and relations of the pre-capitalist era represents a deterritorialization, whose cultural effects are discussed by Mark Fisher. Fisher terms this transition the 'massive desacralization of culture' because capitalism, as a system, is 'no longer governed by any transcendent Law; on the contrary, it dismantles all such codes, only to re-install them on an *ad hoc* basis' (2009: 8). An example of this phenomenon is Sieburth's aforementioned 'folk': the poor and needy, once worthy of charity granted by the transcendent Christian principle of giving to those in need, are deterritorialized. Their condition of poverty is detached from any immovable principle of the social order, and they are reterritorialized as working members of society just like any other. They are thus no longer worthy of receiving alms and must take it upon themselves to make their situation bearable by selling their labour on the market in return for a wage. Time also

becomes privatized as labour time, stripped of any public significance. Privatization is ‘the formation of a flow that has no specific or collective meaning, that is the same whether it is mine or yours, has no sense, locus or identity *and becomes what it is only with appropriation*’ (Colebrook 2006: 35; emphasis in original). In capitalism, time is privatized. Money creates a single flow that recognizes no difference as it circulates. To cite Claire Colebrook’s example, I can buy a patch of land on the other side of the world, build on it and make money from it because ‘the matter of the world has no intrinsic quality’ and can be distributed and appropriated at will (2006: 35). This is seen in Cerdà’s vision of covering the earth in an orthogonal grid for the purpose of facilitating mobility, which relates very clearly to Gil’s belief that property in the capitalist economy is reduced to ‘l’incessant moviment de l’univers’, allowing us to see that nineteenth-century subjectivity is rooted in constant mobility (Oller 2012: 166).

Gil and the speculators operate within these networks of the virtual and intangible, which allow for unobstructed movement. Money and property become detached from tangible, material objects and instead form the basis of a conceptual network articulated virtually based on imagination, which is equally excited by money and the potential for riches (Resina 2008: 35-36). Visual apprehension is of great importance in the novel: Gil’s gaze is always the device through which he speculates, perhaps the most prominent example of this being his behaviour at the funeral proceedings of his mother-in-law, Mònica. Gil, believing in an inflated version of his own self-importance, invites prominent figures from banking and politics to the vigil, and they barely fit in Mònica’s small flat, prompting his brother-in-law, Francesc, to accuse him of having robbed his mother from him. Later, at the burial, Gil soon forgets all about the emotional commotion of the scene and his mind (and, crucially, his gaze) turn to business once again. He points out to his colleagues the areas of coastline and vegetable gardens that he intends to buy to construct an arsenal he has been planning. The narrator highlights Gil’s gaze as he contemplates the scene before him: ‘Sa vista, encesa, d’ambició, s’esplaiava per aquella immensa plana. *I tot era moure’s, i anar i venir*, i assenyalar amb aquell bastó inquiet els grans rodals de terra que ja es veia seva, que adquiriria sens dubte’ (Oller 2012: 298; emphasis added). He also thinks that a rich man like him could do with a pantheon visible from afar and he does not leave the cemetery until he has chosen the precise location for it.

Indeed, Gil no longer recognizes what is sacred and has little regard for tradition. Catarina also notices Gil’s personality change as he relishes the thrills of the game of

stock trading: ‘Aquell marit se li anava trasmudant [...]. No semblava sinó que els diners li ingerien una ciència infusa molt diferent de la que fins aleshores havia conegut. L’*ex-fusteret* de Sant Cugat s’anava enfilant com les carbasseres’ (Oller 2012: 165). Catarina could not feel ‘els entusiasmes del seu marit pels negocis aleatoris de Borsa, que la feien viure amb l’*ai al cor*’, and which distracted Gil from his duties as supposedly the head of the household: ‘mentrestant en Foix anava sentint cada dia més la febre de Borsa, vivia cada dia més distret de la família’ (Oller 2012: 312, 325). This change bears metaphorical resemblance to the economic policy of *desamortización* (disentailment, or confiscation in this context), spearheaded by Progresista politicians Juan Álvarez Mendizábal in 1836-37 and Pascual Madoz in 1855, under which land and property belonging to the nobility and the Church was sold to the public.³⁰ Gil and the speculators, as Catarina rightly identifies, turn property into the means with which to gain more money through its constant purchase and sale. Catarina also understands property as the guarantee of the next generation’s fortune: it secures their future in a more concrete way than shares could. Instead, Catarina’s view of wealth is that it should be tied down in property:

Sense saber-ho explicar, la propietat era, per a aquella dona, condensació de treballs i afanys de l’home previsor, amb la qual assegura i consolida l’esdevenidor de sos hereus; producte de l’esforç, no instrument per a aconseguir-lo. [...] La propietat, ella, la volia neta, ben deslligada de tots els atzars que corrien. (Oller 2012: 76)

Property needs to be safeguarded from the ‘anarchy’ of financial speculation; Catarina understands the accumulation of wealth teleologically, with property the end result of processes in which accumulated wealth is condensed. Bernat intuits the unfolding of a similar phenomenon. He is wary of the speculators’ penchant for risky adventures instead of tried-and-tested ways of making money in industry: ‘el bon Bernat es planyia que tots els capitals preferissin les aventures de la Borsa als profits de la indústria’ (Oller 2012: 63). Bernat’s observation registers how the investors prefer the virtual nature of the exchange economy above the materiality of traditional means of production. Combined with the imaginative gaze that this engenders, we can speak of their propensity for fantasy

³⁰ Luis Ubalde explains that the policy of *desamortización* did not succeed in its aim to free up land that belonged to the ‘*manos muertas*’ as was intended because the sale of disentailed properties in large batches made it impossible for farmers and smallholders to compete with the tenders of powerful landowners, who then often raised the rents (2020: 143). This situation promoted the widespread discontent felt in rural areas against the liberal government and provided fuel for the successive Carlist wars (Ubalde 2020: 143).

over reality, as they ignore the material conditions upon which the economic system depends, a key element of Braidotti's analysis of subjectivity under capitalism.

Yet for all this, looking at *La febre d'or* through the lens of the *urbe* has its limitations. These result from Oller's poetics, which in some crucial ways is not compatible with the central tenets of the *urbe*. Despite the considerable inspiration he found in the works of Zola, and several influential critics' appraisal of his own work as worthy of the Naturalist label, Oller's method of creating fiction is decidedly not Naturalist. Oller was considered a Naturalist by other Spanish and Catalan writers in the 1880s, most prominently by Clarín, who remarked that if one is looking for a Naturalist novel, one ought to look no further than Oller's first novel *La papallona* (Vidal-Tibbits 1989: 174). However, this is undermined by the fact that 'the true meaning of this concept had not been accurately established in Spain' (Vidal-Tibbits 1989: 180). Oller considered himself a Naturalist writer because he regarded external reality as the most suggestive material for his works, as attested by his memoirs: 'en la contemplació de les coses reals és on he trobat sempre mos principals deliquis, tota la inspiració de mes narracions i mes novel·les' (1962: 338). After reading Zola for the first time (he read *Une page d'amour* [1878]), he was highly impressed by 'el gran contingent de poesia que conté a voltes el natural per qui sap ben observar-lo' (Oller 1962: 6). These statements, however, reveal a much more Romantic than Naturalist way of conceiving of art. Zola does not set himself the aim of unveiling beauty in his works, but reveals the 'natural' course of his characters' lives given their genetic make-up and environment, according to his determinist philosophy.

Zola indeed disagreed with Oller and the Spanish critics regarding Oller's Naturalism. In the prologue to the French translation of Oller's *La papallona*, Zola declared Oller to be 'mille fois non' a Naturalist because of the lack of positivism and determinism in his work; Zola thought that Oller was more accurately 'un conteur qui s'émeut de son récit, qui va jusqu'au bout de son attendrissement, quitte a sortir du vrai' (1886: iv). Critics now agree that Oller is, overall, not a Naturalist, but that there are some aspects of Naturalism in his writings. Dorca references Oller's limited or partial approach to literary realism (2001: 62), and Beser remarks that his narration is too reliant on the cultivation of a sentimental and moralizing tone (1977: 345). Tayadella also comments on Oller's prose, locating it outside of the Naturalism theorized by Zola (1986a: 606). *La febre d'or* was written from Oller's intense memories rather than rigorous research (Yates 1975a: 56), which does not correlate with Zola's blueprint for Naturalism. The role that

Oller attributes to the novelist is not the same as that attributed by Zola: ‘Oller planteja el principi genèric de la naturalesa vista a través d’un temperament’, a temperament that is looking for beauty and a poetic truth, elements that do not interest Zola (Tayadella 1986b: 65). Indeed, Beser is of the opinion that ‘el sentimentalisme romàntic i la preocupació moralitzadora, en el sentit més elevat, són els motius que l’aparten en alguns moments del naturalisme’ (1965: 7). Montoliu is more resolute, saying (in 1948) that there is nothing of proper Naturalism in Oller (cited in Vidal-Tibbitts 1989: 178). However, critics agree that *L’Escanyapobres* and *La bogeria* come close to a kind of Naturalism; perhaps the best names for it are ‘realisme-naturalisme autòcton’ – Yates’s term (1980: 14) – or ‘naturalismo español’ (Gilabert 1977: 82).³¹

In *La febre d’or*, these statements of poetics are expressed through the opinions of the artist, Francesc Tió, Catarina’s brother. Francesc remembers contemplating the sea and the sunsets in Tarragona, and in contrast to Gil, when he looks out at the world, he sees it as poetry not business. Francesc sees beauty and Gil sees the potential for money. When his marriage to Gil’s daughter, Delfina, is suggested, Francesc is resolute that he would never accept ‘la filla d’un home que no sabia apreciar altre talent que el de fer diners’; in fact he would rather die of consumption (Oller 2012: 272). Yet Gil and Francesc display a similarity in that they both conceive of the world imaginatively. Gil imagines the real estate he could build and sell, while the beauty that Francesc sees can be translated into works of art to be sold on the market and thus turn a profit. Francesc is therefore not as ‘anti-capitalist’ as Fernández Cifuentes considers him to be (2020: 124) because his bohemian lifestyle is funded by the income he gains from the sale of his mother’s house. It is Bernat who proposes a real challenge, or at least indifference, to this way of subsisting. He contemplates the horizon with an oneiric gaze: ‘llançà la mirada somiadora als confins d’aquell horitzó infinit que la calitja enterbolia, i pensà que era més infinit i misteriós encara el cor de l’home’ before saying to himself: ‘La vida no té fi: tot evoluciona, tot es transforma, tot roda... roda... rodarà eternament, i mai, mai no en sabrem el com ni el perquè’ (Oller 2012: 299). He displays an attitude that is not constantly striving to extract something profitable (for either monetary or aesthetic gain) from the world around him.

³¹ Gilabert’s work studies Oller in the context of the nineteenth-century Spanish, as opposed to Catalan, novel, placing him on an equal footing with authors such as Galdós, Clarín and Pereda. His reason for this is the nineteenth-century novelist’s ‘carácter sociológico y monumentalidad’, which ‘sólo pueden ser estudiados en un marco más amplio que el netamente local del novelista’ (Gilabert 1977: 20).

Hence the limitations of *urbe*: at least in the case of Oller, our study is limited because of the moralizing and sentimental tone of the narrator, which clings to the hierarchy and the ‘shoulds’ of the *civitas* and appears, in many ways, to be unable to accept (let alone embrace) the pure circulation of the *urbe*. This has to do with Oller’s poetics, which are rooted in Romanticism. He finds beauty in nature and seeks to reproduce this beauty in literature, a posture which is decidedly at odds with Naturalism as formulated by Zola. This in some ways speaks to the misunderstanding of Naturalism that was widespread among writers in the Spanish state, as attested by Clarín’s and Zola’s conflicting appraisals of Oller’s first novel *La papallona*. *La febre d’or* is constructed around Oller’s tacit awareness of a subjectivity in the process of urbanizing. As Gil remarks to Catarina: ‘Tu segueixes veient-me com al carrer d’En Gíriti, i, noia, el teu marit és tot un altre. L’home no és una essència pura, perennement *una, pura, invariable*: l’home és com una esponja que s’amara, es tenyeix i dona de si segons les substàncies amb què la mulles’ (Oller 2012: 244; emphasis in original). We can argue that Gil to a great extent embodies urbanized subjectivity along the lines of my interpretation of *urbe*; however, as we have seen, the novel is not fully able to sustain the kind of praxis that *urbe* demands because the space of pure movement is reterritorialized in such a way that virtual networks take precedence over material ones and Oller’s resulting narration verges too far into the sentimental and moralizing. In the next chapter, we move on to discuss the ways in which *urbanización* attempts to regulate the social order in a text in which, to invert Galdós’s exhortation (see Chapter 2, note 17), questions of realism are subordinate to the imaginative potential of more popular genres: the *fulletó* and the cinema.

Chapter 3

Urbanización and the Regulation of the Social Order (1):

Caterina Albert, *Un film (3000 metres)* (1926)

In Cerdà's formulation, *urbanización* is a regulatory framework that seeks to secure the smooth functioning of the social order via cognitive means. This is to be achieved by tending to the individual's requirements for a greater amount of private space, the lack of which Cerdà identifies as the root cause of physical, economic and moral defects. In Cerdà's words:

De esa falta de departamentos individuales en las habitaciones resultan gravísimos daños en el orden moral, higiénico y económico. Los sentimientos delicados se embotan, se pierden o pervierten desde la primera juventud. La falta de independencia quebranta la nobleza de las aspiraciones, [...] destruye las constituciones naturalmente robustas y enerva las fuerzas físicas, y distraído, por fin, el individuo por la compañía no desciende al fondo de su conciencia, ni puede producir las obras que tal vez en la soledad llevaría a cabo en provecho de la familia y de la sociedad. (Cerdà 1867/1: 598)¹

Urbanización therefore attempts to correct this by restructuring the physical layout of cities with wider roads and larger dwellings to increase the amount of space pertaining to each individual. This fact alone will, in Cerdà's formulation, produce the necessary improvements in the moral constitution of urban subjects such that they will behave in ways that contribute to the good of society through, for example, the production of ideas that can then be put into practice out of the home, in society at large. Cerdà therefore assumes that a significant amount of cognitive labour will naturally occur in the private dwelling space, or *el intervías*, to use his terminology, given the increased amount of space that both frees and shields the individual from the poisoning influences of the physical and moral defects of others. He also assumes that this cognitive labour will reduce the burden on the state to regulate the social order. *Urbanización* therefore

¹ Narcís Oller makes similar comments to Cerdà in this regard in the article 'El enlace de las Ramblas' published in *La Vanguardia*, 24 January 1890: 'Diríase que los grandes espacios asustan a los hombres pequeños; que quien anda cohibido por la estrechez del propio criterio no puede concebir que se muevan con holgura los demás. Más que por motivos de higiene física, por razones de higiene moral, de esa que ensancha el criterio y las ideas, conviene, pues, la reforma interior de Barcelona. Quizás, una vez destruidos esos callejones que dan al barcelonés falsa medida del contraste y más falsa idea aún de la comodidad y belleza urbana, aprenderemos a amar la holgura y la grandiosidad de líneas' (Oller cited in Cabré 2004: 184).

relocates the responsibility of ensuring that individuals behave morally onto individuals themselves, and it does this by reconfiguring the physical form of the urban environment.

The assumptions that Cerdà makes in casting *urbanización* as a force capable of regulating the social order are explored here, and in the following chapter. Through an analysis of Caterina Albert's *Un film (3000 metres)* (1926), this chapter suggests that *urbanización* ultimately achieves the opposite of what it is supposed to. That is, it only contributes further to the degeneration of the social order precisely because of the increased sense of alienation it produces. Our discussion draws on an understanding of individual behaviour modelled on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and the social implications of this as developed in the works of cultural theorists Todd McGowan and Slavoj Žižek. Building on this psychoanalytical foundation, Chapter 4 looks in more detail at the structural device of *el intervías*, which provides an urbanistic lens through which to view motifs such as transgression and secrecy in Josep Maria de Sagarra's *Vida privada* (1932). *El intervías* is shown to be unable to stabilize subjectivity and it therefore cannot stabilize the social order.

Un film (3000 metres)

Un film (3000 metres) (hereafter referred to as *Un film*) was first published in instalments ('fulletons') under the title ***3.000 metres in the literary review *Catalana* between April 1918 and September 1921. *Catalana* was founded by writer and publisher Francesc Matheu in 1918 'com a tribuna popular des d'on poder combatre la secció filològica de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans i les seves normes ortogràfiques' (*Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* n.d., online). *Catalana*'s collaborators were often prestigious writers who were hostile to Pompeu Fabra's prescriptivism and to Noucentisme, as indeed was Albert, who was also a member of the Acadèmia de la Llengua Catalana, an anti-Fabra group. *Catalana* published weekly until 1921 and then fortnightly until 1926 when it closed as the editors were unwilling to subject the publication to the censorship imposed by the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (*Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana*, n.d., online).

Un film was republished in 1926 in book form by Llibreria Catalònia, which had acquired Editorial Catalana the year before.² This is important because it registers the

² Citations are taken from the fourth edition of the novel, published by Club Editor in 2018.

shifting landscape of publishing, which altered as Noucentisme came and went. Editorial Catalana had been set up in 1917 on the initiative of Enric Prat de la Riba with literary direction from Josep Carner.³ It had the aim of professionalizing writers, which the Noucentistes had not yet accomplished. Until this point, Noucentista authors had written under the auspices of institutions, which freed them from the most commercially successful genres, but constrained them to a defined set of political and ideological parameters (Castellanos 1987: 37-38). Catalana changed this by providing an outlet for more popular and commercially viable literature: ‘obria [...] una via nova, la creació d’un mercat literari normal, basat en les lleis de l’oferta i la demanda (tot i que l’editorial venia condicionada perquè depenia clarament de la Lliga i trobava el seu públic entre els subscriptors de *La Veu de Catalunya*)’ (Castellanos 1987: 38). What Jordi Castellanos puts in parentheses here is actually of some importance to this study of Albert, because it makes clear that a work like *Un film* could not be published to commercial success during the height of Noucentisme in the early 1910s.

Un film responds to popular tastes, which were reflected in the silent cinema of the time. The book’s title alludes to the cinematic inheritance of the text, which is made more explicit in the prologue. Albert (in her male persona, Víctor Català) explains that in writing the novel, she has created a film (‘He fet una pel·lícula’), seemingly because of the film’s capacity for melodrama and its ability to present thrilling scenes taken from everyday life which have the purpose of distracting the audience from structural problems that cause conflicts in domestic settings (Català 2018: 7). As I go on to explain, melodrama, understood as a mode and not a genre, foregrounds the moral dimension of a work. Thus *Un film* can be seen to address the question of social regulation in line with the moral concerns of *urbanización*. First, we summarize the novel’s plot before discussing the structures that regulate daily life that it presents.⁴

The novel follows Ramon Nonat Ventura (referred to as ‘Nonat’ throughout the work), who was raised in an orphanage in Girona, and spends his adult life in search of his parents. Symbolically, he shares his name with Saint Ramon Nonat, who was born by

³ Carner stayed on until 1921 when he abandoned Noucentisme because its position had been weakened by the anti-Catalan policies of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, which abolished all Catalan institutions and prohibited the public use of the Catalan language in 1923, officially ending Noucentisme according to Illas (2012: 88). Carner left Spain to embark on a diplomatic career and, having sided with the Republicans during the Civil War, he went into exile and never returned permanently to Catalonia.

⁴ Francesca Bartrina gives an exhaustive overview of the primary masculine plot lines and secondary feminine plot lines in *Caterina Albert/Víctor Català: la voluptuositat de l’escriptura* (Eumo, 2004), pp. 267-96.

Caesarean section and is the patron saint of birth. Nonat carries traces of religious symbolism in that he was raised by nuns, and his birth mother marks him with a cross tattooed on his chest as a baby and places a Montserrat medallion on a blue ribbon around his neck, which he wears throughout his life. During his childhood in the orphanage, a wealthy man comes to collect Nonat, believing him to be his son, but Nonat is prised from his embrace by the nuns who tell the putative father that his son is another boy, a ‘nen lleig’ (Català 2018: 24). Nonat is indeed tall and handsome, yet there is something sinister about his appearance, particularly his penetrating gaze which betrays ‘alguna cosa de mal ésser’ (Català 2018: 59), a reflection of his developing narcissistic and vindictive personality. Following the incident at the orphanage, which leaves Nonat angry and humiliated, the nuns try to convince him not to worry about his father and this sparks a change in his character: ‘mudà enterament de geni: es tornà taciturn, concentrat, recelós, esquerp. Odiava les monges. “L’havien enganyat! Ell tenia papà; el tenia, ben cert, però no sabia on, i si no anava a buscar-lo el seu papà a l’Hospici, ell fugiria de l’Hospici i aniria a buscar el seu papà”’ (Català 2018: 25). One day the orphanage is visited by a good-natured locksmith in search of an apprentice. Nonat jumps at the opportunity and leaves the orphanage in the locksmith’s employ. He develops an attraction to fashionable clothes and accessories, crafting his own jewellery from pieces of scrap metal, while the locksmith buys him presents of new clothes and accessories that Nonat himself chooses. As a result of his charm, politeness and attempt to cultivate a sophisticated appearance, and also because of his relative poverty, he earns the tongue-in-cheek nickname ‘El Senyoret’.⁵ After several years, he becomes unable to ignore the strong desire to find his birth parents and he takes the chance to relocate to Barcelona when his friend, Peroi, announces he is moving there to look for work. In a sentimental scene, he says farewell to the locksmith, who gives him a golden doubloon coin (the first wages the locksmith ever received) which Nonat keeps on his person from then on, and which ‘es convertí per a ell en una fetilleria, en una benèfica *mascota*’ (Català 2018: 74; italics in original). His life then begins to change dramatically.

Nonat is convinced his parents are very wealthy ‘gent de possibles’: ‘Ell sentia que els seus pares eren gent com cal, gent de possibles... En tenia la certesa absoluta, perquè aquestes coses prou les diu clarament una veu misteriosa aquí dins’ (Català 2018:

⁵ For instance, despite not having a watch, Nonat makes a watch chain using knitting needles and scraps of brass and hangs it from one pocket to another ‘per goig de veure’s l’encisadora lluïssor’ (Català 2018: 27). The watchless chain functions as a metonym for his superficial elegance.

30).⁶ He believes that he deserves wealth to match theirs, and the dazzling, frenetic city excites him with its promise of new opportunity. He moves in with Peroi's aunt and her daughter Carlota, whom Peroi is desperately attracted to. His affections are not returned, however, as Carlota instead falls madly in love with Nonat, who does not care for romantic relationships. When Peroi finds out Nonat is the object of Carlota's affections, he explodes with rage and Nonat leaves the house to go and live with his foreman, Joan Rovira, his wife, Pepita, and their eight year-old son, Octavi. At this point, an episode occurs that is testament to the novel's melodramatic nature because of the excessive character of the events that unfold and their reliance on improbable causes. Nonat is one day eating a melon in the street and gives Octavi a slice. The boy soon develops a fever, which turns out to be meningitis, and dies, the slice of melon seeming to be the cause of his illness. Rovira then enters a period of severe depression and his performance at work suffers considerably. Nonat sees an opportunity to climb the professional ladder and coerces the firm's owner, Senyor Ramoneda, into sacking Rovira and paying him Rovira's wage. After he is sacked, Rovira begins deliriously to walk home and eventually steps deliberately in front of a tram and is killed. Nonat is the first to inform the investigating judge of the turn of events and confidently claims that the other men at the factory work under his supervision. However, they had not been informed this was the case before Rovira's death (Nonat's 'promotion' occurred on the same day) and when questioned by the judge, they say Nonat is a worker, just like them. When concluding the investigation in public at the courthouse, the judge confronts Nonat with this discrepancy, which hurts Nonat's vanity and forces him to wheedle himself out of the situation. Nonat does go on to become the de facto foreman and under his leadership the workshop goes from strength to strength.

With the extra money he has made from his 'promotion' and frequent embezzlement of funds from the company, he frequents the Liceu, where those wishing to establish their place among Barcelona's high society go to exhibit themselves. Here, Albert portrays him as painfully self-conscious as he mimics the attire and etiquette of those around him and is desperate to impress the city's aspirational classes, although he feels somewhat out of his depth. A decisive moment occurs when Ramoneda one day catches Nonat at work using an ornate cigarette holder he stole from one of the firm's

⁶ Albert's prose is frequently punctuated with ellipsis marks. Unless enclosed in square brackets, ellipsis marks given in quotations do not stand for omissions.

contractors. Nonat violently threatens Ramoneda, who promises not to say a word to the authorities, and Nonat leaves the company scot-free. He sets out on his own, resolving never to work under the control of anyone else again, declaring “‘Mai més amos!’” (Català 2018: 216). He buys an old forge and uses it as a base from which to operate his budding criminal enterprise, eventually recruiting a gang of petty criminals – the grizzly Nas-Ratat and violent Xé – and well-mannered though easily impressionable youths, such as Salvi, the son of the forge’s only previous worker. The gang, always under Nonat’s firm leadership, embarks on increasingly complex and ambitious heists in Barcelona, Lleida (where he ends up sharing a train carriage with the judge from the court proceedings) and Girona (where he learns that his old boss at the locksmith’s drank himself to death after Nonat’s departure). Nonat gains considerable wealth and travels around the Iberian Peninsula and France, although he feels much more comfortable in Catalonia because he does not have to rely on his backstreet Spanish (‘castellà repropí i deslluït’ [Català 2018: 332]) and lack of ability to speak foreign languages.⁷

After enjoying a lengthy period of prosperity and notoriety (the gang’s activities are covered sensationally by the press but the members’ identities remain unknown), Nonat’s downfall finally comes during the burglary of a house that belongs, unbeknownst to him, to his own mother, the wife of a South American consul. (His birth father had been a young soldier his mother had met while she was working as a maid at the home of Nonat’s grandfather, who happened to be a judge. Years later, after she had married the rich South American, the pair met again by chance and continued their affair.) In this scene – in which the sense of danger is symbolically heightened (or melodramatically exaggerated) by its setting during a thunderstorm – he rifles through cupboards searching for gold bonds when he is discovered and shot by his half-brother, and the injury leaves his face disfigured. He is arrested and tried in court by the same judge, and sentenced to prison in Tarragona.⁸ While being transported by train to the prison, he makes to escape only to be shot in the neck and back by the guards, and this time his wounds are fatal.

⁷ Another example of Nonat’s difficulty in speaking Spanish occurs during the interaction between Nonat and the judge mentioned earlier. Nonat responds ‘en un castellà treballós i ridícul’ that alters the register in which he talks to the judge: ‘parlava amb altivesa, una mica temperada per sa gran dificultat a expressar-se en llengua estrangera’ (Català 2018: 195). This compounds Nonat’s status as an outsider or misfit who is kept out of the language of the law, or the Name of the Father, as this chapter proceeds to argue.

⁸ The book makes reference to all four Catalan provincial capitals, sketching out the geography of the Mancomunitat. We could read this as an imagined Catalan state, which would suggest a possible nationalistic allegory that is not implausible given Albert’s keen defence of the Catalan language. The connection between, on the one hand, her defence and promotion of Catalan through writing and, on the other, attempts at Catalan nation-building during the years of Noucentisme is strengthened if we take into

The central research question of this chapter arises from the following: the fact that Nonat does not produce ‘las obras que tal vez en la soledad llevaría a cabo en provecho de la familia y de la sociedad’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 598) suggests that Albert, through the construction of a cinematographically styled melodrama, implicitly contests Cerdà’s claims about *urbanización*. While *urbanización* is supposed to provide the optimum psychological conditions for the development of the cognitive faculties towards superior virtue and integrity, *Un film* illustrates that although Nonat inhabits the Eixample, he is unable to contribute to the common good. The chapter therefore asks: is *urbanización* capable of regulating the social order via psychological means?

This question will be approached via a reading of the novel and of *urbanización* in line with Lacanian psychoanalysis, which provides suitable critical apparatus with which to produce a picture of the cognitive mechanisms at play in *urbanización*. Nonat’s move from Girona to Barcelona is illustrative of the transition of the subject through the Imaginary and Symbolic stages, and Nonat’s failure to live harmoniously with others in Barcelona is explained in terms of a psychoanalytic understanding of desire that traps the subject in cycles of desire in a way that does not appear to occur in Girona. The dichotomy between the two cities sits at the crux of the novel: Barcelona, through its association with Nonat’s birth parents, presents an excess of signification that takes it beyond the need to provide only the conditions for the reproduction of bare life.⁹ These conditions are located in Girona, where the void produced by the excess of signification is

account Edgar Illas’s hypothesis that ‘stateless literatures are impelled to construct the nation that lacks full political status’ (2020: 131); i.e., literatures of stateless languages cannot help imagining a nation-state. This is because, ‘as Giorgio Agamben affirms, stateless languages do not function as mere communicative tools but always have political implications, and Catalan is a paradigmatic example’ (Illas 2020: 131). (Illas here refers to Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* [University of Minnesota Press, 2000], pp. 66-67.) This would add weight to the argument that Albert’s use of ‘imperfect’ or ‘impure’ Catalan (to use the contemporary reviewers’ descriptors) is a doubly political manoeuvre. In the first instance, and if we are to follow Agamben’s reasoning, any kind of writing in Catalan is inherently political because of the language’s statelessness, while secondly Albert’s idiosyncratic, non-standard lexicon contravenes precisely the kind of Catalan that Noucentisme codified as part of its attempt at nation-building, as it does not comply with the Institut d’Estudis Catalans’ *Normes ortogràfiques* of 1913.

⁹ The ‘excess of signification’ is a key concept in psychoanalysis. It begins with the Lacanian ‘mirror stage’, in which the infant recognizes its own reflection, a process which renders the infant a ‘subject’ that is an entity distinct from the world around it. This is followed by the infant’s entrance into the Symbolic Order, which is the realm of language: the child begins to use language to interact with the world. The implication is that through the process of signification (i.e., the conversion of the world into a linguistic system), the child loses the direct access to the world, or to the ‘Real’, that it enjoyed prior to the mirror stage. Because we can only approximate ourselves to objects through language, it is impossible for our desire to be fulfilled as desired objects only present yet more layers of signification. This concept is explained in more detail later in the chapter.

filled instead with religion. This is the basis for the hypothesis that *urbanización*, as a cognitive tool, is not capable of regulating the social order in the way Cerdà envisages.

The remainder of this section sets out and explains the aspects of *urbanización* with which Albert tacitly engages in *Un film*, and it sets the work within its context of melodrama and Noucentisme, with which Albert consciously and directly engages. The cognitive aspect of *urbanización* is to be found in the isolation and protection of the psyche: the individual needs to have enough space at its disposal to think freely and limitlessly (‘necesita [...] una expansión y una libertad sin límites’ [Cerdà 1867/1: 597]) in order to incubate the ‘elucubraciones mentales’ that ennoble the individual through its contribution to the social good (‘las obras que tal vez en la soledad llevaría a cabo en provecho de la familia y de la sociedad’ [Cerdà 1867/1: 598]). Cerdà places considerable emphasis on the individual’s need for deep thought, to ‘[descender] al fondo de su conciencia’ and rigorously understand the self, which in turn invigorates the individual’s physical constitution, establishing a clear link between the health of the mental faculties and moral and physical hygiene (1867/1: 598). Cerdà also espouses here an understanding of the social world in terms of individual, personal psychology: an individual’s mental faculties must be cultivated and enhanced in isolation if the healthy functioning of society is to see any improvement.

Urbanización therefore erects a barrier between the individual and the social world, a barrier that Cerdà characterizes as protective: it shelters us from the corrupting effect of strangers and crowds. This assumption is in accordance with Richard Sennett’s thesis in *The Fall of Public Man* (1977), which argues that a fixation on understanding the social world in terms of individual, personal psychology can lead only to the degeneration of the social order. The basis of Sennett’s argument lies in the epistemic shift effected between ancient and modern understandings of privacy. Whereas ‘the Roman in private sought another principle to set against the public, a principle based on religious transcendence of the world’, by contrast, in the modern era ‘we seek out not a principle but a reflection, that of what our psyches are, what is authentic in our feelings’ (Sennett 1977: 4). Inés García López, in *Calla i paga: encontres entre política i psicoanàlisi* (2022), further the argument that the modern subject is expected to demonstrate a certain ‘hipervigilància’ of the body and mind: ‘l’imperatiu de perfeccionament exigeix una atenció constant respecte al nostre cos i les nostres emocions’ (2022: 77). García López cites mindfulness as an example of a ‘psicologia positiva’ which presents itself as a ‘sensualitat hedonista [que] és considerada com l’únic camí autèntic que ens portarà a la

veritat i ens allunyarà de la confusió que causa el pensament crític. [...] Només en l'atenció en el present podem copsar allò "autèntic" i allò que "realment" som' (2022: 80-81). This corroborates Sennett's thesis that we try to treat 'the fact of being in private, alone with ourselves and with family and intimate friends, as an end in itself', as if the psyche had an inner life of its own (1977: 4). Sennett and García López concur in their propositions that we are encouraged to perform cognitive work in the service of ourselves, of our own psyche; we obsess over understanding our own minds and believe that this understanding can only arise in private, in a space free of the horrors of the social world.

While García López attributes this phenomenon to the frustration and discomfort produced by the logic of neoliberal capitalist consumption – '*mindfulness* s'ha d'entendre en el context d'expansió de producció de subjectivitats neoliberals' (2022: 79) – Sennett's reasoning for turning our backs on the social world lies in the profound societal changes that took effect in the nineteenth century which caused us 'to undervalue the community relations of strangers, particularly those which occur in cities' (Sennett 1977: 4). Cerdà of course wants to reconfigure the city so that society places greater value on and trust in the community relations of strangers, yet at the same time, his plan for *urbanización* appears to further the interests of capitalist expansion. This suggests a contradiction: while Cerdà's aims appear noble and aspire to correct the societal malaise of his time and which García López identifies in more recent eras, his epistemological interpretation of the problem (or his way of framing it) betrays a disconnect between the problem at hand and the approach to solving it.

The urban aspect of the change in the production of subjectivities helps us to understand that the city, as restructured in the nineteenth century, is geared in such a way as to cause breakdowns in the social order despite the best intentions of engineers such as Cerdà. This position is bolstered if we take into account the rise of secularism and industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century, which are said, by Sennett, to have caused an imbalance in the public and private spheres of urban life. Prior to the nineteenth century, an overall balance of civility ('epitomised by cosmopolitan, public behaviour') and nature ('epitomised by the family') resulted in a greater will on the part of the individual to control and shape public order (Sennett 1977: 18). However, that will, in the nineteenth century, became the will to protect oneself *from* the public, in particular by retreating into the family sphere. The family thus becomes a 'refuge from the terrors of society' and is seen as morally superior to the public sphere: 'privacy and stability

appeared to be united in the family; against this ideal order the legitimacy of the public order was thrown into question' (Sennett 1977: 20). Film studies specialist, Todd McGowan, whose works – in particular *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (2016) – explain the psychoanalytical mechanics at work in capitalism, helps us to understand the role capitalism has to play in this process. According to McGowan, 'the more subjects become subjects of capitalism, the more they turn away from public space and seek refuge in their private worlds. Even when capitalism requires that subjects interact with each other in relations of production, distribution, and consumption, it demands that they do so as private beings' (2016: 51). This is because, according to McGowan, industrial capitalism and secularism had a general flattening effect on society, and this will be outlined below. Sennett uses the example of the mass production of clothes and other goods, while Cerdà identifies urban rail transport as the key element in this process: 'los modernos inventos, unidos al ansia febril por ellos despertada, de ganar tiempo y ahorrar gastos, han sido motivo de importarse otra causa de perturbación a las muchas que ya había en las vías urbanas' (Cerdà 1867/1: 619). So Cerdà specifically connects the emergence of technological inventions, themselves a result of the shift to a capitalist economy, to the degradation of the social order.

Industrial capitalism and secularism therefore work together to 'erode the sense of public life as a morally legitimate sphere' because they make all things have meanings in themselves (Sennett 1977: 22). This fact is backed up by the equalizing or flattening effect that commodification has on society, turning everything into commodities that can be traded for items of equivalent value. In McGowan's words: 'the idea of equivalence inheres within capitalist relations of production: any commodity can be traded for any other, and even time, the one resource that we cannot replenish or replace, acquires a price and thereby becomes a factor of equivalence' (2016: 3). This flattening of pre-Enlightenment hierarchies is troublesome for Cerdà, who tries to programme into *urbanización* the means through which society can recoup a sense of shared purpose. Cerdà describes this sense of 'fraternidad' as consisting of bonds that mimic those of the family, but which exist between all members of a local community and which originally arose precisely as a result of 'vialidad', that is, of the connections that roads create:

esas buenas relaciones que convertían la calle en una especie de asociación de socorros mutuos, de hermanos, funcionaban en las urbes antiguas por medio de esa vialidad que ahora llamamos transversal, considerándola como secundaria, y

que sin embargo originariamente fue primordial, base y punto de partida de todas las demás vialidades. (1867/1: 634)¹⁰

Such relations, which Cerdà (1867/1: 634-35) describes as ‘nada más natural, en efecto, nada más conforme con la sociabilidad humana’ have been lost because of an excess of moving bodies and vehicles in the street:

La transformación que el organismo urbano ha sufrido en estos últimos tiempos, convirtiendo la calle en carretera, ha creado un obstáculo permanente a esa vialidad transversal [...] De ahí que hayan disminuido considerablemente, y en algunas urbes desaparecido por completo, las fraternales relaciones de vecindad que fomentaban. (Cerdà 1867/1: 634-35)

Cerdà locates a eudaemonic aspect, that is to say, a concern for happiness, in these neighbourly relations – ‘esos dulces sentimientos de confraternidad vecinal que constituían la felicidad de nuestros antepasados’ – yet this vital aspect is disappearing as there are people living on the same street who ‘ni siquiera se ven ni se conocen’ as a direct result of loud and fast road traffic: ‘el movimiento rodado con su estrepitosa velocidad’ (1867/1: 635). Cerdà aims to resurrect these community networks through *urbanización* by constructing domestic buildings that provide ample private space for the individual, whose cognitive growth and development will help to regulate the social order by isolating and protecting the individual from such immediate physical danger and sensory overload.

Examples of the kind of danger and sensory overload that Cerdà warns against abound in *Un film*, wherein Albert engages with the melodramatic cinema of the 1910s and 1920s.¹¹ During the period in which the ‘fulletons’ of *Un film* were first published, cinema was quickly becoming the most popular form of entertainment in Spain’s major cities. Throughout the 1910s, Barcelona had been establishing itself as ‘the principal centre of production and distribution for the whole of Spain, and in addition, the most important screening centre as well’, with around one cinema for every three thousand five hundred citizens, which was more than Madrid at the time (Minguet Batllori 2004: 94). Comic cinema was the public’s favourite genre in this period (Iribarren 2012: 238), captivating audiences by taking advantage of the possibilities of moving images in an

¹⁰ By ‘vialidad transversal’, Cerdà refers to *vialidad* which concerns the crossing of roads from one side to the other.

¹¹ Palmira González indicates that in Catalan cinema from 1911 onwards, fiction cinema takes over from historical cinema: ‘el melodrama d’ambientació realista contemporània s’imposà clarament sobre el film d’ambientació històrica’ (1987: 158).

aesthetic strategy that Jordi Revert calls ‘la estética de atracciones’ (2015: 17). This is an aesthetics of rapid, thrilling movement which consists of ‘la contemplación de cuerpos y objetos en movimiento, las acrobacias, las variadas formas de entretenimiento popular, las tomas de acontecimientos dramáticos, los panoramas de lugares exóticos o atractivos’ (Benet 2012: 29-30).

On a rudimentary level, *Un film* contains all the features of melodrama as outlined by Peter Brooks in his canonical study *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976): ‘the indulgence of strong emotionalism; moral polarisation and schematisation; extreme states of being, situations, actions; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripety’ (1976: 11-12). In the prologue to *Un film*, Albert herself outlines some of these elements, which she directly connects to silent cinema: ‘truculències’ exhibited in all their ‘extremositat’, ‘les poques endengues i traves psicològiques que es gasten en el teatre mut’, ‘salts mortals que s’hi fan per damunt de la versemblança’ (Català 2018: 7).

Teresa Bagués ascribes the ‘estética de atracciones’ to the new perspectives and modes of apprehending the city that emerged as a result of new transport technologies (2001: 125). Transportation, along with other advances in engineering that contributed to the frenetic pace of life in the early twentieth-century city, provide the new imaginary that audiences wanted to be excited by, which Vicente Benet, in *El cine español: una historia cultural*, summarizes as ‘la modernidad celebrada por sí misma’ (2012: 24; italics in original). Ben Singer identifies a similar trend in American cinema of the same period, citing its ‘preoccupation with the sensory intensity of modern life’ and effort to convey the ‘distinctive hyperconsciousness of environmental stress and physical vulnerability in the modern city’ (2001: 65, 74). *Un film* contains numerous examples of the overstimulation provoked by the modern urban environment, where roads in particular are frequent sites of danger and even death. Rovira’s suicide is a salient example, as is a scene in which Nonat’s car is overtaken at speed by another, provoking Nonat, enraged, to order his driver to race past the other car at great speed, leaving one of the occupants ‘corgelada’ (Català 2018: 375). This occupant turns out to be Nonat’s mother (and the driver of the car his half-brother).

However, a heady evocation of the modern metropolis such as this typically received harsh criticism from some sectors of society during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The sense of danger conveyed by early cinematic depictions of the city was picked up on by contemporary critics, who were beginning to

perceive a correlation between the hyperstimulus of the metropolis and popular entertainment's increasing emphasis on powerful sensations and thrills. [...] The environment of urban modernity, they surmised, had a significant impact in shaping hyperkinetic entertainments. (Singer 2001: 90)

In spite of (or perhaps because of) cinema's popularity, the media in Spain in the 1910s and 1920s was 'deeply anti-film' (Minguet Batllori 2004: 96). In the eyes of Spain's anti-cinema lobby, 'fiction cinema' was viewed as the 'origin of so many evils, perversions and incitements to criminality' and it was proposed that it be prohibited in favour of cinema with cultural and educational content (Minguet Batllori 2004: 96). In Catalonia, priest Eudald Serra i Buixó published three articles in *Lo Missatger del Sagrat Cor de Jesús* in 1918 under the title 'La maledicció del cine', with the individual pieces evocatively titled 'L'escola del crim', 'La pertorbació de les facultats i la desmoralisació' [sic] and 'La sala de la prostitució' (Gregori 2020: 119). The Noucentistes also came out against cinema. Josep Carner made his 'anticinematografisme' public, equating cinema's mode of narration with that of the novel, which the Noucentistes associated with 'la vulgaritat i [e]l mer reflex de la realitat' (Iribarren 2016: 223, 221); for the Noucentistes, cinema was nothing more than an 'art grofellut de masses' (Capmany 1972: 1865). The films and novels of this period portray an image of the modern city far removed from the kind of city the Noucentistes wanted to see reflected in art. In a similar vein, Modernistes including Santiago Rusiñol and Joan Maragall denigrated cinema for being 'un vulgar espectacle de masses' (Gregori 2020: 118), committed, as they were, to producing works of art with a more noble purpose.

Indeed, Domènec Guansé, a critic associated with Noucentisme, published a negative review of *Un film* in the *Revista de Catalunya* in December 1926.¹² Guansé laments the fact that 'l'autor renuncia [...] a la bellesa de l'expressió. [...] El gènere, sobretot tret de la pantalla, no ofereix gaires suggestions ni gaires possibilitats estètiques' (1926: 654). Guansé's review critiques the novel within a Noucentista framework, which at the time meant that novels that gave mimetic depictions of reality were to be avoided in

¹² On the whole, the book received positive reviews in the press, with notable exceptions: Guansé, Octavi Saltor (in *La Veu de Catalunya*, 31 March 1927) and Enric Bosch i Viola (in *La Nova Revista*, 4 April 1927) were critical of the work (Muñoz i Pairet 2014: 237). For a comprehensive overview of the reception of *Un film* in the press, see Irene Muñoz i Pairet, 'La recepció a la premsa d'*Un film* (1926), de Víctor Català' in *Actes del setzè Col·loqui Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes. Universitat de Salamanca, 1-6 de juliol de 2012*, ed. by Àlex Martín Escribà, Adolf Piquer Vidal and Fernando Sánchez Miret, 3 vols (Associació Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat and Universidad de Salamanca, 2014), III, pp. 235-48.

favour of more idealized constructions of urban life, expressed in a polished form of standard Catalan.¹³ Albert was against Noucentisme's 'centralisme uniformista' and showed disdain for vanity, fashions and the desire for originality for its own sake, which she saw as defining features of the contemporary aesthetic current (Font 1993: 206). M. Rosa Font claims that Albert's real intention in *Un film* is to question the uniformity and dogmatism of the Noucentista canon (1993: 224). The work is motivated by her own rules and not by anyone else's, as she mentions in an interview with Tomàs Garcés in the *Revista de Catalunya* in August 1926: 'el meu credo artístic és l'eclecticisme desenfrenat. Per això refuso els dogmes de les escoles literàries. Em semblen pures fórmules arbitràries, on els homes voldrien encabir la proteica realitat de la vida' (1926: 128). Furthermore, Francesca Bartrina argues that Albert's affirmation that 'l'autor pot ser un subjecte diferent en cada nova obra que escriu' is a key concept in interpreting her oeuvre (2001: 260). Albert defends the novelist's mobile and dynamic role, proposing a model of a writer 'que altera equilibris i mou estabilitats' (Bartrina 2001: 261).

Un film contests the artificial character of Noucentisme in that it abounds with examples of artifice and falsity: Nonat does not look like a worker, but a famous actor dressed up as a worker, and the fashionable objects whose ownership forms his identity are all stolen. The book is replete with tropes of self-fashioning (Good 2018: 64-70) or self-falsification (Castellanos 2007: 69). Kate Good reads Nonat as Albert's alter ego and considers that his story is an allegorical representation of Albert's quest to become a respected woman writer via counter-cultural means (2018: 88, 59). I disagree with this interpretation and instead read the allegory as a rejection of Noucentisme, which for Albert exercises its demands at will without actually producing works of significant value.¹⁴ Its emphasis on artifice veers too far into the false and hollow. Albert rejects it in perhaps the most egregious way she can, by creating a piece of art that purports to be

¹³ Maria Aurèlia Capmany considers that Guansé's review's strict adherence to the prevailing aesthetic doctrine of the time makes it all the more persuasive, and it exerted such an influence on Albert that she excluded *Un film* from the 1951 publication of her *Obres completes* (1972: 1866).

¹⁴ I instead read the character of Maria la Gallinaire as reflective of Albert's persona because she is an intelligent woman who makes the most of the constraints placed on women in early twentieth-century rural Catalonia. She is the wife of Jepet, a fisherman in the village of Sant Pere de Ruelles, which is perhaps modelled on Albert's native L'Escala. Maria is assertive and strong-willed – 'una dona viva, neta i treballadora' – and, unwilling to 'resignar-se a suportar mansament les hores de solitud i el desenfeinament regalat de dona marinera, s'havia cercat un ofici que omplís els seus lleures i pongués diners' (Català 2018: 14). As Albert herself did not marry, it is also worth noting that the biblically named couple are unable to conceive a child and yet it is Maria who is entrusted with Nonat and delivers him as a baby to the convent.

everything Noucentisme initially rejected at a time when it faced having to loosen its ideological constraints to attract a wider audience.

In this spirit, Font claims that Albert wanted to prove that rural writers could turn their ‘geni’ to a ‘civilized’ environment and not merely write dark novels about the geographical and human interior (1993: 214). In writing a ‘novel·la ciutadana’ – the hallmark of the Noucentista novel that emerged following Josep Carner’s call for more novels that portray an ordered, beautiful city (Castellanos 2013: 114-15)¹⁵ – Albert questions its conventions, principally its focus on the bourgeoisie, and proposes instead a projection of the ‘real’ city with all its misery and social upheavals, exhibiting a side of city life that the Noucentistes refused to depict because of its imperfections (Font 1993: 213-14).¹⁶ The use of language in *Un film* exemplifies this rebellious attitude. In her response to Guansé’s review, Albert highlights her desire to use a language that is true to life, and not use sterilized language from a laboratory (in Font 1993: 223).¹⁷ The deliberately imperfect language (if we follow Fabra’s standardization as the ‘perfect’ standard) of the book draws attention to itself because of its non-standardization and use of ‘castellanismes’: language does more than communicate a point, rather ‘the language itself is the point’ (Good 2018: 73), and this speaks to a broader element of Albert’s poetics in her work as a whole: the striving to reproduce the dark side of life that so stimulated her, or what Bartrina terms ‘la voluptuositat del dolor’ (2001: 258-59). She is much more drawn to the ugly heads of the peasants in Velázquez paintings which inspire in her a ‘vibració vital’ than by the Venus de Milo, whose ‘perfecció [...] sense

¹⁵ In Carner’s view, Barcelona is not yet a city (or a City, to maintain Carner’s orthography) and is therefore only worthy of representation in satirical novels. For more on Carner’s relation to the novel, see Jordi Castellanos, ‘Josep Carner i la literatura narrativa’, *Els Marges*, Extraordinary issue (2013), pp. 101-25.

¹⁶ Font’s portrayal of *Un film* as essentially an act of defiance differentiates the work from other Modernista city novels such as Juli Vallmitjana’s *La Xava* (1912), which sits more fully (in terms of chronology and aesthetics) within Modernisme, and Josep Maria Folch i Torres’s *Aigua avall* (1905), which explores *obrerisme*, the political substratum of a good deal of Modernista writing. It should also be differentiated from Sagarra’s *Vida privada* (1932), which, while following a similar principle of revealing intimate aspects of city life in the 1920s, was written during the Second Republic, when Noucentista ideas had fallen out of fashion.

¹⁷ Àlex Matas argues that Modernista authors employ colloquial registers that verge at times on almost incomprehensible idiolects but which often represent actual ways of speaking, and hence order and disorder the city via linguistic means. (A similar idea is advanced by Kevin Lynch in his influential work *The Image of the City* [MIT Press, 1960], which investigates how people make sense of the visual form of cities. This is explored in the context of Barcelona in *After-Images of the City*, ed. by Joan Ramon Resina and Dieter Ingenschay [Cornell University Press, 2003].) Matas cites Modernista author Juli Vallmitjana’s novel *La Xava* (1912) for its use of non-standard language, which ‘està al servici de una fantasmagoria suburbial que contradice o desmiente la *ciudad letrada* del proyecto noucentista, un modelo de ciudad neoflorentino y neoateniense: una arcádica ciudad neoclásica’ (2010: 662). For more on the concept of the ‘ciudad letrada’, see Ángel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Arca, 1998).

humanitat' irritates her (quoted in Font 1993: 223). Albert finds a poetic beauty in life's imperfections and wants to reflect it in her works.

The foregrounding of imperfection and suffering is a key trait of melodrama, which is discussed briefly here to orientate *Un film vis-à-vis* this chapter's central research question. An interpretation of the novel as melodramatic focuses our attention on the narrative procedures at work and points towards the interaction of psychological (or internal) and social (or external) themes, a key dynamic which Cerdà aims to regulate by means of *urbanización*. It is widely argued by, for example, Christine Gledhill (1987) and Agustín Zarzosa (2013), among others, that melodrama should be understood not as a genre but as a mode. Zarzosa offers a definition of mode: 'whereas genres involve the partition of a universe in terms of similarities and differences, modes involve no partition at all but the expression or modification of a whole'; modes occupy 'a higher taxonomic group than genres' and thus '*melodramatic* refers here to a common tone that pervades works with differing structures' (2013: 9-10; italics in original). Josep Maria Català Domènech likens melodrama to a kind of realism, as it moves beyond genre boundaries: 'excede [...] los límites de un género particular para convertirse en una forma general de realismo' (2009: 97). Rather than a discrete genre, melodrama is more accurately a mode of narration, a way of telling a story. The emergence of the melodramatic mode is historically conditioned. Gledhill locates 'the inception of melodrama in the degeneration of bourgeois tragedy', as dramas featuring aristocratic hierarchies gave way to family dramas (1987: 16). In her words, 'sentimentalisation, stress on the individual, appeals to the personal, all supported the shift in the social terrain of bourgeois fiction and drama from feudal and aristocratic hierarchies to the "democratic" bourgeois family – arena of personal, moral and social conflict' (Gledhill 1987: 17). Richard Maltby discusses how early film melodrama attempts to make sense of an urban environment of increasing moral ambiguity by imposing a bourgeois sense of morality on the urban masses (1994: 217). Through the projection of bourgeois anxieties onto an Other, feelings of guilt arising from the bourgeoisie's relatively recent role in exploiting the labouring class are displaced and alleviated.¹⁸ Similarly, for Brooks, melodrama represents a 'response to the

¹⁸ Maltby observes furthermore that the cinema itself began to be associated with criminal activity. As a place of commercialized pleasure along with amusement parks and dance halls, the cinema produced a 'heterosocial environment' giving cinemagoers access to a wider range of pleasures and producing an ambiguous commercial relationship between the sexes which directly allowed for the commercialization of vice (1994: 218). The idea that the sexes have become related commercially is furthered by García López, who terms this relationship the 'tinderització' – after the famous dating application – of social bonds, in

loss of the tragic vision', emerging as it did in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which marked 'the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch), the shattering of the myth of Christendom, the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society', a society that the literary forms of tragedy and comedy depended on (1976: 15).¹⁹ Consequently, truth and ethics, having been 'violently thrown into question', become of 'immediate, daily, political concern' (Brooks 1976: 15). To translate this into Cerdà's urbanistic terms, the stress and chaos of city life invades private space, where it disrupts the individual's mental development. Cerdà therefore interprets domestic space as the interiorization of exterior practices and norms, i.e., what happens in private is a reflection of what is happening outside in society more broadly. The constant interaction between public and private space creates a threat to social order and it is the anxiety that this threat produces in the individual that is the subject of melodrama.

It is therefore clear that melodrama foregrounds the everyday in order to translate structural problems faced by individuals into personal problems, thereby shifting attention away from harmful societal structures. This attitude places importance on the trivia of everyday life as the root of contentment. Thomas Elsaesser maintains that melodrama's engagement with the quotidian 'indicate[s] the ways in which popular culture has not only taken note of social crises [...], but has also resolutely refused to understand social change in other than private contexts and emotional terms' and demonstrates 'a healthy distrust of intellectualisation and abstract social theory – insisting that other structures of experience (those of suffering, for instance) are more in keeping with reality' (1987: 47). As a result, Elsaesser argues, melodrama 'has encouraged increasingly escapist forms of mass-entertainment', being, in his view, ignorant of the social and political dimensions of societal change (1987: 47).

Un film ironically plays into this fact: the book's prologue almost shamelessly demands that we read it as light entertainment and derive pleasure from it without intellectualizing it. As Albert says, its exciting scenes 'et vénen a dir que va de faula i que no cal que t'hi enfondis' (Català 2018: 7). This recalls Žižek's argument that scenes of 'subjective' violence, meaning visible acts of horror, pain and trauma, distract us from

which 'l'altre es converteix en objecte de mercaderia i és valorat des del seu potencial com a plusvàlua' (2022: 70).

¹⁹ The epistemic shift noted by Brooks is the same as that identified by Sennett in the transition from public-facing to private-facing as discussed above.

any intellectualizing impulse: ‘the overpowering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims inexorably function as a lure which prevents us from thinking’ (2009: 7). Albert presents her book as ‘una estona de repòs espiritual’ and ‘un petit i fresquívol oasi d’inatenció restauradora’ (Català 2018: 9), thus inoculating us from what Žižek calls ‘objective’ violence, that is, the violence perpetrated by the structures inherent to the functioning of the ‘normal’ order and which is ‘invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent’ (2009: 7).

It can be seen from this that melodrama has a determinedly psychic nature, as it aims explicitly to make us feel the drama of the everyday and only obliquely or allegorically confronts the social structures that cause such drama. Both Brooks and Elsaesser comment on melodrama’s desire to express the ‘large moral entities’ that lie beneath the surface of the modern metropolis, whereby characters assume ‘primary psychic roles’ (such as father, mother, child) and whose lives tend ‘toward ever more concentrated and totally expressive gestures and statements’ as they externalize their every thought and feeling (Brooks 1976: 4-5). Elsaesser introduces specific Freudian terms, acknowledging that the realist writing of Dickens, Hugo and Balzac ‘lets through a symbolic dimension of psychic truth, with the hero in turn representing very nearly the id, the super-ego and finally the sacrificed ego of a repressed and paranoid society’ (Elsaesser 1987: 49).²⁰

We can see these elemental Freudian drives at work in Nonat, specifically in the form of his kleptomania. Many of his thefts are unconscious and he does not realize he has thieved until the stolen object is in his hands. For example, he steals a bicycle: ‘abans que ell mateix se’n donés compte clar, en Nonat se sentí volant com un mal esperit carrer de Balmes amunt i cavaller en la bicicleta robada’, and a lady’s handkerchief: ‘no hi havia

²⁰ These have an important bearing on melodrama’s aesthetic, with such psychic aspects communicated through music, gesture and expressive mise-en-scène, giving melodrama its characteristic exaggerated style (J. Mercer 2004: 155). Because of its essentially dramatic rather than conceptual nature, melodrama relies on a realistically styled visual register, creating ‘situations which the spectator can identify with and recognize’ (Elsaesser 1987: 54). Despite the realism of melodrama’s aesthetic, its use of highly contrived plots is anti-realist, according to Steve Neale, because of its reliance on ‘chance happenings, coincidences, missed meetings, sudden conversions, last-minute rescues and revelations, deus ex machina endings’ (1986: 6). In *Un film*, Nonat believes that chance will lead him to his fortune and it does indeed provide the points on which the plot turns: ‘Un obscur instint – l’instint de l’aventurer nat – li deia que aquella [la casualitat] era la més gran arranjadora de conflictes; que allà on fracassen l’astúcia i les previsions dels homes, comencen les sorpreses de la casualitat. Ella li havia obert les portes de la Borderia, ella trencaria les muralles de Girona, ella li presentaria al davant els pares, ella el posaria en el camí de la fortuna’ (Català 2015: 66). Examples of coincidences in *Un film* are the unbelievable incidents of Nonat’s first court judge ending up travelling in the same train carriage as him to Lleida and, more spectacularly, his shooting at the house of his mother and half-brother. The work therefore blends the realism of its settings with the anti-realism of its plotting, which, as critics show, is typical of melodrama.

dubte; ell havia pres, instintivament, *sense donar-se'n compte*, el mocador de la dama' (Català 2018: 114, 222; italics in original). This neurotic behaviour is a manifestation of Nonat's failure to repress or compensate for the id's 'lustful, aggressive (in Freud's terminology, sexual)' drives of 'pure craving' which comprise 'both the pleasure-seeking urges with which we are born and the wishes, obsessions, and other effects derived from or associated with them' (De Berg 2003: 50). The superego, the id's counterpart, is similarly uncompromising, although it strives instead towards social harmony and ethical perfection, pushing us unconsciously towards acting in accordance with the norms and values of the society in which we have been raised. Nonat's ego is unable to balance out his id and superego, and this imbalance results in his inability to repress his aggressive desire to steal, rendering his kleptomania pathological. In the following section, the focus of analysis broadens out from the character of Nonat to the city of Barcelona as a whole in order to evaluate the success of *urbanización*'s stated aims against a psychoanalytical framework.

Barcelona as *objet petit a*

This section begins with an overview of key concepts in psychoanalysis, which allow us to construct the argument that Nonat 'stages his desire' in Barcelona and this is responsible for his eventual demise. Psychoanalysis broadly argues that 'the subject emerges through the experience of loss', that is, as we mature throughout childhood, we begin to differentiate between our own self and objects external to our self (McGowan 2013: 26). For Lacan, this alienation is produced through the mirror stage, in which the child recognizes their reflection in a mirror, turns around to look at their mother or father who is supposedly holding the mirror, and then looks again at their image in the mirror. This stage occurs when the child is separated from its mother's body and can 'see someone else *as someone else*', a point by which 'it must be able to sense its discrete separation from an Other, and must begin to assume the burden of an identity which is separate, discrete' (Sarup 1992: 64; italics in original). Through this process, the child gains a sense of its own identity; although the image in the mirror is the child in reverse and 'this moment has meaning only in relation to the presence and the look of the mother who guarantees its reality to the child' (Sarup 1992: 66). This is followed by the subject's entrance into the Symbolic Order, the realm of language, signs and social codes that make

identity stable and secure for the subject. These two realms both alienate the subject from the Real, which is located outside of these two realms and consists of ‘that which is excluded, the impossible to bear’ (Sarup 1992: 104). The Real is that which cannot be expressed symbolically, through language, which exists beyond the Symbolic. Julia Kristeva illustrates this concept through her own concept of chora, which is the semiotic (i.e., pre-symbolic) realm associated with unity between mother and infant, when the infant experiences the world directly, purely without language as a mediating, and therefore loss-inducing, mechanism (1984: 25-28).

The severing of the connection between mother and child creates a division between the subject and the object, and our desire is subsequently directed towards the object world that we have lost. We try to recover the lost object through language, or signification, which ‘alienates the individual from its environment by introducing a layer of mediation into all of the individual’s interactions’ (McGowan 2016: 23). It is through the system of signification that we perceive all objects, which all come to ‘embody something more as a result of the division introduced by signification’, and this excess attached to the object produces a satisfaction for the subject that objects on their own could never provide (McGowan 2016: 23). Žižek summarizes the process of signification at work when we name objects with words: ‘as soon as the reality is symbolized, caught in a symbolic network, the thing itself is more present in a word, in its concept, than in its immediate physical reality’ (2008: 145). Hence by using words to refer to objects, we draw attention to the fact that we have lost these objects in their ‘real’ form: ‘even if we turn from the word to the thing – from the word “table” to the table in its physical reality, for example – the appearance of the table itself is already marked with a certain lack – to know what a table really is, what it means, we must have recourse to the word which implies an absence of the thing’ (Žižek 2008: 145). This process operates on a higher level than that of the single word to ‘language as a synchronic structure’: ‘when the human being is caught in the signifier’s network, this network has a mortifying effect on him; he becomes part of a strange automatic order disturbing his natural homeostatic balance (through compulsive repetition, for example)’ (Žižek 2008: 145-46). An example of a compulsive repetition could be Nonat’s kleptomania.

As a result of having been severed from the Real, we construct fantasy in order to come to terms with this trauma. According to Sean Homer, the Real ‘can never be completely absorbed into the symbolic, into social reality’ and thus fantasy compensates for our division from the Other, ‘sustaining an illusion of unity with the Other’ (Homer

2005: 84, 87). We are essentially seeking to fill a void in our symbolic reality, a void which is unfillable. This sense that something is lacking from our lives is what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*, which is not a particular object but lack itself and which mediates between fantasy and the real. In the words of Homer (2005: 87): ‘the pleasure we derive from fantasy does not result from the achievement of its aim, its object, but rather from the staging of desire in the first place’; in short, we desire to put ourselves through the experience of desire. That is what we derive pleasure from because we strive to recover some of the Real that we have lost through signification. Alienation from the Real represents the ‘moment that tips the whole of human knowledge (*savoir*) into being mediated by the other’s desire’ (Lacan 2006: 79). Our desires are therefore always the desires of others because the problem with language is that it creates an excess of signification. Words represent not just the object they refer to, but the very fact of being a word – i.e., a symbol in an interconnected symbolic network – introduces more and more layers of signification that makes us desire the object.

Furthermore, the alienation from our environment that signification causes is what makes capitalism possible. ‘Every object takes on the hue given to it by the system of signification and loses its image of self-identity’, meaning: it is impossible for us to perceive things outside of signification, and because we can only confront objects that are represented by their signifiers, we can never obtain objects that would enable us to realize our desire (McGowan 2016: 24). Within the system of signification, it is clear that one signifier will always lead to another signifier in the search for true meaning (as, for example, looking up a word in the dictionary can only lead to further approximations towards the definition of that word). Such a chain is hidden in capitalism because commodities present themselves to us as promising to end the search to fill the void created by signification. Capitalism turns objects into commodities that promise to fulfil our desires, but these by definition can never fulfil our desire, and so we end up moving from one desired object to another in a never-ending chain. Psychoanalytical desire is therefore capitalism’s *raison d’être*.

This impetus is precisely what traps Nonat within cycles of desire in Barcelona, which eventually becomes the location for his series of heists. In *Un film*, Barcelona is presented as chaotic and exciting, overflowing with movement and life, the very opposite of Girona’s silent, stagnant atmosphere. The narrator introduces us to the city during Nonat’s first few days there using the narration as a filmic lens to show us the city through his eyes. His vision takes in the vivid colours of the sky and of gardens: ‘El bord

esguardà enlaire, cap al cel, immensa conca de topazi polimentat, i cap als costats, fistonejats de demores sumptuoses, entre verdors severes i exuberants dels jardins antics i la policromia retallada i vistosa de parcs adolescents’ (Català 2018: 99). He surveys vistas that open towards the horizon, creating a dramatic change in scale in the capital compared to Girona: ‘esguardà endavant i endarrera les dolces llunyanies esblaimades que tancaven la doble pendent, acotxant-se en l’horitzó...’ (Català 2018: 99). Girona was damp and claustrophobia, monotony and boredom: ‘veient sempre la mateixa gent i les mateixes coses, fent sempre semblants treballs, sempre ensopint-se en diversions semblants’ (Català 2018: 77). Albert engages with the trope of ‘Girona-la-Morta’, constructed by poets and artists in the early-twentieth century, portraying a city which ‘és dominada per la Catedral, [...] és freda i humida, amb les seves porxades i els seus carrers tortuosos, és [...] desvetlladora dels sentiments agònics, de la melangia existencial que nia al cor dels homes’ (Castellanos 1997: 121).²¹ In contrast, Barcelona is exhilarating variety, in short: life. Nonat’s own thoughts make this connection explicit and suggest a certain erotic attraction to the city: “‘Allò era vida!... Allò era *la vida!*...” I, poc a poc, un desig frenètic, gairebé afrodisíac, li abrusà les entranyes...’ (Català 2018: 99; italics in original).

It can be seen from these evocative depictions of city life that Barcelona is saturated with excess. Nonat is convinced that Barcelona is ‘l’arca que tancava el secret; [...] deambulant per aquells carrers, un jorn qualsevol, a la impensada, el cop de cor li diria: “Aquest és ton pare!”’ (Català 2018: 66). For Nonat, Barcelona becomes synonymous with his parents – ‘Pensar *Barcelona* i pensar *papàs*, era tot u’ – which is perhaps the most important line in the whole book, for the purposes of this argument (Català 2018: 66; italics in original). Barcelona signifies much more than the material city itself; it signifies his parents, the sublime ‘lost objects’ theorized by psychoanalysis, particularly by Lacan’s *objet petit a*, as we will see. The city transcends use-value and represents also an excess of signification, a void that Nonat tries to fill with meaning. Nonat’s thirst for Barcelona is insatiable, he cannot consume enough of it, as allegorized through his increasingly risky heists. In contrast, Girona exists to reproduce bare life, epitomized by the locksmith’s resignation that it is futile to try to outmanoeuvre God’s designs and one should live in harmony with the life cycle: ‘Que tant li fa néixer d’un

²¹ Cerdà describes the streets of old urban centres as similarly ‘tortuous’ and detrimental to efficient mobility in language that echoes the stagnant character of Albert’s and Castellanos’s descriptions of Girona: ‘tortuosidades, inflexiones y recodos sin objeto conocido, sin ventaja alguna para nadie, y que sin embargo hacen a esas calles impermeables al movimiento rodado’ (1867/1: 356).

home com d'un altre; que tots vénen de la mateixa soca: el pare Adam, i tots paren allà mateix: a l'ossera... Així com així, totes van pel mateix indret i cap no pot desviar-se'n' (Català 2018: 35). This attitude is also present in the Mother Superior's attempt to impress on Nonat the belief that his parents are not to be found. She underlines that children of God are in submission to God's designs and Nonat should resign himself to divine will: 'Res no saben les humanes criatures del remot perquè de les coses ni dels designis de Nostre Senyor... Si Ell volgués – posem per cas – tirar definitivament un vel sobre la naixença d'en Nonat, senyal que així devia convenir i que calia resignar-se a la voluntat divina' and she advises Nonat that it is better to 'fer-se il·lusions i conservar-les gelosament, que no pas saber de cert' (Català 2018: 33).

Moreover, the locksmith's attitude prioritizes sensory experience and connection to the land over intellectual exercise: 'l'important, doncs, no era saber a qui es devia la vida, sinó viure, respirar, córrer, treballar... sentir-se anar i venir la sang per les venes i l'alegria pel cor... Tot el demés, embaucaments, falòrnies... ganes d'esprémer en va el suc de la cervellera' (Català 2018: 35). However, he addresses these words to himself, being as he is 'curt d'expressió i no va saber treure's una paraula de la boca' (Català 2018: 35), which further highlights the rustic nature of life in Girona, where people display a tacit awareness that they are anonymous cogs in a machine that works in harmony with nature, and not distinguished individuals destined for greatness. The locksmith's inability to express his intuitions in language reinforces Girona's characterization as locus of the Real and the pre-linguistic, where it is understood that any attempt to 'esprémer el suc de la cervellera' is futile.

Once established in Barcelona, Nonat moves from one criminal scheme to the next, acquiring greater amounts of wealth, and is unable to stop. He begins in Girona with the fashioning of objects to adorn his appearance in the manner of jewellery. Later, in Barcelona, this turns into the embezzlement of funds from the metalworking factory and petty theft of objects such as canes and cigarette cases – objects that have no real use-value to him (he does not require a cane to walk). With greater resources at his disposal, he embarks on organized criminal enterprises around Catalonia, culminating in the theft of gold bonds from his mother's home. These thefts enable Nonat to stage desire, to enjoy the feeling of being a desiring subject, upholding the fantasy that compensates for the trauma of being severed from the Real. Further, as these objects have been stolen, they are 'removed from [their] ordinary syntax of labor and exchange' (Goldberg 2016: 138). So not only do they consist entirely of surplus value in the Marxist sense but their relation

to the chain of production and exchange is oblique, meaning they have been removed from the system that distributes value via the exchange of goods and money, the very system that *urbanización* exists to support. Albert therefore offers a comment here on Cerdà's speculation that the subject's isolation will inspire the production of 'obras que [...] llevaría a cabo en provecho de la familia y de la sociedad' (1867/1: 598). Although Nonat cultivates his own independence in Barcelona, the energy this self-sufficiency gives him is directed not towards noble acts which benefit society but towards the pursuit of desires that are impossible to fulfil. Through the character of Nonat, Albert questions the assumptions upon which *urbanización* is based. Contrary to Cerdà's argument, *Un film* shows that *urbanización* seems to promote a growing sense of individualism that distracts the subject from family and society.

Psychoanalysis claims that with the subject's entrance into the system of signification, an originary lost object is created, and 'even though this object has no substantial status and can never acquire any concrete form, it shapes the contours of subjectivity. All of the subject's multifarious activity within the world of signification centers around the attempt to rediscover this object that it never possessed' (McGowan 2016: 27). In developing this idea in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud argues that the subject's entire existence revolves around this originary loss to the extent that the subject finds enjoyment in unconsciously repeating this loss over and over. This is because 'failure and loss produce the object as absent, and it is only the absence of the object that renders it satisfying. Absence animates the subject, driving it to act, in a way that presence cannot' (McGowan 2016: 29). This drama is precisely that which Nonat acts out in Barcelona, his absent parents (paradoxically for the reader all the more present because of their overwhelming absence) are what drive him to leave Girona for the Eixample. The lost object that motivates Nonat's actions is his parents, specifically his father, on whose identity he fixates.

Nonat's rise from locksmith's apprentice to metalworker, foreman and criminal gang leader forms part of a quest narrative that Albert employs to tell his story. Jordi Castellanos explains this quest in terms of the symbolism of Nonat's name. Nonat literally means 'not born', suggesting that he lacks essence, to trace the Latin root of the verb 'ésser', 'to be'. Nonat's full name is Ramon Nonat Ventura Miquel, so to take this further, we could say that the narrator has excised those of Nonat's names which have a positive or substantive meaning. Whereas the names Ramon and Miquel are associated with saints, and the word 'ventura' has connotations of wealth and fortune, Nonat goes by

the least substantive of his names, the one that semantically carries the least weight because it refers to non-existence.²² As previously mentioned, the locksmith introduces the idea of ‘living’ as more important than ‘being’: ‘el mestre serraller li oposa “viure” a “ésser”, pero ell [Nonat] aviat s’adonà que només hi ha una manera de viure que és “ésser”, i que l’“ésser” el porta ell i no els altres’ (Castellanos 1986: 621). This implies that Nonat needs to find stability, a fixed point from which to articulate the identity he believes he is destined to have and which will give him security. He tries to get there through criminal means, but ends up being killed as a result of the actions of his half-brother, his ‘alter ego, el que sí era “nat”’ (Castellanos 1986: 622). To return to psychoanalysis, Nonat turns away from the rewards and sense of belonging offered by culture and instead embraces the transitory rewards that capitalism gives him instead.

The stagnation and claustrophobia of Girona actually affords its inhabitants a much more harmonious mental state which is more akin to the lost originary harmony of the pre-Symbolic. Girona may not have the excitement and possibility for riches of Barcelona, but it does offer a different connection with life that is rooted in the cycle of nature and is much more sustainable than that offered by the capital. Reinforced by the evocation of a deathly atmosphere in Girona, Albert sets up the provincial city as one that is mundane and, to a certain extent, mired in tradition that verges on making it appear backward, and yet it holds a degree of life-affirming power that Barcelona does not. The restrictive nature of both the city’s urban fabric and the characters’ words of advice to Nonat serve as constant reminders of death, which in turn imbues life with more intense meaning. Girona offers Nonat the possibility of making peace with the fact that he does not know the identity of his parents, and the possibility of belonging to a culture less characterized by capitalism’s market interactions. Instead, he refuses to recognize the

²² Nonat himself attempts to hold on to his more ‘substantive’ names, printing his name as ‘Ramon N. Ventura’ on his card, eliding ‘Nonat’ as if to hide the fact he was an orphan. His name helps to establish intertextual references, for example, Àngela Bagués identifies several similarities between *Un film* and the short story ‘Ramón Nonnato el suicida’ from Miguel de Unamuno’s *El espejo de la muerte* (1913). In these two works ‘ambdós protagonistes són víctimes d’un pecat d’origen i ambdós textos s’ocupen de la problemàtica de la identitat i de la relació que té amb la figura paterna, on destaquen l’omnipresència o l’absència de la dita figura’ (Bagués 2001: 130). The novel also finds a melodramatic parallel in Willa Cather’s short story ‘Paul’s Case’ (1905), in which Paul, a wayward child and an effeminate, dandyish figure (Nonat’s appearance is also feminized, as, for example, his skin is ‘blanca, immaculada, com la d’una noia’ [Català 2018: 21]), escapes a hostile Pittsburgh for the excitement of New York, where he funds his lavish lifestyle of fashion and theatregoing by stealing. When he eventually runs out of money, he commits suicide by throwing himself in front of a train. For an interpretation of ‘Paul’s Case’ which focuses on its melodramatic aspects and Cather’s treatment of gender and sexuality, see Jonathan Goldberg, *Melodrama: An Aesthetics of Impossibility* (Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 133-38.

finite nature of his own life, preferring instead to construct a life based around the pursuit of his desires, which he believes himself to be in control of, but which is in fact produced by chance, out of his control. As we have seen, desire is about recreating a lost origin – it compensates for the trauma of having been severed from the Real – and we may infer from the novel's reading alongside *urbanización* that Cerdà also yearns to recreate that lost origin in the form of *urbanización* and the networks of community and mutual aid that it is supposed to engender and which are supposed to have been lost as a result of the incursion of the capitalist economic structure.

We can extend this point: Nonat's eventual rise to power follows a similar pattern to the increase in technological development that Cerdà outlines in the *Teoría general*. Nonat begins as a pedestrian until he gains a bicycle, then he travels by tram when he can afford to, and occasionally manages to hire a private carriage, until he owns a horse and then an automobile with one of his gang members working as his chauffeur. This trajectory mirrors Cerdà's chronology of 'locomoción', which, as discussed by Françoise Choay (1969), is the characteristic that Cerdà uses to measure human development, beginning with 'locomoción pedestre' and progressing to 'ecuestre', 'rastrera', 'rodada' and finally 'perfeccionada'. This parallel strengthens the argument according to which *Un film* comments on and critiques urban development and expansion because of the cycles of desire that Nonat enters into from his arrival in the city. In searching for the 'lost object' of his father, he seeks to construct his own image of inherited wealth by obtaining more and more possessions. The fact that the monetary value of his acquisitions increases throughout the course of the novel underscores the fact that his desire is never satiated, and he *enjoys* the experience of desire.

Barcelona, as the locus of capitalism in the novel, cannot offer Nonat the sense of belonging that he may otherwise have been able to attain in Girona. It is this very instability that conditions his endless staging of desire, which, as McGowan argues, is a symptom the capitalist subject experiences as capitalism necessarily locates them outside culture:

Capitalism transcends culture and offers its subjects psychic rewards that are radically different from those that cultures provide. As a member of a culture, I gain a stable symbolic identity associated with a structure that extends beyond my own subjectivity. [...] Culture gives the subject a sense of belonging that capitalism does not. The capitalist subject constantly experiences its failure to belong, which is why the recurring fantasy within capitalism is that of attaining

some degree of authentic belonging (in a romantic relationship, in a group of friends, in the nation, and so on). (McGowan 2016: 21)

Nonat's fantasy revolves around attaining the sense of belonging that finding his birth parents would give him. The relationship he has with the city and his insistence on being the master of his own destiny support a narcissistic 'fantasy of self-sufficiency' (Walsh 2014: 3) in that he believes himself to be capable of sustaining his own lifestyle without the help of others. However, this proves to be anything but the case. Relationships of reciprocity are therefore impossible for Nonat to sustain: he takes what he needs from people and then leaves them to suffer. In a manner that reflects Lacan's triadic structure of the psyche, he intuitively feels that he is leaving behind one stage of his psychic maturation – the Imaginary, the internalized idea of the whole self – and is on the threshold of entering another, the Symbolic: 'sa vida no seria ja la vida alegre i descuidadament viscuda a flor de jorns, sinó la vida recònditament maurada per l'angúnia, la vida governada, esclavitzada per un propòsit concentrat, travessada durament per ell, com la roda pel fusell' (Català 2018: 29). He is aware that to recognize the Name-of-the-Father is to surrender a significant part of his own autonomy and he therefore resists his entry into it, refusing to accept the dictates of a society of the Mother Superior's 'ànimes netes i esterrejades de les taques originàries que les enllotaven' (Català 2018: 33). For if the Symbolic can be understood as 'the pact which links [...] subjects together in one action, the human action *par excellence* is originally founded on the existence of the world of the symbol, namely on laws and contracts' (Lacan 1991: 230), Nonat emphatically does not find himself integrated into the Symbolic in his life in Barcelona.

Un film demonstrates that to remake the social order through a programme of *urbanización* is unsustainable because the urban form of the Eixample is designed around the isolation of individuals from each other, and is thus an instrument of capitalist economic expansion. Instead of producing the conditions for introspection that Cerdà believes will improve the moral character of the urban subject and lead to the creation of ideas that contribute to the common good of humanity, my analysis of *Un film* shows this to be in reality a narcissistic impulse which has a destructive effect on the social order, unable to correct the moral faults and nefarious behaviours that Cerdà intends to correct through *urbanización*.

This chapter has shown that *urbanización* lends itself to be read against a psychoanalytical framework because of Cerdà's interest in influencing the cognitive procedures of urban inhabitants through a reconfiguration of urban space. In turn, the

resulting paradigm suggests a psychoanalytical reading of *Un film*, which appears to implicitly reject *urbanización*. The following chapter returns the critical focus to the material dimension of *urbanización*, to consider to what extent Cerdà's concepts are capable of regulating the social order from the perspective of the construction of identities and their relative stability.

Chapter 4

Urbanización and the Regulation of the Social Order (2): Josep Maria de Sagarra, *Vida privada* (1932)

Building on the conclusions of Chapter 3, this chapter studies the ways in which Josep Maria de Sagarra's *Vida privada* implicitly engages with the capacity of *urbanización* to regulate the social order, focusing on the novel's depiction of public and private spaces. The ironic title encapsulates the novel's implied promise to expose the private life of prominent members of Barcelona's aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Such crossing over of public and private domains is conveyed through moral transgressions that take place in spaces that are characterized simultaneously as public and private. This spatial configuration stems from Cerdà's concept of *el intervías* (I retain the Spanish article for reasons which I explain in the following section), which, we recall, refers physically to the built volumes in between streets (in other words, the spaces where people live). The concept receives considerable theoretical treatment from Cerdà, to which we return later in the chapter. In brief, *el intervías* is intended to illustrate a conception of space that blends movement and stasis. Cerdà identifies these as fundamental requirements for humans to live prosperously, given his definition of human life as 'una alternativa constante entre el quietismo y el movimiento', which makes *el intervías* a space designed for repose and intimacy, yet which must also facilitate easy movement within its walls (1867/1: 368). This dual function is also apparent in other aspects of Cerdà's theory of *urbanización*, as he notes that activities that usually take place in the home may also happen out in the street and vice versa, because urban space is defined by 'encuentros, encruces y enlaces' (Cerdà 1867/1: 362).

As will be argued, the resulting crossing over of public and private activities plays a crucial role in the construction of the identities of city inhabitants in *Vida privada*. Specifically, the chapter reveals the inability of *urbanización* and *el intervías* to stabilize subjectivity and, if they cannot stabilize subjectivity then neither can they stabilize the social order. This is manifest in *Vida privada* in the relations between a web of characters – Guillem de Lloberola, the Baron Antoni Mates and his wife Conxa Pujol, and dressmaker Dorotea Palau – who are linked through their roles in maintaining a secret sexual arrangement.

While Caterina Albert made it her objective to remain at the fringes of Catalan intellectual life, Sagarra (1894-1961) took an active role as a shaper of public opinion in the early twentieth century. He was heavily involved in the intellectual life of Catalonia, publishing a prolific quantity of poetry and theatrical work as well as three novels, and translations of canonical authors such as Dante and Shakespeare. He had an oblique relationship with Noucentisme, being a respected member of the intellectual establishment but also distancing himself from Noucentisme around 1925, well before *Vida privada* was written (Cornellà-Detrell 2011: 27), as will be explored further in the section on his poetics. He had met Carles Riba, one of Noucentisme's luminaries, at university and he spent time at the offices of *La Veu de Catalunya* and the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and joined the youth wing (les Joventuts Nacionalistes) of the Lliga Regionalista (Gallén and Gustà 1987: 464). He was a staunch supporter of the Second Republic and in particular saw it as a great opportunity to strengthen Catalan national identity in the wake of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

Despite his considerable contributions to newspapers, journals and the theatre, he is best known today as the author of *Vida privada*. The lack of genre coherence of *Vida privada* – which Sagarra describes as ‘una mena de gènere híbrid de novella i reportatge’ (cited in [Anon.] 1932a: 3) – perhaps underlies the novel's imbalanced structure. It is divided into two parts of equal length, but the first part is plot driven and the second part is character driven, comprising digressions on the lives of various characters without much discernible storyline. The book was an instant bestseller (Cornellà-Detrell 2015: 98), although its critical reception ‘va ser freda, si no irada’, and it became commonplace to talk of the book as a *roman à clef* (Gustà 1981: 34). A report in *La Publicitat* documenting the book's presentation at the Llibreria Catalònia restates Sagarra's insistence that ‘els personatges, si poden recordar tal o tal personatge, no volen retratar ningú. Quant als fets també són imaginats, completament imaginats’ ([Anon.] 1932a: 3), which contrasts sharply with *El Be Negre*'s report that ‘els infinits i honorables lectors de *Vida privada*, el darrer èxit escandalós i editorial de Josep Maria de Sagarra, s'estan trencant el cap per descobrir la clau del llibre, perquè encara que l'autor afirmi el contrari i es vulgui passar per innocent, el llibre està escrit amb clau’ ([Anon.] 1932b: 3). The book evidently sparked considerable controversy.

Vida privada is, at its heart, a novel about the financial and moral decline of the Catalan aristocracy. Set in Barcelona, it centres in particular on the misfortunes of the Lloberola family, at the head of which is Don Tomàs de Lloberola, who is conservative

by nature and sympathetic to the Carlists. Since Don Tomàs is a proud and tedious character who was a poor businessman, it is up to his wife, the morally upstanding Leocàdia, to manage the family's finances. Their sons Frederic – a hedonistic shirker and womanizer who despite his job at a bank can barely read or write – and Guillem, around ten years Frederic's junior, whom the narrator describes as 'un xicot feble, amoral, egoista, sense dignitat', are central characters in the plot (Sagarra 2007: 93).¹ In addition to the financial ruin into which the Lloberolas gradually slide, the novel salaciously portrays the debauchery and exploits of the Lloberola sons and their associates in the back rooms of well-to-do Eixample establishments and in the red-light district of the 'Barri Xino', or Raval neighbourhood, featuring sexual deviance, blackmail, secrecy and exhibitionism.

***El intervías* as a spatio-critical lens²**

As explained in Chapter 1, Cerdà coined the neologism *el intervías* to describe the built-up spaces between streets, where people live and work. According to Cerdà, every one of the spaces isolated by the streets constitutes a 'pequeña urbe' or 'urbe elemental', that is, a microcosm of the city itself (which he calls the 'grande urbe' [sic]) (1867/1: 363-64). The city is made out of these foundational building blocks which are 'enlazadas entre sí por el gran sistema viario' (1867/1: 364). They are, at their most basic, 'apartaderos', or spaces set aside by humanity for its 'estancia y permanencia' (Cerdà 1867/1: 365). However, Cerdà admits that as human life is constantly caught between movement and stasis, *el intervías* plays a crucial role in connecting the static side of daily life to movement and the city streets. As will be argued, the resulting crossing over of public and private activities plays a crucial role in the construction of the identities of city inhabitants. In this chapter, attention is placed on the dynamic between movement and stasis that characterizes *el intervías*.

Cerdà recognizes that the human subject requires stasis and permanence in addition to movement. He makes reference to the dichotomy of movement and stasis that he argues defines human life and conditions the behaviour and attitude of individuals both

¹ Citations are taken from the sixth edition of the novel, published by Proa in 2007.

² Sections of this chapter are reworkings of material published previously in Matthew Oxley, 'Transgressive Sexualities and Urban Form in Josep Maria de Sagarra's *Vida privada* [Private Life] (1932)', *WROCAH Journal*, 5 (2019b), pp. 37-43.

in the private home and in the public spaces of the city. Human life, as Cerdà sees it, requires that ‘se hacía indispensable que al lado mismo de los espacios destinados a la permanencia, hubiese vías constantemente dispuestas a franquearle [al ser humano] el paso para donde quiera que intentase dirigirse’ (1867/1: 368). Humanity is on the one hand ‘en continuo movimiento, como obedeciendo a una agitación febril’, while on the other it is ‘muellemente descansado de sus fatigas en lo interior de esas construcciones levantadas a una enorme altura’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 268). Cerdà recognizes the importance of being able to move and be still in the most private rooms of the home: ‘aun en la estancia más íntima de la casa, y con preferencia destinada al quietismo, aun allí necesita el hombre moverse’, a motif that he develops and applies to moving around the city, describing the ground as a conduit for movement wherever people are located: ‘es de ahí que el piso o pavimento es igual en los espacios viales y en los habitables’ (1867/1: 434). Public and private spaces are thus intertwined throughout the *Teoría general*, and Cerdà applies the same methods and terminology to his discussions of both domains.

Cerdà recognizes that in the urban environment, *el intervías* is principally a space for the family to live in. As seen in Chapter 3, he argues that problems that begin in the family home transfer out into wider society, causing moral, political and social problems in society at large. Action and movement that take place within *el intervías* radiate out into the ‘sistema urbano’ and thus out across the entire populated world via the *gran vialidad universal*. *El intervías* achieves its function of connecting humans to the *gran vialidad universal* with pavements and doors, which are essential elements that carry out the dual function of isolating and communicating, as they signify paths that connect family life to the network of ‘vías’ (understood not just as roads but as all ways used for transportation) and therefore also to the remotest geographical extremes of society. The resulting transcendent nature of *el intervías* points also to its relevance on both the micro and macro levels of spatiality in the city.

Cerdà also problematizes the division he makes between spaces for movement and spaces for permanent residence by indicating that activities usually carried out within the home are frequently carried out in the public domain of the streets, yet streets, designed only to cater for movement, are not sheltered like the home is. Cerdà alludes here to the crossing over of public and private behaviour in the city and how certain spatial practices are not limited to spaces of movement or stasis, rather the definition of these spaces is subverted by the implementation of spatial practices that belong to the opposing sphere.

As we recall from Chapter 1, I take the term ‘spatial practices’ from Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*. For Lefebvre, spatial practice

embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society’s relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance. (1991: 33)

In other words, spatial practices are the routine actions pertaining to a group of people which condition the form of the spaces in which those actions are performed. *El intervías* is therefore a space defined by its potential to shelter human life and provide for humans’ need for privacy and stasis, and at the same time cater to the need for humans to remain connected to the world outside the home and the city. Cerdà’s theory of *urbanización* responds to his observation that human life is characterized by movement and stasis in equal measure, yet as humans fluctuate between moving and being still, these categories are flexible, frequently overlapping and contradicting each other, and are not confined to any one particular space.

In *Vida privada*, Sagarra criticizes the moral decay of the inhabitants of the Eixample, the new area of the city designed by Cerdà, which, I argue, reflects the highly regulated nature of its urban form. The grid structure produces straightforward and linear journeys, in contrast to the confusion of the historic centre with its streets Cerdà describes as ‘tortuosas’ and ‘laberínticas’, which twist and turn and produce ‘anarquía’, frustrating the journey of the moving subject (1867/1: 279). By describing the form of the medieval city centre as ‘anarchic’, Cerdà implies that this area of the city obeys no authority and follows no order, in contrast to the highly regulated Eixample and the strict bourgeois moral code that controls everyday life there. These different characterizations of Barcelona’s urban form are expressed most effectively through the exploration of the transgressive sexual practices that take place in them, as Sagarra devotes a considerable amount of the *Vida privada* to examinations of the characters’ sex and sexuality. Transgressive sexuality, or ‘perversió’ as Sagarra calls it, is understood here as an unstable subjectivity that ‘creates the personal and social expression of self’ by challenging binarized positions such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual (MacCormack 2004: para. 1), which is conveyed through transgressive sexual acts. Such acts are defined by Hastings Donnan and Fiona Magowan as ‘sex that crosses or threatens to cross boundaries and [...] flout[s] social, moral and cultural convention’ (2009: 1).

Transgressive sexuality is also negotiated via the complex interplay between ‘exhibitionism and secrecy, [and] public and private responsibilities’ (McCormick 1997: 2), concepts that are dealt with expressly in *el intervías*, the space that combines private and public notions of space. My analysis will draw on Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s deconstruction of the binary opposition heterosexual/homosexual and Patricia MacCormack’s association of perversion with monstrosity to investigate to what extent Barcelona’s urban form dictates the process of identity formation in the two opposing spaces of the Eixample and the historic centre, as conveyed in *Vida privada*.

The connection between urban form and conceptions of sexuality and gender is also highlighted in the word *intervías* itself. The neologism demonstrates Cerdà’s desire to endorse dominant codes and conventions that are sanctioned by a higher common authority. He achieves this by grammatically defining the word as masculine singular rather than feminine plural, defying the grammatical logic of its feminine plural ‘-vías’ ending. He justifies this decision by comparing it to the Real Academia Española’s designation of the same gender and number to ‘afueras’, another conception of space (Cerdà 1867/1: 365).³ The masculine article therefore also refers to the missing masculine element of ‘el espacio’, the semantic field from which the term originates. For this reason, I refer to the concept as *el intervías* (as opposed to ‘the *intervías*’) to retain the full value of its meaning as intended by Cerdà. Cerdà thus demonstrates an attempt to label the gender of concepts and entities that defy gendered interpretations in a way that resembles, as we shall see, the narrator of *Vida privada*, by deferring to established conventions that promote gendered norms. Sagarra’s novel therefore lends itself to be read in light of Cerdà’s urban theory because of the tension between established norms and transgressive practices that shapes both writers’ texts. Before we look at the novel in more detail, an overview of Sagarra’s politics and poetics is helpful because this to some degree parallels the objectives of Cerdà’s *urbanización*: that is, both aspire towards the cultivation of improved urban subjects.

³ The most up-to-date version of the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (electronic version 23.7, updated in 2023, <<https://dle.rae.es/>>) gives the gender of ‘afueras’ as feminine.

Sagarra's poetics: literature as a tool of social cohesion

Sagarra sees literature as a tool of social cohesion, wherein society is to cohere around a specifically Catalan urban model: Barcelona. In a similar fashion, Cerdà sees his proposal for the urban form of the Eixample as directly constructive of positive social bonds. The sense of city life on the most local level being connected to the world outside Barcelona – as we have seen, a defining feature of *urbanización* – is registered by Sagarra in his column ‘L’aperitiu’ in the weekly review *Mirador*, which ran from 1929-37. Robert Davidson identifies one of Sagarra’s columns on a poster for a jazz concert in which he ‘venture[s] that such a poster on a wall in Barcelona changes the air momentarily, eliciting a physical response from the viewer and even augmenting the experience of the urban as “els automòbils multipliqu[e]n per deu la natural olor de la gasolina”’ (2009: 185). Davidson interprets this column as proof of Sagarra’s appreciation of the connection between the local and the global, the inference being ‘that Barcelona is part of a greater Europe-wide circuit; that it exists as a destination on a scale beyond the local, with the jazz performance serving as the linking system’ (2009: 185). Taking the local to a more extreme physical closeness, ‘in a later piece, he mentions how jazz music is everywhere in the city and has almost become part of the body: “El jazz se sent a tot arreu amb una brutalitat de màquina. Aquesta brutalitat se’ns ha fet tant de la nostra pell, que la portem enganxada a l’orella com portem la corbata damunt la camisa”’ (Davidson 2009: 185). Commercial and artistic trends, then, are shown to oscillate along a scale that places the body at one extreme, via the bar or the jazz club, out onto the streets and finally to connect with global currents at the other extreme.

Sagarra therefore intuits the same patterns of international mobility which Cerdà discusses theoretically in the *Teoría general*, and so both texts can profitably be analysed together as responses to similar observations of global phenomena. Sagarra, as a prominent member of the Catalan intellectual elite, felt it his duty to inspire his fellow Catalans to contribute to the intellectual life and health of their nation during a time when the outlets to do so were multiplying and becoming increasingly stable: institutions such as the Institut d’Estudis Catalans and the Mancomunitat helped to bolster Catalonia’s aspirations to nationhood (Krauel 2009: 75-79). This can be seen through Sagarra’s relation to Noucentisme and his output in *Mirador*, to which we now turn.

While Sagarra was active during the years of Noucentisme and he admired its ambitions, he did not share them, and his writings tend not to be considered Noucentista

in style (Fuster 1972: 217). Joan Fuster attributes this to Sagarra's social position: he is an aristocrat 'pels quatre costats' (1972: 217) and 'd'estirp i per ideologia' (Escala 1999: 19). This makes him 'immune' to Noucentisme, which was a movement that 'tenia la burgesia com a protagonista' rather than the aristocracy (Fuster 1972: 217).⁴ Sagarra launches 'críiques lacerants i despietades' of the bourgeoisie; these are reactionary criticisms that Fuster explains with reference to his exclusion from the bourgeoisie's economic gains, making him disinterested in, although not hostile towards, Noucentisme (Fuster 1972: 217).

His attitude towards Noucentisme is necessarily political in character, and reflects an ideology of strident Catalanism that diverges from that of the Noucentistes in its commitment to a more thoroughly democratic strategy of reinforcing a strong sense of Catalan identity, or 'Catalanitat', by appealing to the masses, in contrast to the Noucentistes' elitism. A window onto this social and political commitment is provided by Javier Krauel, who, like Davidson, analyses Sagarra's column 'L'aperitiu', albeit from the point of view of ethics and politics. In Krauel's judgement, these columns are best understood as 'artifacts that suggest opinions and advice on how to behave as ethical subjects of a democratic Catalan nation' and he ascribes the columns to the genre of 'literature of the patriotic self', a 'genre that conceives of the nation not merely as a legal, juridical, or institutional domain but primarily as an ethical one' (2009: 79).

These legal, juridical and institutional elements of life in Catalonia were very much under construction in the early years of the Second Republic, and Sagarra believed that these regulatory organizations were not enough on their own to build a functioning Catalan nation. Krauel tells us that 'Sagarra knew that, in order for Catalans to enjoy their new political and cultural liberties, they first had to perform a specific type of work upon themselves, upon their emotions and their actions' (2009: 80). He encourages Catalans to strike a balance between emotion and intelligence in political matters, strictly avoiding emotional excess so that they should 'become well-adjusted citizens who were proud of their nation's cultural achievements and representative institutions' (Krauel 2009: 82-87).⁵ Sagarra understood that people have to be 'nudged' to behave appropriately across a

⁴ Sagarra occupies a similar position to Josep Pla vis-à-vis the Catalan intelligentsia. Pla, another canonical author, is also positioned outside of the bourgeoisie. Fuster labels him a 'kúlak', meaning a landowning member of the proletariat (1972: 217).

⁵ Sagarra gives the example of the hasty exile of the Spanish royal family upon the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931, an event to which, according to Krauel, many Catalans reacted with sorrow, a wholly 'immoral' emotional response for patriotic Catalans, as would be feelings of hatred or vengeance (2009: 81). Such excessively emotional sentiments are further embodied equally in Catholic propaganda on

variety of political situations, leading Krauel to argue that reading his column ‘can in itself be seen as a form of training, as a kind of asceticism toward oneself designed to improve one’s patriotic conduct’ (2009: 86). Davidson concurs, giving the *Mirador* columns mentioned above as evidence that for Sagarra, ‘print culture at this point in time exerts a lot of power’ (2009: 185), making literature and the press powerful tools through which to bring into effect some kind of regulation of ethical Catalan conduct.

Overall, in his *Mirador* column, Sagarra espouses a moral outlook that seems to attempt to prescribe ethical conduct in the service of the higher values of liberalism and republicanism, with a view to constructing a successful Catalan state. Krauel reiterates that Sagarra ‘is not a moralist and that it is not his intention to provide a universally valid Catalanist moral code’, and Sagarra’s own claims that he is not a moralist do in fact stand up, in Krauel’s view, because his concerns ‘are not translated into a moral code consisting of doctrines, rules and prohibitions’, rather they ‘are translated into an ethic of a particular way of living, an ethics of Catalanism’ (2009: 80). Krauel’s conclusion seems generous to Sagarra, for while Sagarra does not provide a list of rules for Catalans to follow, there is a clear moral framework behind his journalistic contributions that is Noucentista in spirit.⁶ Nonetheless, Sagarra’s moral outlook reflects a push to engage with ordinary Catalans in a democratic manner, which is not seen, for instance, in the work of Noucentistes like Eugeni d’Ors, and this push is expressed most keenly through Sagarra’s views on language and the novel. Maria Escala remarks on Sagarra’s prose style, which is ‘producte d’una síntesi entre la llengua popular i la llengua culta’ and which imbues the written word with ‘la naturalitat de la llengua parlada’ (1999: 20). In a similar vein, Gaziol – responding to Sagarra’s award of the Premi Crexells for *Vida privada* in 1932 – writes that Sagarra ‘es, realmente, un escritor que puede y debe ganar todos los premios que se proponga, porque tiene una fecundidad y unas cualidades excepcionales’, despite admitting that, in his view, the work suffers from an excess of ‘excrecencias gratuitas, desabrochamientos familiares, excesos íntimos, tumefacciones innecesarias y virutas inútiles de un estilo esencialmente externo y verbal’ (1932: 5). Unlike Caterina Albert, Sagarra complied with the grammatical and orthographic norms codified by Pompeu

the one hand, and anti-clerical literature on the other, of particular relevance to Barcelona given the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Ajuntament during the Second Republic (Krauel 2009: 81).

⁶ Krauel points out that ‘unlike Sagarra, Eugeni d’Ors may be labeled a true (and unapologetic) moralist, a genuine spiritual director’, largely on account of the erudite references and lofty tone of his newspaper columns, or *Gloses*, which were published at a time when the Catalan institutions of the Republican years had not yet come into existence (2009: 88).

Fabra in the *Normes ortogràfiques* in 1913 but moved away from the academic rhetoric of the Noucentistes, striking a balance between spontaneous and cultivated expression which Escala attributes to ‘una seva convicció íntima de com s’havia d’aproximar l’escriptor al públic de lectors’ (1999: 20). Fuster agrees, describing Sagarra as a ‘poeta “popular”’, his poetics differing from that of his Noucentista counterparts Carles Riba or J. V. Foix in that he expresses the necessity of making art ‘go to the people’, in particular to the working people on the street as opposed to the erudite reader:

En el meu sistema [...] el poeta no feia res per dur el lector –o qui havia d’escoltar-lo– al seu terreny. No violentava ningú ni exigia cap exercici mental perquè se’l seguís. Feia tot el contrari: era ell qui anava al camp del lector, i no del lector erudit i savi, sinó de *l’home del carrer i de la dona de sa casa*; i cercava, dient les coses en forma més directa i amb el procediment més expeditiu, que el xoc de l’emoció i de la comprensió íntegra es produïssin ràpidament. (Quoted in Fuster 1972: 219; emphasis added)

This poetics also reflects his Catalanist political mission, not least because the survival of Catalan literature depended on extra-literary factors (politics in particular) more than ever in the period from 1931 to 1961 (Fuster 1972: 323). In order for Catalan literature to flourish, the Catalan language had to occupy the position of an official language, meaning it had to be used as the vehicular language in public education and administration, the routine aspects of a society (Fuster 1972: 323). Fortunately, the extra-literary factors Fuster mentions were arguably more favourable during the years of the Second Republic. This seems to have given a boost to Catalan literature, as Fuster indicates that from 1931, the Catalan language ‘començava a comptar amb un principi de “normalitat” social’ (1972: 324).⁷

A series of three articles Sagarra wrote for the newspaper *La Publicitat* in 1924-25 suggest that he believed the new ‘normalitat social’ should be reflected in literature. What stands out in these articles is an overwhelmingly political and sociological conception of the novel, along with an extraordinary faith in the Catalan language and, as mentioned, a firm belief in literature’s role in societal cohesion. Sagarra believed that the novel genre was ‘la forma democràtica per excel·lència de l’art de la paraula’ because of the scope

⁷ The landmark approval of the Estatut de Catalunya on 9 September 1932 is a case in point. The Estatut made the Catalan language co-official with Spanish and granted citizens of Catalonia the permission to choose the language in which they would prefer to conduct state proceedings (article 2), and granted the Universitat de Barcelona a degree of independence that would allow it to offer ‘a les llengües i a les cultures castellana i catalana les garanties recíproques de convivència amb igualtat de drets per a Professors i alumnes’ (article 7).

and range of social life it could contain (1924: 1). In what Marina Gustà and Enric Gallén call a thoroughly nineteenth-century conception of the novel (1987: 489), Sagarra views the genre as the one that, for Catalonia, could pin down social classes that are yet to see themselves represented in novel form:

Totes les nostres classes socials estan com qui diu per definir encara: ni la vella aristocràcia, ni l'aristocràcia sobrevinguda, ni la burgesia, ni la menestralia, ni els obrers, ni els pagesos, ni els mariners viuen d'una manera sòlida i poliforme dintre de les novel·les catalanes, com viuen dintre les novel·les de qualsevol país amb tres dits de cultura i de preocupació. (1925b: 1)

Sagarra admires the nineteenth-century novel, whose main characteristics he sees as its encyclopaedic nature, its capacity for showing characters' emotions and its 'virtualitat sociològica' (Gustà 2008: 150-51). A view of the novel as portraying all of society's classes, particularly in the urban environment of Barcelona, conflicts with the Noucentista aesthetic of the idealized city. He considers that 'la nostra vida barcelonina ofereix una quantitat d'aspectes peculiars interessantíssims, ben nostres, i ben definits, que donen molt camp a córrer a un observador agut, a un creador d'històries i a un constructor de fantasies consistents', in an aesthetic vision that resembles Albert's 'voluptuositat del dolor' (Bartrina 2001: 258) insofar as it aims to portray the totality of life, both positive and negative, in terms of 'la virtut i la depravació, l'egoïsme i la generositat de la nostra gent' (Sagarra 1924: 1).

What is striking throughout these articles is the use of the personal pronoun 'nostre'. By evoking the community of readers and writers of Catalan literature, a community to which Sagarra himself of course belongs, Sagarra solidifies the notion of a people bound by a common language. In this vein, it is important to remember that Catalonia has frequently based its sense of a collective identity around language as opposed to race or religion (Balcells 1996: 26), or geography (Sobrer 2000: 176). While Sagarra does lament the lack of a novel tradition in Catalonia (one article, 'La por a la novel·la', calls attention to the fact that had Catalans not been so afraid of failure, two-hundred novels could have been written since the start of the twentieth century [1925a: 1]), he recognizes that the Catalan language now finds itself in a position to be able to support such a tradition. He writes that 'un fort moviment novel·lístic' requires 'un estat social complex, madur i definible, i es necessita sobretot un estat filològic també madur, flexible, sense entrebancs [...] en què l'escriptor es trobi resoltes les dificultats primàries i secundàries, que pugui treballar amb una llengua treballada' (Sagarra 1924: 1). Such a

stable ‘estat filològic’ was now beginning to solidify, as a language flexible enough to say all the things one needs to say in a novel ‘totjust comença a apuntar, totjust ens el trobem encara tebi, encara esborronat i desorientat com una criatura que acaba de néixer’ (Sagarra 1924: 1). Overall, these articles convey a view of the novel as one that offers Sagarra a different, bolder outlet more in line with the political and ethical project of Catalanism constructed in his *Mirador* column than the theatre or poetry could offer him.⁸

Despite this theorization of the novel, *Vida privada*, by Sagarra’s own admission, does not quite fit the model he proposes. At a presentation at the Llibreria Catalònia upon the book’s publication, *La Publicitat* reports that his aim in writing the book was to compose ‘una crònica de la seva època; una crònica que abastés un segle, que expliqués la Barcelona d’abans la guerra, durant la guerra i després de la guerra’ ([Anon.] 1932a: 3). Given the enormity of this task, he began by writing an essay, which quickly – in the space of two months of assiduous work – turned into a novel. Perhaps a result of this haste, Sagarra admits that *Vida privada* goes against the nineteenth-century European idea of the novel that he has previously spoken about, as the report on the book’s presentation in *La Publicitat* states that:

no és ben bé una novel·la, una novel·la almenys segons el patró de les novel·les franceses de final de segle, amb un personatge central i una acció amb plantejament, amb [...] nus i amb desenllaç. Diu que és més aviat una acció que creix i que es desenrotlla d’una manera biològica. Que és una mena de reportatge de les coses que ha vist en la societat barcelonina, amb personatges que ha pogut observar gràcies a la seva particular situació dintre aquesta societat i que són fins avui inexplorats per la nostra literatura. ([Anon.] 1932a: 3)

It may be placed in doubt, then, that Sagarra even managed to convince himself that he had written the kind of novel he wanted to see Catalan writers produce. Nonetheless, the short article concludes with a mention of Sagarra’s rousing speech in which he expressed the hope that the book would ‘servir d’estímul a literats joves que han de fer la glòria de

⁸ Additionally, of particular relevance to Sagarra’s view of the novel is Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin’s essay ‘Discourse in the Novel’, ‘the novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized: The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour’ (1981: 262-63). Therefore, as the novel is based on the stratified nature of real language(s), it sits in opposition to the idea of a national, unitary or official language, which seeks to overcome heteroglossia. Bakhtin thus sets up a conjunction whereby ‘mythical consciousness is aligned with poetic genres, monologue, unitary language, objective culture and officialdom, while critical consciousness is aligned with the novel, dialogue, discursive plurality, “life” and “the people”’ (Brandist 2002: 117).

la Catalunya de demà', highlighting again his conviction that literature is key in building national solidarity for Catalonia ([Anon.] 1932a: 3).

***Vida privada* and the interplay of knowledge and secrecy, possibility and impossibility**

Vida privada, as a 'mena de gènere híbrid entre novel·la i reportatge', largely portrays a novelized chronicle of life in Barcelona in the early twentieth century, focusing on the private antics and public hypocrisies of the city's affluent classes. Like many characters in the novel, dressmaker Dorotea Palau keeps two separate public and private lives. At the back of her dress shop, she rents a room from which she operates a business that capitalizes on the desire for debauchery of Barcelona's high society. She symbolically calls this room 'la cambra del crim', where 'cambra' suggests a room reserved for privacy and 'crim' the violation of a moral code. But Dorotea is not just interested in financial gain: she is herself sexually transgressive. Described as a 'col·leccionista de casos clínics', the 'treballs secrets i anormals' she carries out 'donav[en] a la seva sexualitat deformada, o si es vol, a la seva perversió, una vivacitat ondulant' (Sagarra 2007: 66-67).

To satisfy the demands of her 'perversion', she regularly contracts Guillem de Lloberola to the room in his role as prostitute to provide his services to the Baron Antoni Mates and his wife Conxa Pujol.⁹ Dorotea provides Guillem with clothes and make-up so he may disguise himself as a vagrant to keep his identity secret from the pair. The Baron, described as an effeminate 'faldilletes', has previously had joint sexual relations with his wife and younger men, which have had the effect of bringing the married couple closer

⁹ Sagarra employs the term 'perversion' in its meaning as elaborated by Freud in the *Introductory Lectures*. Freud lists five ways in which the individual may pursue 'abnormal' sexual objects without repression: 'first, by disregarding the barrier of species (the gulf between men and animals), secondly, by overstepping the barrier against disgust, thirdly that against incest (the prohibition against seeking sexual satisfaction from near blood-relations), fourthly that against members of one's own sex and fifthly the transferring of the part played by the genitals to other organs and areas of the body' (1963: 208). See Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XV (1915-1916): Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Parts I and II)*, ed. by James Strachey and others (Hogarth, 1963). The second and fourth items in this list are certainly present in *Vida privada*, while the first – 'disregarding the barrier of species (the gulf between men and animals)' – is present in the proliferation of animal imagery given throughout the work. Sagarra frequently likens characters to animals, suggesting their grotesque or monstrous deformation on account of their moral turpitude, and by extension the violation of the incest taboo (because many animal species mate within the family). Jeffrey Zamostny explains Sagarra's likening of humans to animals as a recourse to Naturalism, because human beings are portrayed as mere organisms and Sagarra engages with medical theories of degeneration (2012: 76). I would argue the narrator's gaze is far too moralizing to be considered authentically Naturalist.

together, giving them the public appearance of an ideal couple who love each other madly, as indeed Dorotea remarks: ‘Són el matrimoni exemplar. [...] S’estimen bojament’ (Sagarra 2007: 63). Dorotea draws attention to the hypocrisy of their image as an exemplary married couple while at the same time engaging in sexual practices that fall outside the bounds of those considered ‘normal’ for a married couple. The bourgeois moral code is patriarchal and heteronormative, a position which the narrator upholds, identifying a hidden monster in Dorotea Palau: ‘Probablement, en el clima secret de Dorotea s’hi devia criar també algun monstre insospitat, i probablement, una de les conseqüències d’aquell monstre era l’escena que acabava de passar a la casa de modes’ (Sagarra 2007: 66). In her discussion of perversion as monstrosity, Patricia MacCormack recognizes that if ‘monsters’ are to name themselves as such, they ‘[accept] the terms of their bodies given to them by phallogocentric [sic] culture’ (2004: para. 21), affirming a condition for them that they did not choose. Indeed, as David Roas postulates, the monster is constructed in opposition to a social norm: ‘el monstre sempre implica l’existència d’una norma: és evident que l’anormal només existeix en relació amb allò que s’ha constituït o instaurat com a *normal*’ (2023: 17; italics in original). For Roas, this explains the monster’s relation to fear:

el monstre serveix per a metaforitzar les nostres pors atàviques de la mort [...], al que és desconegut, al depredador, a la cosa materialment espantosa... Però, alhora, el monstre ens posa en contacte amb el costat obscur de l’ésser humà quan reflecteix els nostres desigs més ocults. (2023: 17)

The narrator portrays Dorotea, along with the other characters involved in the ‘cambra del crim’ episode, as characters to be feared. Roas’s argument that the monster connects us with the unknown, the dark side of life or that which is materially frightening, which in *Vida privada* is conveyed through the narrative voice rather than the responses of the characters themselves, bears a clear relation to Kristeva’s concept of abjection, which will be outlined below. Analysis of this scene begins with the narrator’s brief digression on the characters’ deformed physical appearances, which mirror their ‘deformed’ sexualities. The Baron’s cheeks are a pallid grey and his eyes are like those of a dead hare. Both the couple’s heads seem to have been stuffed like ‘aquelles testes reduïdes que elaboren els salvatges de l’Equador’ that can be seen in ethnographic museums, ‘perquè allí també semblava que hi hagués la força que tibia, que encongeix i fa més expressius els rostres’ (Sagarra 2007: 65). Note also the exoticization the narrator employs, using the language of the alien and exotic to position these ‘deformations’ as savage or barbaric and therefore

as vastly inferior to the urban(e) refinement that the narrator implicitly cherishes as standard and superior.

Given our knowledge of the status of these characters and the activities they are to engage in, a parallel is set up between aesthetics and morality: ‘Probablement, la purulència moral que els treballava el desig era la que es cuidava de reduir les faccions, d’empobrir-les, de descarnar-les d’una manera massa cruel, injectant-los una aguda expressió d’espectres’ (Sagarra 2007: 65). The narrator finds a causal link between the grotesque, distorted appearance of the couple and their deviance from the norms of acceptable behaviour in the medical metaphor, ‘purulència moral’, where ‘purulència’ refers to a wound discharging pus, and which is laden with connotations of the abject.

Kristeva’s concept of abjection refers to the visceral reaction of revulsion we feel when faced with things that are unclean, for example, ‘a sore of blood and pus, or the sugary and acrid odour of sweat or of putrification’ (1982: 127).¹⁰ For Kristeva, these threaten the identity of the self, and thus the self rejects them as ‘other’. Kristeva expresses this by framing the self as able to recognize its own self, or ‘I’, from which it is of course also inseparable: “‘I” do(es) not want it, “I” do(es) not want to know, “I” do(es) not assimilate it, “I” expel(s) it’ (1982: 126-27). This underlines the fact that it is through the rejection of these things that one’s identity is established: ‘I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* in the same movement by which “I” claims to be me’ (1982: 127; emphasis in original). The complex grammar of these sentences underlines the fear that the self feels when faced with the threat of a breakdown in meaning between self and other, or subject and object. Our violent reaction to phenomena like wounds or corpses is caused by the threatened breakdown in meaning that these provoke, which is the core of the concept of abjection: ‘It is not then an absence of health or cleanliness which makes something abject, but that which perturbs an identity, a system, an order; that which does not respect limits, places or rules. It is the in-between, the ambiguous, the mixed’ (Kristeva 1982: 127).

As with all crime, the ‘crime’ (Kristeva uses the same word as Sagarra) of Dorotea, Guillem, Antoni and Conxa, is abject not just because of the revulsion felt by the narrator, but ‘because it indicates the fragility of the law’, occupying as it does an in-

¹⁰ Citations of Kristeva are taken from Julia Kristeva, ‘Approaching Abjection’, *Oxford Literary Review*, 5.1-2 (1982), pp. 125-49, doi:10.3366/olr.1982.009, which is John Lechte’s translation of the first chapter of Kristeva’s *Pouvoirs de l’horreur*. I cite this version on account of the greater clarity of the translation compared to that of *Powers of Horror*, trans. by Léon S. Roudiez (Columbia University Press, 1982).

between space that flouts established boundaries (Kristeva 1982: 127). However, their ‘crime’ is not spontaneous but arranged well in advance and is mediated by the exchange of money, as is Guillem’s ‘crime’ of the blackmail of Antoni later in the novel. Kristeva argues that these kinds of crimes, ‘premeditated crime, sly murder, hypocritical vengeance’, are more abject still

because they emphasise this exhibition of legal fragility. He who refuses morality is not abject [...]. But abjection is immoral, murky, devious and suspect: a terror which is dissimulated, a smiling hatred, a passion which abandons the body instead of inflaming it, a man in debt who sells you, a friend who stabs you in the back. (1982: 127-28)

In *Vida privada*, abjection occurs both intra- and extra-diegetically. After the scene involving the Baron and his wife (which is not recounted in detail by the narrator but merely alluded to), the disgust that Guillem expresses reveals his experience of abjection. Guillem (ironically, given his involvement) compares the Baron to a pig: ‘Ell és un porc, Dorotea, una cosa... sembla impossible...’ and remarks to Dorotea: ‘Quin fàstic!... Jo tinc molt estómac... i per tres-centes pessetes es pot posar a prova l’estómac, però no tant!’ (Sagarra 2007: 67, 68). By relegating the Baron to the realm of animal with its connotations of base instincts and, especially in the case of the pig, a perceived (hence inaccurate) total lack of hygiene, along with the desire to vomit which we infer from Guillem’s words, all clearly reference a response of abjection: ‘Spasms and vomiting which protect me, repulsion and nausea which separate and turn me away from the impure, from the cloaca, from filth’ (Kristeva 1982: 126). The ellipses in Guillem’s dialogue that leave clauses unfinished also point to the threat of the breakdown in meaning that Guillem has just faced, as he cannot adequately express through language the reaction to what he has experienced.

Guillem’s reaction is certainly of importance. It adds nuance to his character and accentuates the decadence of the aristocracy more broadly because he engages in these exploits out of boredom. However, it is the narrator’s engagement with the abject and specifically the construction of the abject from a point of view outside of the story that strikes at the heart of Sagarra’s project. It is the third-person narrator who constructs the abject imagery of ‘purulència’ and compares the couple’s heads to the model heads of the ethnographic museum in reaction to the characters’ actions. Abjection is therefore located extra-diegetically, as the reaction here is not produced by the characters themselves but in the narration. The narrator therefore takes up a moralizing posture (to a more extreme

extent than that of Narcís Oller's narrator in *La febre d'or*) that Gustà argues is modelled on nineteenth-century antecedents, as each storyline 'té un sentit exemplar, il·lustra una tesi massa palesament prèvia: els efectes destructors de la tensió entre realitat i aparences en el comportament de cada personatge' (1981: 38). Gustà names this defect 'bovarisme', and argues that it affects 'la conducta sexual i la situació econòmica, mòbils de l'actuació dels caràcters, i és l'argument bàsic perquè el narrador rebutgi un present conflictiu enfront d'un passat ideal' (1981: 38).¹¹

In taking up this moralizing posture, the narrative voice participates in what it names 'Barcelonisme': an idealization of the past and nostalgia for a bygone world that now finds itself in decline. Gustà identifies the Barcelona of the nineteenth century as the object of the narrator's longing, a time when the city 'naixia a la modernitat amb la indústria i el comerç, conscient del seu esforç productiu, però que començava a obrir-se a comportaments deseixits i a maneres de viure menys convencionals' (2008: 162). The characters who exhibit this quality (and who come from both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, suggesting that the narrator's disapproving gaze does not discriminate on grounds of class) are saved from condemnation by the narrator (Gustà 2008: 162), with Pilar Romaní representing the finest example of a world that is disappearing for she epitomizes 'tota l'essència d'una Barcelona aristocràtica i comercial, popular, orgullosa i una mica infantil, de la qual s'estava acabant el rastre', and her death at the end of the novel symbolizes the end of the era Sagarra romanticizes (Sagarra 2007: 157).

The narrative voice, using 'Barcelonisme' as its discerning moral criterion, rejects the moral crimes of the 'cambra del crim' foursome, and yet if we are to follow Kristeva's theory of abjection, in doing so it is constituted by them. Gustà identifies the coincidence of the narrative voice with the scenes it narrates, in which 'l'expressió verbal integra tots els elements de la novel·la i acaba identificant-s'hi. La il·lusió de realitat i la recuperació del passat creen uns efectes totalitzadors mitjançant la reducció a la paraula escrita, uns efectes que connoten una concepció del món: una moral' (1981: 40). That is, the lack of distance between the narrative voice and the subject of the narration produces a moralizing narrative. The narrator is forced to reject the behaviour of the group as it

¹¹ Guillem perhaps embodies 'bovarisme' most explicitly, as the narrator tells us that he 'havia estat víctima d'una autointoxicació, d'un embriagament de literatura i de poca-solta' (Sagarra 2007: 231), like Emma Bovary or Don Quixote. The meta-literary dimension of the novel is extended by Zamostny's reading of both Guillem and the novel he confesses a desire to write, as *mise-en-abymes* of Sagarra and *Vida privada*. Guillem's plan to write a novel based on his experiences 'constructs a *mise en abyme* of the enunciation in which there is an analogy between Sagarra as creator of *Vida privada* and Guillem as author of a hypothetical intradiegetic novel sharing characteristics of its embedding work' (Zamostny 2012: 79).

runs counter to ‘Barcelonisme’. Reading this in line with abjection reveals that the presence of a moralizing narrator conflates subject and object and the boundary between self (the narrative voice) and other (the narrated scenes) is blurred. Order and meaning are therefore placed under threat, which causes the narrative voice to reject violently the unfolding scenes and in so doing reject a part of itself, a part which is essential for its own construction as a self.

The novel is therefore produced through this moralizing mechanism in which abjection is displaced in large part to the reactions of the narrator rather than the characters. The narrator expresses abjection aesthetically through the language of illness (‘purulència’) which is then tied to morality – we are faced with a ‘purulència *moral*’ – leading the narrator to make the connection between aesthetics and morality: ‘La moral també té una estètica; i les catàstrofes dintre d’aquesta estètica són implacables’ (Sagarra 2007: 65; emphasis added). Here the narrator conflates morality with beauty in a manner that is in line with Kant’s view that what is morally acceptable is also aesthetically beautiful.¹² The connection between morals and aesthetics takes on a further dimension when we take into account the fact that the narrator speaks on behalf of the city, as a member deeply ingrained in Barcelona society.

Barcelona, specifically the Eixample, is inextricable from the characters; they represent the city. The narrator’s abjection reinforces the fact that the narrator has to reject them in order to be constituted by them. The narrative voice’s nostalgic tone also binds it intricately with the city: the narrator is part of the city, a ‘barceloní’ inextricable from the metropolis. This allows us as well to set up our own parallel between the Eixample’s urban form, and morality. The characters are inextricable from the space they inhabit, a connection to space which is reinforced sarcastically by Dorotea’s surname: Palau means palace, but, to the narrator, what happens in her rooms is anything but regal. The name is therefore reflective of Sagarra’s biting critique of Barcelona’s upper classes who by now, as we infer, had become so prone to decadent behaviour.

The concept of abjection helps to establish a parallel between morality and the urban form of the Eixample and the ‘in-between’ space of *el intervías* because the abject is provoked by ‘that which perturbs an identity, a system, an order; that which does not respect limits, places or rules. It is the in-between, the ambiguous, the mixed’ (Kristeva

¹² This view is also shared by many other philosophers since Plato. For an overview of these ideas, see Elisabeth Schellekens, *Aesthetics and Morality* (Continuum, 2007), pp. 95-113.

1982: 127). The abject and *el intervías* both hinge on the in-between, on that which blends different ways of being that bleed into each other and that which is both public and private, inside and outside. The ‘cambra del crim’ episode takes place in the ‘in-between’ space of *el intervías*, the space that is literally ‘between ways’. In a similar vein, MacCormack’s alignment of perversion with monstrosity directly draws on Rosi Braidotti’s definition of monsters as also occupying the in-between: they are ‘human beings [...] who represent the in-between, the mixed, the ambivalent as implied in the ancient Greek root of the word monsters, *teras*, which means both horrible and wonderful, object of aberration and adoration’ (1994: 77; italics in original). Also drawing on the blending of opposites, Roas argues that the monster is constructed as ‘disorder’ against the supposed ‘order’ of what is framed as socially acceptable: ‘El monstre encarna la transgressió, el desordre. La seva existència subverteix els límits que determinen què és acceptable des del punt de vista físic, biològic i, fins i tot, moral’ (2023: 17). Hence the monster subverts moral norms and at the same time embraces its own vitality, rejoicing in its transgression. My discussion of *Vida privada* now moves therefore towards an analysis of Sagarra’s positioning of the public and private sides of Barcelona in light of the ‘perverse’, ‘monstrous’ or ‘abject’ subjectivities elucidated thus far; however, attention is shifted away from individual subjectivities and onto themes and tropes operating on a societal level.

Sagarra represents the Eixample as the private side of Barcelona, and the historic centre of the city is portrayed as its public side. In the Eixample, the aristocratic and bourgeois characters spend their time indoors, the narrator focusing critical attention on bodies and material possessions inside apartments in order to reveal the private lives of the inhabitants (Davidson 2009: 193).¹³ By contrast, in the historic centre, indoor activities are presented as spectacles to be appreciated visually. For example, the Liceu on the Rambles stages opera for the monied classes and away from this wide, central boulevard, spectators attend dance clubs and burlesque shows in the red-light district, where the street is also a site of activity. These separate public and private zones of the city, where transgressive sexual practices are carried out, are the locations of different flows of knowledge and power. Michel Foucault (1979: 32) argues that practices of

¹³ Anna Casas Aguilar adds that ‘material elements elucidate the narrator’s ethical critique and moral judgment toward the protagonists of *Vida privada*’, arguing that ‘daily objects, furniture, clothing, and houses [...] elucidate the protagonists’ *material ideology*, as well as their economic and moral decadence’ (2014: 269; italics in original).

knowledge and power are what create sexuality, which is defined by Sedgwick as ‘the essence of both identity and knowledge’ because it concerns the management of information about a person’s sexuality or sexual activity to a much greater degree than it concerns any intrinsic personal qualities (2008: 26, 70).

This occurs in *Vida privada* around the blackmail episode. Guillem visits the Baron at his home, where he reveals himself to be the vagrant from the dress shop flat and threatens to disclose the Baron’s transgressive sexuality to the members of the Barcelona bourgeoisie if he does not write off the debt of fifty thousand pesetas his brother Frederic owes him from gambling losses. The Baron is quick to comply, as public knowledge of his activities and associated identity would ruin his reputation. Guillem therefore threatens to reveal knowledge of sexual acts, which is what would in turn construct the Baron’s sexuality. Following Foucault and Sedgwick, it is the act of revelation itself rather than the acts he participates in which construct the Baron’s sexual identity. (Such acts are never actually revealed diegetically; only the reader and the ‘cambra del crim’ foursome are privy to this information, although some characters surmise that unsavoury business led to the Baron’s demise later in the novel.) Whereas in the pre-modern era, society would have understood an individual’s identity in terms of their social standing, bloodline and public honour, in the modern era, individual identity is created in private spaces and is defined in greater part by personal and psychological characteristics (Pernas 2010: 15). It is our private life that allows us to develop our own personality and identity, because it is in our own private space that we feel ‘free’ from the scopophilic and judgemental gaze of others (Pernas 2010: 13). Therefore, these personal qualities are the factors that determine social value, rather than status or privilege accorded to a person at birth. In Chapter 3, we saw that Richard Sennett problematizes what he sees as the placement of excessive attention on the pursuit of self-knowledge for its own sake, which, he argues, ultimately causes the social order to break down. These different approaches to the construction of identity bring to the fore the question of where the power to determine an individual’s identity lies. That is, does an individual have the power to determine their own identity, or can identity only be determined publicly, by recognition on behalf of society as a whole, as holds for Foucault and Sedgwick (if we are to agree that sexuality is indeed ‘the essence of identity and knowledge’)?

As mentioned, in the Eixample, the private space of *el intervías* is used as the location for transgressive sexual acts which form their participants’ identities. The Baron and his wife, concerned about the secrecy of the location, situate their transgressive sex in

a private, concealed space because news of their ‘perversion’ would be ruinous to their position in society. Their sexual identities are therefore also kept secret from public view, which appears to reinforce the binary of heterosexuality/homosexuality, where the former is marked as normative and the latter deviant. However, Sedgwick demonstrates how this dichotomy is inherently unstable as both terms ‘subsist in a more unsettled and dynamic tacit relation’ (2008: 10). Homosexuality is not symmetrical, but subordinate to heterosexuality, which in turn depends for its meaning on the submission and exclusion of homosexuality. Each category is therefore ‘irresolvably unstable’ because homosexuality is constituted as at once internal and external to heterosexuality (Sedgwick 2008: 10). This concept is, in some ways, an expanded version of Kristeva’s concept of abjection. Where the experience of abjection pertains to a single individual subjectivity, Sedgwick’s theory reproduces the pattern of abjection – the subject’s rejection of something that constitutes it – on a societal scale. Heterosexuality has to reject homosexuality in order to maintain its own conceptual integrity which necessarily entails the acknowledgement of the fact that homosexuality does in fact go some way to constructing the meaning of heterosexuality.¹⁴

Indeed, taking a step back from the analysis of tropes of abjection in the narrator’s moralizing gaze reveals that the ‘cambra del crim’ episode demonstrates that the same ‘unsettled and dynamic tacit relation’ exists between much wider themes such as privacy and publicness, secrecy and exhibitionism. Following Foucault’s theory of the construction of sexual identity, public knowledge of the Baron’s secret would represent the production of knowledge of his ‘secret’ sexuality, thus entirely reconstructing his identity in the eyes of the public. Guillem taunts the Baron, gleefully tormenting him with the idea that his class will abandon him if they find out the truth: ‘Veure com aquesta societat hipòcrita a la qual vostè pertany es cargola fastigosament d’alegries i

¹⁴ It should be clear that Sedgwick’s thesis rests on the theory underpinning Derrida’s deconstruction, as Sedgwick acknowledges (2008: 9). For an analysis of Sedgwick’s uses of Derrida in *Epistemology of the Closet*, see Hector Kollias, ‘Queering it Right, Getting it Wrong’, *Paragraph*, 35.2 (2012), pp. 144-63. Kollias identifies a ‘structural misunderstanding’ on the part of early queer and gender theorists (specifically, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler) where this pertains to their uses of the works of preceding theorists such as Derrida and Foucault (2012: 145). Kollias explains that a ‘structural misunderstanding’ should be understood ‘not in the sense of a misreading, an error, a betrayal of some original, but in the sense of a highly productive transfer of words and concepts from one specific market of symbolic goods to another’ (Cusset quoted in Kollias 2012: 145). It could be argued that I attempt to effect a similar ‘structural misunderstanding’ by treating Sedgwick’s theory as a ‘scaled up’ version of Kristeva’s abjection, and also by using Cerdà’s theories in literary analysis.

d'escarafalls en sentir que a un dels peixos més grossos d'aquesta societat el deixin en calçotets al mig del carrer, empastifat d'infàmia [...]. Tothom sabrà qui és el Baró de Falset, l'hi juro!' (Sagarra 2007: 176). Public knowledge of his identity would therefore submit him to the power of Barcelona's privileged classes. Furthermore, Sagarra's use of the verb 'ser' to describe the Baron's identity is revealing of Foucault's observation that a person who engages in same-sex acts came to be viewed as *being* a homosexual person; the acts and the state of being thus becoming inseparable: 'the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species' (1979: 43). Racked with fear as Guillem ensnares him in an ever-thicker web of blackmail, the Baron, terrified of the social consequences of his potential unmasking, shoots himself in the head. The complex intertwining of public and private realms that Sagarra presents demonstrates how each sphere cannot be delineated and separated as neatly as the characters, or Cerdà, imagine they can be, as the public/private dichotomy transcends urban boundaries.

The public fascination with his sexuality that the Baron imagines, a fascination echoed in the narrator's labelling of Dorotea's sexuality as 'monstrous', subjugates the characters to the established norms of the bourgeois realm. Falling foul of this moral code is what brings about the characters' murders. The Baron is not the only one to die as a result of his transgressive sexuality: Dorotea is later stabbed in the heart by a rancorous former associate who helped her procure clients for her secondary line of work but whom she had since abandoned. Their deaths connect to Cerdà's theorization of the urban form of *el intervías*: attempting to keep their transgressive sexual practices private within a space characterized as both private and public proves tragically impossible. *El intervías* involves by necessity contact with the other, the outside, the constant crossing of the inside-outside boundary, a situation that proves impossible to uphold for the Baron and Dorotea. Guillem and Conxa, on the other hand, end up marrying each other, which, taken at face value, shows that the public recognition of a formal bond of marriage settles any public search for moral wrongdoing.

On the other hand, and building further upon the points made in Chapter 3, theories of melodrama which question the notion that the revelation of a true identity resolves conflict are of use to the analysis here. As glossed by Goldberg, Brooks's theory of melodrama maintains that 'there is some moral clarity and force in the distinctions represented by characters, that to reveal those distinctions is the aim of melodrama', in other words, knowledge laid bare 'secure[s] the social and political order' (Goldberg

2016: 8).¹⁵ This theory does not suffice for Goldberg, who relies on queer theory to tease out the assumptions and contradictions that Brooks glosses over where these relate to queer others. Indeed, ‘to assume a correlation between action and identity’, as in that observed by Foucault,

relegates melodrama to an impasse to be overcome; it assumes that embodiment and visceral experience serve as hindrances to the achievement of identity. This is the idealizing and ideological plot that lies behind the kind of literariness that Brooks accords melodrama. (2016: 8)

What Goldberg refers to as ‘the kind of literariness that Brooks accords melodrama’ is the nineteenth-century style of bourgeois realism (Brooks’s primary sources are, after all, Balzac and Henry James) whose moral coordinates, as is very much the case with *Vida privada*, are regulated by the liberalizing forces of liberty, equality and fraternity. Goldberg opposes this view which would appear to make melodrama yield only idealized, contrived plots as well as reinforce the idea that melodrama can be reduced to a battle between good and evil that can be neatly resolved. For Brooks, marriage would ‘secure the social and political order’ and tie up the loose ends of the plot satisfactorily. However, Guillem and Conxa’s marriage does not stabilize the social order, it changes it. Guillem usurps the Baron, essentially by killing him (‘Guillem l’havia assassinat’; ‘era l’assassí real d’un suposat suïcida’ [Sagarra 2007: 229, 231]) and then taking his wife and his money. On a societal level, we can read this as the bourgeoisie’s usurpation of the aristocracy. The aristocracy is only able to survive by marrying into the much more financially successful bourgeoisie, to which much of its wealth is redistributed as a consequence of the expansion of market capitalism. A salient example of this wealth redistribution is the tapestry that Hortènsia Portell buys from the Lloberolas, and which Guillem buys back using Conxa’s money after the pair are married, making it therefore a symbol that ‘crosses the boundaries between the public and private’ (Casas Aguilar 2014: 275) (the tapestry has public significance because it is known to Barcelona society, and the public often refer to the Lloberolas as ‘aquells senyors que tenen aquell tapís tan bo’ [Sagarra 2007: 50]).

We turn, finally, to the public zones of Barcelona, specifically the Raval area of the historic centre of the city, which is generally home to people of a lower

¹⁵ We see this at the end of *Un film* when Nonat is apprehended, allowing his identity as a criminal mastermind to be revealed. The state’s criminal justice infrastructure mobilizes to remove Nonat from the streets, thereby restoring the social order.

socioeconomic status than the Eixample. MacCormack points out that conditions of subjugation (such as those experienced by the Raval's inhabitants), are often glamorized in society (2004: para. 21), which further reaffirms traditional patriarchal and heteronormative discourses. Although MacCormack refers to contemporary trends, this argument remains a valid explanation for Sagarra's Barcelona. I would add that the act of glamorizing encompasses a morbid fascination or scopophilic tourist gaze of the sort we find in Sagarra's lively portrait of Barcelona's red-light district. A group of aristocratic and bourgeois characters who had met through regular games of poker go on a night-time excursion in the historic centre. Their night out turns into a voyeuristic tour of the red-light district, as they observe all kinds of people out in the streets: different kinds of men, prostitutes, gypsies and disfigured people exhibit themselves to the passers-by.

Practices of transgressive sexuality in the red-light district take place outdoors in the streets, where people flaunt their bodies' characteristics and display appearances that cross boundaries, flouting the conventions the group of tourists are accustomed to. The people they encounter blur the strait-laced, normative conceptions of gender enshrined in the bourgeois moral code: 'D'homes, se'n veien de tota manera, des dels mariners, els mecànics i els obrers perfectament normals, fins als pederastes amb els llavis pintats, les galtes amb crostes de guix i els ulls carregats de rímmel' (Sagarra 2007: 205). Later on, they are pursued by Lolita, who is perhaps a more extreme example of the combination of elements of male and female within one person. Described as an 'homenot' with a masked face and hair gleaming with coconut oil, Lolita begs them for a cigarette 'amb una veu de mascaró que vol imitar la d'una dona i fent aquell ploriqueig assossegat i llepissós dels invertits professionals' (Sagarra 2007: 212). Afraid of this character, the group try to hurry away as Lolita makes 'uns "ais" inaguantables a l'orella dels quatre homes que fugien; uns "ais" com si volguessin imitar l'orgasme femení' (Sagarra 2007: 212). Indoors, transgressive sexuality is expressed through performances of dance and movement. In the La Criolla club the dancers and a boy with full make-up and a woman's hairstyle prepare the group and the reader for the friezes they witness later at the show at La Sevillana: a burlesque performance by four women and 'dos éssers que probablement eren homes' (Sagarra 2007: 214). This episode again highlights the narrator's taxonomic gaze by attempting to define all subjects in terms of the extent of their deviation from 'male' or 'female', or as a combination of the two.

In the riotous, winding streets of the old city there is a much less clear distinction between public and private spaces as the streets are much narrower and there is much less

room for a pavement buffer zone to separate public and private areas. Private spatial practices that develop the identity of an individual are therefore forced out into the public domain, where they are witnessed as performance. There is consequently no layer of secrecy surrounding transgressive sexuality in the old city: it exists out in the open and invites no public quest for knowledge as in the Eixample. The people of the red-light district attract viewers, which is reflected in the narrator's comparison of the area to a stage being set up for the 1929 International Exposition where the inhabitants are performers: 'és possible que aquells barris els donin un maquillatge especial' (Sagarra 2007: 205). The Raval's Carrer del Cid had also been embellished by the Patronat de Turisme i Atracció de Forasters in preparation for the Exposition, and those who stood to gain from the event sought to maximize their profits by hunting for 'xinesos, [...] negres, [...] invertits truculents, i [...] dones extreptes de la sala de dissecció de l'Hospital', exotic creatures with which to decorate the street (Sagarra 2007: 205).

Tourism had made a considerable impact in Barcelona since the Universal Exposition of 1888 (Vargas 2018: 121), and Sagarra's mention of the Patronat is a clear allusion to the Societat d'Atracció de Forasters, a public-private body set up by industrialists and liberal politicians of a Catalanist bent and which was active between 1908 and 1939. The Societat was founded on the aspiration 'that the presence of tourism in Barcelona would affect and improve the civic character of Barcelona society' and would encourage citizens to 'learn to relate themselves with the city in a more elegant and ordered way' (Cocola Gant and Palou Rubio 2015: 470). One means of achieving this consisted of the construction of buildings in Barcelona's historic centre based on traditional designs from medieval Catalonia, a period that post-Renaixença Catalans glorified to such a degree that the resulting twentieth-century interpretations of medieval architecture were more embellished than their original referents. According to Agustín Cocola-Gant, these constructions produced 'a hyper-real Gothic environment in which buildings were reconstructed following an idealised past that probably never existed' (2020: 133).¹⁶

¹⁶ Cocola-Gant (2020: 133) indicates that the expression 'Gothic Quarter' was first used in 1911 in the review *Cataluña* by journalist Ramon Rucabado, a 'militant Noucentista' (Minguet i Batllori 1989: 238). We can infer that Cocola-Gant uses the expression 'hyper-real' in the sense proposed by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) in which elements from fiction and reality merge to so great an extent that neither can be separated from each other, resulting in confusion. For an interactive, audiovisual exploration of these aspects of Barcelona's historic centre, see web documentary *Farselona*, dir. by Kika Serra and Paty Godoy (n.d.), <<https://uab-documentalcreativo.es/farselona/en/index.html>>.

The aims of the Societat d'Atracció de Forasters therefore seem to have been twofold. While they wanted to make the city more attractive to foreign tourists, they also saw the reconfiguration of Barcelona's historic centre (what we might nowadays call 'urban regeneration') as productive of improved Catalan subjects. This aim is a correlate of *urbanización*, which, as we know, Cerdà sees as having the power to generate greater social cohesion and improve the smooth functioning of the social order. Both initiatives demonstrate the belief that by changing the urban environment, they will change the way people 'are'. The epistemological procedure at work here resembles that identified by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, whereby since the nineteenth century, people's actions and behaviours have been understood as directly constructive of their identity. As explained above, Sagarra views literature as possessive of a similar capability: that of emboldening a sense of collective Catalan identity through the consolidation of a Catalan literary sphere.

The aims of the Societat d'Atracció de Forasters appear Noucentista in spirit on account of their aspiration to a fostering of elegance and urbanity among Barcelona's citizens. Similarly, in *Vida privada*, Sagarra portrays the bourgeois social, moral and cultural conventions of the middle- to upper-class residents of the Eixample to be understood as heterosexual relationships and normative sexual practices, as we may deduce from their reactions to the sights they witness in the Raval. An illustrative example of such a reaction is that of Emili Borràs, a mathematician who is an avid consumer of literature, art and fashion and who is described as 'el cas d'intellectualista més pur que es pogués donar en una societat barcelonina com la d'aleshores' (Sagarra 2007: 204). After fleeing from Lolita, Emili remarks that 'davant d'una cosa com aquesta [...]; se't nua la gola, et sents tan avergonyit, que et vénen ganes de plorar...', indicating that the embarrassment he feels stems from pity for these characters (Sagarra 2007: 213). Emili attempts to make sense of the scenes he has witnessed with recourse to literary referents: 'citava els autors russos i alguns aspectes de la novella picaresca espanyola; citava, sobretot, els Pares de l'Església; parlava de Jesucrist...' (Sagarra 2007: 209). He confronts this reality which so disturbs him by rationalizing what he sees as if it were a work of fiction revealing to him a poetic truth. Emili, given to philosophizing, sees in the burlesque performance not vice but 'la infinita tristesa de la carn', saying that vice is not even to be found in the Ciutat vella: 'el vici no el trobaràs en aquests barris' (Sagarra 2007: 216). Emili is at this point addressing Teodora, who comes to the realization that perhaps vice is actually represented by the group of tourists themselves: 'vols dir que el

vici... som per exemple nosaltres?’ (Sagarra 2007: 216). The exchange between Emili and Teodora highlights that vice, for these characters, is the social deprivation they witness in the Raval, rather than moral depravation. For Emili, already familiar with literary treatments of sexual obscenity as a result of his wide reading, it is the authenticity of the scenes, physically alive in front of him, which provokes his reaction. Alarmed, he is then made aware that his group’s voyeuristic attitude to the Raval is the real representation of vice.

The interaction between Emili and Teodora demonstrates that the distinction between reality and fiction has been blurred in the Raval (like the subject/object blurring in abjection), as the bodies on show are not authentic representations of local residents but characters selected judiciously by enterprising city officials for their curious and enticing appearances which do not fit the conventions the group are used to. By trying to make sense of these scenes by comparing them to high-brow literature, Emili confuses their stylized, artificial nature which exists in the interest of profit, with authenticity. He is ultimately unable to make sense of the scenes he has witnessed: ‘només la pietat d’un sant pot comprendre aquestes coses; jo ja voldria, ja voldria... però no puc...’ (Sagarra 2007: 215). His confusion is symptomatic of the threat to the established order presented by the breakdown in distinction between what is visibly authentic and what is for show, the ellipses in his dialogue reminiscent of those in Guillem’s dialogue following the ‘cambra del crim’ episode.

The flouting of bourgeois moral conventions is reflected in the old city’s urban form. Whereas Cerdà regulated and controlled the form of the new city with its rigid grid pattern of streets and an *intervías* consisting of apartment blocks made of single-family units and hence a great deal of private space, the old city underwent no similar planning project other than the demolition of buildings to make way for the Via Laietana and the subsequent neo-gothic reconstruction of the area.¹⁷ *Vida privada* thus establishes links between transgressive behaviour and the form of the city. The layout of the Eixample advocates the dominance of binary modes of thinking that protect normative identities, as

¹⁷ Cerdà was in favour of demolishing the historical centre of Barcelona to rebuild it in line with his theories, although this proposal found little traction among the public. The implementation of Léon Jaussely’s plan in 1907 saw the demolition of some areas of the Ciutat vella for the construction of the Via Laietana, a wide boulevard connecting the port area to the Eixample. Later, as part of the 1934 Macià Plan, a collaboration between a group of vanguard architects and thinkers known as the Grup d’Arquitectes i Tècnics Catalans per al Progrés de l’Arquitectura Contemporània (GATCPAC) and Swiss Modernist architect Le Corbusier proposed the demolition of the historic centre and its reconstruction following the design of Cerdà’s homogeneous grid pattern, but with blocks grouped into larger units with high density residential blocks housing as many as one thousand inhabitants per hectare (Casellas 2009: 824).

exemplified by the presence of transgressive sexual practices within the private space of *el intervías* and the secret nature of the sexual identities that are constructed as a result. Dorotea's back room in the Eixample acts somewhat as the Baron's 'closet', where his transgressive identity is developed and where it is kept a closely guarded secret, along with the roles of Dorotea and Guillem.

As Green observes, Cerdà's *urbanización* is based around human interaction and interrelationships which are constantly shifting, thus making themselves 'open to the subversion of normalcy and the multiplication of alternative potentials' (2002: 142). While this process of subversion happens publicly in the streets and clubs of the old city, when it takes place in the private-public in-between space of *el intervías*, it results in tragic consequences. Private sexual identities are shown to be incompatible with the conventional values that regulate daily life in the Eixample, values which are structured, as we have seen, around phallocentrism. The potential for privacy and secrecy was meant by Cerdà to create a more balanced place for humans to thrive by allowing them to combine movement and stasis in equal measure and creating universal harmony. Yet *Vida privada* suggests that the promotion of this human solidarity and fraternity appears contingent on the upholding of phallogentric, bourgeois moral values, as the tragedies in the Eixample and the glamorization of conditions of subjugation in the red-light district convey.

Chapter 5

Cerdà's Political Subjects: The Individual and the Collective in Josep Maria Francès's *Retorn al sol* (1936)

The *Teoría general* opens with a 'Proemio' in which Cerdà explains the motivations behind his study. He identifies that humanity is currently paused on its path towards greater progress and development – 'un pequeño alto en la senda de su perfeccionamiento' – and that it is necessary to remind governments and peoples of this current state, with the express aim to 'dirigir y encaminar a buen término los futuros acontecimientos' (1867/1: 11). Cerdà recognizes the democratic nature of recent technological developments and progress which, in the current era, are within the reach of all and benefit everyone, in contrast to previous eras when they belonged to just one class. However, when comparing these developments to the ability of the city organism to satisfy them, he finds an organism that is seriously flawed:

ese organismo con los defectos capitales de que adolece, incompleto en sus medios, mezquino en sus formas, siempre restrictivo, siempre compresor, aprisiona y mantiene en constante tortura a la humanidad, que orgullosa con los medios y elementos de acción de que dispone, y ávida de seguir adelante por el camino de su perfeccionamiento que el dedo de Dios ahora con más fuerza que nunca parece indicarle, forcejea sin cesar para romper esas tiránicas cadenas de mampostería que la aprisionan. (1867/1: 12-13)

Furthermore, Cerdà notices that 'un estado de lucha constante' therefore takes place every day, which affects all urban dwellers and sets up an antithesis between the city organism and the 'justas y legítimas aspiraciones de la Humanidad' (1867/1: 13). He speaks of humanity's need for urban expansion, to break out of the straitjacket that imprisons it. The allusion to the gradual demolition of Barcelona's city walls is surely deliberate, and Cerdà uses this historical event symbolically to highlight the positive effect that changing the urban fabric of a city can have on the progress of its people. According to Cerdà, people, in general terms, will continue to progress and develop until they no longer exist:

Es decir, que la obra de urbanización empezada por el primer hombre, seguirá desarrollándose hasta que en la consumación de los siglos desaparezca el último hombre de la superficie de este globo. Su historia [la historia de la urbanización], es, pues, la historia del hombre, a cuya existencia, ora individual, ora colectiva, sirve siempre de indispensable complemento. (1867/1: 50)

As we can see here, Cerdà evokes a human-centred history of urbanization (feminized here as the ‘amiga fiel del hombre [que] le acompaña a todas partes’) which has taken many different forms over the centuries, but which has remained unchanged at its base: we recall that ‘para la urbanización, la forma es nada, la satisfacción cumplida y adecuada de las necesidades humanas es todo’ (1867/1: 50).

However, Cerdà’s vision, in which humanity gradually tends towards perfection by means of refining the way in which it urbanizes, is only possible to achieve upon the disappearance of humanity from the surface of the earth. It is therefore the disappearance or non-existence of humanity, at least in material terms, which provides the conditions for perfection. The removal of the human from progress provides the basis for the central argument of this chapter, which is that under the regime of *urbanización*, the conditions for progress necessitate the excision of the ‘human’ because *urbanización* is understood primarily as a technical process. While it is true that Cerdà believes the moral and intellectual health of humanity will improve (as we explored in Chapters 3 and 4), such an improvement is only possible because of material changes. Our focus in this chapter is on Josep Maria Francès’s satirical novel *Retorn al sol* (1936), a post-apocalyptic vision of a Catalan society that survives and flourishes in the underground city of Subolesa (so called because it is underneath the town of Olesa de Montserrat) until a violent coup d’état enables some characters to return to the earth’s surface.¹ The chapter makes the case that the novel presents an unsustainable urban social contract and its reading alongside *urbanización* supports the hypothesis that Cerdà’s theory is similarly impossible to achieve. I argue that *urbanización* essentially admits that progress towards a point of perfection is untenable. Cerdà, along with the society constructed in *Retorn al sol*, aims to excise the human in the pursuit of perfection; the progress each text claims to support is necessarily corruptible and mortal because it is – despite its best intentions to prove otherwise – produced by human activity, which is itself corruptible and mortal. This argument will be made with the support of a brief analysis of Llorenç Villalonga’s *Andrea Vicitrix* (1974), which introduces us to Teilhard de Chardin’s theory of the Noosphere – a vision of the evolution of humanity in which humans lose their material form – as well as tropes of ambivalence and ambiguity which are also of importance in *Retorn al sol*. Following an exposition of the Noosphere and *Andrea Vicitrix*, the political subjectivity

¹ Quotations from the novel are taken from Josep Maria Francès, *Retorn al sol: novel·la de fantasia i de sàtira* (Voliana, 2018 [1936]).

implied by a reading of *urbanización* is used to examine *Retorn al sol* and make the argument that both Cerdà's and Francès's texts are characterized by impossibility.

Beyond *urbanización*: Andrea Vicitrix and the Noosphere

Despite Cerdà's admission that *urbanización* is essentially unrealizable, he is seemingly unaware of the implications of this fact for his project. As a result, *urbanización* is rendered futile or utopian: it cannot be achieved materially and humans logically cannot benefit from a perfect *urbanización* because that necessarily entails that humans no longer exist. It is at this point that Cerdà's theory reaches its end point, yet this line of reasoning has been taken a step further by paleoanthropologist and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), whose most well-known work, *The Phenomenon of Man* (*Le Phénomène humain*, published 1955; English translation 1959), illustrates an idea of progress by which humans eventually evolve into pure consciousness. In this immaterial state, known as the Noosphere (after the Greek *nous*, meaning 'mind' or 'intellect'), humans no longer have their bodies but exist as pure intellectual energy. Teilhard posits this 'planetary level of psychic totalisation and evolutionary upsurge' as a stage of evolution that will occur millions of years in the future and will eclipse the Biosphere, or the world of plants and animals (1959: 278). Culminating in what he calls the 'Omega Point', this stage of evolution essentially signifies 'the end of the world', as people vanish off the face of the earth, but this happens so that they can be built into something else 'above our heads in the inverse direction of matter which vanishes' (Teilhard de Chardin 1959: 272). Although humanity, at this point in time, will be characterized by a sharp tendency towards unity, by which we mean that all intellects will be unified in the Omega Point, each consciousness will retain its individuality, as the Omega

can only be a *distinct Centre radiating at the core of a system of centres*; a grouping in which personalisation of the All and personalisations of the elements reach their maximum, *simultaneously and without merging*, under the influence of a supremely autonomous focus of union. (Teilhard de Chardin 1959: 262-63; first emphasis in original, second emphasis added)

Teilhard effectively finds a solution to the impossibility that *urbanización* implies, by aligning progress towards a point of perfection in which humans do not exist as material beings yet retain their individual consciousness. Whereas Cerdà does not continue developing the theory of *urbanización* beyond the disappearance of humans from the face

of the earth, Teilhard's Noosphere understands the evolution of humans from physical beings into pure consciousness to be a real possibility.

The Noosphere is one of the central concepts which guides the organizing principles of the society depicted in Llorenç Villalonga's *Andrea Vicitrix*, which was written predominantly during the 1960s and published in 1974. In brief, the novel – or novel-cum-essay – presents the reader with a new world order, where the USA, Russia and China have eliminated each other in nuclear war and a united Europe – the Estats Units d'Europa (EUE) – is the only remaining civilization. The EUE, with its capital in Paris, is controlled by 'trusts' (conglomerates and big business) whose figurehead is Monsieur-Dame de Pompignac la Fleur. Its premier luxury tourist resort is the Club Turista de la Mediterrània, better known as Turclub, which occupies the island formerly known as Mallorca and provides the setting for the novel. The narrator is a 67-year-old man who was cryogenically frozen in 1965 and wakes up in Turclub in the year 2050 looking, but not feeling, almost forty years younger. At the novel's opening, he finds himself in a Rolls Royce being driven by Andrea Vicitrix, the regime's Director of Pleasure, as they hurtle down the road. Neon advertisements for dentists and interplanetary tourism, along with the regime's slogan, 'El progrés no es pot aturar', illuminate the city in place of sunlight, which is blocked off by skyscrapers. The narrator cannot discern the gender of Andrea, who, like almost all the inhabitants of the EUE, appears to be androgynous: 'pertanyia al gènere neutre' (Villalonga 1974: 15).

The guiding principles of this society are founded in part on the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin, although these appear to have been deliberately misinterpreted by the governing institutions. Andrea gives an overview of the EUE's use of Teilhard's theory of the Noosphere:

Cal estimar tota la Humanitat, l'Ésser Col·lectiu', com deia Teilhard de Chardin. Ja saps que, per a aquest filòsof, és necessari que tots els milions d'éssers humans es fonguin en un Ésser Suprem al qual, per no dir-li Déu, diu el punt Omega. [...]

A l'època materialista de la teva joventut, parlàveu de Biosfera (la vida animal damunt l'esfera terrestre); a l'espirtual en què hem entrat, és lícit parlar d'una Noosfera (vida de l'esperit). No cal divinitzar una sola persona, sinó tota la Humanitat: el proïsme, com deien els cristians. Per això aconsellem el plaer, la *débauche*, sense pensar en un ésser determinat i sense distinció de sexes; un plaer compartit entre tots... (Villalonga 1974: 129)²

² Unless enclosed in square brackets, ellipsis marks given in quotations do not stand for omissions in either *Andrea Vicitrix* or *Retorn al sol*.

The drive to love all of humanity and to occupy oneself with the constant pursuit of pleasure is a theme found in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), another text that has contributed to Turclub's social organization and which, as Doctor Orlando, a psychiatrist and regime dissident, tells the narrator: 'els socialistes prengueren [...] al peu de la lletra i se n'aprofitaren' (Villalonga 1974: 54). Similarly to the collective sexual entertainments in which the characters of *Brave New World* engage, the inhabitants of Turclub are encouraged to attend the 'collective orgies' and to seek sexual pleasure in the form of sado-masochistic beatings, which leave participants injured or dead. 'Exclusive' love between two people is considered a sin against the collective – 'l'amor exclusivista, entre dos, és un pecat social' (Villalonga 1974: 129) – and reproduction is achieved 'oviparously', i.e. humans are 'born' in laboratories without the need for sexual intercourse, which benefits the requirements of the industries: 'aleshores es cregué oportú controlar la natalitat, condicionar-la a les necessitats de la indústria i sobretot no deixar-la al caprici individual...' (Villalonga 1974: 43). (There are, however, several members of society who have been produced 'viviparously', i.e. via sexual reproduction, such as the narrator and others who have undergone cryogenic treatment.) As a consequence of this, love is redirected away from an intimate relationship between two people and towards the anonymous, 'Ésser Col·lectiu', which, as Doctor Orlando explains in his clandestine lectures, 'és una abstracció, un nombre, un monstre' (Villalonga 1974: 121). This is a far cry from Teilhard's vision of personalized, individual consciousnesses connected together in the Omega Point, or 'human particles [which have] become really personalised under the creative influence of union' which is sustained by love (1959: 263). The regime's interpretation of the 'Ésser Col·lectiu' runs counter to this position. As Teilhard makes clear: 'to love all and everyone is a contradictory and false gesture which only leads in the end to loving no-one' and love 'dies in contact with the impersonal and the anonymous' (1959: 266-69). Because love is misdirected under the EUE's dictate, the plural and therefore faceless 'Ésser Col·lectiu' (Orlando calls it 'l'Anònim') in *Andrea Vicitrix* cannot be overcome because it offers no individual person to whom one may direct one's love (Villalonga 1974: 121). Furthermore, in the EUE, the directive to love all of humanity necessarily entails the erosion of the family, an entity which is construed as antithetical to the interests of the corporations which govern society: 'les famílies representen la individualitat, l'anarquia, incompatible amb el règim industrial i gregari' (Villalonga 1974: 43). The regime's suppression of individual differences as expressed

through its treatment of love, sex and the family is therefore what gives it power and what prevents its people from being productive and being satisfied. The EUE's citizens cannot understand the creative use of love (Villalonga 1974: 43-44), which can produce lyric poetry and novels rather than churning out useless mass-produced goods which generate profits for corporations but poison human life rather than contributing to progress as they are supposed to.

The text has sparked a range of critical interpretations. While it has been described as a 'novel·la antiutòpica' (Martínez Gili 2020: 120) and a 'novel·la futurista i d'anticipació' (Alcover 1980: 192, 215), for Sílvia Ventayol Bosch (2015: 54), the work does not succeed as a novel, it is instead a work that is 'nascut morta', according to the principles of José Ortega y Gasset's 'Ideas sobre la novela' (1925). While Vicent Simbor (1999: 268) qualifies the work as a 'novel·la de tesi', Jaume Vidal Alcover argues that it is, like all of Villalonga's novels, more accurately understood as a 'novel·la d'idees' on account of its loose structure (1980: 26). Finally, Jordi Larios describes *Andrea Víctrix* as having adopted 'un to gairebé pamfletari que resulta carregós', whose re-reading 'ens fa enyorar la qualitat del món feliç de Huxley o del món sinistre que Orwell va construir a 1984' (2002: 4). While Larios's appraisal of the novel is hardly flattering, it speaks to broader tensions present in the work, in other words, as readers we seek to make sense of the text by grafting onto it the anti-utopian visions of canonical novels such as *Brave New World* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) to compensate for its narrative defects. The procedure of the interpellation of other texts into the work has been examined in detail by P. Louise Johnson (2002) and Raül David Martínez Gili (2020), who analyse the novel through the lens of reader-response theory and the politics of order and disorder, respectively. The basis of these interpretations of the novel will be drawn upon in the exploration of political subjectivity in *Retorn al sol*.

Johnson's reading interrogates the novel's many ambiguities that draw attention to binaries and hence also to language and textuality, 'la qual cosa es recolza al seu torn en la qüestió de la sexualitat' (2002: 47). The name Andrea, for instance, can be read as female (as is the case in Spanish and English) or male (as is the case in Italian), as Villalonga explains in a letter to Baltasar Porcel, citing this as the reason for choosing the name (Villalonga 2011: 761). This duality draws attention to what Jonathan Culler calls the 'impossible situation' in which the reader cannot choose one particular reading over another (1982: 81). A similar case of ambivalence is presented in the title of *Retorn al sol*. Francès plays on the words *sol* (meaning 'sun') and *sòl* (meaning 'ground' or 'soil'), as

the society of Subolesa is located underground (and hence in the *sòl*, with its connotations of earthy simplicity) and returns to the earth's surface and hence to the sun, which in the novel symbolizes enlightenment. Culler's 'impossible situation' is created in *Andrea Víctrix* because, despite the narrator's efforts to locate typically masculine or feminine qualities in Andrea, it is not possible for him (or us) to read Andrea as male or female, because the text instructs us to read the character as both. Hence the narrator's 'dilema gramatical': 'com referir-se a Andrea sense pronoms i adjectius que en traeixin automàticament el sexe?' (Johnson 2002: 47), a dilemma compounded by the fact that the language spoken in Turclub does not have grammatical gender. The text therefore 'establish[es] a double bind: one must choose between obedience and disobedience' – in our case, ascribing male or female to Andrea's sex because of the requirement to use grammatical genders in Catalan – 'but one cannot choose, because to obey would be to disobey and to disobey would be to obey' (Culler 1982: 81). This predicament finds a political parallel in a moral dilemma explained by psychoanalyst Miquel Bassols. If your father tells you not to trust anyone, not even him ('No te'n refiïs, ni de ton pare'), you enter a double bind whereby in refusing to trust your father, you acknowledge his authority, yet this is the very authority he instructed you not to acknowledge:

Si havia de creure'm aquella frase no podia refiar-me del meu pare que me la deïa. Però si no podia refiar-me del meu pare, no podia creure'm tampoc aquella frase que em deïa de forma imperativa. I si no podia creure'm aquella frase, aleshores podia quedar lliurat al risc de refiar-me de qualsevol. (Bassols 2020: 17-18)

This dilemma maps on to the political organization of the EUE, as the requirement that its citizens love all of humanity – 'que es fonguin [and hence change physical form] en un Ésser Suprem' – suppresses individual agency. How can one as an individual be instructed to love all of humanity if one does not have any individuality? Teilhard shows it is impossible to love without one's individuality, thus we arrive at a logical stalemate. We are presented, then, with a narrative which is based around the ambiguity and impossibility of meaning, mirrored thematically in gender, sexuality and political subjectivity.

Upon reading such a text, a 'poderós mite de coherència ens compel·leix a desxifrar els buits textuais i les indeterminacions' (Culler cited in Johnson 2002: 61). Cerdà is not immune to the 'mite de coherència': in the *Teoría general*, he tells us that despite the effort of numerous scholars, no one has yet hit upon the exact cause of society's malaise in the nineteenth century. He tells us that when he searched for an

account of how and why cities exist and function (or malfunction) in the way they do, he found it to be ‘envuelto con el velo del misterio que ha sido forzoso descorrer’ (1867/1: 12). The trope of lifting the veil (which is also the meaning of the word ‘apocalypse’, making the apocalyptic subject matter of *Retorn al sol* all the more apt as the case study for this chapter) is also found in *Andrea Vicitrix*. Johnson takes the novel’s discussion of *El vel d’Isis* as representative of the interpretative procedures governing the book as a whole. In *Andrea Vicitrix*, Andrea has read *El vel d’Isis*, a book which describes ‘d’una manera al·legòrica els detalls de la lectura i de les operacions de la “reader-response” a través de la recerca de la veritat d’un operari a l’empresa “Hola-Hola”’, which is the drink (clearly a mockery of Coca-Cola) which is consumed as a sacrament in Turclub (Johnson 2002: 62). The factory worker discovers one day that the drink is really nothing more than water coloured with food dye: ‘tot es reduïa a anilina rogenca i aigua de la cisterna’ (Villalonga 1974: 109). The worker has therefore lifted the veil and revealed that the sacrament is fake, enforced and unnecessary: ‘constitueix una admissió d’ateisme, d’una manca de fe en els sacraments del règim’, which, in Turclub, represents an ‘acte subversiu [que] desemboca en la mort’ (Johnson 2002: 64). Johnson draws on Wolfgang Iser’s idea that voids produced by a text as a result of ambiguity or indeterminacy must be filled before any communicative act can take place (2002: 62). As such, the lifting of the veil reveals a ‘pared nua’ (Villalonga 1974: 108), or a void that the reader has to fill with more text in the attempt to produce a coherent, meaningful reading. According to Johnson, ‘el vel revela la necessitat de significació fins i tot on no hi ha cap lectura coherent possible [...]; invita a la creació de sentit, a l’expressió de les aspiracions del lector amb relació al text ensems amb la seva pròpia imaginació’ (2002: 64; emphasis in original). This interpretation of the novel substantiates Larios’s claim that we bring to bear our prior knowledge of Huxley and Orwell’s dystopias upon reading *Andrea Vicitrix*. It also points to the fact that the text’s lack of authority is mirrored politically: its failure to produce stable and coherent meanings is driven by the reader’s need to compensate for the text’s linguistic and conceptual defects by relying on extra-textual material. While the failures of language are not as significant in *Retorn al sol* as they are in *Andrea Vicitrix*, the ideological failings and inconsistencies are of real importance. Subolesa’s ruling regime attempts to control the aspects of human behaviour that fall outside the bounds of reason and hygiene. As we will see, daily life in Subolesa – where every inhabitant is provided with all they could ever need – is cleansed of passions, wants and the general mess of human life which makes life distinctly human. It is alien to Nietzsche’s concept of

‘experience’ (*Erfahrung*), which philosopher Byung-Chul Han glosses as a force capable of ‘tear[ing] the subject out from subjection – out of its downcast state’ (2017: 46), and recalls Foucault’s comments on the ‘art of living’, namely that ‘the art of living is the art of [...] creating with oneself and with others unnamed individualities, beings, relations, qualities. If one can’t manage to do that in one’s life, that life is not worth living’ (cited in Han 2017: 46). ‘Experience’, as discontinuity, transformation and resistance to subjection and subjugation (Han 2017: 46), is at the root of the coup in *Retorn al sol*.

To take this political reading further and to establish a parallel with *urbanización*, we can draw on the analysis of Villalonga’s politics carried out by Martínez Gili. It is more helpful to locate Villalonga’s political stance in terms of his attempts to reconcile the individual and the collective and how these may interact in the most beneficial way rather than trying to label his views in line with determined political ideologies or positions such as right and left. According to Martínez Gili, throughout Villalonga’s writing the artistic, psychological and political fields are run through by a two-pronged discourse of cause and effect, namely:

d’una banda, la dialèctica entre l’individu i el cos social s’organitza com una oposició entre ordre i desordre; per l’altra, la jerarquia, la disciplina, l’obediència i la subjecció a la moral comunitària ofereixen un punt de referència segur per al comportament de l’individu davant dels desigs individuals que provoquen la divergència, la disgregació i el caos. (2020: 14)

As a synthesis of these ideas, Villalonga proposes:

una concepció jeràrquica i elitista del món en què l’individu –sotmès a un règim disciplinari perquè pugui superar les seves vacil·lacions i amb una intel·ligència suficient que li permeti ser conscient de les seves febleses– pot realitzar-se com a singularitat però en harmonia amb l’ordre social, cosa que li permet liderar-ne l’evolució sense caure en l’anarquia dels processos revolucionaris, en què la disparitat del criteris provoca més destrucció que progrés. (Martínez Gili 2020: 14)

As can be seen from these quotations, Villalonga defends an elitist political paradigm whereby the intelligent individual can attain some form of self-realization within the confines of a social body, into which it is harmoniously integrated. This position accounts for the fact that Villalonga’s real political allegiance is towards the principle of authority and its required governing institutions (‘al principi d’autoritat establerta’), irrespective of the party of government (Martínez Gili 2020: 47). For Villalonga, *who* governs is of much less importance than the *good* they can bring to those they govern, as he writes in an

article for the Mallorcan newspaper *El Día*, fending off charges of fascism: ‘ni yo soy fascista, como se me atribuye, sino gubernamental, partidario del orden venga de donde venga’ (cited in Martínez Gili 2020: 49). Villalonga’s frustration is that people often cannot work together in service of the evolution of the social order, and so often fall into the destructive ‘anarquia dels processos revolucionaris’ (Martínez Gili 2020: 14). He is aware of the fact that humans are not ultra-rational beings, and plays with this idea in his fiction, where it emerges constantly as ‘la falla sexual del subconscient’ (Martínez Gili 2020: 60); hence the importance of understanding the use he makes of sexuality in his literary works, and its connection to social and political ideas.

In Martínez Gili’s analysis, the fact that individuals so often fall into revolutionary anarchy is what stops the narrator of *Andrea Vicitrix* from participating in the overthrow of the regime at the end of the novel. The dissidents will just succumb to another, equivalent form of ‘totalitarianisme arbitrari’ because Andrea is just ‘una màscara agradable de la mateixa realitat que genera la màscara detestable de Monsieur-Dame’ and therefore logically any mask ‘és tan sols un ornament buit [...], una representació circumstancial, una simulació’ (Martínez Gili 2020: 127, 131). We see in this analysis a reflection of Villalonga’s attitude to science, anthropology and philosophy in the twentieth century (Martínez Gili 2020: 119): these rational disciplines raise more questions than answers, explaining why it would be nonsensical to substitute one absurd system for another.³ This ambivalence is a common theme across Villalonga’s oeuvre. In his analysis of Villalonga’s most well-known novel, *Bearn o la sala de les nines* (1956), Larios (2007: 100) cites Ortega’s idea that the point at which a society comes to reject tradition and consequently embrace rationalism as a means to ‘construir un món nou amb la raó’ triggers ‘el mecanismo revolucionario’ (Ortega cited in Larios 2007: 101). However – to paraphrase Larios’s summary of Ortega –, this rationalist and revolutionary stage in a people’s history ends in failure, as the attempt to make laws and systems provide for ‘ilusiones y deseos’ as opposed to vital needs leads to disillusion (Ortega cited in Larios 2007: 101). *Andrea Vicitrix* illustrates this, as the regime is powerless to combat the famine that breaks out in Turclub. This position underlines the fact that it is not solely the emergence of emotions that undermines rational discourse but that reason, too, produces monsters (Martínez Gili 2020: 131).

³ Resina argues that a similar ambivalent attitude is displayed in *La febre d’or*, as ‘Oller’s dialectics of progress is based on the idea that in history there are no net losers or winners’ (2008: 40).

Indeed, Cerdà's lifting of the veil that prevented him from seeing the 'truth' of urban life presented him with a 'paret nua' to be filled with a textual project, i.e., *urbanización*. The philological process which Cerdà constructs in order to underpin the word *urbanización* is similarly produced as a result of a breach in meaning: he selects *urbe* as the term from which his project emerges because of what it does not mean, compared to *ciudad*. Aside from these linguistic concerns, the substance of the theory of *urbanización* also sets up a conceptual double bind like Bassols's example above. As Cerdà constructs it, *urbanización* is both the cause and effect of human activity. On the one hand, he proposes *urbanización* as a solution for contemporary problems and suggests its realization (for example in the construction of the extension of Barcelona), while on the other hand it simply signifies the built environment and its commensurate social networks, which are the result of thousands of years of human civilization, suggesting that forcefully implementing a programme of *urbanización* would not constitute a faithful materialization of the same. Thus, to build cities in accordance with the principles of *urbanización* is not to faithfully 'urbanizar' because the imposition of a determined form runs counter to the principles of *urbanización*, whereas not to build it perpetuates the harmful conditions that it exists to rectify, and renders Cerdà's project futile. This throws into question the possibility of making a coherent reading of Cerdà. He proposes a rigid yet flexible form and at the same time makes the case for the uselessness of the forceful imposition of form. This dilemma is explored further in this chapter with reference to the political nature of *urbanización*, in particular, the tension that arises between the individual and the collective, which Cerdà expresses through his concept of *individualismo*, itself ambivalent. These political positions are explored in *Retorn al sol*, which helps to elucidate the utopian dilemma at the heart of Cerdà's urban social contract and its relation to urban form and the body.

The urban social contract: *Retorn al sol*

Retorn al sol is often described as one of the first works of science fiction in Catalan and as a 'novel·la d'anticipació' because it predicts a number of world events: the rise of authoritarianism, international conflict and environmental disaster (Tasis 1950: 50).⁴ It

⁴ For a fairly comprehensive overview of science-fiction writing in Catalan, see *Futurs imperfectes: antologia de la ciència-ficció*, ed. by Antoni Munné-Jordà (Educaula62, 2013).

tells the story of a failed coup d'état in the underground nation of Subolesa in the year 233 of the 'Era Profunda', which is around three hundred years after humans are forced to flee underground to escape rapidly freezing temperatures on the earth's surface. The book's subtitle is 'novel·la de fantasia i de sàtira', and Josep Maria Francès (1891-1966), an anarchist and Catalanist, satirizes many aspects of Catalan and Spanish society of the early twentieth century. Francès was born to a Spanish-speaking family of *funcionarios* in Lleida, and yet he was heavily involved in radical anarchist and Republican groups throughout his life, such that he decided to seek exile in Mexico at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 where he later died. He wrote a column on literature in the Catalanist newspaper *La Humanitat* for many years and was a freemason and a member of the left-wing political party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

Retorn al sol provides a clear example in a literary context of Cerdà's new urban social contract – described by Adams (2019: 68) as a 'global state of administered peace' – as its satirical and science-fiction elements allude clearly to different political and economic systems that place the individual in different relationships with the collective. Subolesa is a self-contained political and urbanist project that allows us to explore Cerdà's notions of *individualismo* and in whose interest the individual should act, and the novel explores these political notions in relation to urban form and architecture. In the novel, we are told that a 'savi desnaturalitzat' discovered a device capable of depopulating the planet in twenty-four hours using ammonia, and the unspecified nation to which this character belonged began hoarding the substance, which produces an extreme cooling effect (Francès 2018: 17). As the ammonia became more volatile, the sun could not warm the earth's surface sufficiently, and it froze over in a layer of ice one hundred metres thick.

In the novel's prehistory, Catalans frantically search for ways to survive by escaping into the earth itself. After discovering Barcelona has no Roman catacombs, they eventually realize that the mountain of Montserrat, where the monastery of the same name is located, is hollow – suggesting a certain religious insincerity – and so they flee down a tunnel and found a new civilization at a depth of 1200 kilometres below the ground, which they name Subolesa. A utopian society of plenitude and equality is established, but the system begins to fall apart as a group of agitators opposed to the ruling regime instigate a riot in an attempt to overthrow the city council and install their own leader. This attempt at a violent coup d'état ultimately fails and in the chaos the rocks are disturbed such that a way out to the earth's surface is opened up, allowing some

of the characters to emerge into a world of lush greenery where the ice has melted away and the sun is shining. The clichéd ending suggests a parodic inversion of the structure of the Bible, whereby the novel is framed by the Apocalypse at the beginning and Genesis at the end, in what amounts to a reversal of the Fall motif. Humanity's originary innocence is obtained at the closing of the novel as the characters who decide to remain on the earth's surface 'es disposen a obeir el manament de l'Altíssim: "Creixeu, multipliqueu-vos i ompliu la terra"' (Francès 1998: 191), this phrase having been taken from Genesis 1.28 ('crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram').

A similar slogan is displayed on the frontispiece of Cerdà's *Teoría general*: 'Rurizad lo urbano: urbanizad lo rural:... *Replete terram*', the Latin phrase meaning 'to fill the Earth'. This is a connection that cannot be ignored, and it is suggestive of a strong political link between the two writers. The pair are indeed related through their political and ideological similarities, rather than any direct reading of Cerdà on the part of Francès. As well as his literary career, Francès had become familiar with factory and warehouse environments since the age of fourteen, and so he had mixed with working people despite his family's professional background (Mori 2018: 380). Jordi Solé i Camardons provides an overview of Francès's political affiliations (1998: 14-21), which begin in 1907, when he joined the Catalanist political entity Centre Nacionalista Republicà, one of the groups that made up Solidaritat Catalana, a coalition composed of supporters from across the political spectrum. Solidaritat Catalana proved to be an effective response to the 'fets de Cu-Cut!' and the resulting imposition of the *Ley de jurisdicciones*, which Catalanists interpreted as attacks on Catalonia, and it was the first irrefutable demonstration of 'suprapartisan' political Catalanism; in short, a reassurance that Catalanism could gain widespread support.⁵ For Francès, the success of this movement 'li produirà un gran entusiasme, s'hi integrará i representará la seva participació directa a la dinàmica política i partidària de l'època (Solé i Camardons 1998: 18).

Francès's memoirs (written in Spanish and published in Mexico) attest that in 1912 he believed in a federal union of Iberian states within which Catalonia could achieve

⁵ The 'fets de Cu-Cut!' is the name given to the destruction of the offices of Catalan satirical magazine *Cu-Cut!* and those of *La Veu de Catalunya* by Spanish troops and the subsequent enacting of the repressive *Ley de jurisdicciones*. The events marked a watershed moment that led to 'a chain of events that included the suspension of constitutional guarantees in Barcelona, the fall of Prime Minister Montero Ríos's government, the imposition of the *Ley de jurisdicciones* (1906), which legislated for military control over perceived insults and threats to the nation, and the rise of the united Catalan political movement, *Solidaritat Catalana*' (McGlade 2015: 206). For more on the 'fets de Cu-Cut!', see Rhiannon McGlade, 'The "fets de Cu-Cut!" Cartooning Controversy in Catalonia', *Romance Quarterly*, 62.4 (2015), pp. 199-211.

its independence while avoiding the division of peoples which would run counter to his anarchist beliefs: ‘Mi credo es federativo y aspiro a una Confederación Ibérica, de naciones independientes, incluyendo a Portugal. [...] El poso universalista de anarquismo platónico que llevo dentro, no me hace desear una humanidad separada’ (1962: 314).⁶ A kind of Iberian federation – variously called by critics ‘Iberisme’ (Martínez-Gil 1997), ‘Iberian pluralism’ (Harrington 2015) and ‘Pan-Iberianism’ (Costa 2015) – was a popular idea in early twentieth-century Catalonia and had in fact originated earlier in the nineteenth century in Spain. Antonio de Marchena and Antoni de Puigblanch had put forward draft proposals for a single Iberian state covering the whole of the peninsula as early as 1828, and ‘Spanish Pan-Iberianism was a position shared by certain political and cultural elites, especially those connected to progressivism’, such as Víctor Balaguer and General Prim who figured within its ranks (Costa 2015: 501-02). It would therefore be unsurprising if Cerdà also supported some sort of pan-Iberianism given the political position of universal harmony he advocates in the *Teoría general*.

Francès could therefore be seen as a Catalanist, anarchist version of Cerdà who is able to reconcile his aspirations for the independence of Catalonia with the Cerdian belief in the unity and fraternity of different peoples in a harmonious political relationship with each other. Seen in this political light, both Francès’s and Cerdà’s works constitute responses to the modernity of their times in terms of large-scale industrial and political changes, and they are works in which ideas about politics and urbanism are of great importance. While Cerdà’s main concern is to analyse the built environment and propose solutions to make it healthier, which he sees as having positive consequences for politics, in the case of Francès’s novel, these priorities are reversed. As a satirical novel, its main purpose is to expose and criticize political tensions and hypocrisies and it does so within a precisely constructed fantastical urban setting which is of crucial importance to the novel’s plot. It may be argued that because the work is primarily satirical, it constitutes more of an experimental theoretical playground because, as a novel, part of its purpose is to entertain, and it fulfils this through the use of humour. This aesthetic aspect is what makes it a fascinating case study in the investigation of the construction of urbanized,

⁶ However noble Francès might consider his own aims to be here, Xosé M. Núñez Seixas points out that Portuguese supporters of Iberianism were often ‘perceived as the unwitting servants and naive companions of Spanish or Castilian imperialism in new clothes’ and that ‘a peaceful return of Portugal to the Spanish nation was presented as a fusion of two partners, but for many it represented a threat of absorption’ (2013: 83). This suggests that Francès was guilty of overlooking the reality of the Portuguese position vis-à-vis Iberian pluralism, and prioritized ideology over lived experience.

political subjectivity.

Several different political ideologies and structures are alluded to throughout the novel, and these will be explained in relation to the urban and architectural forms of Subolesa, which, I argue, Francès crafts in accordance with the ideologies he wants each form to reflect. In Subolesa's early days, the original people from Olesa de Montserrat who give their name to the city became known as 'civitas optimo jure', a term that in Roman times signified a person's full citizenship and put them in a class of Roman citizens who had a share in the sovereign power. The underground residents who had descended (by family descent and quite literally down from the earth's surface) from Olesa were therefore considered higher-class citizens. Seen alongside Cerdà's rejection of the term *ciudad* with its specific connotations of citizenship because of its etymology in the Latin *civis*, we understand the early history of Subolesa was predicated on inequality and privilege accorded by dint of birthplace and lineage, which Cerdà, and we may assume, Francès, were keen to eliminate.

Out of the early settlers emerges Carles Narbona i Santolària. Son of an engineer father and a poet mother, he is imaginative as well as rigid and mathematical, and is able to put his ideas to good use. Narbona organizes society so that hygiene, sanitation and 'convivència' are greatly improved. He perfects the rudimentary system of electrification, develops agricultural methods that produce marvellous fruits and simplifies the administrative system. When he has brought his perfect vision to life, he retires from his duties and hides himself away in his mysterious cabin in the central hydroelectric power plant, from which he controls the mechanical processes that regulate daily activities, such as the refrigeration system and artificial sun and rain. His mission accomplished, he abstains from marrying and having children, saying that he needs his faculties to remain intact.

The physical layout of the new nation that Narbona engineers is home to two million people and it centres on one massive cave (the 'cova gran'), twelve kilometres in diameter and two- to three-hundred metres high. Tunnels lead off this central cave to five smaller ones, giving the whole formation the appearance in plan view of a five-pointed star, which may be a reference to the *estelada*, the version of the Catalan flag which features a five-pointed star in the same position as on the flag of Cuba. The Cuban War of Independence (1895-98) was an important point of reference for early twentieth-century Catalan nationalists, hence the *estelada* is a political symbol for the independence of Catalonia. A wide saltwater river, the 'Gran Canal', emerges from the third cave, crosses

through the ‘cova gran’ and disappears between the first and sixth caves. It serves as the burial place for Narbona’s body. Daily life is organized into exactly equal periods of work, leisure, nutrition, hygiene and rest. There are no clocks in Subolesa as there is no need to tell the time: the colour of the artificial sunlight changes at the beginning of each period to alert the population to the change in activity. All aspects of Subolesa’s society have been so perfectly organized into a utopia that there is almost no crime or disease, and every citizen’s needs are met:

Lliures de problemes socials pròpiament, amb cledes polítiques i colors esportius que no es barallaven mai fins a fer-se mal; sense el soroll dels carrils, ni dels avions, ni dels autos, amb una jornada curta de treball fàcil, ben peixats, ben dormits i ben satisfets, els naturals de Subolesa gaudien pràcticament de normes de vida molt superiors a les que hauria pogut somniar la soferta humanitat antiga. El treball dur el feien gairebé tot les màquines; l’aire hi arribava pur de la superfície, copsat a molts milers de metres i no es coneixien detritus, per tal com tota la deixalla o brutícia eren destruïdes per l’acció de líquids especials. La vida subolesenca era còmoda, justa i blana. (Francès 2018: 38-39)

Subolesa follows a kind of socialist political and economic system explained in very simplistic terms: ‘els productes del treball de tots són equitativament distribuïts, segons les necessitats de cadascun’ (Francès 2018: 63), which recalls Marx’s slogan ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’ (2001: 20), and Francès would no doubt have been familiar with this given the political circles in which he moved.

In a further connection between Francès and Cerdà, the society of Subolesa sees a cult emerge around the figure of the engineer. We recall that engineers in nineteenth-century Spain generally sympathized with progressive liberal politics, hence an engineer as the controller of society is a suitable choice given the kind of egalitarianism that purportedly exists in Subolesa. Towards the end of his life, Narbona chooses the engineer Cosme Goi as his successor as the chief engineer at the hydroelectric plant. Cosme is a 30-year-old man with a ‘temperament concentrat’ and laconic bearing that some mistake for pride: in reality, his pride is found only in his love for justice and he is the most generous and down-to-earth (‘assequible’) person in Subolesa (Francès 2018: 22). When handing over his responsibilities, Narbona instructs Cosme: ‘pensa que cal que siguis, com jo sóc, una màquina humana, inassequible a les passions’ (Francès 2018: 12). He is therefore forbidden to fall in love or have children. In Chapter 1, we meet Cosme as he finishes his shift at the plant, picks up a letter left for him in a secret hiding place by a lover, and heads home. On his way, he passes the giant bronze statue of Narbona at a

wide crossroads. The narrator likens Narbona to a ‘semidéu comparable als Osiris, Zaratustra i Orfeus de la vella història del Món de dalt’ and acknowledges that the inhabitants of Subolesa owe all they have to the ‘salvador de la Pàtria’ (Francès 2018: 10). Cosme quickly kneels before the statue as he passes ‘com a bon subolesenc’ (Francès 2018: 10). The glorification of Narbona and Cosme Goi in *Retorn al sol* demonstrates a reverence for engineers, who hold a great deal of power and influence. However, at the same time, the hyperbolic manner in which this reverence is displayed highlights Francès’s satirical criticism of the worship of one person in whose figure the success of the regime is embodied. The responsibility for the smooth functioning of vital processes is concentrated in this singular male figure, and we may see in this a reflection of Cerdà’s holistic manner of overhauling society. Cerdà recognizes the political and economic ramifications of his work beyond purely technical issues, and demonstrates consideration for the administrative, legal and financial aspects of his proposals in addition to the explicitly urbanistic ones.

Francès gives us the details of the political organization of Subolesa, which I will briefly describe before moving on to examine how Francès explores notions of freedom and individualism within the socialistically organized world of the city. The population had no choice in the layout of their city – which is referred to interchangeably as a ‘metròpoli’ (Francès 2018: 43), ‘ciutat’, ‘República’ (Francès 2018: 53), ‘infraseria’ (Francès 2018: 55), ‘país’ (Francès 2018: 104), ‘colònia’ (Francès 2018: 125) and ‘poble’ (Francès 2018: 148) – as the caves were discovered accidentally and Subolesa was founded out of the necessity to avoid death. This, I argue, sets the course for the novel’s political direction of travel. In spite of Subolesa’s fortuitous location, which its population had no option but to occupy, they were able to choose its political organization. The necessity to work together is motivated by the threat of death, yet as shown by the plot synopsis, the social order created and established over the centuries breaks down as social tensions begin to emerge and society faces a revolt (despite having removed the word ‘revolt’ from its dictionary on account of the general societal harmony that had lasted for so long). Subolesa’s main body of government is the Comú Lliure, a kind of municipal council, and the city’s natural topography is the basis for the governmental structure, as we will now see.

The Comú Lliure is formed by Comissaris, or representatives, from each cave. There are seven in total, two for the large central cave and one each for the five outer caves. Some are loyal to, even fanatical about, Carles Narbona and his legacy, while

others are secretly working on a plot to overthrow the current administration. The council is led by an *Alcalde Popular*, by the name of Papell, described as a young, energetic, focussed, reserved and hermetic man who is the second most important person in Subolesa after Cosme Goi. In contrast to Cosme, he is the first ‘*egòlatra*’ since Subolesa’s founders and he feels no love for the communal, simple, equal life of the city and hides ambitions that could endanger the Republic, eventually becoming repulsive and violent as he leads the coup to overthrow the *Comú Lliure*. Papell and his followers therefore break the social contract upon which Subolesa is founded. The reasons for the growing dissatisfaction that provide the impetus for the uprising can be explained in terms of the political nature of *urbanización*, which sets Cerdà’s concept of *individualismo* against Rousseau’s arguments in *The Social Contract* (1762) that excessive population density is the root cause of societal malaise.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the origin of urbanization is found in the history of the individual, in particular the individual’s need for shelter: ‘donde quiera que se encuentre esa guarida primitiva, allí, allí mismo, está el origen de la urbanización’ (Cerdà 1867/1: 35). Cerdà believes it is therefore crucial to secure the well-being of the individual first, before attending to that of the collective, as indeed individuals and families take care of their own before helping others external to their unit:

antes que atender a la conveniencia de la colectividad, cada individuo y cada familia atiende a la suya propia. En el orden social no hay subordinación preestablecida, y la que se establezca para conservar la debida armonía, ha de ser la expresión genuina de la voluntad espontánea de todos y de cada uno. (1867/1: 93)

These lines imply that, for Cerdà, prior to the establishment of societal hierarchies, all individuals are fundamentally equal; there is no intrinsic reason why one group should dominate another. In the same way, nineteenth-century scientists observed that humans are all the same under the skin and there are no biological reasons why any race is superior to any other, and therefore the differences between races were constructed and explained along metaphorical and ideological (and therefore pseudoscientific) lines (Pratt 2016: 47). Cerdà makes the somewhat naive assumption that hierarchies in the social order are established with the aim of maintaining social harmony, yet his exhortation that this hierarchy *must* or *ought to be* (‘ha de ser’) the genuine expression of every individual’s will implies that he recognizes that the social hierarchy as it currently stands may not reflect this in reality.

Cerdà's use of 'voluntad' indicates an awareness of certain philosophical principles, especially the idea of general will, most famously promoted by Rousseau, who conceptualizes it as a collective will that aims towards the common good. This idea is alluded to throughout the *Teoría general* and we infer that it guides Cerdà's thinking as he proposes a new way of making cities, as I will show. Scholars have pointed out the close connection between Cerdà and Rousseau, who connect the health and strength of civilization with the social life of humanity, albeit from opposing viewpoints. Cerdà formulates his own interpretation of individualism, which is based on altruistic, community-oriented behaviours and is essentially sociable:

El individualismo no es el egoísmo concentrado, raquítrico y miserable que se niega a reconocer las ventajas de la solidaridad y de la mancomunidad, o que a lo más quiere solo explotarlas en su provecho, sin contribuir ni poco ni mucho a su logro: el individualismo es esencialmente sociable y social. (1867/1: 94)

Rather than giving a full definition of a seemingly very important term, Cerdà uses the adjectives 'sociable' and 'social' to describe *individualismo*, thus producing an oxymoron. It is left to the reader to surmise what exactly *individualismo* is for Cerdà. We may assume that it refers broadly to actions made on one's own initiative but which also serve the greater good of the group as a whole. Cerdà invests 'sociable' and 'social' with positive connotations, which chime with Aristotle's idea, as explained in the *Politics*, that humans are 'naturally political', meaning that they enjoy conversation and each other's company, and shared values emerge through social contact (Morrison 2013: 179). Aristotle believes that the ultimate goal of the political community and of individual self-interest is 'living well', which is achieved by sharing in virtuous activity with others and exercising virtue in private, which all contributes towards the common good (Morrison 2013: 179). This perhaps approximates Villalonga's political position. However, Cerdà's overwhelmingly positive conception of sociability in this passage demonstrates a certain naivety. He appears to take it for granted that the sociable character of individualism could only have positive effects, in contrast to Rousseau, who argues that the intense sociability of urban life has only detrimental effects. The wide differences between Cerdà and Rousseau's views on sociability have been noted by critics. Nicolas Tocquer (2018: 106) argues that Cerdà is Rousseauist in the sense that he aligns urbanization with sociability, which, along with individual freedom and the desire for independence, he considers the predominant sentiments in man's [sic] heart. Ross Adams argues further that Cerdà's work speaks less to fellow architects and planners such as Le Corbusier,

Nikolay Milyutin and Ludwig Hilberseimer than it does to thinkers such as Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant (2019: 27). It should therefore be seen as ‘an attempt to *recover and complete the project of the Enlightenment* begun two centuries earlier’, a bookend to the Enlightenment rather than the foundations of Modernism (Adams 2019: 27; emphasis in original).⁷ Even Cerdà’s narrative style, recounting how humans came to dominate the world and urbanize, continues in the manner established by Rousseau in the *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (Tocquer 2018: 233). However, while continuing the line of thought established by these thinkers, Adams agrees with Francesc Magrinyà (1999: 99) that Cerdà roundly refutes Rousseau’s reasoning in *The Social Contract* that civilization and sociability are the cause of moral decay, arguing instead that civilization is the cause of humanity’s progress and improvement and could not cause man any physical, moral or intellectual harm (Adams 2019: 28). Cerdà equates Rousseau’s general will with his own conception of a general well-being (Adams 2019: 70) and believes that instead of a social contract, Rousseau would have done better to come up with an improved system of organizing cities that allowed man to live in comfort and independence, and improvements in well-being would therefore emerge out of this rather than a new political and legal system (Adams 2019: 28). Cerdà thought that Rousseau, living in dense and overpopulated Paris, had failed to take into account the structure of the city that surrounded him; the required social contract was ‘a new *urban* order, [...] an *urban* social contract’ (Adams 2019: 70; emphasis in original). *Retorn al sol* illustrates, to a degree, the urban social contract, i.e., the way in which *urbanización* functions politically. However, as mentioned, this contract is broken by the coup instigators, and we now turn to the reasons behind the insurrection, which point towards an imbalance of individual freedom and sociability in Subolesa.

Papell, the Alcalde Popular and leader of the coup, opposes the regime and leads his own small group of agitators who belong to the group known as ‘Muricians’. These are Spaniards who have not integrated with the Catalans and who have banded together and occupied the fourth cave, which the narrator refers to as ‘un Estat dintre l’Estat’ (Francès 2018: 37). The ‘Muricians’ (the nickname is a pejorative term for working-class immigrants to Catalonia from elsewhere in Spain, principally Andalucía) had shown an enthusiasm for manual jobs such as digging wells and levelling surfaces but when it came

⁷ By contrast, other scholars such as Choay (1997) and Hermansen (2016) consider Cerdà’s work to represent the beginnings of Modernist urbanism.

to putting together a communal plan for hygiene, culture and politics they showed no interest. Their representative in the Comú Lliure is Lacerda, who is also part of the revolutionary plot. Lacerda speaks Spanish and he is the descendant of people from Badajoz, such that he maintains something of the Andalusian in his manner of expression and the Portuguese in his manner of thinking, and has an instinctive aversion to anything resembling method or discipline.

Papell and the ‘Murcians’ decry the current state of affairs and place themselves firmly on the side of economic liberalism. Papell gives the following rousing speech to his supporters:

Desapareixerà l’actual règim absurd de nivellació que ens ensopeix i ens enutja!... Restablirem la llibertat de comerç, de préstecs amb interès, de treball tothora i a jornal... Qui més treballi, més tindrà!... Volem que hi hagi classes i sabrem imposar-les. Per això fer, crearem els cossos armats que siguin necessaris i ells vetllaran per la nostra reintegració a l’ordre natural de les coses. Cadascú sabrà allò que es seu, cosa que no sabem avui, per tal com tot és de tots, anomalia sense precedents en la història... (Francès 2018: 115)

Lacerda also makes a speech of a similar thrust at a decisive moment in the uprising:

Hom no podia continuar submergit en l’eterna igualtat de drets i deures i patrimonis. Calia estimular el treball, augmentar-ne la durada, restablir els salaris. Si ell i els seus amics volien treballar dotze o quinze hores al dia, per què els n’havia de privar? I per què l’home capaç de trescar sense aturador havia de percebre del comú igual que el que no produïa o produïa poc, o bé que produïa coses tan innecessàries com les belles arts o l’ensenyament de les ciències? (Francès 2018: 107)

The group of Murcians represent a different ideology more akin to libertarianism, which we take to understand as a political philosophy that strongly values the freedom of the individual and endorses ‘an economic order based on private property and voluntary market relationships among economic agents’ and opposes ‘the kind of large-scale, coercive wealth redistribution in which contemporary welfare states engage’ (Van Der Vossen 2017: n.p., online). The ‘Murcians’ see the Comú Lliure as having deprived them of their economic rights to work or not work and receive as much or as little as they should be paid in return for the number of hours worked. They see the state’s enforcement of equality upon the population as unnatural and they wish to impose social classes and maintain order and hierarchy through the armed forces as opposed to the government. This view correlates with that espoused by the paradigmatic theorist of libertarianism, Robert Nozick, who argues that ‘no state more extensive than the minimal state can be

justified' (1974: 297) and limits the state to a 'merely defensive or "night-watchman" function' (Zwolinski and Ferguson 2022: 1).

Cerdà's aim, as we know, is to cure society by redesigning the urban fabric of cities so that the state does not need to rely on the use of force to maintain social order, and in this respect *urbanización* (and, of course, the *urbe*, Cerdà's harmonic ensemble of life and progress [Tocquer 2018: 106]) would seem to display some signs of a libertarian politics in which the needs of the individual are balanced with those of the collective. This dialectical synthesis finds specific representation, in the *Teoría general*, in Cerdà's concept of the *urbe rurizada*, which is characterized by parity between urban and rural aspects. He locates the *urbe rurizada* (and not *ruralizada*) in a previous, unspecified civilization's state of *urbanización compuesta*, glossed in the following way:

La urbanización compuesta [...] forma la obra maestra de las razas que acababan de salir del estado de selvático aislamiento para entrar en el de relaciones recíprocas de individuos y de familias, a impulsos de ese fecundo e innato sentimiento de sociabilidad que bulle incesantemente, fuerte e irresistible, en el corazón del hombre. Dos sentimientos predominaban en aquella generación que acababa de salir de los bosques, uno era el de la libertad individual que viene a ser uno mismo con el de la independencia de la familia, otro el de la sociabilidad vigorosamente fomentado por los encantos y ventajas del trato común. (1867/1: 121)

Cerdà maintains that this population was able to exercise individual freedom and sociability through the incorporation of rural elements in the *urbe*, for example fields are allocated to each family so they may provide for themselves, thus investing the *urbe* with the qualities of the rural landscape. In practical terms, it also promotes and guarantees individuals' freedom to build what they want on their land, for example tall, obnoxious buildings, which could be far enough away from neighbours so as not to intrude. This model provided dwellers with certain cherished aspects of rural life such as abundant space, freedom and sunlight in addition to the benefits of living as part of a society:

Por consiguiente, aquellos felices moradores no podían echar de menos, ni la holgura, ni la libertad para sus faenas, ni el vivificador sol ni el puro ambiente de la campiña, ni en una palabra, cosa alguna de las que constituían los goces de su vida selvática; y en cambio disfrutaban de los inefables deleites de la sociedad. (Cerdà 1867/1: 122)

The choice of past tense here is important to note, as Cerdà believes that modern day society has lost this healthy way of living: '¡Cuánto distan nuestras modernas Babilonias del admirable organismo urbano de la primera que se fundó en la superficie del globo!'

(1867/1: 121-22). This past population's *urbe rurizada* had allowed them to keep their absolute and unlimited freedom as it fostered the independence of the individual and the family within a communal setting, allowing for a balance of privacy and reciprocity.

According to Hermansen, Cerdà's idea of 'ruralized urbanization' complements Rousseau's idea of the 'state of nature', which emerges from the equation of nature with liberty (2012: 102). Nature was often seen, in nineteenth-century planning, as a redemptive cure for the ills of the dense, industrial city. On a pragmatic level, too, it was convenient to have a less dense city, as this provided cheaper land to develop into production and sites for workers' housing and allowed for an efficient transportation system to deal with imports and exports (Hermansen 2016: 102).

Of course, building the *urbe rurizada* in modern times requires a large amount of land and, although the *urbe rurizada* in ancient times may have been walled for protection, in the nineteenth century, given his experience of living in and studying walled Barcelona, Cerdà thinks that surrounding walls present a hindrance to the health and development of the *urbe*. According to Cerdà, when unwalled, the *urbe rurizada* takes a shape determined by the many individual wills that build it, obeying a principle of utility and convenience. Cerdà uses a very simple idea of will here and says the city is the physical representation of utility and convenience:

es evidente que la forma que afecte su conjunto ha de ser hija de la voluntad individual de cada constructor. Mas como la voluntad, por libre que sea, obedece siempre a un principio de utilidad y conveniencia en todo cuanto emprende, y más especialmente aún en lo relativo a obras urbanas, es claro y evidente que la forma [...] ha de revelarnos el principio de utilidad y conveniencia a que la mayoría de esas voluntades hayan obtemperado. (1867/1: 246)

This reveals that the city's physical environment affects the workings of the mind and relationships between individuals, an idea discussed by Georg Simmel which we saw in Chapter 2. The form of the unwalled *urbe*, according to Cerdà, is the product of the individual will of each builder and it always follows the principles of utility and convenience. The relationship between the individual and the collective is again made explicit as Cerdà multiplies the individual will by the number of builders to give the overall general principle of utility and convenience of the majority. He assumes humans always act in the interest of utility and convenience, which seems excessively utilitarian and, given his railings against the current state of society, clearly not always the case. This passage also alludes to the idea of general will. Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*, for

example, argues that morality is based on the general will of all of humankind to improve its own happiness, and individuals access this moral ideal by reflecting on their own interest as members of the same society. The object of the general will is the betterment of all and as such, it is necessarily directed at the good. In contrast to this abstract interpretation, for Rousseau the general will is much more political. It is the will actually held by people in their capacity as citizens. One participates in the general will by reflecting on and voting on the basis of one's sense of justice. Individuals become conscious of their own interests and thus in the interests of the state as a whole through private reflection, rather than open discussion, as we explored in Chapter 3.

Cerdà mentions public discussion in his section on Greek urbanization. He claims that Greek urbanization was very dense, which caused friction between inhabitants but also created community aspirations, the sharing of public opinion and a belief in collective power. Thanks to the density of family dwellings, private home life lost its appeal, so individuals spent their time out in the street debating and therefore shaping the public spirit. Public opinion became a 'fuerza irresistible' that forced the replacement of monarchical power by popular institutions (Cerdà 1867/1: 149). However, given that the public spirit is undeniably shifting and variable, both admirable and glorious events occurred alongside less laudable incidents. The constant to and fro of public opinion is the root of the great intelligence of the Greeks, who produced advanced works of art and philosophy: 'el ingenio se aguzaba, la inteligencia se remontaba hasta las regiones más sublimes, y se fomentaba, y crecía y se desarrollaba un espíritu de gloria' (Cerdà 1867/1: 149).

According to Cerdà, this was a direct result of urbanization, and it is where Europe's culture and civilization originated (1867/1: 149). However, Cerdà acknowledges that Greece was eventually conquered by Alexander the Great, whose army was smaller and less powerful than the Greek armies. Cerdà is certain that this defeat is the result of a Greek society in decline, which occurred as a result of a society so geared towards the constant shifting of public opinion and vibrant public spirit that it was not able to rest and recuperate in private. Greek civilization therefore did not balance independence and sociability. Similarly to Rousseau, he concludes that the pressure of never-ending social contact becomes a source of fatigue that leads to degeneracy.

Cerdà touches on political institutions such as states and administrations. He believes the state emerges from man's reliance on the support of others to survive. When faced with a harsh climate and infertile land that yielded little subsistence, life had

become a constant struggle against the elements and the home had become merely an object that looked after man's first need, that of shelter and defence, and man had to appeal to others for help:

Y en tal situación, reconociendo el individuo su propia debilidad e impotencia, ha debido buscar en los otros individuos, es decir, en la colectividad social, el apoyo necesario. De esto provienen originariamente, en política, las instituciones que sacrifican el individuo al Estado, y en urbanización la mezquindad de las habitaciones y la yuxtaposición de los edificios y la consiguiente condensación de las urbes. (Cerdà 1867/1: 134)

Man's need for help and support therefore had two consequences. In urbanistic terms, it resulted in paltry dwellings and a higher densification of the *urbe*, while in politics, it resulted in the establishment of state institutions that prioritize the concerns of society as a whole, unified body over the concerns of individuals. Cerdà is overwhelmingly negative about this state of affairs, as attested by his vocabulary: 'debilidad', 'impotencia', 'sacrifican', 'mezquindad', although his qualification of the state as a body that sacrifices individual interests to the interests of the state as a whole is underdeveloped. If he follows his own notion of 'voluntad individual' as mentioned above, the general will of the whole body of individuals, acting in the interests of utility and convenience, would mean that the state would not necessarily be sacrificing any individual's agency. While he acknowledges that dense urban living brought man down from the mountains, civilized him and then 'fortaleció y robusteció los vínculos sociales, y contribuyó en su principio al mayor desarrollo moral e intelectual del individuo', as we saw in the case of the Greeks, when urban residents are deprived of their own individual agency, society begins to break down (1867/1: 135).

Cerdà appears to suggest that a balance may be struck between state administration and private initiative, one of the main factors that contributes to the reading of *urbanización* as a liberal political programme. He gives as an example the fact that road networks are highly irregular as private owners would build their own roads to their properties and there was no central planning of the network. Municipal administration rarely extends out of the nucleus, so landowners and builders located further away from urban centres have complete freedom and their constructions here serve private, individual purposes.

Cerdà demonstrates awareness here of the fact that the administration is able both to provide for individuals and bring about societal harmony. Municipal administration

caters for those within the urban nucleus, which is more densely populated and whose population is generally accepted to be poorer. The administration must therefore construct buildings according to the needs of the collective. Meanwhile, landowners, who one would expect to be wealthier than residents of the urban nucleus, are free to build their own constructions and infrastructure to serve private, individual purposes. It is debatable which entity disposes of greater freedom. Landowners have almost complete freedom to build what they like to attend for any need or wish they may have, but this is a privilege reserved for the wealthy. Residents of the urban nucleus do not have the means to build their own structures and must depend on those provided by the administration, which carries the burden of researching, designing, constructing, financing and regulating construction. The notion of freedom is therefore somewhat ambivalent in Cerdà, as he is unable to univocally tell us where the optimum freedom lies. *Retorn al sol* contributes to this point of contention, showing that a state which promises to provide everything for all its citizens ends up curtailing some of the more enjoyable aspects of life.

Aside from the explicitly political motivations of the Murcians, two of the main female characters in the novel also debate freedom and individualism. These are Opalina, Cosme's secret lover, and Pòrfida, a crafty prostitute. They discuss the relative merits and deficiencies of the political system, placing in doubt the benefits that Subolesa is supposed to have afforded them. Opalina is described as a generous and selfless nineteen-year-old who has fair skin and golden hair which, in clichéd fashion, signify innocence and virtue. She loves the institutions 'de la vida lliure', which 'tenien la seva concreció perfecta en l'home que estimava' (Francès 2018: 138). Her association of the regime with the figure of Cosme, who is bound up with the political structure of Subolesa to the point that, in her eyes, he and it are one and the same, highlights the way in which Francès writes politics into his characters and settings. After all, this short novel is a satire and so there is some element of caricature involved as the narrator needs to make it clear to the reader who and what he is satirizing. Francès's ironic use of cliché and stereotype is one way in which he achieves such caricaturization.

Pòrfida is one of the 'sacerdotesses de Venus' who work as prostitutes in the Departament d'Higiene. In Subolesa, prostitution is not considered any lesser a profession than being a nanny, and the women who work for the Department are 'dones selectes, joves, cultes i refinades' (Francès 2018: 88). To the average 'subolesenc', going to Kythira (Aphrodite's island and Francès's metonym for the brothel) is no more shameful than going to the barber or dentist. Diametrically opposite to Opalina, Pòrfida is the

caricature of a witch, as she has black hair, piercing eyes and a mysterious aura and her personality is ambitious, selfish and restless. In Chapter 24 of the novel, while the coup is underway and the whole city has descended into chaos and violence, Pòrfida reveals to Opalina the true impetus behind the attempted coup and her hand in it. She is familiar with classical texts and knows that the ancients believed in the devil and evil forces as well as their benevolent gods. She complains of the lack of initiative and surprise in her life which she attributes to the enforced regularity of Subolesa, where even prostitution is a regulated arm of government:

Saps tu què és soportar dies i més dies, hores i més hores, eternament iguals, sense neguits, ni ambicions, ni estímuls?... Pobra criatura! Ets una subolesenca de socarrel, com jo ho era quan tenia els teus anys... Però d'aleshores ençà, la nostra existència de precisió ha arribat a embafar-me!... M'enutja la funció sacerdotal i voldria restituir al meu ofici les característiques que tenia abans de davallar els homes al cor de la terra. M'ensopeix terriblement la manca d'interès i àdhuc de sotsobre. Trobo enormement tediosa la igualtat dels subolesencs, sota un sistema que els ho dona tot resolt. (Francès 2018: 137-38)

Pòrfida tells Opalina how she manipulated Papell, a regular visitor to the brothel, into working his way to the top of the *Alcaldia* and then encouraged him to install himself as dictator. The lack of a variety of emotions in her life has made her hate the regime to such an extent that she wants to cause mass violence and death. She contends that the regime has forced her to abandon her own individuality in service of the welfare of all her fellow citizens and as a consequence, the relentless positivity in her life has made her bitter, even 'inhuman', according to Byung-Chul Han:

It is impossible to subordinate human personhood to the dictates of positivity entirely. Without negativity, life degrades into 'something dead'. Indeed, negativity is what keeps life alive. Pain is constitutive for experience (*Erfahrung*). Life that consists wholly of positive emotions [...] is not human at all. (2017: 23)

As such, she can no longer contribute to the general welfare because she cannot carry out her own individual acts, as Cerdà's *individualismo* spells out. She loses her freedom to act as an individual and, according to Cerdà, if this is the case, there can be no possibility of general welfare, hence Pòrfida's inclination towards destruction. Political ideas are inscribed into urban and architectural forms that intersect with the political nature of *urbanización* according to Cerdà. One example of this is the development of the *Consell Municipal* building, which mirrors Cerdà's early stages of the development of urbanization. At first the council occupies a cave, like the troglodytic stage of

urbanization. Then a two-storey building is built out of loose stones in the pre-Narbona period, which correlates with Cerdà's Cyclopean stage of urbanization, when simple buildings are constructed from stones either above the surface of the ground or partially underground. Nowadays the building is a fully functioning, advanced construction with a 'saló de sessions' in the shape of an amphitheatre with stone seats like in Greco-Roman times where council meetings are held.

Buildings are also key to understanding the satirical characterization of two opposing groups of intellectuals, the Plutos and the Nitros, who meet in their respective buildings to discuss their ideas and socialize. The major philosophical difference between the two groups is their belief in the existence of the sun. The Plutos believe in its existence, having hung onto the 'heretic' texts of the 'Era Vulgar', which we assume to be antiquity. They meet in a nineteenth century-style building of severe lines whose 'sala d'actes' resembles that of the Ateneu Barcelonès, a library and cultural centre founded in the centre of Barcelona in 1860. The Ateneu became the centre of mainstream political Catalanism, as it was the founding place of the Lliga Regionalista and the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. In a similar fashion, the Plutos' library holds five hundred books, but there are never any on the shelves as they are in constant circulation.

On the other hand, the Nitros' building looks more like a hangar and its design is described as a 'capriciosa barreja' where 'tot ...era atrevit i singular' (Francès 2018: 72). The central hall looks like the inside of a giant oyster with a huge mattress on which audience members sit, lie or curl up, depending on their degree of philosophical radicalness, while the speaker sits on a trapeze hanging in the middle of the room. The Nitros' building evokes the London Bar in Barcelona, which also has a trapeze hanging from the ceiling. The bar dates to around 1910 and was a popular meeting place for Bohemian artists and musicians, so it is likely Francès would have been familiar with it. There are few books in the library 'per tal com hi era interdicta la producció impresa del passat i no era lícit de llegir altres textos que els que dictaven als socis les seves novíssimes conviccions' (Francès 2018: 72). The Nitros attract a younger demographic than the Plutos, their ranks being made up of students and young workers. A non-conformist and iconoclastic group, they have no interest in Aristotle and ancient affirmations of phenomena which they have not witnessed, and are staunch defenders of the control of the senses over ideas. They deny the existence of the sun because their Cartesian philosophy places everything in existential doubt: 'només admetem... allò que veiem i palpem' (Francès 2018: 38). This displays a similarity to *Andrea Vicitrix* in that,

in Turclub, it is prohibited to write in genres and styles that are not sanctioned by the state. Philosophy, history and poetry are construed as either antithetical to the interests of the collective (for example, the narrator's proposal to write an essay on King Felipe II is met with puzzlement: 'no tindrà més lectors que vostè mateix'), novels amount to 'tres-centes pàgines de falsedats' and lyric poetry is considered pornographic (Villalonga 1974: 24, 44).

We can argue that these two groups are satirical portraits of intellectual schools in early twentieth-century Spain and Catalonia: the Modernistes and Noucentistes. The Nitros represent the Modernistes: they focus on abandoning the past and creating new works, and their bizarre meeting space resembles the striking designs of Modernista architecture in Barcelona, such as the Palau de la Música Catalana (designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner and opened in 1908) and Casa Batlló (designed by Antoni Gaudí and completed in 1906). Politically, their non-conformism resembles anarchism, the ideology that motivated the workers' revolutions of 1936, and with which Francès himself identified. By contrast, the Plutos are suggestive of the Noucentistes, who placed a strong emphasis on classical aesthetic values and aimed to restore these to Catalan society. While the Modernistes were heavily inspired by ideas from northern Europe, particularly German artists and intellectuals such as Wagner and Nietzsche, the Noucentistes rejected the north in favour of the Mediterranean, celebrating the Greek and Roman origins of the Catalan people. The Plutos have maintained this belief in the sun; they are spiritual people who have faith, in contrast to the sceptical Nitros. At one meeting of the Nitros, the speaker gives an inflammatory speech about taking down the Plutos. He thinks the Nitros are the only force in Subolesa worthy of dictating moral law and the way it should be obeyed: 'El sistematisme monomaniac dels nostres adversaris, proclama l'existència del Sol i subordina el nostre futur immediat a un quietisme suïcida' (Francès 2018: 75). There are many Plutos members in the Comú Lliure and they occupy other prominent positions in society, where they are able to spread their belief in the sun. At a meeting of the Nitros, the speaker laments the fact that members of their own clan are nowhere to be found in public life and they limit themselves to debating with the Plutos rather than bringing about tangible change in Subolesa. The Plutos manage to carry out practical philosophy, by ensuring their ideas have an impact on the organization of life in Subolesa in a further similarity to the Noucentistes, whose prominent advocates had been involved in the founding of the conservative and Catalanist political party the Lliga Regionalista. In contrast, the Nitros are concerned that their intellectual endeavours

will bear no fruit. Francès writes these concerns into the architectural spaces the groups inhabit in a way that resembles Cerdà's conviction that society's ills could be cured by restructuring the form of cities. Cerdà believes the grid form he proposes for Barcelona's Eixample is the physical embodiment of the justice and equality he wants to promote in society (Adams 2019: 68). Similarly, Francès's literary constructions of Modernista- and Noucentista-style architecture are the material representations of the Plutos' and Nitros' iconoclastic philosophies and the character of their followers.

Another example of a building that expresses the political subjectivity of Subolesa through its own design is the Temple-teatre. In Subolesa, the theatre and the Church have become one. Priests are actors and actors are priests. The narrator points out that this is similar to ancient Greek theatre: before Aeschylus and for some time after, Greek tragedy was a 'solemnitat religiosa', and the Temple-teatre of Subolesa is indeed modelled on Greco-Roman architecture (Francès 2018: 93). It has an altar-stage, doric columns and a frieze that reproduces the events of the journey down to the caves. In the auditorium there are no preferential seating areas, because there are no social classes in Subolesa so the audience can sit wherever they please. The Temple-teatre is accompanied by the Àgora, which is used for debating and is the site of the outbreak of the coup. In ancient times, an agora was used as a marketplace and an area in which to socialize, in addition to being a space where men (and not women or slaves) could debate and make democratic decisions. The agora of classical Greece had an important socio-political function, as it 'best represents the response of city form to accommodate the social and political order of the polis' (Cabanillas Whitaker 2005: 7).

As well as its socio-political purpose, the Temple-teatre fulfils a cultural and aesthetic function: 'ben aviat el Temple-teatre, magnífica realització de la més típica arquitectura subterrània, on hom va aprofitar els elements naturals a fi d'obtenir efectes sobrenaturals, atragué les multituds i va disciplinar-les' (Francès 2018: 94). Here, the narrator posits culture, understood as the act of constructing the Temple-teatre, as an active force that dominates and perfects nature, yet at the same time, we are told that the building exerts discipline over the crowds of people who occupy it. This can be elucidated by Elizabeth Grosz's idea of the interface of bodies and cities, which 'cobuild', define and establish each other: 'the form, structure and norms of the city seep into and effect all the other elements that go into the constitution of corporeality and/as subjectivity' (Grosz 1999: 385). For example, a city's geography conditions the muscular structure and nutritional context of the body, and it affects the way we see others, for

instance, domestic architecture conceals and reveals the inhabitants of the home. Furthermore, 'the city's form and structure provides the context in which social rules and expectations are internalized or habituated in order to ensure social conformity or, failing this, position social marginality at a safe distance' (Grosz 1999: 386). In Subolesa, the Àgora fulfils a democratic function, allowing urban residents to attend debates, which they follow as attentively as they had once followed sports matches, apparently in accordance with Aristotle's belief that social life and conversation is conducive to production of shared values that lead a society towards the common good, which is its ultimate goal. The lack of a seating hierarchy in the Temple-teatre reflects the egalitarian constitution of Subolesa and suggests that no spectator has more privilege than any other. However, this is undercut by the fact that the Comissaris have reserved seats on the front row, yet they often do not use them and prefer to sit at the back, where they have a better view. This exception to the egalitarian rule is mirrored on the macro level by the failure of the regime to maintain its citizens' acceptance of the status quo in which everyone is provided with everything they need in return for abiding by the high degree of central regulation of life processes, such as the aforementioned demarcation of leisure time (different coloured lights tell you what time of day it is and what you should be doing, e.g. eating, working or resting) and the duty of women to marry and have children at age twenty.

Papell's revolutionary effort exposes the craving for individual subjectivity as exemplified by Pòrfida, who longs to feel a fuller range of emotions and experiences, however negative. The urban social contract of Subolesa, read alongside Cerdà, elicits too many contradictions for us to be able to call the novel a straightforward satire. The novel seems to reflect Cerdà's theory that the downfall of Greek society was precipitated by too much social contact, which led to fatigue. The parallelism between the body and social order, which in Cerdà entails the fact that a healthy body naturally leads to a healthy society, breaks down in the novel, and is demonstrated to be untenable by the urban and architectural forms of Subolesa, as informed by Grosz's theories of the interaction of cities and bodies.

The end of the novel perhaps helps to resolve these questions. In the aftermath of the riot, a pathway is opened up which leads to the surface of the earth. Indifferent to the political struggles, Cosme and Opalina, along with Jep el Guinyot, who we could describe as having a learning disability and who is obsessed with returning to the sun, follow the path and emerge into an earthly paradise where the ice has melted and lush greenery

abounds. We might read the ending as the final discovery of a place to begin an acratist society, that is, an anarchist society with no authorities. It could be argued that Francès satirizes any attempt at authority, rather than left- versus right-wing economic ideologies as previously suggested. And, as we know, the pull of the sun is an important motif throughout the novel. The return of Cosme, Opalina and Jep to the sun, typically imbued with positive connotations, may symbolize a return to a state of nature without political control; to a state of harmony with nature, where a living does not have to be eked out of rocks and rain does not have to be made to fall artificially. Cerdà also aims to increase the amount of sunlight that enters into each dwelling, believing that this will increase the health of urban residents, and with his theory of *urbanización rurizada* he attempts to apportion a piece of arable land to every urban inhabitant, as mentioned above. This reading of the novel characterizes Cerdà's *urbanización* as utopian and impossible, or as an urban social contract that does not take into account the interactions between urban form and urban bodies.

Regulatory systems such as *urbanización*, which are rooted in liberalism, cannot eradicate the human instinct for transgression. Villalonga considers that liberalism cannot perpetuate itself without violence: 'el liberalismo, creador en ciencias y en arte, es cruel en política y no subsiste sino a costa de ejecuciones que son su complemento' (cited in Martínez Gili 2020: 55). Cerdà is no doubt a liberal, but he wanted to eliminate this conflict through *urbanización*. We can therefore take *urbanización* as the rigid form of governmental practice that Cerdà wants to see, as it dishes out order and justice in the way that the institutions of the state do, no matter who oversees them, but it can only do this because it is, in a sense, dehumanized. It functions in the same way as Turclub's language or Subolesa's mechanical environment, that is, without considering human concerns, human passions and human anti-rationality, and admitting no flexibility for aspects that fall outside what it prescribes. Hence in *Retorn al sol*, the fact that Cosme rebels against Narbona's instruction to remain abstinent (which, incidentally, turns out to be hypocritical: Narbona had a lover, Dama Oníxia, whom he also trained to run the power plant) and pursues a relationship is what leads him to escape Subolesa and reach the earth's surface. Francès therefore uses the same plot figuration as other dystopian novelists such as Huxley and Orwell, who use love as the motive that pushes characters to 'see behind the veil' and to become involved in attempts to overthrow despotic regimes. The ambivalent ending of *Andrea Vicitrix*, in which the narrator declines to join the group to overthrow the regime as he knows that they will be unable to replace it with anything

better, is paralleled in *Retorn al sol*. The characters emerge into an earthly paradise where they are to perpetuate humanity ('El seu aparellament promet una repoblació magnífica d'aquest món de Dalt' [Francès 2018: 170]), but the earthly paradise is a *topos*: we know that it can only precipitate a Fall. To go back to the Bible: paradise can only be sustained if Adam and Eve do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; they can only remain there if they repress their human instinct for curiosity, their temptation to transcend the limits imposed on them by a higher authority, – to quote Cerdà – to sail beyond 'los límites que impuso [el Omnipotente] a las olas del Océano (1867/1: 49).⁸ Continuing the biblical parallel, the whole of human history is predicated on this transgression, which, for Epps (as mentioned in Chapter 1), is represented in the *Teoría general* by the *urbe*'s etymology: demarcating a territory by opening a furrow with a plough (*urbum*) is imbued with a 'reminiscència adàmica' (2007: 113). In other words, what makes humanity mortal is its corruptibility and its instinct to disobey and move beyond what it knows to be right. This is, according to Pòrfida, what makes life worth living. When the authorities cut off meaning from a population – when they are covered by a veil which reduces even the most personal and intimate aspects of life to regulated, sanitized relations of production and consumption – the population is motivated to lift that veil to reveal a 'paret nua'. Making sense of this blank space requires one to fill it with knowledge and information gained elsewhere, or with products of the imagination, in order to render existence coherent. The forced removal of what is morally transgressive leads to civil discontent, as we have seen in *Retorn al sol*. The attempt at creating a utopia also fails because people have bodies. Cities are made for bodies, and a state of perfection is impossible to attain while humans occupy a material form, as Teilhard de Chardin's concept of the Noosphere makes clear.

One may be forgiven for reaching the conclusion that Francès's implication, in *Retorn al sol*, is the same as Villalonga's, i.e., that no system for social and political

⁸ The allusion here is to the pillars of Hercules, which served as a warning to sailors not to navigate beyond them. Sailing beyond the pillars of Hercules in the pursuit of knowledge is the subject of canto XXVI of Dante's *Inferno*, which recounts Ulysses' reckless decision to sail beyond the pillars to try to reach Mount Purgatory, sacrificing his crew in the process. Dante elegantly combines Ulysses' sin of trespass with Adam's sin of the trespass of the bounds imposed by God in canto XXVI of the *Paradiso* (specifically in the metaphor of Adam's 'trapassar del segno' [*Paradiso* XXVI. 117]). These two parallel cantos are perhaps a useful intertext for understanding the interplay of love, transgression and language in *Retorn al sol*, as all of these are major themes in the cantos mentioned. The rationale for establishing this intertextual reference is reinforced by the Dantesque setting of *Retorn al sol*, its many classical references (Dante draws heavily on Virgil and Aristotle in the *Commedia*) and its engagement with the trope of the earthly paradise, which is also found in Villalonga's works.

organization is better than any other and humanity is fated to repeat itself replacing ‘one absurd system for another’. However, there is a crucial difference in *Retorn al sol*. While the passage to the earth’s surface is opened up and the three characters ascend to begin a new life under the sun, Subolesa remains down below under a modified regime in which hierarchy is reinstated in ‘un Estat, molt democràtic, això sí, pero recolzat en lleis coercitives, en autoritats superiors, en gendarmes, en classes, en funcions. [...] Sense estímulo de l’interès, la vida esdevé estantissa, per manca del premi a l’esforç o l’aptitud’ (Francès 2018: 151). Subolesa therefore has limits reimposed on it in a return to a liberal-style political system based on the imposition of order through violence. This fact inverts the novel’s titular metaphor: to return to the sun is revealed as a false promise. What attracts us to the sun – its warmth and brightness – finds itself necessarily balanced by darkness.

Conclusion

At the end of *Andrea Vicitrix*, the narrator looks back at the world of Turclub and admits he sees in it an earthly paradise – ‘no ens podíem sostreure a l’encís d’allò que preteníem destruir’ (Villalonga 1974: 289) – yet prior to this point, the narration has constructed Turclub as a dystopia (Larios 2018: 311). As we have seen, this kind of cognitive dissonance, that is, being one thing and its opposite at the same time, is in many ways a characteristic feature of the novels studied (and finds its principal illustration here in Villalonga’s novel). This speaks to the fact that Cerdà could not see the end of *urbanización*; positioned as a constant process, it cannot terminate and therefore cannot become perfect. Therein lies the major tension at the heart of Cerdà’s project: he is striving to create something better, something that aspires or tends towards something perfect, but without the sense of ever ending, it logically never can.

The allusion to Frank Kermode’s *Sense of an Ending* (1967) here is deliberate. Larios (2018: 305-06) draws a connection between *Andrea Vicitrix* and Kermode’s argument that Christianity displays an eschatological tension whereby ‘the point of the end, or of some vast alteration in history, is preceded by a decadence, and followed, in this world or elsewhere, by a renovation’ (1995: 252). The cyclical conception of time which we infer here is found also in Cerdà’s theory of *urbanización*: humanity has suffered setbacks on its trajectory towards perfection, but it continues its forward march nevertheless. In the same vein, the periods of decadence which precede the ends of the novels studied in this thesis (Gil Foix’s financial ruin, Nonat’s arrest and trial, the decay of the aristocracy in *Vida privada* and the coup which causes political change in *Retorn al sol*) all promise a renewal to come. In all cases, new generations are primed to take over where the old ones left off. We can therefore see that *urbanización* is eternally oriented towards the future, it carries the promise of the future within it, and this is at the core of what I have called, after Cerdà, ‘urbanized’ subjectivity.

This thesis has explored the potential of literary fiction to illustrate, reflect and implicitly dialogue with Cerdà’s theory of *urbanización* via the concept of ‘urbanized’ subjectivity. Its purpose has been twofold: to appraise the merits and weaknesses of the theory and simultaneously put it to use in the analysis of works of fiction. This is an innovative approach to the study of fiction which crosses disciplinary boundaries by confronting literary texts with a text not commonly used as a theoretical framework outside urban studies. Examples of studies which apply a similar approach include

Benjamin Fraser's *Henri Lefebvre and the Spanish Urban Experience: Reading the Mobile City* (2011), Liam Lanigan's work on James Joyce and Dublin (2014), Lieven Ameal's work on writing on New York (2019) and Helsinki (2021), and Jana Čulek's comparative study of utopia in Ebenezer Howard and H. G. Wells (2023). This thesis differs from these in the more extensive attention it pays to one thinker – Cerdà – and its explicit aim of developing his thought into a critical framework.

It is therefore uncommon for Cerdà to be used in this way. He is often only cited to provide historical background or as an example of an attitude that treats the city as a 'static planar surface' (Fraser 2011: 93) or 'the epitome of rational order' (Sendra Ferrer 2022: 29), a perspective which critics argue is then subverted by writers and artists. As this thesis has shown, Cerdà is not quite as ultra-rational and dogmatic as some studies make him out to be. The pairing of literary and non-literary texts, of works of fiction with a sprawling and often self-contradictory text written by an engineer, may at first seem incongruous. However, this approach introduces Cerdà to the emerging field of literary urban studies, which has 'begun to read literary and non-literary texts side by side and to consider both the pragmatic functions of literary texts and the "literariness" of planning documents' (Gurr 2021: 1). Certainly, Cerdà's text is in some real senses 'literary'. The *Teoría general* is a creative, discursive product of the imagination; it is prose full of ideas, sometimes expressed elegantly, which are still in the process of being fully developed. In the spirit of nineteenth-century scientific endeavour, Cerdà attempts to combine historical, philosophical and technical ideas in the compilation of one 'general' theory, and as such, the text gives us insight into the attitudes and concerns characteristic of urban discourses in nineteenth-century Spain and of Europe more broadly.

The originality of the contribution of this thesis lies in its attempt to make Cerdà work for literature in a similar manner to other studies which have interrogated literary constructions of cities through urban planning lenses. In addition to these, Barcelona has generated its own abundance of studies which investigate textual constructions of the city, drawing on Cerdà in limited measure. In this respect, Joan Ramon Resina's *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image* (2008), Enric Bou's *Invention of Space: City, Travel and Literature* (2012), Olga Sendra Ferrer's *Barcelona: City of Margins* (2022) and studies by the aforementioned Benjamin Fraser are representative of the work that has been carried out in this area. This thesis adds to related scholarship both in terms of increasing the academic output on Catalan texts in relation to the city (its contribution on Albert's *Un film (3000 metres)* is perhaps the most significant

given the relative lack of critical interest in this work) and in pioneering a new approach to the study of literature using the Catalan context as a case study.

In separating out Cerdà's key concepts, which contribute to the development of his 'ciencia urbanizadora' (1867/1: 17), and using these in turn as critical tools with which to analyse literary texts, this study has arrived at a number of conclusions, as follows. First, *urbanización* is composed of two foundational concepts: the *urbe* and *la gran vialidad universal*. The use of *urbe* as a critical framework was explored in Chapter 2, specifically in its capacity to illuminate the praxis of novel writing, where it demonstrated that Oller's *La febre d'or* escapes the key tenets of the *urbe* because of the moralizing and sentimental nature of the narrative voice, which complicates the dynamic of pure movement underpinning the *urbe*. I established that the Naturalist works of Émile Zola might instead correlate more closely with *urbe*, and these novels (such as *L'Argent* or *La Curée*) could be a productive further outlet for the exploration of Cerdà's ideas in literature. The argument of Chapter 2 drew on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, which reorders flows of capital in service of a new economic order. I demonstrated that this is a key aspect of the *urbe*, seemingly overlooked by Cerdà, and the social and political changes that the *urbe*'s process of deterritorialization necessarily engenders were subsequently examined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The first two of these form a diptych in which *urbanización*'s capacity to regulate the social order was investigated, first as it pertains to the intangible forces informing individual behaviour – for which Albert's *Un film (3000 metres)* was a case study – and second in its material form, namely *el intervías*, which provided the lens through which Sagarra's *Vida privada* was analysed. The result of the discussion of Albert's and Sagarra's texts in dialogue with Cerdà was that *urbanización* as both a sociopolitical and urbanistic force is incapable of containing and regulating the behaviour of urban inhabitants. Contrary to Cerdà's aims, it proves unable to stabilize the shifting identities and relationships on which city life, by Cerdà's own admission, is founded. The psychoanalytical reading of capitalism that informed the analysis of *Un film* showed that the Eixample appears not to provide for the cognitive conditions which Cerdà believes will improve humanity. Chapter 4 reached a similar conclusion in that the crossing of public and private conceptions of space ignores the moral concerns at play among urban society, and as such, *el intervías*, as Cerdà positions it, contributes to the breakdown of the social order rather than securing a stable social order: subjectivity evades the fixity Cerdà wants to impose on it. Chapter 5, the most overtly political of the chapters, explored the way in which *urbanización* produces a

tension between the individual and the collective, which Cerdà sets within a narrative of progress towards a point of perfection. The chapter drew on novels whose narratives themselves deal with themes of progress and perfection, and demonstrated that perfection is impossible to achieve materially: as Cerdà concedes, it is only realizable if humans lose their physical form. Human life is corruptible (as the plots of *Retorn al sol* and *Andrea Vicitrix* make abundantly clear) and dependent on the physical form of the body, which is also what produces the city.

Cerdà's acknowledgement of this fact points towards the numerous contradictions that we find within the theory of *urbanización*. Cerdà admits that urban life is constantly fluctuating and *urbanización* is positioned as his attempt to channel these undulating flows through more productive and efficient pathways (this is the motivation behind *la gran vialidad universal*). However, as my analysis demonstrates, these new flows are reterritorialized in the service of the liberal, capitalist order, which is equally generative of flux and uncertainty. Use of *urbanización* as a critical paradigm is therefore limited somewhat because the theory itself constrains us in a double bind because of this contradiction. However, while such an impasse in a theoretical text cannot be overcome, an impasse in a literary text can. Bringing in literature to 'meet' Cerdà (the heart of the methodology of this thesis) has therefore proved to have been crucial in working through Cerdà's contentious ideas. Literary texts are given to exploring subjectivities which are fluctuating and turbulent, and they therefore lend themselves to the exploration of similar currents in Cerdà's thought.

The approach I advance in this thesis has required illumination from a number of other theorists from urban studies, geography, history, philosophy, critical theory and psychoanalysis, whose works have informed the analysis of both Cerdà's project and the literary texts. This required the careful triangulation of Cerdà's theory, the extra theoretical texts, and the literary works. A particular challenge of combining this considerable theoretical material was to ensure that it supported Cerdà: that I did not relegate Cerdà and instead prioritize the work of the other theorists, whose ideas are much more frequently applied in literary studies. The benefit of drawing on complementary theories is that they place Cerdà in dialogue with a critical vocabulary familiar to those working in literary studies. This has the effect of translating Cerdà's concepts into an effective critical apparatus. Additionally, it enhances the relevance of the thesis beyond Catalan studies. For example, the approach could be used as a template for studying Madrid: Galdós's *Torquemada* novels (1889-95) or *Lo prohibido* (1906) would stand

comparison with *La febre d'or* on account of their shared exploration of themes of ambition, corruption and finance within the context of the expanding city. Similarly, *Un film* could be explored alongside *La rampa* (1917) by Carmen de Burgos, as the latter focuses on the arrival of women without means to the capital and their attempts to find work. Inclusion of this novel would address an imbalance in the thesis in that works by women writers and exploration of female characters are notably absent. While Cerdà's ideas are very much a product of the nineteenth century, the fact that they arose during the incipient expansion of capitalism makes them suitable both for the study of more recent, contemporary texts which deal with globalization and texts published outside of Spain. (The inclusion of *Andrea Vicitrix*, a chronological outlier compared to the rest of the corpus, helped to make this case in Chapter 5.) There is no reason why Cerdà's concepts could not have critical currency in literatures beyond the context in which Cerdà and his immediate successors were writing. In line with the dual nature of the thesis, I also suggest that this approach could be replicated to help us to understand more texts in disciplines such as engineering and the sciences and open up their ideas for critical use in the humanities.

Common themes throughout all of the literary texts are the treatment of gender and sexuality, and the effects of a moralizing narrative voice on the texts' content. Furthermore, the texts all have things to say about Catalan nationhood and all of them deal with market interactions which see certain elements of society turned into commodities to be traded as they never had been, including the novel itself as a cultural artefact. The texts also deal with the more meta-literary aspect of the filling of voids: this is narratological in the case of *Andrea Vicitrix* and is mirrored politically in *Retorn al sol* and *urbanización* (the empty earth is a void to be filled with human life which necessarily organizes itself into a political system). This trope is more thematic in the case of *Un film* (where its psychoanalytic aspect has been explored in detail), and in *La febre d'or* and *Vida privada*, where the texts themselves fill voids in the reader's knowledge: a contemporaneous reader would have been confronting the transformation of Barcelona's class structure by the growing industrial bourgeoisie and the decline of the aristocracy. Sagarra's novel is also representative of 'la voluntat de contribuir a pal·liar un buit històric' in novelistic production in Catalan in the early-twentieth century (Gustà and Gallén 1987: 490).

All of these areas of investigation have ramifications for subjectivity, a notoriously nebulous concept which this thesis has helped to determine through the notion

of ‘urbanized’ subjectivity. Our objective was to define Cerdà’s implied view of the subject of *urbanización* and assess the extent to which that subject can be considered as having undergone a specific process: *urbanización*. The thesis has shown that reading literary texts in light of ‘urbanized’ subjectivity, i.e., by interrogating the aspects of literary texts which dialogue with the concepts set out by Cerdà in the *Teoría general*, provides essential re-interpretations of both canonical and lesser-known works, makes a valuable contribution to scholarship in Catalan studies, and establishes a model for literary analysis which can be reproduced in literary traditions beyond the *Països Catalans*.

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