

Imagining Catalonia After 1898:  
Cuban-Catalan Relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Ashley Nicole Puig-Herz  
August 2011

© 2011 Ashley Nicole Puig-Herz

## ABSTRACT

### Imagining Catalonia After 1898: Cuban-Catalan Relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

Ashley Nicole Puig-Herz, Ph.D.  
Cornell University, 2011

This dissertation theorizes the nature of the cultural and political relationship between Cuba and Catalonia in the contemporary context. Rather than tracing a linear history, this project explores Catalan-Cuban connections in their multifaceted, fragmented, and shifting aspects from the 19<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, across a broad range of expressions of culture.

In my first chapter, “*Modernisme Caribeny* in Cuba as an Expression of *Catalanitat*,” I show how *Modernisme* marked Catalan national space in Cuba and how 1898 begins a new Cuban-Catalan epoch, characterized by the development of political ideology and greater mutual influence.

The second chapter, “Listening for the Revolution After the Revolution: Silence and Noise in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *Y Dios entró en La Habana* (1998),” examines Vázquez Montalbán’s late piece, *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, in which he describes the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba and presents unique commentary on revolution and contemporary Cuba.

My third chapter, “(Re)Imagining a National Project: The Rise of Cuban Nationalism in Carme Riera’s *Cap al cel obert* (2000),” scrutinizes mid-nineteenth-century relations between Cuba and Catalonia and how Carme Riera (Palma, 1948)

reworks this historical relationship in the context of the late twentieth century in her novel *Cap al cel obert* (2000). Her nuanced manipulation of the historical Catalan-Cuban connection reveals certain attitudes about contemporary Catalan national identity.

The final chapter, “Locating the Catalan Nation in the Twenty-First Century: Immigration and Exile in Contemporary Barcelona,” examines the photography of *Enlloc* (2005) by Juan Pablo Ballester. Ballester portrays identity in exile; however, his use of the Catalan term and his treatment of Catalan symbols depict the challenges of immigration to Catalonia in the twenty-first century. Ballester’s establishment of a Catalan “Nowhere” re-enacts cultural and political conflict, even as it seeks to go beyond it.

Overall, my research demonstrates how Cuba has affected Catalan identity and politics in the contemporary period in a greater capacity previously indicated by the scholarship, and moreover, that the importance to Catalonia that Cuba held in its colonial struggle against Spain has been re-imagined in literature and arts through the present day.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ashley was born and raised in southwestern Virginia and is Cuban-American, of Catalan and Basque descent. She completed dual Honors Baccalaureate Bachelor of Arts degrees in Spanish and International Studies at Virginia Tech in 2002, with minors in French and European Studies. In Spring 2001, she spent a semester abroad in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland, adding Italian to her languages studied.

In August 2004, Ashley began her graduate study at Cornell after spending a year in Germany as a non-degree seeking student at the University of Dortmund. It was during this year in Germany that she began casual study of Catalan in preparation for graduate work at Cornell, planting a seed that would grow into the full-fledged project that became her dissertation topic. During her graduate career at Cornell, Ashley received the Foreign Language Area Studies summer fellowship for advanced Catalan language, the Einaudi Center Travel Grant for pre-dissertation research, and several Graduate Student Conference Grants.

Ashley has presented her research at a number of graduate student and professional academic conferences, including early versions of her two dissertation chapters on Ballester and Riera. She is a member of various professional organizations, including LASA, NACS, and the MLA; and she served as a regional delegate for New York State in the MLA Delegate Assembly, 2008-2011.

*A mi abuelo cubano, quien me enseñó mis primeras palabras en catalán;  
y a mi abuela cubana, quien me enseñó mis primeras palabras en español — y a quien de seguro  
le hubiera gustado tanto ver completarse esta obra.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following is, I'm sure, an incomplete list of people who have been a constant source of encouragement and/or rear-end-kicking as needed. My apologies to anyone left out unintentionally. First and foremost, to my husband, Erik: thanks for your love, support, and companionship; I would not have been able to do this without you. You are the best husband anyone could wish for. To my parents, siblings, and other relatives and family friends: thank you for encouraging me along the way and for believing that I would – eventually – graduate!

Heartfelt appreciation for my cohort at Cornell, who have become colleagues and friends for life: Malia, Beth, Irení, and Zac. Special thanks to Malia, my “twin.” Sincere thanks to many others for being there through all the stresses and successes, late-night paper writing, and friendship through the years: Alicia, María Fernanda, Henry, Bill (you're still a Cornellian in my mind), Alfredo, Caroline, Daniel D., Carolyn, Loredana, Daniel T., and Andrea. Thanks also to Sarah P. for your camaraderie through our insanity toward the end of our respective projects.

To my Mosqueteros Mariela/Marielé/Aramis, Octavio/Octavié/Atos, and Ellen/Ellené/Portos, whose undying devotion and confidence has been a tremendous source of encouragement when times were hardest: ¡Votre D'Artagnan devient *Doctora!* ¡TODOS PARA UNO!

A big thank you, of course, to my dissertation committee, for your honest and helpful feedback: Drs. Joan Ramon Resina, Debra Castillo, Peter Gilgen, and Gerard Aching. Special thanks to Joan Ramon, who believed in me before I even decided to go to Cornell and who has remained steadfast across 3,000 miles; and to Debbie, who has been a mentor through so many situations over the years, even on stage.

I am grateful to the Cornell Institute for European Studies for the Foreign Language Area Studies Grant in Summer 2005 for intensive Catalan study, which allowed me to gain the language skills necessary to undertake my dissertation research; and the Mario Einaudi Center for the Summer 2007 International Research Travel Grant that allowed me to conduct pre-dissertation research in Spain. Thank you also to my relatives in Havana who were so helpful with my research in Cuba in January 2010.

Several individuals helped me tremendously with commentary and resources, especially Juan Pablo Ballester, Tate Cabré, and Joseph Scarpaci.

Last but not least, a huge blast of appreciation to Arwin, Margrit, and my mom, without whose child care this dissertation certainly would never have been finished!



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1	30
Chapter 2	76
Chapter 3	112
Chapter 4	151
Conclusion	195
Works Cited	205

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	155
Figure 2	159
Figure 3	160
Figure 4	178
Figure 5	179
Figure 6	181

## INTRODUCTION

Els catalans van aprendre de la crisi del 98 que es podien relacionar amb l'Estat a través d'un règim autòmic. Els cubans l'havien après dels canadencs i els catalans dels cubans. Aquesta és la lliçó del 98.

- Josep M. Fradera, *Cuba: sempre fidelísima*

### *A Shared History*

Today, Catalans in Cuba constitute “una especie en extinción. Difícilmente quedan un centenar de ellos en toda la isla” (Ferran 11). Yet this was not always the case. Not so long ago, in fact, Catalans made up a fairly numerous and, overall, prosperous group in Cuba. It is indisputable that Catalans left an indelible mark on Cuban families, culture, and society at large; to the point that Cuba was once “commonly referred to as the fifth province of Catalonia” (Bakhtiarova, “Tale of Two Habaneras” 124). Catalans began traveling to Cuba in the early days of the encounter between Europe and the Americas. From 1492 until 1898, when Cuba was granted independence from Spain,<sup>1</sup> the relationship between Cuba and Catalonia took place under Spanish colonialism.

It is not until the late 1700s, however, that we see the beginnings of a truly significant interconnected history. The eighteenth century was characterized by

---

<sup>1</sup> The significance of the year 1898 will be discussed in detail at a later point in this study. As a hint of what is to come, the language used in certain Catalan contexts even in recent decades indicates the importance of 1898 for Catalonia whereby Cuba has functioned as a model that has exerted profound influence in Catalonia. One example of such language, which will not be specifically discussed in further detail in the present study, is the presentation of the documentary *Cuba, siempre fidelísima* (1998), which describes the end of the war in 1898 not as the year marking the *granting* of Cuba's independence, but rather as when Cuba “aconsegueix posar fi a 400 anys de domini espanyol” (“El Documental”).

overall significant changes that led to increased interdependence, although this relationship often developed under conditions of duress. The death of Charles II in 1700 and the ascension to the throne of Philip V marked, for Catalans, a new period of external hostility and cultural repression leading to a War of Succession undertaken by Catalonia and Aragon against the Spanish crown, in support of archduke Charles of Austria for the Spanish crown. However, Catalan forces were defeated in 1714, and the Crown tightened control after obtaining military victory, placing Barcelona, Valencia, Mallorca, Eivissa and other territories under strict occupation.

With the Nueva Planta [New Order], a series of decrees beginning in 1707 and published in Catalonia in January of 1716, Philip V “configurà un règim polític que exclouïa la representació de la societat catalana i reforçava la preeminència...de les autoritats militars sobre les civils i una assignació quasi sistemàtica del govern dels corregiments (demarcacions substitutòries de les vegueries) a oficials de l'exèrcit del rei” (“El règim de la Nova Planta”). The New Order abolished longstanding Catalan constitutions and institutions, replacing them with authorities maintained by repressive centralized control, which – despite various uprisings and crises in the latter half of the eighteenth century – did not abate significantly until intermittent breaks came in the absolute monarchy between 1808 and 1833.

Despite political difficulties, a burgeoning Catalan economy propelled an expansion of interests across the Atlantic in the second half of the eighteenth century, including in Cuba. Moreover, the decades from approximately 1760 to 1820 marked a

period in which Spain's overall relationship with Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines underwent significant economic and social transformations, whereby these insular territories became much more important to the Spanish imperial system (Fradera, *Colonias para después de un imperio* 17). Catalans were restricted from participating in significant trade with Cuba until the eighteenth century; “a partir de llavors, Cuba va ser un destí preferencial” (Toll).<sup>2</sup> The Decree of Free Trade of 1778 under Charles III was one of the Bourbon reforms that contributed to a change in imperial structure and affected the Catalans' ability to conduct business with and in Cuba. The Decree of Free Trade allowed American ports to trade directly with ports in Spain and with each other. Although part of a general program of reforms to maintain the Spanish colonial empire intact, this new trade structure contributed to conditions that favored the growth of Catalan industry at home and abroad, including in Cuba.

Naturally, circumstances in the Caribbean also affected migration and politics in the metropolis. By the mid-eighteenth century, Saint-Domingue (Haiti) was leading

---

<sup>2</sup> Joan M. Ferran points out that scholarship is divided on this point, and that despite the usual story that Catalans did not participate in the Conquest and colonization, perhaps it was due to their own choice rather than strictly because of prohibitions (14). It is worth noting, however, that there were extremely high taxes imposed on various aspects of Catalan trade and industry during the eighteenth century that no doubt contributed to limiting Catalan trade in Cuba at that time. Two of the tax types that posed special barriers were the *lezda* and the *bolla*. Pierre Vilar indicates that the *bolla*, “droit catalan par excellence, est appliqué sur l'étendue entière du Principat, mais seulement aux vieux produits textiles – laine et soie” (15), while the *lezda* underwent significant changes in structure: “Ce qui apparaît, en 1751, sous le vieux nom de *lezda* est, en fait, quelque chose d'assez différent, et nouveau. C'est un droit uniforme et faible, mais qui frappe toutes marchandises, importées, exportées, en transit, nationales ou étrangères” (20).

the world's boom in sugar production, churning out 63,000 tons of sugar annually, which corresponded to an increase in slave labor by tenfold during the eighteenth century (Buck-Morss 827). By the late 1700s, there were approximately half a million slaves in Saint-Domingue, what would become the “epicenter” of the struggle for abolition of slavery (Buck-Morss 833). In 1791, the slaves formed a massive armed rebellion, which had repercussions in Cuba and beyond.

In economic terms, the Haitian slave revolt of 1791 meant that a vast share of the sugar market suddenly shifted to Cuba. Following the revolt, Cuba developed its sugar production and trade to become the leading producer of sugar in the world beginning in the 1820s; thereafter, sugar production doubled every ten years (Tomich 25). In the space of just a few years, Cuba and Puerto Rico – but particularly Cuba – became “la cara más dinámica del universo imperial hispánico tardío” (Fraderas, *Colonias para después* 18). Cuban *ingenios* increased their sugar production at a tremendous rate, until the island became the greatest producer in the world by around 1820, and after this decade production still continued to grow.

Around the period just before and after the Haitian slave rebellion, Cuba received a relatively small but ultimately influential wave of Catalan immigrants; from Seville alone, for instance, around 450 Catalans left for Cuba between 1765 and 1824 (Junqueras 38-39). This became the first wave of three during the nineteenth century. Catalan immigrants to Cuba at this time were mostly single young men: there were eleven Catalan men for every woman who came to Cuba during this immigration

wave (Maluquer de Motes, *Nación e inmigración* 79). Beginning in 1811, however, Catalans became the most numerous group from within Spain to immigrate to Cuba. It is pertinent to note that in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Catalonia constituted “la punta de lanza de la economía peninsular, pero todavía no era un país rico” (Ferran 11). Many Catalans who migrated to Cuba did so to “fer les Amèriques,” much like immigrants to the United States pursuing the American dream.

While the Cuban economy was expanding rapidly due to the changed circumstances caused by the slave rebellion, Catalonia was also strengthening its industries and stood to gain from a greater expansion in Cuba. There were many Catalans willing and able to take advantage of new opportunities on the island, attracted in part by the business prospects presenting themselves as a result of the increased sugar production, but they also relied on the family and friend networks that were beginning to grow. The 1820s-1840s marked the peak in Catalan emigration to Cuba. While many settled in Havana, a large number of them ended up in Santiago de Cuba; there was also a significant community in Matanzas that created traditions that have survived into the present day.<sup>3</sup>

This generation of émigrés was one of two important segments (the other being from the Canary Islands) of a general wave of immigrants from Spain which “se

---

<sup>3</sup> For example, Dec. 8 the “Fiesta de la Colla” is celebrated in Matanzas. See the video “L’emigració catalana a Cuba” for more details. The Ermita de Montserrate was erected by the Catalan community in Matanzas in 1875 and was recently reconstructed to serve as a “complejo recreativo, cultural y turístico, como parte de la colaboración entre el gobierno en la provincia y la corporación CIMEX” (Solís Díaz).

inserta plenamente en el ciclo revolucionario internacional y se distingue por la gestación de una economía de plantación” (Maluquer de Motes 57). Some of these Catalans became highly successful businessmen and prominent figures in Cuban society. Catalans represented around 29% of the total business owners in Havana and 65% in Santiago de Cuba (Maluquer de Motes 81). Many young men who went to Cuba initially left to participate in the *aiguardent* trade, but as more people left the Països Catalans for Cuba, the network of Catalans on the island and the number of Catalan-owned businesses grew. Although the “aristocràtica societat de l’Havana els menyspreava,” they shopped regardless at the Catalan-owned stores: so common were Catalan-owned businesses that the “*catalán de la esquina* o, simplement, *el catalán* va passar a ser la denominació de les merceries i “pulperías” on es venia de tot” (Genovès). Some Catalans opened sugar plantations and participated actively in the massive expansion of the sugar industry, although many became important bankers or ran other businesses; many of the earliest sugar and tobacco plantations were owned by Catalans, as was the first coffee plantation, which was owned by Josep Gelabert. As Joaquim Roy states, “la presència catalana [en els sectors del sucre i derivats, i el tabac] és impressionant. És impossible fer una història del rom i del tabac sense esmentar els catalans” (61).

Although many Catalans did prosper, of course there were some who did not succeed; these remained anonymous and we do not know many details of their histories. Furthermore, some who were successful returned to Catalonia after making



their fortune (as did some who had failed), although many integrated themselves completely into Cuban society, marrying Cuban women and remaining in Cuba indefinitely to live. Many who stayed consciously maintained their connections to their homeland active by founding cultural centers that served to foment cultural activities, including language instruction in some cases, and to provide a meeting place for Catalan speakers to discuss cultural and political issues; the Sociedad de Beneficencia de Naturales de Cataluña (1840), which still maintains a library and archive in Havana today, and the Centro Balear de La Habana (1881) are just two examples of centers founded in the golden age of the nineteenth century.

While Catalans developed business relations in and with Cuba and fomented cultural activities in the early and mid-nineteenth century, the political situation on the island was becoming increasingly unstable. Overall, the nineteenth century in both Cuba and Catalonia were marked by periods of severe instability, unrest, and uprisings against the centralized Madrid government. The Haitian slave rebellion had sent shock waves through Cuban society and added to the extant turmoil of the time period. The white *criollo* classes began to fear a similar revolt on their own soil: “Many whites in Cuba felt that they lived permanently in the shadow of a slave rebellion on the Haitian model. They were not altogether wrong, for many Cuban blacks found inspiration in the Haitian example” (Gott 46). Slave importations in the late eighteenth century had increased dramatically, averaging over 3,000 per year. By 1841, the slave population had grown to nearly half a million and totaled almost 45

per cent of the population, while the number of free blacks had grown to become a substantial majority of the blacks on the island, to 58 per cent (Gott 46-47).

Discussions of the necessity to *blanquear* the Cuban people became common, oriented in large part by José Antonio Saco in the 1830s. Immigration from Europe (not just Spain) was therefore welcomed as a means of “whitening” the island and thus diminishing the black-to-white ratio in the population.

Indeed, inspired by the slave revolt of 1791, free blacks and *mulatos* in Cuba immediately began to organize uprisings, although despite the fears of the white plantocracy, in general these were directed toward a fight for independence from Spain – well before the majority of the middle and upper (white) classes of *criollos* ever became involved significantly in the fight against the Spanish crown. Already in 1795, a free black man from Bayamo, Nicolás Morales, organized a mixed group of blacks and whites against the clergy and against taxes and land ownership laws that he felt “oppressed the poor” (Gott 48). In 1810 a serious attempt to gain independence was organized, in which a black militia and a white independence movement, led by masons, joined together and proposed a constitution for an independent Cuba (Gott 49). Two years later there is another important black revolt led by free black man José Antonio Aponte, who likely knew of the Spanish Cortes and was aware of the possibility of the end of the slave trade. Aponte was betrayed and was executed along with other accomplices in the revolt; his head was displayed prominently in an iron cage at the entrance to Havana.

Mid-century was also marked with disappointment experienced by Catalans at home regarding unfulfilled promises of more liberal policies. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, the Catalan bourgeoisie “viuen el somni feliç de la seva aliança amb la Unión Liberal, durant el govern llarg d’O’Donnell (1858-1863), sota el guiatge de Francesc Permanyer...i amb la participació en la política espanyola de Duran i Bas” (Fontana 330). By the end of the 1860s, the war in Morocco brought to light a “profund cinisme” (Fontana 331). During this same time, from about 1857-1868, “catastrophic” economic evolution took place in Catalonia (Fontana 332). Emigration to Cuba continued during these years and beyond, but for clearly different reasons than those of the earlier waves.

Likely in part because of the growing frustration felt due to politics at home, a number of Catalans came to play significant roles in the Cuban fight for independence from Spain, even before the white criollo classes became broadly involved. The 1837 “Conspiración de los catalanes” is an interesting example that was plotted in Barcelona as an assassination attempt against Tacón with the subsequent objective of declaring Cuban independence, but the conspiracy was discovered and aborted before it could be carried out (J. M. Ferran 115). Notable Catalan figures involved in politics on the island were Francesc Senmanat, Rafael Dolfí, Sebastià Ferragut, Tomàs Gener,<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> See footnote in Chapter 1 for interesting reference to Gener and his ideas regarding the possibilities for using independence of the Americas as a springboard for renewing independence movements within regions of the Peninsula. Gener was an influential figure, without whose presence

and Ramon Pintó,<sup>5</sup> among others. The following decades saw a particularly high number of conspiracies; some of these were headed by free blacks and mulattos (*mulatos*). In 1844 there was the famous “Conspiración de la Escalera,” so named because many of those accused of participating were tortured while strapped to a ladder. The authorities were notified of the conspiracy, and many blacks accused of being accomplices were tortured and killed.

Aside from the business and political involvement of Catalans in Cuba, the contact with Cuba also arguably transformed Catalan literature of the nineteenth century. One salient example is Jacint Verdaguer (1845-1902), one of the primary voices of the Catalan cultural and literary movement, the *Renaixença*. Verdaguer wrote his epic poem *L’Atlàntida* (1876) while spending time as chaplain aboard the ships of the Compañía Transatlántica, owned by Cantabrian businessman Antonio López y López (1817-1883), who built a shipping industry via Cuba. Although Verdaguer had begun the poem some years earlier, the time spent aboard allowed him to devote energy to completing it; in fact, he completed nine trips to Cuba before finishing the text. It is certainly plausible that Verdaguer’s connection to Cuba might have, if not

---

the ideas behind the Cuban independence movements would likely not have developed in the same manner.

<sup>5</sup> See discussion in Chapter 3 of Ramon Pintó’s subversive activities.

inspired, at least influenced this seminal work that earned him recognition as the greatest poet in Catalan literature of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

With such a rich history, it is easy to see why scholarship has focused to a large extent on the colonial period. However, the current project focuses primarily on the post-colonial era, although, as we will see, Chapter 3 delves heavily into the nineteenth century. There are several reasons for the emphasis on the era beginning in 1898. First, most of the scholarly attention to Cuba and Catalonia has come, somewhat predictably, from Cuban and Catalan scholars, but particularly the latter. Beyond this specific community, there remains work to be done to increase general awareness of the importance of the relationship between Cuba and Catalonia in the broader fields of literary and cultural studies, outside of Cuba and Spain.

Second, much scholarship on Catalonia and Cuba to date has been limited in focus. Some works treat the various waves of immigration to Cuba; others investigate the motivations behind these migratory waves, the place of origin of the Catalans who went to Cuba, how long they stayed and where they settled and so on. Another trend has been to identify what heritage the Catalan presence in Cuba has bequeathed to the island. There is a pressing need, then, to examine more fully how ideas were exchanged, or how, for example, Cuban culture might have left an imprint on

---

<sup>6</sup> Magín Carbonell's musical piece, *Somiant l'Atlàntida*, was featured in a 1914 edition of the literary and musical periodical published by the Grup Nacional Radical Catalunya of Santiago de Cuba (Fontanet Gil 57). It would be fascinating to examine the full transatlantic history and legacy of Verdaguer's masterpiece in a separate study.

Catalans and their ideas about their own homeland, rather than only the other way around. This has begun to change in the last decade, but there is still quite a bit of room for additional research.

This project, then, attempts to address certain areas of investigation that were lacking by reversing, in some sense, the most commonly pursued questions of the past: how has Cuba influenced Catalonia, and how does Cuba appear in the Catalan imaginary? The present work proposes to trace and untangle rich cultural layers of a relationship that reached beyond commercial boundaries and beyond visible Catalan heritage left behind in Cuba. Grounded in historically documented political and cultural connections, my project on Cuba and Catalonia sheds light on how Cuba's involvement in Catalonia's history —and vice versa— has helped to shape notions of Catalan national identity and has contributed to what should properly be called dynamic mutual influence and exchange between the two places and cultures; if during colonialism Catalans created a prominent presence in Cuba that would leave an important cultural heritage, it is arguable that after 1898, the transatlantic winds reversed, so to speak: that is, Cuba thereafter exerted the greater influence on Catalonia.

The turn of the twentieth century would in fact bring a new and notable wave of Catalans into Cuba, as well as significant political developments. Between 1898 and 1905, approximately 400,000 people left Spain for the Americas, of which around 30,000 went to Cuba; in 1900, only around 5% of the Spanish citizens registered in

Cuba were Catalans (Roy 60). However, the total number of Catalans in Cuba had increased over the previous decades. According to calculations by Joan M. Ferran, there were approximately 9,000 Catalans in Cuba in 1860, but by 1925, this number had nearly doubled to 16,000. Ferran states that in contrast to the Catalans who arrived in the nineteenth century, nearly all of whom “feien de majoristes...o industrials,” the Catalans who arrived in the twentieth century “era una gent amb una visió política més ampla, ja no eren colonialistes” (Toll). Overall, after a brief interlude in which emigration slowed,

Després de l'any d'independència de Cuba les relacions amb Catalunya van continuar i augmentar...Els catalans van aprofitar la xarxa de familiars i coneguts que havien establert. A més, la immigració després d'un parèntesi breu va tornar a fluir cap a Cuba com ho feia cap a totes parts d'Amèrica durant el primer terç del segle XX. (Toll)

Although the number of Catalans who went to Cuba in the early twentieth century was in lower proportion to emigrants from other regions of Spain, these Catalans still played an important role in Cuban society and, of more importance for the present study, Cuba's independence loomed large as the model for Catalonia in Catalan communities in Cuba.

It is not coincidental that “és a Cuba on es perfilarà d'una manera més decidida, més diàfana i operativa el separatisme català d'aquest segle” (Castells, cited in Costa 15). As discussed briefly in the next subsection, and in greater detail in Chapter 1, I

relate this development in large part to the effect the Cuban War ending in 1898 had on Catalan political thought. After 1898, Cuba became a place that inspired Catalans seeking greater autonomy or even strict independence from Spain. The Catalan communities in Cuba founded radical political groups, published journals, and created separatist leagues, such as the *Club Separatistes* under the leadership of Josep Conangla i Fontanilles in 1922.<sup>7</sup> Catalan political activities in Cuba would culminate with the 1925 publication in exile of what is commonly called *La Constitució de l'Havana*, but was in fact a constitution for an independent Republic of Catalonia. Shortly thereafter, however, the 1929 economic crisis effectively put a stop to Catalan emigration to Cuba, and the onset of the Spanish Civil War would see the true end of permanent emigration by Catalans to Cuba. The number of Catalans in Cuba has steadily dwindled ever since. According to Joan M. Ferran, there still remains “un puñado de aquellos que hace muchos años vinieron en busca de fortuna o por otros motivos. Son los últimos catalanes cubanos. Ellos y sus predecesores fueron protagonistas, y todavía lo son, de la Cataluña exterior” (cited in Segura Soriano). The small number of Catalans remaining in Cuba today does not, due to obvious political and social circumstances that have developed over the past half century, exert the same level of influence or active presence in Cuban society as that of the Catalan community of the

---

<sup>7</sup> Conangla i Fontanilles was a crucial figure in the separatist activities in Cuba in the early decades of the twentieth century. For reasons of space, he will not be discussed in further detail in the present study, but a future version of this work could easily include an entire chapter devoted to his writings.



nineteenth and early twentieth century, notwithstanding the continued existence of organizations such as the Sociedad de Beneficencia de Naturales de Cataluña.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the lack of an established Catalan community in Cuba in the second half of the twentieth century, the inspiration found in, and the fascination with, the Cuba in Catalan politics, journalism, and literature has not disappeared. After the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), some Catalans did pass through Cuba on their way to Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America. Mexico, in particular, was the final destination of many Catalans due to the accommodating policy of receiving political refugees under President Lázaro Cárdenas. Cuba was often an obligatory stop on the way to Mexico and other destinations, but did not offer its own similar policy of receiving those seeking asylum, in part due to its own turbulent political problems. In any case, some Catalan writers translated their experience in Cuba into novels, such as Teresa Pàmies and Josep Maria Pobleu.<sup>9</sup>

The Cuban Revolution ending in 1959, as will be seen in further detail in the chapter on Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, presented another important point in the

---

<sup>8</sup> The Catalan community today is, in fact, so negligent that historian Joan M. Ferran is actually referred to in a video report on the Catalan heritage in Cuba as “probablement l’únic cubà resident a l’illa que parla català” (Toll). It is pertinent to note that although Ferran was born in Havana, he actually moved to Catalonia at a young age when his parents decided to return home; they came back to Cuba due to the Civil War.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Núria Sabaté Llobera’s article on these particular authors. Sabaté Llobera argues that Cuba functions in Pàmies’s and Pobleu’s respective novels as “espacio de libertad para expresar las ideas prohibidas en la Península por el franquismo.” Moreover, she believes that the “transitar de los protagonistas por los espacios cubanos permite entender (y funciona de acorde a) sus ideologías como catalanes y republicanos” (304). The postwar Catalan experience in Cuba will not be analyzed in the present study, but would be an interesting area to explore in the future.

twentieth-century relationship between Cuba and Catalonia. Namely, the Revolution offered inspiration for the postwar clandestine Catalan left under Francoism, inspiration that has continued into the present for certain leftist movements and organizations: in Catalonia, across Spain, and throughout Latin America. Vázquez Montalbán's *Y Dios entró en La Habana* (1998), remarks on the legacy of the Cuban Revolution, with all of its accomplishments and failures.

In the past decade or so – seemingly, I would posit, in conjunction with the centennial of the loss of Cuba as a Spanish colony commemorated in 1998 – Cuba has continued to grow rather than diminish in importance in the Catalan imaginary, in politics, in literature, and in academic research. Various works of note featuring Cuba have been written in Catalan around and since 1998. One novel, *Cap al cel obert* (2000) by Mallorcan-born Carme Riera, will be dealt with in this dissertation. Other examples are Ferrant Torrent's *Líving l'Havana* (1999), Teresa Costa i Gramunt's *Estampes de Cuba* (2001), and Francesc Bodí's *Havanera* (2006). Films such as *Cuba: sempre fidelíssima* (1998) and academic conferences such as the transatlantic “La petjada catalana al Carib” (2009-2010) and the annual “Taller Cuba-Cataluña” (started in 2010) demonstrate increased scholarly interest in what is proving to be significant and substantial material, which remains to be explored in all of its nuanced aspects. Alex Broch has noted the growing importance of Cuba in contemporary Catalan literature, which he connects in part to the historical aspect of the relationship between the two places (63). I would add that the surge of interest in Cuba around the centennial of

Cuba's independence from Spain points to the importance of 1898 in the Catalan cultural and political imaginary, which we will explore in further detail in the chapters.

The shared history between Cuba and Catalonia has even found its place recently popularized in tourism, for instance by theme tours like the advertised tour “Tras la huella catalana en Cuba,” which is run by a Spanish travel agency specializing in Cuban tours since 1991 (Cubaltamira.com). Gastronomic aficionados have found material to work with in both popular and scholarly realms, including outside of Havana, such as the article on “Cultura culinaria y huella catalana en Santiago de Cuba.” Musicians and researchers working on the history of music have found the *havanera* a rich topic to pursue, being a musical genre that has gone through several phases as it has been invented, re-invented, and re-interpreted in various forms back and forth across the Atlantic. Galina Bakhtiarova, for instance, has written about the *havanera* and its transatlantic transformations.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Year 1898 As Rupture From Past Relations*

A significant objective of this dissertation is to theorize the overall nature of the post-1898 relationship between Cuba and Catalonia, between Cubans and Catalans. In order to understand the post-colonial relationship between these two places and their peoples, it is pertinent to understand the influence of Cuba on Catalonia, not just the other way around. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate

---

<sup>10</sup> See her articles in the Works Cited section, as well as specific references made in Chapter 3.

how Cuba has grown in importance in the Catalan political and cultural imaginary after 1898, and I therefore propose 1898 as the marker for a new period of Cuban-Catalan interaction. This mutual influence has reached into art, architecture, literature, and politics; and it has transformed ideas about Catalonia throughout the twentieth century into the present. The individual chapters of this project seek to trace some of the most important points throughout the twentieth century and into the contemporary period.

In my first chapter, “*Modernisme Caribeny* in Cuba as an Expression of *Catalanitat*,” I begin the period in question by analyzing Catalan *Modernista* architecture as it travels from Catalonia to Cuba, relating this to a shift in political and cultural circumstances after 1898. This chapter questions the validity of previous scholarship deprecating the limitations of *Modernisme* in Cuba and demonstrates that this version of *Modernisme* should be considered as a legitimate expression of Catalan national culture.

The second chapter, “Listening for the Revolution After the Revolution: Silence and Noise in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *Y Dios entró en La Habana* (1998),” moves into the mid- and late-twentieth century to examine the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution as it has influenced ideas emerging from Catalonia’s intellectual forces. In this journalistic piece, Vázquez Montalbán ostensibly describes the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba. Yet far from being merely a descriptive journalistic report of the Pope’s trip, this monumental work actually delves into criticism of the left in

Catalonia and in Spain at large, as well as sophisticated commentary on revolutions in Latin America and the future of leftist movements.

My third chapter, “(Re-)Imagining a National Project: The Rise of Cuban Nationalism in Carme Riera’s *Cap al cel obert* (2000),” looks simultaneously at actual mid-nineteenth century relations between Cuba and Catalonia, and at how Riera (Palma, 1948), a well-known Mallorcan author who publishes fiction and scholarly work in both Catalan and Spanish, re-negotiates and rewrites this historical relationship in the context of the late twentieth century, in her novel *Cap al cel obert*. Riera’s novel fits into a growing trend of featuring Cuba in Catalan literature at the turn of the twenty-first century. *Cap al cel obert* exposes, albeit perhaps unintentionally, the unfortunate continuing tendency in contemporary Catalonia toward the return to a systematic, Francoism-inspired repression of the indigenous cultural and linguistic identity of the various regions of Spain. Riera’s novel offers a curious interpretation of just how “[e]l mito de Cuba todavía sobrevive en Cataluña” (J.M. Ferran, *La saga dels catalans a Cuba* 13). Moreover, Riera’s origin as a Mallorcan writer and her use of a specifically Mallorcan Jewish community in this novel is of particular interest for expanding studies on literature written in Catalan.

The final chapter, “Locating the Catalan Nation in the Twenty-First Century: Immigration and Exile in Contemporary Barcelona,” examines the photography of *Enlloc* [*Nowhere*] (2005) by Cuban-Catalan artist Juan Pablo Ballester. In a sense, this chapter addresses Catalan identity in the face of (im)migration to Catalonia and

presents Ballester as a sort of microcosm of the Cuban – and arguably, the Latin American – community in Catalonia. Ballester takes up a well-established Cuban trope of exile in his photography. However, despite his claim to establish a “nowhere,” his use of the Catalan term in the title and his treatment of Catalan symbols actually re-enact cultural and political conflicts surrounding the issue of immigration, even as he seeks to go beyond them.

One important aspect of this research has been to uncover in what ways Cuba has affected the various imaginings of Catalan identity. Beyond the notion of *catalanitat*, however, this work scrutinizes how the post-1898 relationship between Cuba and Catalonia has influenced politics on both sides of the Atlantic. I demonstrate that Cuba has continued to affect Catalan identity in the contemporary period in a greater capacity than previously indicated by the scholarship, and moreover, that the importance to Catalonia that Cuba held in its colonial struggle against Spain has been re-imagined in literature and arts through the present day. From the surge of political Catalanism in Cuba at the beginning of the 1900s, to the struggle to define *catalanitat* in the face of increased immigration a century later, the post-1898 relationship between Cubans and Catalans marks a period of mutual influence as well as prominence of the role of Cuba in the Catalan imaginary, particularly regarding the political – and politicized – question of Catalan identity.

### *Proposing “Critical Transatlanticism”*

The scope of this admittedly complex project entails, approximately, the rise of Cuban rebellions against the Spanish crown in the mid-nineteenth century, to present-day interpretations of national identity in Catalonia. While clearly entrenched to a certain degree in Catalan Studies specifically, and Iberian Studies more generally, this project must also be considered in the context of both Cuban and Latin American Studies. Moreover, the architecture, texts, and photography encompassed in this dissertation truly hail from both sides of the Atlantic; thus this study most certainly falls within the still-developing discipline of Transatlantic Studies. It is my hope that this dissertation will contribute in a meaningful way to Transatlantic Studies, in substance and in theory.

It might be tempting to say that this project fits into the overall discipline of Hispanism, given its broad scope. Yet what does it actually mean to speak of this project’s place in Hispanism? As other scholars have criticized, the philosophical tenets of Hispanism are questionable at best. At the root of the structural problems with Hispanism as a discipline is its insistent reliance on a monolingual (Castilian/Spanish) approach and, therefore, a tendency toward hegemony and homogenization of cultures; as Joan Ramon Resina has noted, “The discipline’s monolingualism needs to be recognized not as an effect of Hispanism’s ideology but as its main vehicle” (“Whose Hispanism” 174). What is clearly needed – which Resina has argued in other contexts and I would like to re-emphasize from another angle – is

a critical and well-defined approach to literary, film and cultural studies of Latin America, the Iberian Peninsula (and even, I would add, United States Latinos) that will better address non-Hispanic (i.e. non-Spanish-speaking and/or non-Castilocentric) traditions. The growing fields of Iberian and Latin American Studies, which present theoretical alternatives to the exclusionary discipline called Hispanism and concepts that can reach other areas of literary studies outside of “Spanish,” offer the appropriately dramatic disciplinary reformations that are called for.

Yet the theoretical problems present in Hispanism have not been resolved,<sup>11</sup> and in fact have remained pervasive even as attempts are made to overcome them. One proposed reformulation that has recently been gaining more traction is the term “new Hispanism(s)” followed by any number of qualifying caveats. Julio Ortega’s edited volume, *Nuevos hispanismos interdisciplinarios y transatlánticos* (2010), is a salient example. Naturally, the term “New Hispanisms” attempts to renovate and revitalize

---

<sup>11</sup> The existence of certain progressive programs in Iberian and Latin American Studies indicates an extremely significant measure of progress that cannot be ignored or understated. Such programs are the model, but unfortunately are not currently the norm. Despite its deep theoretical problems, we are seemingly a long way, in practice, from being finished with Hispanism in the United States. The horse may be long dead, but some inexplicably insist on beating it. Clear evidence of this is the fact that countless programs are still defined as departments of “Hispanic Studies” or “Spanish and Portuguese.” The fact that programs can still fall under these disciplinary lines, including at prestigious universities – or even speak of teaching “Hispanic culture” – illustrates the progress that still needs to be achieved across the discipline as a whole.



the old Hispanism by expanding its cultural and linguistic territory.<sup>12</sup> Ortega defines New Hispanism(s) as such:

Un nuevo hispanismo plural...más horizontal y dialógico, forjando una práctica teórica compartida, no menos crítica y más democrática...en una nueva geotextualidad desde la perspectiva de una crítica transatlántica, cuya primera característica es que...confirma todas sus instancias como válidas, desde una perspectiva teórica inclusiva...Se trata, en efecto, de una teoría crítica forjada en español, cuyo sentido de pertenencia se afirma en su traza multinacional y se proyecta en su disputa de una textualidad más articulatoria y más dialógica. (9-10)

Thus, Ortega feels he can legitimately claim that New Hispanisms are based on questioning “la retórica de su propia genealogía: preguntan por quién habla, desde qué posicionamiento, y para cuál propósito (10). Yet despite the achievements in terms of broadening the approaches considered via interdisciplinary and transatlantic perspectives, are not these “New Hispanisms” still falling into the same ideological problems as before? What brings New Hispanism(s) onto a theoretically higher ground than the older concept of Hispanism as a hegemonizing force, even with the plural “s” added on? Why, for that matter, must we speak of “una teoría crítica forjada en español,” unless this theory is a clear example of wielding the Castilocentric

---

<sup>12</sup> See bibliography by Joan Ramon Resina, who has previously made similar arguments in response to other scholars over the last couple of decades. My response to Ortega and to the newly (re)formulated positions on Hispanism(s) that have been recently proposed follows in the same vein.

ideology that Resina has sensibly pointed out? New Hispanisms, Transatlantic or otherwise, automatically and inappropriately restrict their territory even as set out to cover supposedly multinational ground.

Ortega goes on to state that these New Hispanisms:

...sólo pueden ser plurales [y] demandan articulaciones tan críticas como políticas. No es casual, por lo mismo, que resulte consustancial a los estudios trasatlánticos la ausencia de un canon o un programa: sus objetos no son tipificables como transparentes ni como homogéneos...son procesales y se despliegan, abiertos. Más bien, son una crítica cultural que alienta la heterogeneidad...de un campo interdisciplinario, menos genealógico y más desplegado, en devenir. Se trata de un campo más deconstructivo que asertivo, y duda de una verdad operativa y formulaica. (Ortega 11)

We might ask what the difference is here between the conflated terms “New Hispanisms” and “Transatlantic Studies.” Transatlantic Studies does not necessarily entail Hispanism, new or old, although the reverse is arguably true in many cases.

Ortega claims that it is predictable that “la perspectiva trasatlántica (las prácticas del cruce de lecturas en una geotextualidad virtual) signifique distintas cosas para distintos grupos de trabajo” (12). But even if Transatlantic Studies (albeit rightly) has no canon or means different things in different areas of investigation, why the lack of a plan or program? As the proverb goes, we might be heading nowhere fast.

Given a solid theoretical foundation, Transatlantic Studies could, alongside of Iberian and Latin American Studies, contribute to the theoretical possibilities for resistance of the centralizing discipline of Hispanism. Yet what do we mean when we say Transatlantic Studies? So far, this field has seemingly been defined merely by interest in researching and writing about both sides of the Atlantic. However, while dual research areas do:

cover legitimate cultural territory...they are...[not] intellectually broader than the national traditions from which they stem. Nor are they intrinsically multicultural; rather, they tend to reinforce the hegemony of former colonial languages, squeezing out even further the native languages and cultures, which rarely if ever come under such headings. (Resina, "Cold War Hispanism" 81)

Studying languages, literatures, and cultures falling under the geopolitical auspices of the Iberian Peninsula or any of its former colonies often requires some form of transatlantic scrutiny to understand historical or contemporary phenomena. Yet as we have seen, simply juxtaposing studies of both sides of the water is not justified in and of itself. By all accounts, Transatlantic Studies is in grave need of theoretical grounding.

Architect Kenneth Frampton considered the distinction between popular regionalism and what he called Critical Regionalism.<sup>13</sup> Critical Regionalism, according

---

<sup>13</sup> Frampton, in turn, borrowed this term from Alex Tzonis and Liliane Lefavre in "The Grid and the Pathway" (1981).

to Frampton's nuanced definition, constitutes "a dialectical expression. It self-consciously seeks to deconstruct universal modernism in terms of values and images which are locally cultivated, while at the same time adulterating these autochthonous elements with paradigms drawn from alien sources" (149). The term Critical Regionalism has been borrowed in other fields, including literary studies, by scholars like Cristina Moreiras-Menor and others.

Therefore I would like to propose the term Critical Transatlanticism, following in Frampton's tradition, as a modest beginning for providing Transatlantic Studies with some theoretical underpinnings. Like Frampton's Critical Regionalism, Critical Transatlanticism would "[depend] upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness ("Six Points" 21). Moreover, the languages and cultures of non-dominant peoples throughout the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula must be considered for Transatlantic Studies to develop to its fullest potential. By definition, a Critical Transatlanticism, firmly rooted in self-reflexivity, can only be "plurinational and multi-directional," that is to say:

...el único [transatlanticismo que] parece viable históricamente e interesante metodológicamente. Este transatlantismo [que yo llamo plurinacional y multi-direccional] incorpora las críticas hechas al centralismo nacionalizador desde las propias periferias sub-estatales tanto de América Latina (incluyendo las periferias indígenas, que podría representar cada una "nación" o un "enclave" análogo) como del Estado español (las [tres] nacionalidades históricas, pero

también las regiones ultraperiféricas como las Islas Canarias, o las "más" viajeras como Asturias, etc.)” (Rodríguez-García)<sup>14</sup>

If Critical Regionalism is defined as dialectical and self-reflexive, Critical Transatlanticism must likewise question the tenets of its own existence, must achieve a “conjunction between the *cultural* and the *political*,” (162), and must embody an “anti-centrist sentiment” (148). Critical Transatlanticism cannot, therefore, be “Hispanic,” in the ideological sense that Hispanism has covertly maintained the term; it must, by its own standards, be necessarily both “plurinational” and “multidirectional” because it involves a level of self-reflexivity requiring consideration and inclusion of all pertinent languages and nationalities across the Atlantic. In Critical Regionalism, region offers resistance to hegemony; likewise, Critical Transatlanticism – functioning as, I offer, a useful rather than superfluous and/or theoretically weak counterpart to Iberian and Latin American Studies – would offer additional resistance to Hispanism and its underlying Castilocentric hegemony, more effectively than a serendipitous at worst, and ill-defined at best, “Transatlantic Studies.”

---

<sup>14</sup> Just to clarify, Rodríguez-García was not referring here to a concept of “Critical Transatlanticism,” but rather simply describing the need for a plurinational and multi-directional transatlanticism, which, as he says, is the only “historically and methodologically interesting” version of the discipline (i.e. that should exist at all). My proposed term and its accompanying (sub)discipline, Critical Transatlanticism, would embody this type of Transatlanticism and fulfill these and other theoretical needs.

## *Brief Notes on Nations*

Although they do not themselves constitute the explicit subject matter of my chapters as such, a brief word must be said about the terms *nation*, *nationalism*, and *national identity*, which have denoted various meanings depending on the context, time period, and political leanings of the user. In this project, I understand these concepts in the general sense that Anthony D. Smith has elucidated them, especially in his work *The Cultural Foundation of Nations* (2008).

First of all, I follow Smith in his rejection of the various “modernist” theories that surreptitiously treat the nation, i.e. as an analytical category and general concept, as the *modern* nation simply by default. The modernist definitions of the nation constitute a “pure or ideal type of the concept of the nation [which] acts as a touchstone of nationhood in specific cases...it has become almost ‘taken-for-granted’ as *the* definitive standard from which any other conception represents a deviation” (Smith 13). It is essential to distinguish *nation* from *modern nation* in this sense.

Additionally, I understand the existence of nations as vitally connected to or dependent upon their cultural traditions. Modernist interpretations of nation qua modern invention (i.e. of the nineteenth century) confuse the rise of nationalism with the existence of nations and indicate that there were no bonds prior to that time that would constitute groupings of people that we can speak of as nations; this view of nations and nationalism as post-medieval and post-Enlightenment reactions is limited and limiting in its capacity to analyze appropriately the various forms of cultural

bonds that have existed throughout the centuries. Thus if, as Smith asserts, it is “clearly insufficient to argue that nations and nationalism arose out of, and against, the great religious cultural systems of the medieval world,” it is also important to acknowledge the complex relations that exist “between religions and forms of the sacred, on the one hand, and national symbols, memories, and traditions, on the other hand, and the ways in which contemporary nations continue to be infused with sacred meanings” (Smith 8). Cultural traditions are an element of national identity – in whatever form it takes – that cannot be elided or ignored.

In this sense, one can speak of Catalonia as a stateless nation, with its autochthonous cultural traditions. As Smith explains, “we cannot separate the issue of periodization and dating of the concept of the nation from broader questions of the historical forms of individual nations, nor from the fundamental cultural traditions in which they have been embedded and which to this day give rise to alternative national destinies” (183). These fundamental cultural traditions are central to the definition of any nation when the concept is examined critically.

## CHAPTER 1

### *MODERNISME CARIBENY IN CUBA AS AN EXPRESSION OF CATALANITAT*

#### *A Brief History of Catalan Modernisme: Glancing Back at the Renaixença*

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Catalan *Modernisme* brought into existence a full-fledged pursuit of all things modern and novel that would drive Catalonia, its language and its culture into the twentieth century. Although *Modernisme* encompassed a literary movement, it took its most momentous form in architecture. It would take over two decades for this architecture to appear in Cuba: *Modernisme* in Cuba arose around 1905, hit a high point around 1914 or 1916, then disappeared around 1919.

Why does it arise when it does, and what is the significance of what we might call a transference of *Modernisme* from Catalonia to Cuba? What symbolic value do the *Modernista* works in Cuba possess, and what can be said about their significance within the Catalan communities in Cuba? Most scholarship making mention of *Modernisme* in Cuba has connected the style to the beginning of the Cuban Republic in 1902. However, this date is a few years too late to explain fully the appearance and significance of *Modernisme caribeny*. Rather than an eye toward the Cuban Republic, I maintain that it is with the post-1898 political and cultural mentality in Catalan thought that we must analyze the meaning of *Modernisme* in Cuba.



Let us begin our circuitous *Modernista* route by taking a glance further back in time, before *Modernisme* even had a name in Catalonia. In 1878, a then-unknown architect named Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1850-1923) published a brief but noteworthy text in the journal *La Renaixensa* called “En busca de una arquitectura nacional.” Domènech i Montaner’s provocative article would mark the commencement of a subsequent cultural and political process that would eventually consolidate and become known as *Modernisme*. The young architect had just finished his studies in Madrid the year before and was now qualified to work; he was merely beginning on the road that would soon lead him to become one of the key figures of Catalan *Modernisme* and, eventually, to become a central leader in the struggle to achieve certain Catalanist political goals in the first half of the twentieth century.

Domènech i Montaner sets up the problematic of his text by declaring that the key matter of any conversation related to architecture “vé á girar sens volguer al entorn de una idea, la de una arquitectura moderna nacional” (38). He, in turn, challenges to his readers to ponder a question: “¿Es que avuy per avuy podem tenirla una verdadera arquitectura nacional? ¿es que podrem tenirla en un proxim pervindre?” (38). To paraphrase his concerns: when, if ever, would it become possible to create a national architecture, and what would that mean?

The architect’s question was not simply rhetorical: he, along with other *Modernista* architects, would continue to explore the possibilities for expression of national sentiment through their works as *Modernisme* developed and spread its

influence. Determining how national identity could be expressed through literature, architecture, and the arts, became increasingly pressing matters in both Catalonia and Cuba throughout the late 1800s, for distinct although overlapping reasons.

Considering the overall question of factors determining when a national architecture could be said to arise, Domènech i Montaner presented the concept that:

Lo monument arquitectònic, tant com la que mes de las creacions humanas, necessita la energí de una idea productora, un medi moral en que viure en derrer lloch un medi físich de que formarse y un instrument mes ó menys perfect de la idea, un artista acomodant á aquella y á los medis moral y físich la forma arquitectónica... Sempre que una idea organisadora domina á un poble, sempre que esclata una nova civilisassió apareix una nova época artística. (38)

In the years following his thought-provoking text, *Modernisme* attempted to address these concerns with unique literary and architectural approaches. *Modernisme* became, in some sense, that “idea organisadora” that exploded into a new artistic era.

Within merely a few years of writing his article, Domènech i Montaner would rise to become one of the three great masters of *Modernisme*, strictly associated with Catalan culture – in contrast with a central Spanish/Castilian language and culture – along with Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) and Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1957), the latter of whom “chose his path” precisely after being influenced by Domènech i Montaner’s article on national architecture (Permanyer and Casals 16), as well as numerous lesser-known architects, wrought-iron workers, and other collaborators.

Domènech i Montaner would moreover come to exert considerable political influence in the struggle to gain increased autonomy for Catalonia within Spain.

It is critical to note that Domènech i Montaner's publication of choice for "En busca de una arquitectura nacional" was *La Renaixensa*, a major venue for the dissemination of ideas in the Catalan *Renaixença* [Renaissance or rebirth], the late Romantic blooming throughout the *Països Catalans* that commenced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Renaixença* was a "culturalist and largely apolitical" movement (Resina, "The Catalan *Renaixença* 472). Examining the shift from the *Renaixença* to *Modernisme* is fundamental for understanding why *Modernisme* developed the way it did, and for comprehending the development of the specific versions of Catalanism that arose around the early twentieth century. In order to reach an informed analysis of the *Modernisme* that appeared tardily in Cuba, it is therefore necessary to start with a brief examination of the earlier *Renaixença* movement and an outline of how *Modernisme* initially developed in Catalonia.

The *Renaixença* has great significance in Catalan history because it was the first major flourishing of Catalan high culture and literature after the long "*Decadència*" stretching through the centuries after the laudable accomplishments of medieval authors such as Ramon Llull and Ausiàs March. The *Renaixença* is often said to have begun with Bonaventura Aribau's poem "Oda a la pàtria" (1833), because "al identificar lengua y patria, la famosa poesía de Aribau formulaba, sin proponérselo, una de las ideas clave del catalanismo" (Balcells 22). It is perhaps more accurate to

say that the *Renaixença* movement solidified more definitively some years later, when more sophisticated deliberations on Catalan culture and history emerged.

The re-establishment of the medieval Jochs Florals [literary contests; literally, “floral games”] in 1859 brought the *Renaixença* movement into the spotlight and generated greater awareness of Catalan literary potential. Jacint Verdaguer (1845-1902), the father of modern Catalan, was the of the foremost literary figures of the *Renaixença*. His epic poems *L’Atlàntida* (1876) and *Canigó* (1885), the former of which won the Jochs Florals of 1877, present a quintessential expression of the aspirations of *renaixentista* cultural achievements. The *Renaixença*, like other Romantic movements, incarnated a revaluation of the medieval past, neoclassical mythologies, as well as the connection between language and national identity. However, the *Renaixença* was by no means strictly a replication of the earlier Romantic movements in other parts of Europe; rather, as Balcells points out, it continued to produce new forms of literature even after Romanticism as such had waned (cited in Conversi 14).

Although the *Renaixença* was ostensibly and primarily apolitical, some of the key *Renaixentista* writers and thinkers created a path for future Catalanisms that would thereafter become engaged in political struggles for autonomy and/or independence for Catalonia. For instance, Valentí Almirall (1841-1904) was an intellectual who published in the latter years of the *Renaixença* and “one of Spain’s keenest political theorists of the left” in the nineteenth century (Resina, “The Catalan *Renaxiença*” 471). Almirall was the founder of several newspapers, including the *Diari Català* (founded

1879), the first published in Catalan. Most notably perhaps, Almirall provided the “foundational text for the doctrine of particularism and a historical turning point for the consciousness of Catalanism” with his crucial text *Lo Catalanisme* (1886) (Resina, “The Catalan *Renaixença*” 471). Although eventually rejected because of his “remorseless” criticism of the centrism of the Spanish state by a somewhat more conservative bourgeoisie all too willing to cooperate with Madrid, Almirall remained “an important reference for future Catalanists and a theoretical bridge between nineteenth-century regionalism and the full development of the national theses of the twentieth century” (Resina, “The Catalan *Renaixença*” 472). Almirall and others who published after Aribau built the theoretical underpinnings of what would come to be recognized as a greater cultural movement.

The cover of the *Renaixensa* journal, which featured a phoenix behind a Catalan shield, is emblematic of the renaixentista ideals. The *Renaixença* itself, this flourishing of Catalan high culture, created a milieu in which interest in Catalan as a valuable literary language was renewed, and awareness of unique Catalan culture and history was sharpened. Such a development provided the fertile ground out of which *Modernisme* would grow. As Albert Balcells points out, “Nadie discute el papel de la *Renaixença*...en la preparación del ambiente en que nació el nacionalismo catalán” (21). It is with the *Renaixença* in mind as the background for *Modernisme* that we must understand the rise and development of *Modernista* architecture and *Modernista* political ideals.

In a general sense, his chapter will engage some of the issues that were at stake for Domènech i Montaner. Yet we will go beyond his direct concern by asking: what is the capacity of an architectural style or movement to express national culture or political sentiment when that architecture is relocated to a space outside of the homeland? *Modernisme* in its literary and artistic forms emerged in Catalonia approximately two decades before it appeared in Cuba. Once *Modernisme* emerges in Cuba, there are particular circumstances relating to Cuban and Catalan politics – discretely and in connection with one another – that must be taken into account in order to analyze this national capacity of *Modernisme* in Cuba.

### *The Emergence and Significance of Modernisme in Catalonia*

By the late 1870s, when Domènech i Montaner published his brief rumination on national architecture, the *Renaixença* was already on the verge of giving way to the early expressions of *Modernisme*. During the shift from the *Renaixença* to *Modernisme*, Spain was combatting political instability and costly wars on multiple fronts. The year 1868 marked both the September Revolution in Spain and the beginning of the Ten Years' War in Cuba. At home and abroad, Spain's military and financial resources were to be stretched thin for the following decades as challenges to the central government grew in number and strength.

While Spain's centralized authority continued to weaken and decline both in the peninsula and abroad during the tumultuous latter decades of the nineteenth

century, until the loss of its last American colonies in 1898, Catalan industry and commerce grew, along with the population in urban centers, particularly Barcelona. The Catalan industrial bourgeoisie grew throughout the nineteenth century. From 1880-1886, Catalonia experienced a time of particularly intense economic growth until a crisis hit in 1886, which impacted the planning for the Universal Exposition of 1888. Despite funding issues and troubling economic problems, the Exposition took place and became thought of as a watershed moment in both *Modernisme* and Catalan history in general.

It is in the milieu of this last third of the nineteenth century, grown out of the strong backbone of the *Renaixença*, that *Modernisme* arose in Catalonia, “continu[ing] the task of the *Renaixença*, updating it in decisive ways. Crucially, it shifted the focus of values from the county to the city, and from a historical identity to a future-oriented conception of the nation as a task in progress” (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 514). This shift in aesthetic, cultural and political values meant that “El modernisme [va] suposa[r], en el seu conjunt, el ‘més fort impuls de la renaixença catalana, conduint-la pels camins de la modernitat” (Cacho Viu, “Pròleg” viii). *Modernisme* developed primarily through painting, architecture, and literature, although the plastic arts also constituted a significant means of expression.

The official beginning of *Modernisme* is placed variously between 1881 and 1890. In a certain sense, *Modernisme* constitutes a “liminal movement” between the *Renaixença* and *Noucentisme* (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 513). Many scholars

mark its commencement with both the first Universal Exposition in Barcelona and the second period of the journal *L'Avenç* (spelled *L'Avens* until the 1891 orthographic reform) in 1888. Others prefer the slightly later date of 1890, when Ramon Casas (1866-1932) and Santiago Rusiñol (1861-1931) put together a joint exhibition in the Sala Parés of Barcelona.<sup>1</sup>

Before delving more deeply into the specifics of *Modernista* aesthetics, it is essential to note what Catalan *Modernisme* is *not*, since the word “modernism” is utilized to denote so many meanings, often with overlapping but not identical philosophical, aesthetic, or political underpinnings. Nelson Orringer points out that in English, as well as in other modern languages (including Castilian), the term “modernism” regularly indicates three interrelated meanings: 1) a general passion for the latest mode; 2) a post-Darwinian tendency to question religion; and 3) an approach that broadly embraces the concept of newness while assuming the pre-existence of the crisis both in religion and the sciences (“Introduction to Hispanic Modernisms” 135). In Castilian-language literature, both in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America, the term “modernism” or “modernismo” usually refers almost exclusively to the ideas of Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916) and of the so-called Generation of 98 in Spain. Darío – who was not even the first of his generation to introduce the term into Castilian – promoted a form of modernism that

---

<sup>1</sup> J.F. Ràfols, for instance, prefers to mark the period between the years 1890 and 1911, when Joan Maragall died (cited in Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 513).



embraced creativity through rebellion, yet bespoke of a generalized cultural and literary malaise or crisis, which becomes particularly prominent in the writings of 98ers. This version of modernism, however, is quite distinct from Catalan *Modernisme*, as we will examine in greater detail.

In the Catalan tradition, the term “modernisme” in its contemporary sense first appeared in the journal *L’Avenç* in 1884, three years after the journal’s inception, before Darío exerted his influence in Castilian-speaking Iberia and Latin America. As Resina points out, it is by no means coincidental that this first use of the word *modernista* in Spain was “well before the arrival of the Latin-American poetic movement that Spanish critics often regard as the source of Castilian *modernismo*,” which...is quite distinct from Catalan *modernisme* (“Modernist Journals” 389). Regarding this discrepancy between actual and perceived timelines, Orringer concurs that:

...counter to widespread belief among Hispanists, Spanish America was not the first to introduce the concept into Hispanic [i.e. Iberian] culture[s]. In the Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula, the idea of modernism in its broadest...sense appears for the first time in Catalan journalism....In a statement of its own editorial policy, the journal professed to stand behind and

bring about the cultivation in Catalonia of a ‘modernist’ art, literature science as the only means to cultural alertness and personal vitality. (138)<sup>2</sup>

The author of the term, Ramon D. Perés, explained in a subsequent issue that it was a “sinònim de *modern*” but that it specifically “definia programàticament la voluntat de ‘rebre influències cosmopolites’, d’acceptar el que fos nou i vingués de fora d’Espanya” (Cacho Viu, “Pròleg” ix). Resina connects Perés’s use of the term to a formalist concern “with the development of an autonomous cultural sphere as the clearest sign of achieved modernity” (“Modernist Journals” 389). The Catalan quest for a cosmopolitan modernity, for all things new and foreign, embodied an inherent ambiguity both in the meaning of “modernisme” and in the philosophies of the diverse groups of intellectuals and artists who participated in it. *L’Avenç*, a “prototypically *modernista*” journal, became a platform for the development of these Catalan Modernista ideas (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 513). In *L’Avenç*, the idea that Catalonia “should join the ranks of European modernity” soon became synonymous with “the quest for innovation in different cultural fields, like architecture and the plastic and decorative arts,” followed by an equivalence between modernity or modernism and a thorough regeneration first of social and then of political life (Riquer 3).

---

<sup>2</sup> In fact, as Orringer points out, Darío actually spent time in Catalonia in 1898 studying *Modernisme* there, particularly Rosiñol’s work, and wrote about his experience in 1899 (139). Although this trip took place after Darío’s first use of the term “modern(ism),” it still reveals the influence that Catalan *Modernisme* exerted, in part because of its longer (than Darío’s) development already in existence at that point.

It was the journal's second period, beginning in 1889, however, in which the idea of modernism would become prolific and constitute a "rallying cry for the new sensibility" rather than a call for a certain type of formalism (Resina, "Modernist Journals" 391). The journal *L'Avenç* was not only "political and literary," as the subtitle of another journal – the *Diari Català* – had indicated, but also aimed to achieve a new aesthetic, "implicated in a general transformation of the public sphere" (Resina, "Modernism in Catalonia" 514). Resina indicates two sequential goals of *Modernisme* in relation to this ambitious transformation: the demarcation of the cultural sphere and the logically prior objective of transforming community into society" ("Modernism in Catalonia" 514).

The political and aesthetic sensibilities of *Modernistes* shifted as the movement went on; moreover, "[c]lassifying *Modernisme's* [literary] works is not always easy, because, from a strictly literary point of view, this movement is ill-defined" (Resina, "Modernism in Catalonia" 514). However, despite their differences, the *Modernistes* were "linked by the common objective to pursue innovation and experimentation and to exert influence over and transform society" (Riquer 3). *Modernista* literature sought novelty and drew heavily on influences from other parts of Europe, including Goethe, Novalis, and Ibsen. Wagner and Nietzsche were both introduced for the first time in

Spain by *Modernistes*, and Wagnerism became hugely popular very quickly in Barcelona (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 515).<sup>3</sup>

Above all, *Modernisme* and all of its various ideals proposed for the Catalonia of the future stood in stark contrast with Madrid and therefore with a Castile-centered Spain pouring its energies into the Restoration. Catalonia – particularly Barcelona, where many *Modernistes* were based – was at this time a “uniquely dynamic space in a torpid Spain” even while *Modernistes* remained a minority “on the edge of the cultural and political establishments” (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 518). Orringer indicates that the “young entrepreneurs of L’Avenç found modernism a strategem to oppose the hegemonic centrist culture of Castilian. At the height of the Restoration, dominated by a centralizing Madrid, they resolved in Barcelona to endow Catalonia with a national identity” (138). However, rather than *endowing* Catalonia with a national identity, per se – since Catalan culture and history had existed and developed for many centuries separately to that of Castile and the other regions of the Iberian Peninsula – it would be more accurate to state that the *Modernistes* sought to (re)define Catalan national identity, and to revive and revitalize Catalan high culture.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> As Riquer notes, the particular sources on which *Modernistes* drew in the literary realm mark yet another difference between Catalan *Modernisme* and “its Castilian (Spanish) counterpart, as the latter was understood by its main champion, Darío” (4).

<sup>4</sup> Cacho Viu adds that *Modernisme*’s “aportació cultural al procés de recuperació de Catalunya es pot qualificar de *nacionalista* sense incórrer en cap anacronisme, en acceptar els modernistes el nacionalisme redefinit a les darreries de l’etapa que aquí analitzem (“Pròleg” viii, emphasis mine).

The bourgeoisie that had risen out of Catalonia's economic growth in the nineteenth century was central in the formation of *Modernisme* and the dissemination of *Modernista* ideals:

In the wake of Catalonia's industrialization and economic differentiation, a newly formed intelligentsia began to reappraise the country's relation to the Spanish state...in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it received a forward-looking impulse from the modernist movement, from which it also took a more marked political consciousness. (Resina, "Modernist Journals in the Paisos Catalans" 388)

This industrial bourgeoisie appropriated the mounting nationalism of the urban middle classes in Catalonia; "[w]here this bourgeoisie...and an organized labor movement did not exist we find instead an imperviousness to Modernism and an abject provincialism" (Resina, "Modernist Journals" 398).

As *Modernisme* developed through both literature and the arts, consciousness of the political possibilities for an autonomous or even independent Catalonia began to pick up steam in an increasingly vehement, parallel and inter-connected process. The Catalans' "newfangled cosmopolitanism" and the "emergence of [their] political self-consciousness in the form of particularism went hand in hand with internationalism" (Resina, *Barcelona's Vocation* 45). As the last decades of the century progressed, *Modernisme* reached a high point in Catalonia. In 1885, Santiago Rusiñol opened his Cau Ferrat ["Iron-Clad Den"] in Barcelona, which he then reopened in the nearby

coastal town of Sitges in 1894 as a “Modernista center.” The year 1893 brought the celebration of the first *Festa Modernista*, also spearheaded by Rusiñol in Sitges.

Regardless of the achievements of literary *Modernisme*, it is in architecture that *Modernisme* made its most developed and enduring appearance. As Resina states: “[a]rchitecture was, not coincidentally, the leading *modernista* domain: it preceded and outlasted the movement’s literary manifestations, and left a deeper, more enduring trace in Catalonia’s cultural legacy” (“Modernism in Catalonia 517). *Modernista* architecture left an indelible mark in the Catalan cityscape, history, and culture. To take one famous example, Antoni Gaudí’s buildings and benches are recognizable today and are usually presented as synonymous with the face of Barcelona. However, Gaudí was by no means the only *Modernista* architect who created an advanced theory of spatial and decorative configurations; Puig i Cadafalch, along with Domènech i Montaner and dozens of other architects, developed their own aesthetics and left indelible marks on *Modernisme*. Puig i Cadafalch’s contributions included the crucial “join[ing of] the Renaixentista nostalgia for an authentic past with the ideals of a modern, European and institutionalised Catalonia projected into the twentieth century, that global *modernista* aspiration which the ensuing movement of Noucentisme would appropriate” (Mackay 30-31).

Indeed, the outward appearance of *Modernista* architecture varies enormously depending on the individual architect who designed the building and the particular collaborators with whom he worked. Gaudí is known for his bright colors and curvy,

twisting structures based on cypress trees and other forms found in nature, while architects such as Puig i Cadafalch used different materials and had a more austere style with cleaner lines. In fact, as Mackay sensibly points out,

If we simplistically consider *Modernisme* to be a version of Art Nouveau, then Puig [i Cadafalch], who never used a sinuous wave in his life, would be excluded from the movement. This fact itself underlines how *Modernisme* is to be understood fundamentally in terms of its underlying cultural and ‘political’ motivation, beyond the diverse (even contradictory) stylistic modes which it generated. (30)

Nonetheless, *Modernista* architecture, “did have, if not a style, then an overall predilection that in practice has done duty as a style” (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia” 517).

In any case, despite the variety, *Modernista* architecture can be characterized in a general sense to have certain traits in common across diverse contingencies. First, although often denoted as a branch of Art Nouveau, it was a “specifically Catalan phenomenon” (Mackay vii). *Modernisme* proved to constitute “much more than a local variant of *Art Nouveau* because it became a style identified with a total movement to affirm Catalan nationhood and cultural autonomy, differentiated from Spanishness and attuned to its advanced European counterparts” (Mackay vii). The “progressive, even revolutionary, advocacy of broad social and cultural reform” of this overall movement “distinguishes Catalan Modernisme from such general period trends” as

*Art Nouveau* (Belén Lord 35). In their quest for reform, *Modernistes* created new architectural structures, forms and spaces that would change architectural theory and affect architectural design both in Catalonia and abroad for decades to come. Through innovative architectural concepts, the *Modernistes* “freed form from functional constraints, letting it rise from the masses of stucco and glazed tiles into an imaginary dimension” (Resina *Barcelona* 52). Such was the role of mythical and religious figures, external decoration, and the like.

*Modernista* architecture, like its counterparts in literature and art, leaned heavily on influences from France and northern Europe as it sought a place for Catalonia within a modern Europe. It was “that stage of the universal Modern Movement which combined the eclectic choice of historical references with the introduction of modern materials, and infused decoration, even construction, with the flowing lines borrowed from the primary source of Nature” (Mackay vii). The latter is manifested prominently in the works of Antoni Gaudí, whose winding curves in structure and decoration are easily recognized. By combining historical referents with modern materials and techniques, *Modernista* architecture was moreover able to “deploy a medievalist symbology of national memory without ceasing to privilege constructive rationalism,” thus achieving its dual goal of engaging tradition while still pursuing innovation (Resina, “Modernism in Catalonia 517-18).

What *Modernisme* meant for Catalanism was that suddenly a more autonomous Catalonia became a greater desire, even an attainable possibility. Thus it was through



*Modernisme* that “Barcelona made a leap forward and showed its passion for being on the edge of time. Modern became synonymous with Catalan, and Catalanism in its *modernista* avatar, conceived itself in the crack of time to come, at the site where things are their own anticipation” (Resina, *Barcelona’s Vocation* 45). Under the rubric of *Modernisme*, Catalonia was both a modernized and modernizing place that would propel its people and its culture toward the next century and a more desirable political future.

As the turn of the century passed by, however, *Modernisme* in Catalonia began to shift; the end of the movement, as defined by its most radical (ideological, not aesthetic) terms, is often agreed to be in 1906, even though Gaudí, Puig i Cadafalch, Jujol, and others continued producing some of the most renowned *Modernista* works after this date. This year sees the beginning of the overall shift toward a more conservative political version of Catalanism. Vicente Cacho Viu posits that perhaps it was the

absorció de l'imperialisme, molt més que el tancament de 'Joventut',  
[el que] converteix l'any 1906 en data liminar del modernisme com a corrent  
inconformista i receptiva: el que va venir després també és modernisme des del  
punt de vista estilístic, però 'establert', en paraules de Castellanos, 'decantat cap  
al conservadorisme.' (“Pròleg” viii)

The shift to conservatism is fundamental for understanding the importance of *Modernisme* in Cuba, as we will see. Moreover, the year 1906 is connected to the

closure of the *Modernista* journal *Juventut* as well as to the beginning of *Noucentisme*. By whichever criteria are chosen, the definitive end of the period in Catalonia is usually placed at the latest by 1911, the year in which poet Joan Maragall died.

### *Modernisme's Route to Cuba: 1898 as Opportunity, Not Disaster*

*Modernisme* begins to appear in architecture in Cuba precisely at the same moment when the movement's political innovation as such begins to wane in Catalonia, as the subsequent albeit overlapping *Noucentisme* commenced. In Cuba, its primary years of prominence occurred in the decade from about 1905 to 1915, and it declined during the war to disappear entirely by around 1920. While *Modernisme* was far less extensive in Cuba, remaining limited particularly – though not exclusively – to façades of private residences, it still constituted an important presence in architecture of early twentieth-century Cuba. Cuban scholar Lillian Llanes contends that “Sólo la presencia del *art nouveau* daba a esta etapa [a principios del siglo XX] un interés especial, como destello de creatividad en la atmósfera de esquemas historicistas manifestado entonces” (1898-1921 10).

Yet *Modernisme caribeny* or “Caribbean *Modernisme*” was either ignored or denigrated by scholarship on architecture in Cuba until recent years. Cuban architect and architectural historian Mario Coyula describes the contemporaneous negative attitude toward the Catalan architecture as “el desprecio elitista hacia el *catalanismo*” (“Antonio frente al tranvía” 43). Coyula laments this attitude “para mal del

movimiento, con la formación de los primeros arquitectos y los consecuentes conflictos de intereses con el llamado intrusismo profesional de los maestros de obra” (“Antonio” 43). While elitist disregard for the Catalan architectural forms at the time of construction must have influenced the mark that *Modernisme* would ultimately leave on Cuba’s cityscapes, I would argue that it cannot completely explain the subsequent disdain that is found in scholarship on the topic in the early years after the Cuban Revolution of 1959. To state the point more bluntly, the Revolution needed to validate its own agenda; it could not or would not acknowledge its Catalan architectural heritage, because to do so would delegitimize the Revolution’s need to create a new Cuban identity *ex nihilo*, particularly as expressed through revolutionary Socialist architecture.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, Cuban architectural historians writing in the 1960s and 70s, such as Joaquín Weiss, ignored *Modernisme* as such or pointedly failed to indicate the Catalan origins of architect Mario Rotllant or others who designed *Modernista* buildings or façades in Cuba. As journalist and independent scholar Tate Cabré succinctly puts it, “Curiós destí el del modernisme caribeny: quan no se’l valora se’l considerava “catalanismo”, i quan se’l va valorar se li va amagar la catalanitat” (*Catalunya a Cuba* 81). Mario Coyula acknowledges that “[v]isto en retrospectiva, e incluso aceptando

---

<sup>5</sup> Despite this attempt on the part of the Revolution, Catalan architects continued to influence post-Revolutionary architecture in curious ways, such as when Cuban architects relied on Catalan knowledge to help resolve structural issues by using the *bóveda catalana* in the *Escuelas Nacionales de Arte Cubanacán*, a quintessential Revolutionary building (*Catalunya a Cuba* 111-112).

sus limitaciones, el Modernismo habanero dejó obras importantes” and therefore deserves more scholarly attention (“Antonio” 44). Until recent years, few architectural historians or other scholars have been interested in uncovering more detailed information about the presence of *Modernisme* in Cuba. Tate Cabré, along with Mario Coyula, Eduardo Luis Rodríguez and a few others, have begun the process of decodifying *Modernisme* in Cuba. *Modernisme caribeny*, with its significance not only for the history and development of Cuban architecture, but also for the formation and expansion of Catalan *Modernisme* and political ideas, deserves to be examined in greater detail. This chapter adds to the literature on *Modernisme caribeny* by examining the political circumstances for Cuban-Catalan communities and how Cuban independence figured into the Catalan political imaginary during this time. There remains work to be done, as there are relatively limited resources on *Modernisme* in Cuba, compared to the wealth of information and analyses on the earlier and more developed *Modernisme* in Catalonia.

Through archival research, photography, and personal interviews, Cabré documents the presence and legacy of Catalans in Cuba from 1492 through the present in her book *Catalunya a Cuba: un amor que fa història*. In her chapter on *Modernisme* in Cuba, with the telling title “Del ‘catalanismo’ al modernisme caribeny,” Cabré catalogues the most outstanding *Modernista* works in major Cuban cities and begins to analyze their significance.

In her work, Cabré asserts that “l’alenada del 1900 significà a Cuba l’arribada de la modernitat, la ruptura amb la tradició colonial anterior i l’enllaç amb els moviments posteriors: l’eclecticisme i l’*art-déco*” (81). This echoes statements made by other scholars who link the modernity of the new century with blossoming of the Catalan architectural style as a trend or fad. Coyula, for instance, confirms that the Catalan school exerted the greatest influence in Cuba in the early years of the formal Republic at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cabré goes further by claiming that “[a] més de representar la modernització de l’arquitectura, el moviment s’associa a la jove república estrenada l’any 1902” (Cabre 85). By associating *Modernisme* in Cuba with the new republic, Cabré inherently underscores a connection to the official break from colonial power; this link is certainly no insignificant matter, given *Modernisme*’s symbolic power, desire for innovation, and forward-looking political prowess.

However, while the oft-repeated claim that *Modernisme* in Cuba was associated with the newly formed Republic in 1902, I do not think that this tells the whole story, nor does connecting it to the new century per se. Rather, I look to a slightly earlier point, 1898, and I posit that this year signifies the creation of the circumstances that allowed *Modernisme* to flourish in Cuba, albeit briefly and to a lesser extent than in Catalonia. I furthermore contend that 1898 begins a new, contemporary epoch of Cuban-Catalan relations in general, of a different nature than those that existed in the late colonial period. The new period commencing in 1898 will be marked by the

increased importance of Cuba in the Catalan political and cultural imaginary that will last throughout the twentieth century.

Why bother to talk about 1898 in this context? The year 1898 already denotes a watershed moment in both Cuban and Spanish history, although the precise meaning attributed to the year varies greatly depending on the perspective.<sup>6</sup> For Castile-centered Spain, 1898 is typically known as a national crisis of sorts; while for Cuba, the year is hailed as a hopeful, if ultimately unfulfilled, moment for which patriotic heroes and martyrs like José Martí had so zealously fought. Even aficionados of United States history will realize the significance of the year, due to the explosion of the *Maine* in Havana's harbor and President Roosevelt's subsequent mobilization of both public and governmental support for the Spanish-American War: that is, American involvement in the Cuban War of Independence against the Spanish colonial power.

Louis Pérez points out that the Cuban rebels had begun to secure their victory before the intervention of the United States, and likely would have achieved their independence shortly thereafter. Cubans were highly motivated to secure separation from Spain, in part because of economic incentives. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, Pérez tells us,

---

<sup>6</sup> Joaquim Roy draws essentially the same conclusion: "El que per a Cuba és la culminació de l'última guerra de independència, per als Estats Units és l'anomenada Spanish-American War, com si els cubans no hi fossin. Per a Espanya, va ser el Desastre. Per a Catalunya, el 98 té unes connotacions especials, a banda de les òbvies relacions amb la preocupació política i social en la resta dels observadors espanyols...L'impacte del 98 es nota al llarg de tot el segle XX, que va acabar amb la caiguda del Mur de Berlín" (12-13).

Cubans were arriving at the conclusion that they could not achieve the full potential of their productive capabilities within the traditional framework of empire...Spain was superfluous to the Cuban economy in every way but one: it regulated the terms of the exchange, and increasingly this was becoming a point of contention between Cubans and Spaniards. (84)

This dissatisfaction with the colonial structure soon led to rebellious uprisings. On October 10, 1868, the “Grito de Yara” first proclaimed an independent Cuban republic. The Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC) was established in 1892 under the leadership of José Martí, whose ideas and charisma were fundamental for mobilizing Cubans in the final War of Independence.

When that final war was officially declared in 1895, it took root first in Oriente, the eastern part of the island. This rebellion differed from previous ones, in part because the leaders were of modest origins, rather than from the upper class (Pérez 160). By this time, Cubans had already been producing rebellions and fighting independence wars off and on for three decades. It was time for a change, and Cubans of all economic classes were increasingly devoted to the cause.

Already after 1896, it became evident that Spain was fighting a losing battle in the last Cuban war and was increasingly strained economically and politically:

Cubans found themselves [at that time] in the position of toppling the colonial system, fully and irrevocably...With the completion of the invasion, it was no

longer necessary, or even practical – given the weakness of insurgent logistical support – for Cubans to engage the Spanish army in battle. Instead, Cubans turned on property and production. The war was now against the dominant social class, the local collaborators of colonialism...In this new design for war, the Spanish army hardly figured into it all. (Pérez 162)

Thus it seemed it was only a matter of time until complete independence would have been achieved, and this without intervention from any country abroad. The Cubans expected Spain ultimately to lose: “with the end of 1897 and the start of 1898, all signs pointed to the imminent and inevitable dénouement: the triumph of Cuban arms...never before had Cubans been as certain of victory as they were in early 1898” (Pérez 175-6). Yet also in Spain, disillusionment with the attempts to crush the Cuban uprisings was growing. Beginning in March of 1898, the market reflected a return to pessimism “con una gravedad hasta entonces desconocida” (Maluquer de Motes, “Las consecuencias económicas” 270).

The explosion of the *Maine* drastically altered the subsequent turn of events. The United States, worried about the possibility of losing a profitable opportunity in an annexed Cuba, decided to intervene; “the intervention changed everything, as it was meant to. A Cuban war of liberation was transformed into a U.S. war of conquest” (Pérez 178). As Pérez indicates, the very term “Spanish-American War,” utilized in the United States to describe the four-month official conflict with Spain, deliberately elides thirty years of Cuban rebel activity and the series of wars for



independence culminating in the final war of 1895-1898, denying Cubans “more than laurels of victory – it deprived them of their claim to sovereignty” (179). Another effect of the *Maine*, of course, was an immediately perceptible downturn in the Spanish economy: “Sólo en ese momento el mercado refleja la convicción de una derrota segura” (Maluquer de Motes, “Las consecuencias económicas” 270).

One of the definitive and immediate outcomes of the war was that Spain lost three of its last major colonies: not only Cuba, but also Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Essentially because of its great economic impact, Cuba was, by far, the greatest loss for Spain. The “Disaster” of 1898 has typically constituted a moment of tremendous national crisis for Spain, which many intellectuals, writers and scholars in the Generation of 98 woefully signaled as evidence of the decline of Spain’s historical greatness.

Yet analyzing the year of 1898 critically, what can we call this disaster truly but a shifting of loci of national power? By the end of the Cuban War, Catalans were already disillusioned with the idea of a Spanish nation of any sort, much less a great one, and certainly not one that extended to colonies abroad. The Castilocentrism of the so-called Generation of ’98 that arose in the early twentieth century, as Resina points out, cannot have been primarily a reaction to a colonial disaster, “which merely confirmed the bankruptcy of an old political idea – but [rather] to the rise of two national stars in the focal points of peninsular modernization: Euskadi and Catalonia. The ’98ers’ Castilocentric fixation can be understood largely as a rejoinder to this

peripheral challenge” (171). With location as the essential starting point for understanding the social meaning of the Cuban war for Catalans, we can see how “1898 marks a tangible threshold, expressed in the appearance of a bolder political Catalanism” (Resina 169-170).

Borja de Riquer also affirms that 1898 was a decisive moment for Catalonia, not only because it “led to loss of faith in the idea of Spain as a unified nation...but [also because it] accelerated and definitively altered the political and cultural process of Catalonia” (6). It is clearly the latter point that is the most significant, as the political aspects of this process led to increasingly intensive efforts to mobilize against the central Spanish government. Albert Balcells clarifies this point further by indicating that until the Cuban war, the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie maintained its “conformismo provincial e incluso manifestó su españolismo” (31). As one can infer from this statement, it is specifically after the Cuban war that the Catalan bourgeoisie began to alter drastically its political position. Therefore 1898 “constitute[d] a genuine stimulus when it came to devising new cultural and political strategies of intervention and of relations with Spain, and to setting new projects in motion” (Riquer 6).

Gerrand elucidates specifically that the

loss of Cuba to the United States in 1898 was a major set-back to Catalan trade but it encouraged the development of an independent-minded Catalan nationalism amongst the emigrant centres there, such as the *Centre Català* in Havana (created in 1905) and the *Grop Nacionalista Radical* in Santiago, Cuba

(also in 1905)...These Cuban Catalan Centres were politically more radical, seeking separation of Catalonia from Spain, than the dominant nationalist *Lliga* party back in Catalonia. (28)

The importance of internal events and developments notwithstanding, the subsequent political projects that arise in Catalonia – and in the Catalan communities abroad, including in Cuba – are unthinkable without taking into account the Cuban war and the end of Spanish colonial rule on the island.

Cabré contends that the impressive changes associated with the “gran moment català” at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as *Modernisme*, the founding of banks, and the “afirmació de la identitat nacional catalana” were the result of gradual changes and growing economic profits of the *indians* – not, she specifies, the end of thirty years of rebellious wars in Cuba (*Cuba a Catalunya* 7-8). Of course, it is evident that the social, cultural, and political transformations in Catalonia did not suddenly crop up overnight in 1898 when the Cuban war ended.

Indeed, political Catalanism had been coming into its own for some time as the *Renaixença* gave way to new thoughts about modernity, including the idea of a Catalan nation conceived as such. Balcells tells us, for instance, that with the *Compendi de Doctrina Catalanista* (1895), by Enric Prat de la Riba and Pere Muntanyola, “empezó a difundirse la definición de Cataluña como nación, aunque se siguiese utilizando el término de patria en este *catecismo* del que se imprimieron cien mil ejemplares” (40). The *Compendi*, Balcells explains, first denoted the concept that “Cataluña era la única

patria de los catalanes y España era solamente el Estado al que se pertenecía; ya no se identificaban nación y Estado como antes, aunque este catalanismo, que entraba en la fase nacionalista, seguía sin ser independentista” (40).

Despite Cabré’s criticism and the earlier date indicated by Balcells, the end of the Cuban War of Independence doubtlessly provoked a transformation in the course of Catalan political thought. One of the most crucial ripple effects was the shift to defining Catalonia as a nation – as opposed to Spain, the state. The perception on the part of the Catalans that Spain was on a definitive path to losing the war to Cuba had an effect, which is identifiable even before the official end of the war, but appears more intensively as the war drew to a close.

The effect Cuban independence had on Catalans who were concerned with gaining greater autonomy for Catalonia can be seen in political journals and magazines published both in Catalonia and abroad, including in Cuba. In February of 1898, for example, *Lo Regionalista* changed its name to *La Nació Catalana*; Joan-Lluís Marfany explains that from this date forth, “un nombre creixent de catalans es posen a pensar i a dir aquestes coses [que Catalunya, no Espanya, és la nació; que Catalunya és la Nació i Espanya, l’Estat]” (89). While Marfany does mention that “[l]es revistes catalanistes comenten sovint com és de feliç i pròspera Cuba des de la seva independència i les societats en celebren provocativament l’aniversari” (95), he fails to connect the terminology change itself to the Cuban War. Yet the change in *Lo Regionalista*’s title,

for instance, occurs in the same month as the *Maine* explosion, by which time many Catalans were already convinced of the inevitability of Spain's defeat.

By the same token, *Lo Catalanista* referred to Spain as the “Nació” in 1897, yet by early 1898, the same publication went so far in the other direction as to declare that “*la nacionalitat espanyola no ha existit may*. Lo que existeix hi [*sic*] ha existit es un territori que geogràficament s'anomena Península Ibérica y en part d'aquest territori lo que políticament s'anomena Estat espanyol” (Marfany 90, emphasis mine). Along the same lines, Francesc Cambó spoke in June 1899, approximately one year after Spain's defeat in the Cuban War, of the “diferència que hi ha entre Nació i Estat” at the Centre Catalanista de Mataró (Marfany 90). By 1904, this line of thought had developed so far that a member of the Assembla de Barcelona was able to remark, “La paraula ‘catalanisme’ significa ‘nacionalisme català’” (Marfany 89).

Evidence for the Cuban effect on Catalan political trends is also present abroad. In France, the Comité Nationaliste Catalan de Paris published a document in 1898 entitled “La question catalane: La Catalogne et l'Espagne.” The document begins:

A l'occasion de la guerre-hispano-américaine, la presse européenne s'est aperçue que la Catalogne a une façon de penser tout à fait différente de celle des autres régions de l'Espagne...au critérium castillan, qui tient surtout à savoir mourir, la Catalogne a répondu qu'il ne s'agit pas de mourir mais bien de vivre. (5)

Not only does the Comité draw a clear line between Catalans and Castellans, but this also shows how the Cuban war factored into the new definition of Catalonia as a nation and into the development of a more emboldened political Catalanism. The Comité speaks of “L’Etat espagnol” and states clearly that the “unité espagnole est un mythe, elle n’a jamais passé au delà du désir des gouvernants de Madrid” (10). Going further, the Comité accuses the central government of corruption and refers to the government as “l’instrument de domination” (17).

The allure of Cuban independence can be further seen in Catalan journals published on the island itself. In Cuba, Catalan communities formed cultural and political centers across the island, including a number of formally separatist groups who rallied for a free and independent Catalonia. The separatist journal *Fora Grillons!* [*Breaking Chains!*], published in the historically revolutionary eastern city of Santiago de Cuba, declared its brotherhood with Cubans in its first issue in 1906 by recalling the Grito de Yara, which sparked the Ten Years’ War for independence from Spain in 1868. The editors extended thanks and greetings to the

generosa terra que s’es servit donarnos hospitalitari hostatje. Salut República Cubana! Precisament, no fa molts jorns, remembráres una de las datas mes gloriosas de la teva historia. Lo crit de Yara...Y nosaltres, al fer sentir avuy y en ta terra, la nostra veu, boy esperant ansiosos lo día, día gloriós, en que ressoni per tots els indrets de la terra Catalana, nostra mare patria, igual crit... (“Nostra salutació á Cuba” 2)

The journal also makes a clear distinction between the Spanish state and the Catalan nation. The editors mince no words in explaining their desire for separatism as a result of oppression from a centralist state: “Localisant la qüestió, si la Espanya actual vol esprimirnos les venes y vol privarnos de fer la nostra via cap al progrés y la democràcia que redimeix al[s] pobles, siguém separatistes decidits” (“Nostre separatisme” 2).

Whether in Catalonia, elsewhere in Europe, or in Cuba, Cuban independence – and therefore the year 1898 – indubitably mark a change in Catalan political thought. Until the Cuban war, “no se había podido defender la autonomía de Cataluña y negarla a Cuba” (Balcells 42).<sup>7</sup> If Cuba was indeed a separate nation with its own history, then it logically deserved its freedom from colonial domination. By analogy, when Catalonia was recognized for its separate cultural and linguistic characteristics, it likewise needed some degree of autonomous or even independent governing power. Until 1898, the imminent possibility of Cuba’s victory in the struggle to define a Cuban nation and win independence from an imperial Spain loomed large in the Catalan political imagination. Once that victory was attained, the potential future for Catalonia as defined separately from Spain seemed within reach.

---

<sup>7</sup> This general idea appears to be taken, via repeated circulation in academic references, from a statement made by Tomàs Gener (Calella 1787-Matanzas 1835): “Si Galicia, Cataluña o las provincias Vascongadas pretendiesen ahora, como lo han intentado otras veces, en formarse en estado aparte, ¿tenemos facultades nosotros para concedérselo? Y no teniéndolas, como seguramente no las tenemos por la Constitución, ¿podríamos negárselo decentemente después de habérselo concedido a la América?” (cited in Ferran 116). Lluís Costa notes that Gener “veía en la independència americana un foco posible para revitalizar antiguas propuestas independentistas en el seno mismo de la Península” (cited in Ferran 116).

### *Characteristics of Modernisme Caribeny*

Keeping the traits of Catalan *Modernisme* and the political significance of Cuban independence in mind, we can now examine *Modernisme caribeny* with a fuller understanding of its potential symbolic value. In terms of aesthetic features, *Modernisme caribeny* shares characteristics with *Modernisme* in Catalonia, as one would expect. On the façades of *Modernista* buildings in Cuba, one of the most important elements is the wrought ironwork. The *Modernista* ironwork in Cuba, like that of *Modernisme* in Catalonia or indeed of much Art Nouveau architecture elsewhere,

es vivaz, inquieta y al mismo tiempo en movimiento y en estado de equilibrio, lucha interna que propicia la armonía compositiva y la esencia estática del Art Nouveau. Se trabaja el material hasta que éste se convierte en un elemento obediente, esclavo del ritmo lineal. (Larramendi, “Detalles de herrería”)

Of course, iron is a basic element of Art Nouveau of any origin and in this way one can say that *Modernisme caribeny* captures that “esencia estática” mentioned in this description. Generally in Europe, iron had already become an increasingly important architectural element – both structurally and aesthetically – in the previous century. Walter Benjamin describes the use of iron as developing at an accelerated velocity throughout the nineteenth century; Cuba was late, in this sense, to incorporate ironwork more broadly into its architecture. Benjamin observed that in Paris, iron



was reserved for transitory spaces, such as arcades and train stations, rather than private homes (165-166).<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, ironwork is utilized in *Modernisme caribeny* almost exclusively on balconies and doorways of private residences. Specifically in the Caribbean, where the weather is pleasant many months of the year, both balconies and doorways constitute spaces for inhabitants to relax, for neighbors to speak to one another, and – in the case of balconies – for residents to observe passers-by, relatively unnoticed, on the sidewalks below. Placing wrought iron decoration on the balconies and doorways thus locates *Modernisme caribeny* in a space that is neither fully private nor fully public, but on a liminal space between the two spheres.

Furthermore, the sinuous, superfluous decoration, caught as it is between motion and stillness, does not merely capture some “essence” of Art Nouveau. Rather, in the Cuban context of early independence, the use of this ironwork, clearly connected to the Catalan community and specifically Catalan *Modernista* architecture (as opposed to a generalized absorption of Art Nouveau design concepts), might also be said to echo the colonial limbo in which Cuba found itself beginning in 1898, caught between formal independence and escalating American interference, as well as the uncertain future of Catalan political aspirations to have their separate nation officially recognized by the central government in Madrid.

---

<sup>8</sup> Resina observes that “For Benjamin, the collector was the privileged representative of the art nouveau spirit because he dreamt of being in a past world “(*Barcelona’s Vocation* 51).

Another key element of *Modernisme caribeny* is the concrete work produced in molds in a process designed by Mario Rotllant. Rotllant, the premiere architect of *Modernisme* on the island and the architect most well known for *Modernisme* in Havana specifically, visited Cuba in 1905, returned in 1906 to reside in the capital and began working there full-time. Aside from an extended stint in Barcelona (1919-1923), Rotllant and his family lived in Havana until 1925, when the untimely death of his youngest daughter provoked the family to return to Barcelona permanently (Cabré, *Catalunya a Cuba* 101).

The concrete mold process of this *arquitectura del motlle* was introduced through Rotllant's company, Fundación de Cemento Mario Rotllant. In addition to introducing the concrete mold process in Havana, Rotllant patented and commercialized various decorative concrete elements, as well as non-decorative essentials such as water filters and septic tanks (Cabre, *Catalunya a Cuba* 99). Eduardo Luis Rodríguez divides Rotllant's *Modernisme* into two periods: 1) strong influence from the three great masters of *Modernisme*: Puig i Cadafalch, Domènech i Montaner, and Gaudí (1908-1913); and 2) an evolution toward classicism with characteristics borrowed from both Franco-Belgian and Viennese versions of Art Nouveau (cited in Cabré, *Catalunya a Cuba* 101). According to Cabré, Rotllant's greatest achievement was in the design of façades, funerary monuments, and pavillons. All told, Rotllant alone designed and executed around thirty-five *Modernista* buildings in Havana

(*Catalunya a Cuba*, 100). Rotllant's borrowing from, and transformation of, master architects in Catalonia illustrates the dialogue of sorts that took place in this sphere.

In addition, Rotllant's mold process as a technique might be described as contributing in its own way to the primary declared objective of *Modernisme* at large, namely the pursuit of novelty and innovation. Even if the technique serves to replicate architectural elements on a larger scale, repetition itself does not equal lack of capacity for innovation or even political significance. We need look no further than Gaudí, universally acknowledged as innovative, for examples of repetitive structural and decorative elements.

Rotllant was not, of course, the only Catalan architect designing *Modernista* façades or building elements during this time in Cuba, nor was he the only proprietor of a company producing decorative elements with concrete molds. In Camagüey, for example, Claudi Muns i Piqué and Francesc Borràs employed a *Modernista* style; Antoni Moya i Andreu was responsible for leaving a distinctly Gaudinian stamp on Havana. In many cases, these architects “desarrollaron una predilección por la asimetría en la distribución como en el emplazamiento de ventanas, puertas y el sentido de la ambientación, creando fachadas con un valor eminentemente plástico” (Baroni, “Calle Cárdenas”).

Although Cuban *Modernisme* is expressed principally on the façades of residential homes, its influence can also be clearly detected in parts of eclectic works (Coyula, “Antonio”). The interiors of buildings were less affected by *Modernisme* in

Cuba. Patricia Baroni indicates that “la Arquitectura Art Nouveau [en La Habana] penetró muy poco y muy débil al espacio interior” (“Calle Cárdenas”). Nonetheless, even though there was not a total rupture with the previous architectural style in this sense, “se sucedieron ejemplos aislados y precisos donde el modernismo se introdujo ya no con una nueva espacialidad, sino que desarrolló una expresión de conjunto que alcanzó un carácter relativamente homogéneo” (Larramendi “Interiores”). Furniture and household objects such as lamps, door handles, and ceramics were some of the principal modes of expression of *Modernisme* in Cuban homes.

### *Modernisme Caribeny as an Alternative Catalan National Space*

Cabré posits that because of and in conjunction with its limited expression, *Modernisme* in Cuba “no desenvolupa un corpus teòric o ideològic com als països europeus ni introdueix canvis en l’estructura dels immobles” (*Catalunya a Cuba* 85).

The appearance of *Modernista* style in Cuba, according to Cabré,

[e]s limita a desplegar els codis estètics del modernisme català, instaurant-se com una moda, i s’adapta a la casa tren existent, que consisteix en un llarg passadís d’estances seguides. La tipologia dels edificis és molt simple, no hi ha edificis oficials, només habitatges, i canvien segons els barris. (*Catalunya a Cuba* 85-86)

Cabré is not the only scholar making this judgement about *Modernisme caribeny*. In a similar vein, Llanes also cautions: “si bien las expresiones del *art nouveau* en La Habana

constituían un aporte artístico de significación, no lograban caracterizar al período, atendiendo a sus principales tendencias de desarrollo” (1898-1921 10). Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, while on one hand acknowledging that the concept of *modernity* in early twentieth-century Havana “was more frequently used in reference to Art Nouveau,” he on the other hand maintains that it “was simply but another stylistic alternative at the beginning of the century” (“Architectural Avant-Garde” 255-257).

Contemporary scholars writing on *Modernisme caribeny* are thus quick to point out its limitations, even as they hint at potentially greater significance of this architecture. There remains much to say about the general meaning of this version of *Modernista* architecture that emerges in Cuba at this time. To begin with, it is necessary to connect a synthesis of the reasons behind the limited expression of *Modernisme caribeny* with an explanation of why scholars have tended to downplay its significance. Further, we must examine *Modernisme caribeny* in the context of *Modernisme català* in general, not in isolation from it. Finally, it is essential to view *Modernisme caribeny* in light of the political developments in Catalanism taking place at this time. I would like to counter the criticisms of the constraints found in *Modernisme caribeny* and demonstrate that they do not extinguish the possibility of significant political and cultural meaning created through this Catalan architecture in Cuba.

First, it should be noted that the limited appearance of *Modernisme* in Cuba can be explained in large part by the economic constraints faced by architects wishing to build. Indeed, as the new Cuban republic got off to a rocky start in the first years, the

funding for most construction was provided for by private sources, including for official buildings. This meant that construction in general was limited in a sense, even as there was a great flurry to build in the early decades of the twentieth century. For example, construction of new government and church buildings did not flourish during these years, as they were dependent on private financing (Venegas Fornias 24).

Further, Coyula explains that there was a difference in perception of *Modernisme* in Cuba compared to its counterpart and predecessor in Catalonia:

Esa base económica [que sí existía en Cataluña] faltó a los humildes maestros de obra catalanes que actuaron en Cuba a principios del siglo XX, lo que asoció al Modernismo criollo con una arquitectura para la pequeña burguesía de comerciantes españoles y pequeños casatenientes rentistas. (“Antonio”)

The lack of significant public funding or extensive private funding for *Modernista* works in Cuba led to limited expression of the style on the island. In *Modernisme* in Catalonia, the architecture was not only associated with (and funded by) members of the upper bourgeoisie, but it was also viewed in light of the broader cultural and political movement. While Catalan scholars such as Cabré have viewed *Modernisme caribeny* – as seen by its very denotation in Catalan meaning “Caribbean modernism,” that is, an offshoot of the original *Modernisme* in Catalonia – Cuban scholarship has traditionally viewed *Modernisme caribeny* as isolated from its precursor and counterpart in Catalonia. As I have mentioned, this was partially due to the politics of the Cuban Revolution, but it was also in part because of this narrow

association with the lower bourgeoisie. The connection of *Modernisme caribeny* with small business and property owners, I would therefore like to suggest, has contributed to the negative reception of *Modernisme caribeny* and a misinterpretation of its potential symbolism.

Connecting, or reconnecting, *Modernisme* in Cuba to its counterpart in Catalonia tells much about its significance on the island. Cabré maintains that “[r]eproduir a Cuba l’estil arquitectònic vigent a Catalunya quan la majoria d’immigrants no han trencat els llaços d’unió amb la terra natal ajuda els catalanocubans a identificar-se com a membres de la colònia catalana i a combatre la nostàlgia” (*Catalunya a Cuba* 89). Certainly, a *Modernista* façade could allow one to identify oneself as a member of the Catalan community. Calle Cárdenas [Cárdenas Street] is one of the primary locations in Havana where several *Modernista* structures can be seen grouped together. This is one example where a Catalan community would be noticeable due to the *Modernista* façades.

However, I would argue that constructing a Catalan community by reproducing *Modernista* architecture in Cuba – and especially when altering it in the process – represents more than an effort to quell nostalgic affect. The literal façade should not be taken as an appropriate metaphor for the strength of Catalan national sentiment. First, there is the issue of the financial limitations faced by architects in Cuba at this time. Cuban *criollo* architects and private homes jumping on the visual or stylistic bandwagon notwithstanding, the Catalan architects, community members, and

business owners who chose to build in the *Modernista* style were not, as Cabré has pointed out, cut off from their homeland. Through their familial and business contacts with Catalonia, they would have been aware of the history and political significance of *Modernisme*. *Modernisme caribeny* did not occur in a political bubble.

Furthermore, the fact that the production of *Modernista* architecture occurs in Cuba at this particular moment in history is of vital importance, as political Catalanism of a more uncompromising nature took hold in Cuba within the Catalan communities in the early twentieth century, leading ultimately to the declaration of an independent Catalan Republic by separatist leaders in exile. Carlos Venegas Fornias indicates that “It has been thought that a Modernism of clearly Catalan origin was accepted in Havana so recently after independence from Spain because Cubans felt a rapport with the separatist spirit of that region” (31). Applying this connection to Cubans is reasonable; there were certainly Cuban architects who learned about *Modernisme* in architectural journals and who had access to catalogs of series-produced items such as concrete decorative elements, and the Cubans who supported formal separation from colonial Spain would have also been in favor of visual expression of solidarity with a Catalonia seeking greater autonomy or independence from the State. Venegas Fornias’s statement would certainly be applicable to their case.

Yet regarding the Catalan architects working in Cuba and their Catalan clients commissioning *Modernista* works, the connection to a political Catalanism opposed to a centralizing Castile makes even more sense. The Catalan style with its cultural and



political significance would not have been lost on the Catalan architects employing these aesthetics and creating structures, decorative elements, and household items. Deliberately employing *Modernisme* at this particular time would make a political statement.

Additionally, the façade is the public face of the building. The Catalans constructing these communities were creating a visible, outward sign of their national identity. Through pursuit of a particular aesthetic, they not only commissioned the construction of a cultural community – even if a small one – but also wrote a visual text that would be clearly read and identified as Catalan by the passerby. *Modernisme caribeny* has been criticized for the fact that it touched mainly the façades and did not permeate society deeply enough to produce an innovative theory of architecture. Yet choosing the façade over interior elements when faced with a simple economic choice again points to a culturally and politically charged statement, by displaying an identifiably Catalan architectural style on the outward face of the private residences.

We have seen how the Cuban war and especially the end of Spanish colonialism in 1898 helped to shift Catalanism to a bolder, more politicized version of itself. I assert that these same circumstances, rather than the formal beginning of a Cuban Republic in 1902 – which in many ways was in name only, in any case, and took place under American intervention – allowed *Modernisme caribeny* to arise in Cuba, by relocating a version of modernity as well as Catalan cultural and political aspirations to the island.

Likewise, the events and effects of the year 1898, and the mentality that these provoked among certain sectors of Catalan society, created the opportunity for aspirations toward an independent Catalan republic to begin flourishing in Cuba at this same time – to the point of actually publishing a Constitution a few years down the road, albeit after *Modernisme caribeny* had died out.

Architect David Mackay contends that *Modernisme* in Catalonia “provides an outstanding paradigm to illustrate Christopher Wren’s perception that ‘Architecture has its political use...it establishes a Nation; draws people and commerce; makes people love their native country’” (vi). Why would *Modernisme* in Cuba not possess the same possibilities for cultural and political significance, even if *Modernista* structures seemed to be built in imitation of the original style, rather than offering a new architectural theory of space? Although there were not as many new Catalan immigrants to Cuba in the early twentieth century, there were well-established Catalan communities still in existence since the nineteenth century. The surfacing of active political groups around the same time that *Modernisme* begins to flourish illustrates that these communities were anything but lifeless, especially given the fact that many of them were fully supportive of separatism, that they often considered themselves to be living in exile, and that the political atmosphere in Cuba allowed a separatist Catalan government to declare an independent republic.

I hope to have demonstrated clearly that *Modernisme caribeny* is not only worthy of greater consideration than previous scholars have given it, but that its significance

should be considered in the cultural and political circumstances in which it occurs. First, I posit that *Modernisme caribeny* is not merely an inferior replication of *Modernisme* from Catalonia. Through the production of concrete forms in series, *Modernisme caribeny* adds to the overall pursuit of modernity originally embraced by Catalan *Modernisme* by, as Coyula puts it, “anticipando la pre-fabricación” (“Antonio”). Resina maintains that in Catalonia, the idea of “‘Modern’ became a magic password believed to transfigure everything, even preindustrial forms of production” (*Barcelona’s Vocation* 45). In a similar sense, Rotllant’s concrete mold process contributed to *Modernisme*’s concept of “modern,” advanced the industrialization in Cuba, and modernized architecture as an artistic industry. This is evident even if we take into account that it eventually also led to the homogenization and decline of *Modernisme* on the island, as Cabré indicates (*Catalunya a Cuba* 99).

Moreover, and perhaps ultimately more importantly, while *Modernisme* in Cuba appears mostly on façades, this feature does not, per se, mean that the architecture is devoid of political and cultural significance. As in Buenos Aires, *Modernisme caribeny* “expresses itself on the surface; yet...in no way is it always a superficial style” (Peña and Snyder 239). Let us recall Domènech i Montaner’s original question: is it possible to create a national architecture? Many would agree that *Modernisme* in Catalonia was an attempt at just that, and some would further contend, based on its innovative stylistic and technical achievements, as well as its influence on subsequent movements, that it succeeded.

In its own way, I thus conclude, *Modernisme caribeny* constitutes an alternative national space for Catalan immigrants living in Cuba at this time. At a time when conservative Catalanism was beginning to take hold of *Modernisme* in the metropolis and *Noucentisme* was embarking on its quest to discredit the *Modernista* image of the artist-intellectual in pursuit of a certain type of modernity and national identity, *Modernisme caribeny* appears as an alternative space for *catalanitat* to be expressed abroad. In Catalonia, “the dialectics of modernity and individuality establish a particular relationship with international currents [in *Modernisme*]...Munich, Paris and Vienna are present but transformed” (Mackay vi). In a similar albeit more constrained fashion, through *Modernisme caribeny*, Catalonia is present in Cuba but transformed. If *Modernisme* comprised an attempt at creating national architecture through its deliberate cultivation of novelty and pursuit of the modern – always in contrast to a stagnant Castile – I propose that *Modernisme caribeny*, despite its constraints, likewise possesses the capacity for expressing national sentiment.

It is no accident that *Modernisme caribeny* arises when and where it does: precisely in Cuba during the early years of independence from Spain, when the consequences of 1898 were beginning to make themselves felt within the greater Catalan community. Whether Cuba was a formal republic or not, as it became in 1902, or what kind of local government was in charge, was largely irrelevant; what mattered for Catalans, ultimately, was that Cuba was free of its colonial chains, and this is why 1898

– rather than 1902 – serves as a more logical starting point for explicating the meaning of *Modernisme* in Cuba.

*Modernisme caribeny* offered a way in which Catalan communities could display support for their culture in their adopted homeland, and Cubans could express solidarity with the Catalan aspirations for autonomy or even formal separation from the centralized Spanish government. By 1906, political Catalanism had begun to take a conservative turn in Catalonia, whereas in Cuba, Catalan separatist groups were on the rise, their enthusiasm fueled by the end of the Cuban War of Independence and the retreating Spanish colonial power. From a Catalan perspective, if Cubans could gain their freedom after thirty years of struggle, then Catalans, after two centuries of oppressive political and cultural intervention or, some would argue, colonialism, would surely win their freedom soon. Post-1898 Cuba thus offered a place and time that, in that moment, gave many Catalans hope for the future of their nation.

## CHAPTER 2

### LISTENING FOR THE REVOLUTION AFTER THE REVOLUTION:

#### SILENCE AND NOISE IN MANUEL VÁZQUEZ MONTALBÁN'S

#### *Y DIOS ENTRÓ EN LA HABANA* (1998)

#### *John Paul II and Vázquez Montalbán Go to Cuba*

In 1998, a greatly anticipated and highly publicized meeting of political and religious figures occurred in Havana: on January 21, Pope John Paul II took his famous journey to Cuba to meet with Fidel Castro on the island and to give speeches and hold masses for the Cuban people. The Pope's trip to Cuba provided an occasion for a flurry of political, religious, and social commentary from intellectuals around the world, in part because of the history of a declared policy of official atheism on the part of the communist Cuban government. One of these intellectuals – and one of the most important from Catalonia during the twentieth century – Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939-2003), witnessed the arrival of the Pope on the island and presented his view of the situation in his book *Y Dios entró en La Habana* [*And God Entered Into Havana*] (1998). Vázquez Montalbán's own role in this event and the ways in which he deals with it in his text constitute the primary target of discussion in this chapter.

Vázquez Montalbán's presence in Cuba for the Pope's visit should not seem surprising, given his involved background in politics and cultural commentary. The

world-renowned novelist, poet, playwright, journalist, and essayist was born in Barcelona in 1939 and majored in Filosofía y Letras at the University of Barcelona, then studied Journalism at the Barcelona School of Journalism. Vázquez Montalbán's youth was marked by an early interest in leftist politics and socialism. He joined the PSUC (*Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* [Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia])<sup>1</sup> in 1961 and worked against the Franco regime by writing for satirical publications and inserting sly criticism into his regular journalistic articles; these activities eventually earned him politically motivated imprisonment in 1962.

In the post-Franco years, Vázquez Montalbán was particularly disparaging of José María Aznar. His collection of writings about the Partido Popular under Aznar appeared posthumously in *La aznaridad* (2003).<sup>2</sup> Naturally, as Ofelia Ferran indicates, by no means should one “diminish the importance of the difference in formal political governance enacted by the transition” (194-95).<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, in many cases, the transition provided an opportunity for former Francoist leaders to change sides smoothly and become sudden supporters of democratic principles.<sup>4</sup> Vázquez

---

<sup>1</sup> The PSUC still maintains links of solidarity with Cuba today, as evidenced by the slideshow “Acte solidaritat amb Cuba” – also, there are 24 articles under the category “Cuba” and only 11 under “Catalunya” (psuc.org).

<sup>2</sup> Vázquez Montalbán points to 1898 in this collection: “en cierto sentido, la hora de la verdad en relación España-País Vasco-Cataluña está aplazada desde la crisis de 1898, contando con los cuarenta años enmascarados, militarizados y perdidos bajo Franco” (119, cited in Galeote).

<sup>3</sup> For discussion of the ambiguity present in defining the transition itself, see Ofelia Ferran's article.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed commentary on the problem of changing sides during Spain's *transición* to socialist democracy, see Resina, *El cadáver en la cocina: la novela criminal en la cultura del desencanto*.

Montalbán remained a probing analyst of the central government regardless of who was officially in power.

In literature, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán is most known for his long-running detective series, featuring protagonist Pepe Carvalho. Vázquez Montalbán was the recipient of numerous literary and journalism awards during his career. His Carvalho series has been translated into a couple dozen languages and earned him the highest honors for the genre; however, Vázquez Montalbán also composed poetry and plays for which he earned other prestigious awards. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into detailed analysis of Vázquez Montalbán's detective novels, yet some summary remarks are in order. First, his novels contributed substantially to the “dirección ética y estética particularmente provocativa” of the genre (Colmeiro, “La narrativa policíaca posmodernista de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán” 11). Additionally, the author “procede a dismantelar críticamente la moralidad del orden establecido y se replantea los moldes narrativos anteriores de la novela realista y la policíaca desde una ambigua actitud paródica” found throughout his detective fiction (Colmeiro 11). In terms of his overall contribution to literature, Vázquez Montalbán stands as one of the foremost authors of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, Vázquez Montalbán was one of the most important journalists and cultural critics that Catalonia – or indeed, Spain overall – has produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the superlative descriptors that have been applied to his life and work by other scholars and writers, he has been called “el intelectual más significativo



de los últimos cuarenta años de la historia de España” (cited in Ette 193). Since 2004, the Premi Internacional de Periodisme Manuel Vázquez Montalbán has been awarded in order to “recordar la figura i l'obra d'un periodista que va fer del rigor, l'ètica i el compromís social una constant en l'exercici professional” (“Juan José Millás”).

Vázquez Montalbán's sudden death in Bangkok in 2003 marked the untimely end of a lifetime of contributions to literature and journalism, as well as the living idea of a certain type of conscientious intellectual engaged in the political events of the times, both locally and internationally.

Unlike his literary works, Vázquez Montalbán's *Y Dios entró en La Habana* has received extremely sparse academic attention. This immense book is somewhat less well known than many of his other texts, particularly his detective novels. Yet I posit that it should be considered in higher regard, not only because of Vázquez Montalbán's role as a Catalan/Spanish intellectual and journalist in Cuba, but also due to his distinctive commentary on politics and sophisticated leftist philosophy. There is a clear need to address this particular work by such an important literary and cultural figure who, in many ways, both provided a counter current of critical thought against the assimilating power of the central Spanish government and its supporters, and acted as a bridge between Spain and the rest of the world. Jaume Martí-Olivella notes that “Vázquez Montalbán combines an objective journalistic approach with an ironic subjective view and, at times, a touch of idealist nostalgia in this highly entertaining chronicle” (174).

Yet well beyond its “entertaining” qualities, *Y Dios entró en La Habana* has special importance in Vázquez Montalbán’s writings on *Subcomandante Marcos* and on revolutionary movements beyond (and in relation to) the Cuban Revolution. This text should therefore be considered in the broader context of these other works by the author. I will attempt to unravel some of these elements of Vázquez Montalbán’s work and offer the beginnings of a synthesis of the significance of his dialogue with Cuba in a generalized sense. Already recognized as a key critic of contemporary culture in Spain, Vázquez Montalbán deserves greater recognition for his participation in contemporary Catalonia’s cultural and political discourse with and on (post-?) revolutionary Cuba.<sup>5</sup> Serious, multi-faceted analyses of *Y Dios entró en La Habana* will contribute to both Cuban and Iberian studies because of the work’s implications for both sides of the Atlantic.

*Y Dios entró en La Habana* is comprised of fourteen chapters, many with titles borrowed from or inspired by literature and non-fiction, followed by a section titled “A manera de epílogo”.<sup>6</sup> The chapters begin with one or more epigraphs, most from

---

<sup>5</sup> By “(post-?)revolutionary” I do not mean to indicate that this is a term that Vázquez Montalbán himself uses in the text; rather, his overall discourse on Cuba and its Revolution suggest that the existence of the Revolution as such faces a potential threat, both by economic (materialistic) troubles and by spiritual alternatives offered by the Church. By using this questioning term, I am merely indicating that Vázquez Montalbán does probe his interviewees on these points, which relate namely to the overall issue of what the future of the Revolution might be and what place it might have in post-Special Period Cuban society.

<sup>6</sup> Some examples illustrating the range of sources are: Chapter III, “Conversación en la catedral,” from Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa’s eponymous novel; Chapter V, “Las comidas profundas,” from the title of Cuban poet Antonio José Ponte’s poetry; Chapter VII, “Las afinidades nunca son electivas,” a sort of Weberian contrast to Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*; and Chapter X, “España-Cuba,

Cuban poetry or novels. Via its structure and intertextuality, this monumental work resides in a unique, creative space between journalism and fiction (Ette 203). The bulk of the text in each chapter comprises a transcription of one or more interviews with a cross-cut of Cuban society, ranging from informants such as Alfredo Guevara, a high-profile revolutionary figure in the Cuban government; to Carlos García Pleyán, a Spanish expatriate who supported the Revolution in its early years and became a Cuban citizen in the early 1970s; to Elizardo Sánchez, an openly declared dissident; to “Floreal Borau,” a Cuban intellectual possessing no formal quarrels with the authorities but who chooses to remain anonymous.<sup>7</sup> Vázquez Montalbán says with respect to the range of interviews in his book that “se complementarán, porque trato de ofrecer un cuadro general de la expectativa latinoamericana al borde del milenio, tal como se la ve desde Cuba o desde los nuevos movimientos indigenistas encabezados por Rigoberta Menchú o el subcomandante Marcos” (195). In addition to the interview text, Vázquez Montalbán inserts his own thoughts and commentary, interspersing them throughout the transcriptions of the dialogues. As one of his informants says, “Cuba sigue siendo un experimento,” and Vázquez Montalbán offers

---

Cuba-España,” an inversion of the historical-anthropological work *Cuba/España, España/Cuba* by renowned Cuban historian Manuel Moreno Friginals.

<sup>7</sup> Vázquez Montalbán says with respect to this informant: “...hoy las actitudes se han diversificado tanto en la Cuba insular como en todas las Cubas. Por ejemplo, Floreal Borau, por qué no llamarle Floreal Borau...No quiere que reproduzca su nombre verdadero a pesar de que no se autoreconoce como disidente, y por lo que pude comprobar comparte actitud con un sector de la intelectualidad crítica, pero no abandonista” (128). Montalbán’s commentary here contextualizes the widespread problem of expressing criticism under the Castro regime in contemporary Cuba.

some of his own ideas for how the experiment might be conducted as both the Special Period and the millennium dwindle toward their ends.

In *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, as mentioned, Vázquez Montalbán ostensibly uses the Pope's visit as an aperture for viewing this diversity of contemporary Cuban society and thereby for writing a sort of "mapamundi de todas las Cubas posibles," as the back jacket and the text both point out (124).<sup>8</sup> Contrary to the image of two heads of opposing philosophies coming together for an epic ideological battle, an image presented by many at the time, Vázquez Montalbán would seem, at least upon first glance, to propose "un posible frente cultural emancipador que vería la Iglesia en clave espiritual y la Revolución en clave material y materialista" (91). This would present the Pope and Fidel Castro rather as fighting together for a new image of Cuba, as building a "spiritualist" imaginary to counter a growing desire in contemporary Cuban society for neoliberal capitalism. Vázquez Montalbán reiterates regarding the objectives of his project in Cuba:

Lo más importante del libro es situar a Cuba dentro de esas nuevas condiciones de globalización, a partir de las expectativas creadas por el viaje del Papa. Se suscita la aparición de un nuevo imaginario cubano, vamos a llamarle

---

<sup>8</sup> This image, in turn, is borrowed from a painting by Cuban artist Antonio Elío Fernández (known as "Tonel") in which he created a mapamundi full of Cubas: "Pleyán admite la variedad cultural de todas las Cubas, para siempre imposibles los tiempos del monolitismo, como si se hubiera consumado el sueño del pintor Antonio Elío: un mapamundi totalmente lleno de Cubas" (124).

espiritualista, un frente contra el neocapitalismo y el neoliberalismo, Fidel y el Papa en un mismo frente. (195)

Later, Vázquez Montalbán posits a similar idea to one of his interviewees: “Necesitáis crear un nuevo imaginario cubano. Ya se ha asimilado el verde olivo, el del país bloqueado económicamente, doblemente aislado, de isla aislada” (370). *Y Dios entró en La Habana* would therefore appear to offer a solution, a proposal for a “new Cuban imaginary;” but what, in practical terms, does this mean? If “[e]l propio concepto *revolución* es un *ajiacó* [a Cuban stew that has anything and everything in it],” then we might ask along with one of Vázquez Montalbán’s informants: “¿De qué Revolución están hablando?” (130). Whether or not it is true, as Vázquez Montalbán asserts, that the Cubans needed to create a new imaginary of their own in the late Special Period, what matters here is Montalbán’s personal investment in the process as an intellectual at large, and what image of revolution – or of the (Cuban) Revolution – he creates in his work.

As the text advances, it becomes clear that the idea of revolution is not what the reader might expect and, furthermore, that the Pope does not in fact play the starring role, per se, as one might be led to believe by the title and the occasion for writing the book to begin with. Moreover, the author provides little sense of time, as he refrains from giving dates or times of the interviews; we know that much of the text originates from his stay in January 1998, and occasionally he refers to the process of writing and reflection upon his return to Spain, but very seldom does he provide

further details. It is as if time has nearly stood still after the author arrived in Cuba and the reader has all the time in the world to wait on the Pope to arrive himself.

Ottmar Ette states in his article “Manuel Vázquez Montalbán: Gott in Havanna oder die Redlichkeit des Intellektuellen,” that the underlying structure of the book is precisely “das Warten,” in part because the Pope’s actual visit does not take place until more than 500 pages into the 713-page volume (206).

What is the reader waiting on, if not necessarily the Pope? Ette points out that the only two pictures on the cover feature Fidel Castro and Vázquez Montalbán himself, the latter on the Rambla in Barcelona, not even Havana (Ette 204). Ette argues that Montalbán writes himself into the text as one of the “drei Protagonisten des Buches – der Papst Johannes II., Fidel Castro [und] Manuel Vázquez Montalbán,” among which it is unclear who is the “God” of the book’s title (205). But rather than presenting Vázquez Montalbán as merely one of three protagonists, Ette actually states that, “Längst ist der spanische Intellektuellen zur wichtigsten Figur des Textes geworden” (197). Essentially through self-promotion by way of recycling his own words (published elsewhere in articles in the Madrid-based *El País* but not cited anywhere in *Y Dios entró en La Habana*), the author, reiterates Ette, “[wird] zur eigentlichen Hauptfigur des Geschehens” (200).

Nonetheless, while Vázquez Montalbán inevitably appears within his own book as a formidable intellectual figure, I would question Ette’s apparent claim that this is the primary or most interesting accomplishment of the text, whether or not

unintentional. Vázquez Montalbán's work offers a unique perspective and pertinent commentary, not only on the Pope's visit, but also on the relationship of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution with the world, especially with the rest of Latin America. I do not mean to imply that Vázquez Montalbán was unaware of the version of himself that he was writing into his text, when he is precisely known for his ironic distance and critical view of the very act of writing. But rather than seeing an attempt to create a literary version of himself as a larger-than-life intellectual on a kind of self-promoting mission, I posit that Vázquez Montalbán's text recycling and use of literary references rather make sense when viewed within the broader scope of his oeuvre. In his Carvalho series, for example, "[la] dialéctica en torno a la propia literatura ocupa un lugar fundamental...lejos de ocultar su naturaleza profundamente 'literaria' hace uso reiterado y ostensible de múltiples y variadas referencias intertextuales y metaficcionales" (Colmeiro 13). These references, in turn, "refleja[n] la actitud negativa y escéptica del protagonista frente a la ficción literaria...y es al mismo tiempo una *mise en abyme* [sic] que reduplica la enfrentada postura posmodernista de todo el ciclo narrativo carvalhiano de cara a la anterior escritura" (Colmeiro 14). Therefore his recycling of references in *Y Dios entró en La Habana* should not be so surprising, even though – or because – the text falls outside of a strictly fictional genre; rather, these elements should be read within the context of Vázquez Montalbán's overall skeptical, "postmodern posture" to which Colmeiro refers, a posture that is postmodern enough that even postmodernism deserves criticism.

Thus I suggest that of greater interest in *Y Dios entró en La Habana* are the following points: Vázquez Montalbán's analysis of the current state of the Cuban Revolution, his scrutiny of other leftist and revolutionary movements in Latin America, his relationship with the Cuban Revolution as a recuperation of the clandestine left under Franco, his assertion that Gramsci is the primary base left to Cuba with any useful theoretical complexity for justification of Marxism, and his demonstration of the political role that the intellectual plays in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

Finally, it is important to note that underneath all of this complexity, the ideas of silence and noise come to occupy a prominent space near the end of the text. Through his exchanges with *Subcomandante* Marcos in Chiapas quoted in the epilogue, Vázquez Montalbán presents an image of revolution as “ruidos” [noises] that disrupt the status quo and threaten to wreak changes on societies, as they existed at the turn of the millennium. Silence and noise thus gain a significance that takes on a much larger impact than would immediately be apparent, if one were to base importance merely on the number of times they are mentioned or the length of text dedicated to them. In fact, as I will show, noise and silence surreptitiously come to inform the meaning both of the entire book and of the concept of revolution presented in the text. Moreover, the silences in Vázquez Montalbán's own text form “noises” that speak beyond the transcripts of his interviews and his direct words commenting on Cuba's plight.



## *Reflecting on 1998 in Cuba: A Critical Crossroads*

Nearly forty years after the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Vázquez Montalbán's *Y Dios entró en La Habana* came at a crucial moment for Cuba, as did the Pope's visit itself. The year 1998 marked a confluence of several major historical anniversaries of Spanish-Cuban relations, as well as contemporary milestones in Cuban history, economics, religion and politics. In Spain, one hundred years after the shrewdly misnamed Disaster, the year 1998 presented an opportunity for Spain to reflect on its colonial past and its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. The specific relationship between Cuba and Catalonia garnered significant attention in conferences and books that came out around this time. Catalan scholars led the way regarding Catalonia's history with Cuba, with such publications as *Els catalans i Cuba* by Oriol Junqueras, *Viatgers catalans al Carib: Cuba* by Isabel Segura. The relationship between Cuba and Catalonia has continued to be a growing source of scholarly interest through the present.

From the Cuban perspective, 1998 was the centennial of Cuba's official independence from Spain, offering an opportunity for Cuba to assert its liberty from imperialism. Moreover, 1998 was the eve of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Triunfo de la Revolución*, the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution, which took place on January 1, 1959. Finally, the end of the millennium was imminent, prompting discussion of Cuba's role in the globalized world of the next millennium. Scholars and economists alike were pondering: beyond the Special Period and in the new millennium, what

would the future of Cuban Marxism be? What would the Revolution look like? How would Cuba continue to make progress in fields like education and medicine? What was the best way to involve and enhance the role of civil society in Cuba? These constituted key questions being asked of the Cuban government and of society at large.

Crucially, the year 1998 also occurred during the gradual improvement or at least easing up of the *período especial en tiempo de paz*, the name euphemistically bestowed by the Cuban government on the extreme difficulties following the collapse of the Soviet Union and, consequently, Soviet subsidies that assisted the survival of the Cuban economy and provided for many basic necessities on the island.<sup>9</sup> Prior to 1989, Cuba had carried out around 80% of its trade with the CMEA, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Cole 41). The loss of the CMEA was devastating for the Cuban economy in the first half of the 1990s, although the depth and breadth of the problems that arose in the early 90s had causes originating earlier, in the 70s and 80s, rather than resulting simplistically from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR.

Thus with all of its contradictions and challenges, the year 1998 held much cultural, political, and historical value for Spain, Catalonia, and Cuba alike, though the

---

<sup>9</sup> The Cuban government explains that this terminology arose in contrast to the 1980s, which were referred to as the *período especial en tiempo de guerra* because of the perceived state of war with the United States (“Periodo Especial”), which was aggravated by hostile policies under the Reagan administration that bolstered the embargo against Cuba.

motivations for commemorating the year varied for each. All of these factors contributed to causing the Pope's visit to be contemplated in great detail by politicians, journalists, writers, scholars, and intellectuals. Cuba was in the spotlight, and this time not just for the (at the time) predominantly conservative Miamian community of Cuban exiles. The Pope's visit was broadcasted worldwide, and many eyes were on Cuba, waiting to see what would happen as a result of the meeting between Fidel and John Paul II, the quintessential communist guerrillero and the head of the Roman Catholic Church. As Vázquez Montalbán puts it, these were two aspiring "Señores de la Historia," each of whom was attempting to write future history in a particular way; "en ese encuentro en La Habana [había] algo de teatralización del balance del siglo. Los dos herederos de la lucha espiritual del siglo XX se encuentran" (*Marcos* 185). As expounded upon in *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, Vázquez Montalbán would be present to contribute to the writing of this history, and his text has significance that reaches well beyond the brief visit by the Pope.

The significance of the year 1998 in its political, cultural, and economic terms is commented in depth in *Y Dios entró en La Habana*. Vázquez Montalbán presents Cuba's economic woes of the Special Period as one of the greatest challenges to the Revolution, as they could cause such dissatisfaction that the Cuban people could decide at some point that they have had enough with the Revolution and its apparent inability to provide for their needs in hard times.

Just how bad were things in Cuba during the 90s? The situation became so desperate in the first few years of the 1990s that in order to alleviate some of the economic difficulties, the Cuban government officially – albeit grudgingly – began promoting tourism, actively solicited investments from Canada and Europe, legalized the use of American dollars by Cuban citizens, and created basic allowances for private business (albeit with extreme restrictions). The legalization of the U.S. dollar in 1993 constituted a particularly drastic policy change for the Cuban government; this policy “was considered a necessary evil that brought into being a *transitory* double economy: that of the dollar and that of the peso” (Fernández Retamar 186, emphasis in original).

In the mid-1990s, the Cuban peso was exchanged on the black market at a rate of 120 pesos to the dollar (Fernández Retamar 186). Unfortunately for the Cuban government, this duality was not transitory but has persisted into the present day, well over a decade later. The *peso convertible* or so-called “tourist peso” was introduced in 1994 but did not go into wide circulation until 2004, when dollars were once again banned.<sup>10</sup> Although the exchange rate is better (around 30 traditional pesos to

---

<sup>10</sup> This duality has persisted today primarily in the use of traditional vs. convertible pesos. In 2004, in response to the tightening of the embargo by the Bush administration, the Cuban government banned the use of the U.S. dollars in transactions and added a 10% fee for changing dollars to pesos. Dollars were badly needed by the government at the time to buy oil, food, and other supplies in shortage, and some political analysts felt that overall, this was “more pragmatic than philosophical” (Thompson). Nonetheless, Fidel Castro, in his announcement about the change in October 2004, directly blamed the Bush administration’s economic sanctions, and his aides stated that Cuba was “protecting itself from external economic aggression” (cited in Thompson). The Cuban Central Bank President at the time, Francisco Soberón, commented that with the banning of the dollar, “We

convertible peso in January 2010), it essentially fulfills the role that the U.S. dollar did in the 90s, by acting as primary currency with real value and purchasing power on the island, whereas the traditional peso has very little value.

The Special Period culminated in 1994, when thousands of desperate Cubans abandoned the island for the United States on *balsas* [rafts], earning them the famous collective denomination of *balseiros*. During the second half of the decade, the Cuban economy began to recover somewhat. By 1998, when Vázquez Montalbán published his work, overall quality of life had recovered in certain ways, compared to the middle of the decade; for instance, medical and food supplies had improved, though by no means were sufficient to provide for the entire population. Key economic indicators were still bleak in 1998, and quality of life had not improved compared to the beginning of the decade: imports in 1997 expanded faster than exports, trade had dropped a total of 40% since 1989, and monthly rationing of goods was insufficient to cover two weeks of minimum nutritional needs (Mesa-Lago and Pérez López).<sup>11</sup>

---

have hit the U.S. government where it hurts. We have withdrawn their money from circulation and enhanced our sovereignty” (cited in Frank). In any case, the effect of the new policy was that within a mere two weeks, an “astounding \$500 million [came] out of the woodwork” according to estimates by Cuban economists, and this was presumed to be less than the total amount of money that was actually being hoarded by Cubans with access to dollars, either through tourism or relatives in the U.S. (Frank). The 10% exchange fee was withdrawn under Raúl Castro’s administration in early 2011 as part of Raúl’s series of modest economic reforms to stimulate growth on the island. Neither of the two pesos is worth anything outside of Cuba, and the government must therefore produce cash in other currencies for purchases of food or other supplies.

<sup>11</sup> Some of the key economic indicators are difficult to disentangle, due to frequently changing methodology employed by the Cuban government, especially beginning in 2001, making the data for the Special Period problematic. An in-depth discussion here is not warranted, but for further details on official Cuban GDP reporting methodologies, see Pérez-López and Mesa-Lago, “Cuban GDP Statistics Under the Special Period: Discontinuities, Obfuscation, and Puzzles.”

Vázquez Montalbán brings up the issue of quality of life and current economic hardship with many of his interviewees. He posits the following problem several times in various forms: “la diferencia social entre los cubanos que [tienen dólares] y los que no. ¿No es eso más peligroso para la Revolución que el avance de la Iglesia católica y de la ideología vaticanista?” (95). Throughout the book, Vázquez Montalbán pits the severe economic challenges facing Cuba against the Revolution to test, as it were, whether the Revolution can respond adequately.

### *Antonio Gramsci as Theoretical Orientation for Cuba in the Special Period*

One of the ways for the Revolution to respond to its challenges from all fronts – economic, religious, social, political – is through the ideas of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the well-known Italian Marxist thinker. In his interviews, Vázquez Montalbán repeatedly encounters – and reproduces through his transcript and metadiegetic commentary – Gramsci as a crucial theoretical referent for Cuba of the Special Period, as it ponders its theory and praxis of Marxism on the threshold of the new century and the new millennium. Interviewees of quite diverse political leanings reiterate the reliance on Gramsci by contemporary Cuban Marxist scholars and intellectuals.

Marxist scholar Jorge Luis Acanda, local expert on Gramscian theories or “el representante de Gramsci en Cuba,” as Vázquez Montalbán describes him, explains in an interview with the author that the current use of Gramsci is prevalent enough so as

to be called an overuse. In a general sense, however, Acanda states, “[l]a propia historia de la recepción de Gramsci en Cuba es la historia de la recepción del marxismo después del año 1959” (375). Equally important, Acanda notes, is that the Cuban use of Gramsci as a fundamental resource for explaining Marxism presents a unique case among socialist countries (378).

Vázquez Montalbán discusses the vacillating use of Gramsci in Cuba in his conversation with Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Vicario General de La Habana and great-grandson of his famous namesake who began the 1868 war against Spain. Céspedes explains that after a period of “hibernation” after the 1960s, “en Cuba se ha retomado la curiosidad por Gramsci como un pensador marxista que aporta...desbloques de la rigidez de la dogmática marxista. Se vuelve a Gramsci en muchos círculos” (92).

Despite this critical (re)turn to Gramsci in the 1990s, the topic of Gramsci’s influence in Cuba has not been examined in significant detail in Cuban studies outside of those undertaken in Cuba itself, especially beyond the field of political science. More specifically, this is an important space that has not been studied by scholars working in the literary field, one in which a closer look at Vázquez Montalbán’s *Y Dios entró en La Habana* helps to address. Marxism and Marxist thinkers have historically been interpreted differently in Cuba than in the rest of Latin America, and yet there are crucial links between these places that point toward an interdependent development of Marxism throughout the last century.

When Vázquez Montalbán asks whether the return to Gramsci is causing Marx, Engels, and Lenin to disappear from direct discussion, Acanda answers that rather than replacing these classic thinkers, Gramsci is changing how they are used and that “ya no hay un monopolio de su interpretación” (375). However, nearly in the same breath, Acanda tells Vázquez Montalbán that “los nuevos referentes culturales que han sustituido a los dioses convencionales del marxismo-leninismo [son la] ratificación de Martí, la sobreutilización del padre Varela, la reafirmación de lo cubano de la fundación dedicada a Fernando Ortiz, Gramsci como referente marxista más utilizado” (375).

Why were Gramsci’s ideas so essential for Cuban revolutionary intellectuals in 1998? For one, as emphasized throughout Vázquez Montalbán’s interviews in Cuba, Gramsci offered Cuban thinkers seeking fresh interpretations of Marxism the concept of civil society. A joint Cuban-Italian panel discussion held in 1997 on “Releyendo a Gramsci: hegemonía y sociedad civil” [“Rereading Gramsci: hegemony and civil society”] provides a more detailed insight into the significance of Gramsci’s theories for late-Special Period Cuba pondering the threshold of the twenty-first century. The transcript of the discussion appeared in the Cuban journal *Temas*.

The concept of civil society was central to the discussion panel, which reflects a general trend at the time. The term civil society fell into disuse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but Gramsci “revived the term to portray civil society as a special nucleus of independent political activity, a crucial sphere of struggle against tyranny” (Carothers 19). The



term was revived once more in the 1990s, including in Cuba. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci explains that civil society and the state constitute “superstructural levels,” private and public respectively: “These two levels correspond on the one hand to the functions of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the state and 'juridical' government" (12, cited in Stillo). Part of the problem in Cuba after forty years of Revolution – and indeed, now after over fifty years – was that most individuals have difficulty conceiving of or believing in the possibility of an independent or private domain that is distinguishable from the public sphere and the watchful eye of the government, other than (perhaps) through non-governmental organizations or other associations. As Vázquez Montalbán would somewhat jokingly point out a year later, “En Cuba si hablas de sociedad civil, Castro se saca la pistola porque da la impresión que la sociedad civil es todo lo que está esperando la caída del partido único para meter ahí el imperialismo norteamericano (*Marcos* 159-60).

In part because Gramsci presents civil society and the state as only theoretically separate categories, his notion of civil society is productive for Cuba as a socialist society even – or especially – after so many decades of Revolution. Acanda, who moderated the Italian-Cuban discussion of 1997, highlights the fact that in Gramsci,

civil society is not merely “asociatividad” (84).<sup>12</sup> Acanda argues that Gramscian discourse allows for a creative departure from dogmatic Marxism, while simultaneously enabling the search for “la posibilidad de reestructurar una teoría que permita a la izquierda salir del *impasse* teórico y político en que se encuentra actualmente” (76).

As affirmed in *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, one of the ways that Gramsci’s ideas could help the left out of its *impasse* is by allowing for inventive interpretations of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity. Vázquez Montalbán posits to Acanda in his interview with the Gramscian expert that Gramsci’s “reflexión sobre la relación entre subjetividad y objetividad, ilustraba la tremenda carga de subjetividad y voluntariedad precisa para impulsar una Revolución como ésta” (379). Additionally, in response to the expressed need to define both history and materialism in Cuba, Acanda counters that “se está haciendo [ya] una reinterpretación de la historia de Cuba, incluida la cultura burguesa, y ésta es la principal utilización del pensamiento de Gramsci en la década del sesenta” (379).

The relationship of Cuba with the rest of Latin America is central to Vázquez Montalbán’s discussion of Gramsci and the interpretation of Marxist ideology in Cuba in general. In addition to “la utilización de Gramsci como marxista desbloqueador,” Vázquez Montalbán perceives, as he tells Céspedes, a “latinoamericanización del

---

<sup>12</sup> Carothers agrees that in Gramsci, “it is a mistake to equate civil society with NGOs. Properly understood, civil society is a broader concept, encompassing all the organizations and associations that exist outside of the state (including political parties) and the market” (19).

marxismo cubano” because Mariátegui, rather than Marx or Engels, also constitutes a frequent reference for contemporary Marxists (92). Céspedes does not deny the idea of a “Latinamericanization” of Cuban Marxism, but does clarify that both Mariátegui and Gramsci were important theorists in Cuba during the first decade of the Revolution, then “quedaron algo hibernados” (92).

Two other Cuban scholars on the 1997 panel on Gramsci, Aurelio Alonso, and Isabel Monal, point out significant challenges for contemporary Cuba in its development of civil society, both conceptually and in practice. Alonso’s brief analysis of civil society anticipates Vázquez Montalbán’s concept of the “latinoamericanización” of Marxism in Cuba when he notes that it is difficult to articulate “la relación entre hegemonía y sociedad civil...desde Cuba, sin pensar en su uso en el mundo latinoamericano” (Acanda et al. 78). According to Alonso, Cuba’s challenge is to continue “esforzándose por reproducirse y por tratar de presentar un paradigma distinto, sobre todo, al latinoamericano, al tercermundista, que no es más que un paradigma mundial liberal generalizado” (Acanda et al. 78).<sup>13</sup>

Monal, on the other hand, points out an additional challenge for Cuban civil society beyond the perceived need to establish a uniquely Cuban (rather than Latin American) paradigm, that of creating private participatory *spaces*: “la idea gramsciana

---

<sup>13</sup> I am not aware of a direct connection, but perhaps Alonso and/or other scholars who expressed the need to distinguish a particularly Cuban Marxism from that of the rest of Latin America may have been the source of Vázquez Montalbán’s comment along the same lines. Vázquez Montalbán was well read in Cuban Marxist thinkers of the time.

[de] la sociedad civil supone espacios de participación para plantear un problema...Entonces el problema es: ¿cuáles son esos espacios?...¿Cuáles serían los espacios participativos de la sociedad civil que no dependen directamente de la política?” (Acanda et al. 82). Acanda’s quick solution to this problem is to “create autonomous individuals,” which he says is “la única forma de enfrentar el ataque de la hegemonía capitalista” (85). One of the other panelists, María del Pilar Díaz-Castañón, offers a more provocative solution for the problem of “espejismo de la participación”: nationalism (Acanda et al. 85).

Vázquez Montalbán’s analysis of Gramsci in Cuba parallels his reflection on language itself [*lenguaje*]. Regarding language, the author tells us, “Si no existiera habría que inventarlo porque más que humanizar la realidad inaprehensible, la embalsama y así cuando las autoridades [cubanas] hacen balance de lo mucho que se roba en las *shoppings* estatales...no hablan de robos sino de *faltantes planificados*” (39). In a similar vein, Vázquez Montalbán states on Gramsci that

Si Fidel reconsideró su actitud ante los teólogos al comprender que la teología de la liberación era latinoamericana, tan hija de Dios como de Bolívar, tal vez Gramsci llegue a palacio desde la constatación de que está en la línea del origen de la filosofía cubana original y de que es un marxista providencial para la Cuba actual. De no haber existido habría que inventarlo. (391)

### *Cuba-Catalunya: Solidarity With the Cuban Revolution*

In addition to Vázquez Montalbán's close-up on Gramscian theories as the most valuable Marxist framework for contemporary Cuba, one of the distinctive features of his piece on the Pope's visit to Cuba is the way he uses flashbacks both to insert criticism of the left in Francoist Spain (and, by implication, in contemporary Spain) and simultaneously to evoke a nostalgia for the times when the Cuban Revolution was still able to inspire hope for the clandestine left in Catalonia. Vázquez Montalbán thus appears in his text nearly as a meta-diegetic narrator who functions as a sort of microcosmic personal connection to Cuba, representing not only a larger bridge between the Cuban Revolution and leftist thinking in Spain, but also one aspect of the political facet of a more generalized, long-running historical connection between Cuba and Catalonia.

In one instance of illustrating his personal connection with Cuba, Vázquez Montalbán goes so far as to speculate that “Yo pude haber nacido en La Habana o alguien muy parecido a mí. Yo había estado en La Habana si no desde el día en que nací, sí desde el día en que mi padre salió de la cárcel y me contó algunas cosas de su pasado” (31). By shifting his (potential) birthplace from Barcelona to Havana and connecting it to his father's imprisonment, Vázquez Montalbán suggestively relocates his cultural and familial frame of reference to Cuba, thus authorizing, in a way, his participation in Cuban society through his investigation of, and commentary on, the past, present and future of the Revolution.

Later in the text, Vázquez Montalbán makes several specific references to the inspiration that he and other students felt regarding the Cuban Revolution under Francoism, his present criticism of the totalitarian Castro regime notwithstanding. The Cuban Revolution inspired solidarity with other leftist movements around the world, especially with its successes in the 1960s, including in Catalonia; Vázquez Montalbán's experience is merely one instance of a larger (and longer-lasting) phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> In one chapter, Vázquez Montalbán attempts to recover “otro nexo con La Habana que viene desde los años en que Fidel y los suyos estaban en Sierra Maestra y nosotros tratábamos de organizar partidos clandestinos en la Universidad franquista” (50). At this point, Vázquez Montalbán portrays merely what might be deemed as a loose parallel, but he later reframes the link as a sort of spiritual connection felt by clandestine leftist students in Catalonia:

*Flash back* de las primeras fotos de los *barbudos* entrando en La Habana, el fervor con que comentábamos estos hechos en las formaciones políticas clandestinas de la Universidad de Barcelona, la dificultad de entender cómo gente situada entre nuestra edad y diez años más había ganado una revolución con las armas en la mano, imposible pensar en algo parecido en una España

---

<sup>14</sup> This sense of solidarity has persisted in Catalonia throughout the present day among a variety of leftist organizations. Some examples are Revolta Global Esquerra Anticapitalista (see, for instance, “Solidaritat amb la revolució cubana”), the Brigada Dolores Ibárruri: Brigada catalana de solidaridad con Cuba, the Partit dels Comunistes de Catalunya (see the special issue from *Avant*, “Solidaritat amb la revolució cubana”) and the series of Encuentros Estatales de Solidaridad con Cuba in Seville.

mutitada y acobardada todavía por la Guerra Civil y la administración de la victoria. (112-13)

Vázquez Montalbán wistfully ponders the “recuerdo de mi castro-guevarismo de juventud, mitómana y desarmada” (120). He uses the memory of the armed revolution against Batista to criticize the ultimate lack of effective resistance under Franco, that is, resistance that would succeed in overthrowing the dictatorship. Compared to the armed action of Cuban *guerrilleros*, which achieved the deposition of General Batista through a successful albeit ultimately totalizing revolutionary movement, the “mutilated and intimidated Spain” of the *postguerra* does not measure up: “La palma del martirio...en mayor o menor medida, la tuvimos en nuestras manos, ¡ay!, desarmadas” (113). At the same time Vázquez Montalbán laments the inability of the clandestine movements under Franco to effect a regime change, he uses memories, as in his work at large, to recuperate those same clandestine activities in a continued battle against *desmemoria* in post-transition Spain, even as his textual objective focuses on Cuba.

Flashbacks appear repeatedly throughout *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, not only to recover personal and collective memories, but also often to explain to the reader additional information that Vázquez Montalbán believes will be helpful in clarifying whatever topic is currently at hand. For instance, in the chapter “La Revolución no tiene quien le escriba,” Vázquez Montalbán pauses abruptly in his interview of Acanda to recall:

Del pasado recibo una llamada de advertencia, un informe no contra mí mismo,<sup>15</sup> pero sí sobre mí mismo. El debate sobre el *manualismo* en Cuba llegó a mi vida hace muchos años, trato de recordar dónde y sólo de regreso a España recuperaré entre mis tesoros procubanos de los años sesenta, un especial de *Ruedo Ibérico*... (377)

Only once “cumplido el *flash-back*,” Vázquez Montalbán is able to “return to Acanda” and continue the transcript of his interview (377).

These flashbacks fulfill the function of recuperating – a verb that Vázquez Montalbán uses frequently in his text – the author’s own past, as well as his shared memories of the Cuban Revolution. In part, it is as if he wants to evoke the glorious early days of the Revolution, when it “galvanized the hopes of popular forces throughout the hemisphere as much as it rattled the arrogance of despotic regimes” (Acanda, “Cuba in the Americas” 14). It would seem that Vázquez Montalbán wishes to reassure himself and the reader that there was value in what the Revolution attempted and is ostensibly still trying to achieve in Cuban society, that there exists a possible future for the Revolution, or the left at large, in the new millennium.

As part of his process of recuperation, Vázquez Montalbán thus contemplates the complex task of the left:

---

<sup>15</sup> This phrase, in turn, is a reference to exiled Cuban journalist Eliseo Alberto’s book, *Informe contra mí mismo* (written in 1978 and published abroad later), about the reports he was forced to write against his own family while living in Cuba. Vázquez-Montalbán’s text is replete with such intertextuality, some references being more oblique than others.



no es una obra ‘sistemática’, pero es que a fines de este siglo no se puede urdir ninguna obra sistemática sobre el quehacer de la izquierda. Hay que volver a empezar por donde [Harnecker] lo hace, a partir de un inventario de las experiencias concretas de transformación social que han seguido dándose a pesar de los fracasos de las propuestas absolutas y totales. 682

By reflecting on the history of the Cuban Revolution and the clandestine movements under Franco, Vázquez Montalbán therefore creates his own “inventory of concrete experiences,” including dramatic failures, and thereby begins constructing a prescription for the future of leftist movements in general. The problem with the left, Vázquez Montalbán would note a year later, is that it is as if “la izquierda estuviera compuesta de diferentes naufragios y que...con los restos del barco intentan hacer cada uno de ellos su pequeña cabaña” (*Marvos* 183).<sup>16</sup> If indeed the Revolution “no tiene quien le escriba,” Vázquez Montalbán attempts to fill this gap by writing the Revolution himself through the inventory of his own book.

The importance of the memory and recuperation of memory in this endeavor cannot be ignored or understated, especially considering the rest of his textual production. As Ofelia Ferran succinctly affirms,

Vázquez Montalbán in much of his work explicitly thematizes the issue of memory, its loss and its needed recuperation during the transition...[He] will

---

<sup>16</sup> The author would subsequently note that the Zapatista movement “exige una nueva lectura, una lectura abierta que cada náufrago hace diferenciadamente” (*Marvos* 183).

see memory as a noise, an interference in the transition's message of the benefits of silencing the past for the good of the present. Much of his literary work will be an attempt to register that noise, to tune into its wavelength, to give a voice to the repressed past, and thus...to provide an avenue for the return of the repressed. (209)

As in much of Vázquez Montalbán's overall oeuvre, recuperation of the past fulfills the function of recovering pieces of Spain's repressed past of suffering under Franco, even as the ostensible purpose of *Y Dios entró en La Habana* is rather to portray contemporary Cuba and its future in the coming years.

Beyond the flashbacks to resistance under Francoism and a nostalgia for inspiration found in the Cuban Revolution, Vázquez Montalbán paints an image of contemporary Cuba and Spain as having a relation of *encuentro-desencuentro*: "La relación encuentro-desencuentro entre España y Cuba no hay que remontarla [a] 1960, bastaría empezar con la caída del muro de Berlín" (442). In some sense, one might say that *Y Dios entró en La Habana* constitutes Vázquez Montalbán's attempt to bridge the gap of *desencuentro* through a critical, intellectual engagement with society, politics, and economics *vis à vis* the Revolution, which is adopted, as it were, by Spanish citizens from across the peninsula, as the author himself states:

...una veintena de universidades españolas firman acuerdos de colaboración con Cuba y hay una importantísima asistencia solidaria española, principalmente de ayuntamientos con gobiernos de izquierdas o asociaciones

especialmente organizadas para ayudar a los cubanos, para ayudar a una Revolución que miles de españoles consideran como suya, una Revolución adoptada, sustituta de la que no consiguieron hacer en su propia tierra. (435)<sup>17</sup>

*The Revolution After the Revolution: Mestizaje, Indígenas, New Atlases*

In the same way that he uses plurivocality in works such as *Autobiografía del general Franco* to recover the oppressed – and repressed – memory of Spain under the dictatorship, Vázquez Montalbán creates a collage of Cuban, Spanish, and Latin American voices in *Y Dios entró en La Habana*. This multitude of voices speaks to the fractured and shifting political climate in the Special Period in Cuba at the end of the 1990s, and the image that results from Vázquez Montalbán's rendering of the Cuban Revolution is nuanced in its criticism and praise for the accomplishments and failures of the forty years of Revolution that Cuba had experienced as of 1998. Even as *Y Dios entró en La Habana* contains part of Vázquez Montalbán's general attempt to dismantle the damage wrought by Francoism, it represents his lengthy, painstaking effort to “tune into the wavelength” of the Cuba of the Special Period.

This collage reveals an overall growing dissatisfaction with the Revolution in Cuba, a quiet rumbling that speaks between the lines of the text itself. One of

---

<sup>17</sup> Jaume Martí-Olivella discusses this section of Montalbán's analysis by placing Cuba in the context of a “nostalgia boom,” in which “Cuba offers a double and contradictory stimulus for the new Spanish touristic subject: to be able to satisfy at the same time, almost unconsciously, his/her historical-imperial and/or erotic-revolutionary frustrations and appetites” (164).

Vázquez Montalbán's informants tell him, "Aquí no hay ruidos, pero hay silencios que son ruidos" (141). Whereas in his detective fiction Vázquez Montalbán's intention "tiene un alcance...ambicioso: realizar una novela-crónica de la sociedad de nuestros días sirviéndose de ciertas claves proporcionadas por la literatura policíaca como armazón argumental" (Colmeiro 19), in *Y Dios entró en La Habana* the author creates a collage of voices in his inventory of the left which, if listened to carefully, speak between and beyond the words presented.

Thus noise and silence take on greater significance when examined in the broader context of Vázquez Montalbán's work at large. The author's production on leftist movements in Mexico and other parts of Latin America is particularly relevant. Early on in *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, Vázquez Montalbán admits that beyond investigating Cubans' opinions of their own country or their own revolution, "Me interesa lo que piensan de Cuba los nuevos insurgentes. Lo de Marcos y el Frente Zapatista me suena a intentar hacer la Revolución después de la muerte de la Revolución" (74). Along with the other points I have elaborated on above, this concept of the "Revolution after the Revolution" in Latin America acts as essential piece of the overarching framework within which Vázquez Montalbán weaves his analysis of the Cuban Revolution and its significance for the coming millennium.

That next revolution that Vázquez Montalbán tackles, the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, results in another publication, *Marcos: El señor de los espejos* (1999), in which the author recounts the full interview he conducted with Subcomandante Marcos and

his revolutionary poetics in the Lacandona jungle. One of the key concepts on which Vázquez Montalbán and Marcos elaborate in this text is that of the Zapatista movement as a mirror for Mexico. Vázquez Montalbán synthesizes this idea: “el zapatismo fue la propuesta de un nuevo espejo para que México no se viera en la imagen distorsionada de una falsa modernidad. Hasta cierto punto también era el rostro real del mundo. El rostro real del fracaso de la oferta neoliberal” (149).

In his “A manera de epílogo” at the end of *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, Vázquez Montalbán essentially drops his direct discussion of the Cuban Revolution and the perennially upcoming Pope’s visit, to bring the focus entirely on other revolutionary or leftist movements in Latin America, with an explicit emphasis on the role of indigenous peoples in these global trends. The author first relates his interview with Rigoberta Menchú and her thoughts on the status of leftist movements in Latin America, then turns to Subcomandante Marcos and the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, the *neozapatista* movement in Chiapas, Mexico. Whereas throughout the chapters of *Y Dios entró en La Habana* the concept of *mestizaje* appears primarily in relation to hybridized Afro-Cuban culture and religious syncretism, in the epilogue *mestizaje* takes on a dimension that stems more broadly from indigenous peoples and their cultures throughout Latin America.

Vázquez Montalbán reproduces in his epilogue a letter that he received from Subcomandante Marcos, addressed to “Manuel Vázquez Montalbán y/o Pepe Carvalho.” This letter came from an exchange the two had regarding, among more

solemn topics, the “torture” that Marcos experienced upon reading of Pepe Carvalho’s gastronomic adventures while in the jungle with no access to luxuries like chorizo. On a serious note, Vázquez Montalbán recounts that “A mis dudas sobre el final de las revoluciones, el subcomandante también contestaba: ‘Y el silencio de la rabia explota en cualquier momento, un silencio que se acumula y crece en situaciones absurdas, inesperadas, incomprensibles’...” (713).

Marcos himself has written on the concept of silence, which helps to shed some light on his meaning here. In a letter “to the people of Mexico” and the “peoples and governments of the world,” on October 12, 1995, the Subcomandante takes the 503rd anniversary of Columbus’s landing in Cuba as a starting point for commenting on the resistance of indigenous peoples in Mexico via silence and the word. In a nutshell, Marcos asserts that

It is the word that gives form to that walk that goes on inside us. It is the word that is the bridge to cross to the other side. Silence is what Power offers our pain in order to make us small. When we are silenced, we remain very much alone...We use the word to renew ourselves...That is the weapon, brothers and sisters. We say, the word remains. We speak the word. We shout the word. We kill the silence, by living the word. (84)

Yet there are two silences and two words, according to Marcos. In contrast to the “silence of Power,” Marcos continues, indigenous people can use their own silence and their own word, as a tool to fight oppression: “Five hundred and three years ago

today, October 12, our word and our silence began to resist, to fight, to live... Today, 503 years after death from a foreign land arrived to bring us silence [i.e. the silence of Power], we resist and we speak” (85). Vázquez Montalbán was certainly aware of Marcos’s written body of work on indigenous resistance, so it is important to keep Marcos’s idea of silence and the [spoken] word in mind when Vázquez Montalbán recounts the Subcomandante’s words in his text.

Yet considering Vázquez Montalbán’s own use of noise as resistance in his work, as mentioned, we can perceive an additional angle to the author’s choices in how he portrays both the Cuban Revolution and the Zapatista resistance movements. The author succinctly sums up his connection between revolution and noise, noise as revolution in a comment toward the end of the book: “Ahí está la revolución zapatista... Esta revolución es el ruido que se ha colado en el canal de comunicación del pensamiento único, es el enemigo a batir y se estrecha el cerco en torno a su irresistible originalidad” (686). Thus *Y Dios entró en La Habana* constitutes a fundamental step along the way in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s rumination on revolution(s). Noise and silence inform his project gently at first, then more loudly as the end of the text urgently approaches.

Ultimately, for Vázquez Montalbán, “los cubanos han creído bastante en la Revolución y en sus frutos. De hecho la Revolución les ha dado conciencia nacional, una identidad buscada desde los primeros gritos insurgentes del siglo XIX... en el sustrato ha quedado la esperanza” (187). This hope prevails even through the

numerous and manifold criticisms, and not only for the Cuban Revolution: “Acabe como acabe la Revolución cubana...las necesidades humanas siguen exigiendo satisfacciones y después de la Revolución sobreviene otra revolución en minúscula, de la misma manera que después de la historia vuelve la historia incapaz de asumir en serio su final” (686). In *Y Dios entró en La Habana*, then, Vázquez Montalbán attempts to perceive the coming of that “other revolution” with a lower-case r.

As we have seen earlier, *Y Dios entró en La Habana* presents the author’s effort to tune into the wavelength of Cuba and its Revolution. Yet we can also say that underneath this effort lies a nascent effort to tune into the noise of another revolution, a revolution after the Revolution: the leftist movements across Latin America and the rumblings that were emerging from the silence that had accumulated to a bursting point. This coming revolution, the hope for the future, the next Atlases of the world and the new face of the left – of religion, of everything – in the twenty-first century, Vázquez Montalbán claims, will be *mestizos*. Hence, after spending virtually an entire epilogue speaking of indigenous movements throughout Latin America, Vázquez Montalbán can abruptly end his entire book thus:

Esa continuidad acústica que es un fin en sí misma, que morirá con la tribu que la avala, que nada rompe ya incluso cuando pronuncia palabras de ruptura. Marcos ha vuelto a poner nombre a las reivindicaciones, porque ha partido de un sujeto histórico de cambio realmente existente. El subcomandante es algo teatral, obligado por la naturaleza de su escenario y



como réplica a las farsas de supermercado de la modernización uniformadora o de los restos del naufragio semántico del marxismo leninismo. Representa insurgencias esenciales: el indigenismo como sujeto internacional, el mestizaje como lo deseable más que como lo inevitable.

En Cuba, por ejemplo, los atlantes del futuro serán, sin duda alguna, negros o mulatos. (713)

If the Subcomandante is “theatrical,” as the author says, we might add that Vázquez Montalbán’s own book is a rehearsal of sorts, a *mise en scène* for the author’s more detailed follow-up analysis on the Zapatistas. Almost like an inverse of Marcos’s mirror, *Y Dios entró en La Habana* reflects the image of the left back to itself, displaying the wide range of its intricacies, problems and challenges. Like a deep well, the text sends back the echo of the left’s own noisy silence as it ponders the future.

## CHAPTER 3

### (RE-)IMAGINING A NATIONAL PROJECT: THE RISE OF CUBAN NATIONALISM IN CARMEN RIERA'S *CAP AL CEL OBERT* (2000)

#### *Cuba Trend in Contemporary Catalan Literature*

As we have noted, the centennial of Spain's loss of colonial Cuba prompted research and publications by Catalan scholars on the shared history between Catalonia and Cuba. Along with the scholarly studies and publications, the advent of the year 1998 also seemed to provoke a response in Catalan literature and film, in which Cuba figured prominently. Àlex Broch indicates that “a partir de los últimos años de la década de los noventa, podemos consignar la presencia de Cuba en la literatura catalana de una manera variada y creciente” (63). Broch acknowledges that the opening of Cuba and the corresponding rise of Catalan tourism on the island offer simplistic explanations of the “nuevo registro temático” in contemporary Catalan literature. However, he does argue that “...esta presencia no sería posible si no hubiera un substrato histórico que relacionara Cataluña y España con Cuba. Sin esa base histórica sólo hablaríamos de un posible anécdota literaria...Esta relación explica buena parte de esa literatura reciente y anuncia las enormes posibilidades aún ocultas (63). Broch does not tie the appearance of this trend to the year 1998, but taking this year into account offers quite reasonable additional explanation for the sudden appearance of this fascination with Cuba in contemporary Catalan literature.

Carme Riera's novel *Cap al cel obert* (2000) is one of the early novels that fit into this recent trend in contemporary Catalan literature. Riera (b. Palma, 1948) was born and raised in Mallorca by her Catalan mother and Mallorcan father. Novelist, essayist, playwright and professor of literature at the Universitat de Barcelona, she is one of the most well-known and widely translated female authors writing in Catalan today. She has won many awards for her writing, among them the Prudenci Bertrana (1980), Ramon Llull (1989), Josep Pla (1994), the Ministry of Culture National Prize for Narrative (1994), Creu de Sant Jordi (2000) and Premi Sant Jordi (2003). Although she started writing creatively at the young age of twelve, Riera's first important narrative work was *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora* (1975), and she has continued to publish many pieces of note through the decades to the present. Overall, Riera's "obra no se pronuncia como unidireccional sino que refleja modos de ser y formas de pensar que nacen de una dialéctica social" (Valdivieso). Much of her work, moreover, has "demonstrated a special sensitivity to marginality and silencing, and she has repeatedly given a voice to those who have not had one" (Glenn, "Carme Riera, *Por el cielo*"). Riera's feminist approach has especially included those who are marginalized because of their gender, sexual preferences, or religion.

While Riera's early work is known for its lyricism and intimacy, her lengthy historical novels *Dins el darrer blau* (1994) and *Cap al cel obert* (2000) "[r]omp[en] con aquel intimismo...No hay en estas obras nada de la abstracción lírica...nada de aquellos paisajes interiores cuya universalidad nos seducía. Lo que tenemos ahora son

retratos y retazos de un universo cotidiano opresivo y sórdido” (Valdivieso 92). While these novels were not the first to break with her earlier style (take, for instance, her novel *Qüestió d’amor propi*, 1987), they do mark a separate phase in her oeuvre.

*Dins el darrer blau* deals with a group of so-called *xuetes*, or crypto-Jews who have ostensibly converted to Catholicism, who attempt to flee the island in an English ship, but they are unable to leave because of an impending storm. They are forced to abandon the beach and return to town, where they are immediately arrested and many are subsequently executed. Isabel Tarongí is a protagonist among those who are burned at the stake for heresy. *Dins el darrer blau* compresses the events, which occurred between 1688 and 1691, into a shorter time frame of about a year, but otherwise treats many of the known historical details with careful accuracy.

*Cap al cel obert* embarks, as it were, on the sea journey of the descendents of characters in *Dins el darrer blau*. The novel takes up the Tarongí lineage as its starting point and again deals with marginalization, discrimination, and political intrigue. However, the narration of this “pseudocontinuación” of the previous novel, as Riera accurately describes it, occurs in the middle of the nineteenth century, primarily – and significantly – in Cuba (“¿Por qué novelas históricas?”).

Like its companion, *Cap al cel obert* is based on actual historical persons and events. Both works are very well researched, with an explicitly declared emphasis on projecting correct images of the respective periods, including the Mallorcan vocabulary that was used and other social details. In fact, Riera has stated that she

“detest[a] los anacronismos tanto como los disparates,” and that, moreover, she is always preoccupied with “la verosimilitud del relato, de manera que trato de documentarme al máximo y luego procuro que eso no se note, que todo fluya con naturalidad” (“¿Por qué las novelas históricas?”).

Riera’s emphasis on historical detail is well known and has been thoroughly commented in scholarship. The author has also remarked directly on her own attitude toward the reader in connection to her historical fiction. Before she composed *Cap al cel obert*, Riera wrote of *Dins el darrer blau* that:

...en atención al lector/a y en consideración a que éste o ésta no deben dejar de exigir una obra compacta, bien organizada, bien trabada, capaz de ofrecer una imagen globalizadora de un mundo personal autónomo en el que los personajes vayan evolucionando a medida que avanza la novela y podamos observar cómo se transforman según los acontecimientos, y no al albur de su creador/a. Mi intención era construir una novela bien edificada en la que cada palabra significara precisamente lo que quise decir, del modo más exacto y a la vez más connotativo posible... (“Una ambición sin límites” 23)

Given the close connections between the novels, as well as Riera’s general approach toward her extensive background research for her historical fiction, it is reasonable to assume that the same statement would hold true regarding *Cap al cel obert*. Indeed, the many thematic and narrative links between *Dins el darrer blau* and *Cap al cel obert* have often led scholars to speak of the two novels in the same breath in their analyses of

one or the other.

Yet I question: what does it mean to observe how characters in a novel, historical or otherwise, evolve according to events within the text and not according to the whim of their creator? This claim seems a little farfetched. Despite Riera's perfectly legitimate insistence on research and documentation, and in spite of her hedging that "la base de que cualquier novela es histórica" ("¿Por qué novelas históricas?"), it is precisely, to belabor the point, the "creator's whim" that bestows upon literature a large portion of its complexity and appeal.

Overall, scholars have paid less critical attention to *Cap al cel obert* than to her other fiction, especially compared to her early work, although *Dins el darrer blau* has also garnered greater attention. This may be in part because, as one scholar put it, the novel "proves disappointing" when compared to *Dins el darrer blau*, which was an arguably more "compelling novel, well written and rich in complex, remarkable characters" (Glenn, "Carme Riera, Por el cielo"). Yet the novel has certainly not gone entirely without commentary. Jaume Martí-Olivella has written that *Cap al cel obert* "is especially interesting...When exploring this historical ordeal alongside with that of the Cuban colonization, Riera's text becomes a very valuable social document of the necessary transatlantic gaze that is anchored in neocolonial or imperialist nostalgias" (Martí-Olivella 175). Àlex Broch likewise believes that although *Cap al cel obert* is "una novela de personaje y este personaje, Maria Fortesa, es el eje de toda la novela" (68), it is regardless "una notable novela que refleja una parte de la historia de Cuba" (67).

More recently, Rosa Cornejo Parriego states: “La novela de Riera ilustra de forma muy expresiva las transferencias políticas, económicas, culturales e ideológicas entre España y la Cuba colonial” (4). While to a certain extent these claims are not unfounded, it appears that the scholarship has placed the novel on a sort of historical pedestal, almost as if the novel were authentic material from the epoch in question, rather than a work of fiction set in that period.

Riera has remarked on several occasions that writing is a seductive act.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the extant scholarship on *Cap al cel obert* (and even, one might add, on *Dins el darrer blau*) has fallen a little too deeply into Riera’s seductive snare on this point. I do not, in any way, mean to belittle the real historical basis on which these novels are based and the very important criticisms contained therein. I simply wish to point out the obvious: that *Cap al cel obert*, like any other fiction, is not a historical document; it is a novel and should be read as such. Riera’s consideration for her history-buff readers notwithstanding, it is precisely her own nuanced treatment of historical details that is of real interest: not, as it were, the accuracy of the facts. Riera is, as noted, a well-known and serious author of contemporary Catalan literature; *Cap al cel obert* therefore merits a closer look. This chapter will thus consider Riera’s novel, in the context of the documented historical connections between Cuba and Catalonia, as well as in light of characteristics of her broader oeuvre.

There are subtle criticisms layered within the text, which scholars have hinted

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, her remarks from a 1989 interview (cited Valls 307).

at but thus far have not dealt with in any detail. One scholar obliquely tells us, for instance, that “El text es pot llegir com la dissortada aventura d’una jove mallorquina en la Cuba espanyola del segle XIX, per bé que hi ha paral·lelismes evidents amb el present, amb l’actuació de les classes dirigents i, per dir-ho clar i net, amb la política catalana actual” (Valls 302). But what parallels? What exact link is referred to here regarding contemporary Catalan politics? We have no further explanation here.

Another scholar approaches the issue slightly more directly: “following the handbook of nineteenth-century melodrama, the author recreates Cuba’s colonial conflict in the second half of the nineteenth century, leading to political reflection about the national question” (Cotoner Cerdó). Yet these brief comments leave the criticism neither *clar* nor *net*.

Thus I ask: what, indeed, does *Cap al cel obert* have to say about Catalan politics? Specifically, what can be read in this novel about the concept of the nation? How does Riera define the nation, and is it a viable project? What is the significance of the location in Cuba and the portrayal of the political activities on the island? How are the roles of Catalans in the Cuban fight for autonomy portrayed? These are some of the questions that scholarship on *Cap al cel obert* has thus far failed to address adequately, or at all in some cases. I will deal with these ideas here, particularly in view of the voyages that take place in the novel, as well as the location in Cuba. As I will show, the location of the narration in mid-nineteenth century Cuba and the relationship that Riera portrays between Cubans and Catalans on the island are crucial



for understanding her representation of the development of modern cultural and political nationalisms in both Cuba and Catalonia. Writing is central to the development of nationalism in the novel, as are voyages. I posit that the sea voyage to Cuba at the beginning of *Cap al cel obert*, and the hot-air balloon spectacle at the end, create a circular but progressive narrative, through which Riera makes a fascinating statement about the nation.

### *Writing a Voyage*

The story opens in Cuba with a bet between the Fortalesa brothers Miquel and Gabriel: depending on the outcome of the cards, one of them will get to leave for Europe, and the other will have to stay in Cuba, manage the family business, and marry according to their father's wishes. Under the watchful eye of a notary, who records what transpires, Gabriel wins and will thus travel to Europe to study painting, while Miquel, the loser, must remain.

Isabel Fortesa, who is a distant cousin of the Fortalesa family, then has to leave Mallorca for Cuba, as her father has arranged for her to marry Miquel. Isabel Fortesa's sister Maria promises their father that she will watch over her sister and thus accompanies Isabel on the trip from Mallorca to Cuba. Both the title of the novel (referring to the sky, which in turn recalls *Dins el darrer blau*) and the sea journey that forms the axis for the subsequent plot evoke the color blue. For Riera, the sea and its azure color indicate hope: "Es para mí el azul y no verde el color de la esperanza, del

deseo y de la quimera” (“Una ambición sin límites 27). However, certain hopes are dashed in *Cap al cel obert* when something unforeseen occurs on the way to the Caribbean: on the ship, called *El Catalán*, a terrible sickness takes over and many passengers die; Maria also falls ill and loses consciousness for an extended time, during which her sister Isabel passes away. Maria rouses at the Fortalesa home, where the family has taken her to be her sister because Isabel had transferred her betrothal ring to her sister’s finger before her death.

When Maria comes to comprehend that the Fortalesa family believes that she is Isabel, she agonizes over what to do; finally, she writes a letter explaining what happened, pleading for forgiveness and asking them to help her obtain a way to enter a convent. Instead of becoming a nun as per her initial request, however, Maria ends up marrying the patriarch of the family, Josep Joaquim de Fortalesa, which greatly displeases his adult children Gabriel, Miquel, Custodi, and Angela.

The rest of the novel deals with political and family intrigues that develop in sequential episodes in imitation of the *fulletons* [feuilletons] of the nineteenth century, which were used to publish “no només obres de caràcter literari, sinó també materials ben diversos de caire jurídic o instrumental” (Figueres 241). The *fulletó*-inspired episodic format thus recalls the literary, juridical, and pedagogical layers present in the original genre. As in the original genre, the episodes create suspense for the reader right up until the climax, dénouement and surprising close. Riera has stated that she selected the feuilleton not only because of its technique of building suspense, but also

because “[l]a literatura del siglo XIX era el folletín y yo he hecho una novela sobre el siglo XIX; por tanto, este era el género más idóneo” (Piñol). Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that Riera “departs from the formulae of her model in using irony as a distancing device and not giving her novel a happy conclusion” (Glenn, “Carme Riera, *Por el cielo*”). This arguably lends the text a much more complex air than if Riera had simply followed the original genre in all its aspects.

In a greater measure than its episodic format, nonetheless, the voyages that frame the main portion of the narration are key to the structure of *Cap al cel obert*. The first significant voyage, which occurs near the beginning of the novel, takes the story across the Atlantic, when sisters Isabel and Maria Fortesa travel from Mallorca to Cuba so that Isabel can marry their cousin Miquel.

There are several conspicuous intertextual references related to Maria’s and Isabel’s transatlantic sea voyage that call for further analysis. The most important reference is the ship on which Maria and Isabel travel. This ship, in *Cap al cel obert*, is called *El Catalán*, clearly reminiscent of the real ship *Montserrat*, which was denominated “El Català” in popular lore. This ship became a recurrent symbol in Catalan culture and still resonates strongly today. The primary cultural artifact in which *El Català* appears is in the immensely popular Catalan havanera “El meu avi.” Havaneres, or *habaneras* in Castilian, are expressive songs brought to Catalonia from Cuba, where they were initially fashioned in the nineteenth century out of a blend of European *contradansa* and African rhythms. In Catalonia, havaneres are traditionally

sung in taverns, usually by small groups of men accompanied by guitar and sometimes accordion or bass. The grandfather of the title in “El meu avi” leaves for Cuba aboard the *Català* to fight in the Guerra de Cuba:

El meu avi va anar a Cuba  
a bordo del *Català*  
el millor *barco* de guerra  
de la flota d'ultramar. (“El meu avi”)

Thus, immediately at the beginning of the song, the ship takes a central place, standing in somewhat as a protagonist in the text. The centrality partially explains why the ship in *Cap al cel obert* is such a loaded image. “El meu avi” offers, moreover, a particularly interesting case of transatlantic cultural consumption and transformation. The song was composed in the turbulent year of 1968 and performed in public for the first time in 1971. Galina Bakhtiarova states that this “may be viewed as a crucial point in the story of Catalan habanera” and was likely the first time that a habanera in Catalonia “was a self reflexive habanera, a habanera that acknowledged the habanera tradition as part of local identity” (“Transatlantic Returns”).

Bakhtiarova explores in her research the transculturation of havaneres as they cross the Atlantic between Cuba and Catalonia. Havaneres have been sung throughout Spain for decades. However, specifically in Catalonia, Bakhtiarova claims, havaneres have acquired “the status of a national emblem comparable to the *sardana*,

the Catalan national dance,” and therefore, in “a nation without a state but with a sense of distinct national identity, [marks] a privileged space for reflecting on the permutations of cultural signs back and forth across the Atlantic” (“Tale of Two Habaneras” 119). Overall, this evolution of the habanera/havanera as it makes its way between the two continents leads to “a transnational cultural sign, constitutes a site for viewing the emergence of an unconventional identity space for Catalonia” (“Transatlantic”).

Less well known than “El meu avi,” but potentially no less significant, the ship *El Català* also appears in the television miniseries *Havanera 1820* (1993) by Antoni Verdaguer. In this case, the female protagonist Amèlia goes on board the ship *El Català* to marry a prosperous Catalan immigrant in Cuba, Ton Massana. Like Isabel, Amèlia must marry Ton because of family obligations; in this case, it is a marriage match arranged by her uncle. Martí-Olivella states that *Havanera 1820* “seems to anticipate [a] textual tendency of a more interesting and innovative type...the narrative about ‘indianos’ or ‘americanos,’” even before the literary versions in this vein, such as *Cap al cel obert*, began to appear a few years later (175). Bakhtiarova posits that the reinvention of the *americano* allows for the connection between Cuba and Catalonia to emerge as a particular cultural sign that modifies the traditional representations of Catalan nation and identity (“Americanos”). I would add that this is true not only in the visual and musical texts to which she refers, but also in the

narrative works by Riera and others that appeared around and after the centennial of the Guerra de Cuba.

By taking the name of the ship and its iterations in *Cap al cel obert*, Riera appears to formulate a clear connection at a minimum to the havanera “El meu avi,” and to the narration in *Havanera 1820*. These intertextual references gain further significance when we consider Riera’s purpose for writing *Cap al cel obert*, explained by the author in her notes following the text of the novel:

Amb *Cap al cel obert*...intento reflexionar sobre la història del nostre passat i les contradiccions del nostre present que ens aboquen a la més absoluta desmemòria. No fa pas tant que fóren emigrants i alguns, fins i tot, negrers...Encara que no ens agradi, potser el fet de reconèixer-ho ens permeti de ser més generosos i tolerants amb els immigrants, amb tots aquells que són diferents o, senzillament, no pensen com nosaltres. (354)

What Riera is getting at here, which nearly every scholar writing on this novel repeats in some way, is that yesterday’s victims have become today’s perpetrators; that society tends to forget the past from one generation to the next. In an interview with *El País*, Riera stated directly: “Los humanos somos tan complicados que en una generación podemos ser víctimas y en la siguiente, verdugos. O al revés” (Obiols).<sup>2</sup>

It doesn’t take much to read between the lines to realize that Riera is also essentially shaking her finger at contemporary society in Spain and perhaps especially

---

<sup>2</sup> See also her interview with Piñol, where she essentially repeats the same information.

at Mallorca, instructing her readers to get along with and be tolerant of those who profess or embody any sort of difference from mainstream society, however it is defined. Indeed, Riera made a similar statement in her author's note to *Dins el darrer blau*, in which she spoke of the intolerance she witnessed as a child in Mallorca toward descendents of Jewish converts. Neus Carbonell states that Riera's note to *Dins el darrer blau*

[...] opens up the conflict again to leave it unresolved and writes uncertainty back into the narrative and, more importantly, into history, not as past but as present and future [...] It also creates the uncomfortable possibility of the self being situated both in the place of the executioner and of the victim. In this sense, it demands of the reader an ethical commitment. (226)

We can see the same commitment to the present in *Cap al cel obert*. With its ironic take on history, fate, politics and power, we are clearly dealing with “una visió escèptica, crítica del món i l'existència, del passat i del present” in *Cap al cel obert* (Valls 307).

Yet although Riera had these reasonable and even admirable goals in writing her fiction – and I have no reason whatsoever to doubt her motives – I would like to suggest that the criticism has become a little too mired in these particular ideas. These aspects of her historical novels are merely that: aspects, limited elements of her work that have overshadowed other points that I believe are more interesting and complex. Turning back to *El Català*, then, we see that the link Riera establishes to “El meu avi”

with the name of the ship the Fortesa sisters take to Cuba refers us to a tragic end: the brave young men of the havanera do not return home, perishing rather in their quest:

Quan el 'Català', sortia a la mar,  
cridava el meu avi: Apa nois que és tard!  
però el[s] valents d[ʔa]bordo,  
no varen tornar, no varen tornar...  
tingueren la culpa els Americans! (“El meu avi”)

The blame placed squarely on the shoulders of the Americans is by no means casual. If we recall that this havanera was written and began to be performed in the late sixties and early seventies, we realize that this is the time of the Vietnam War and of ongoing collaboration between the United States and the Francoist regime. The tragic fate of the *Català* and the underlying anti-Americanism in “El meu avi” should properly be understood as a reaction against the oppressive politics of the time. One cannot read of the ship in *Cap al cel obert* and miss the reference to these layers of the havanera.

Moreover, what is interesting here is that Cuba is bound up in both texts with the portrayal of the rise of Catalonia as a modern nation. The havanera ends with a significant line: “Visca Catalunya! Visca el ‘Català!’” The obvious connection between the ship’s name and the indigenous language of Catalonia thus forms a fundamental element of the piece, a rallying cry for the homeland under the latter years of a long-lasting regime of oppression. As Bakhtiarova states,



Behind the name of the ship, the performers and the audience perceived a second meaning with a transparent allusion to the vernacular language and its significance for Catalan cultural identity. The importance these words had during the last years of a dictatorship that sought to eradicate the language and all traces of national culture and identity is self-evident. "El meu avi" may be viewed as a kind of simulacrum, a nostalgic evocation of a song genre that did not exist in Catalan, however, was accepted as such by the whole nation.

("Transatlantic Returns")

Additionally, the name of the ship in the havanera, together with the reference "Visca Catalunya!" explicitly points to the development of political Catalanism, particularly in connection with the war with Cuba and the economic and political fallout that Catalans had to deal with, due to Spain's loss of the colonies in 1898. Moreover, the ship's destination of Cuba and the setting of the war with Cuba establish a link between Catalonia's history of maritime affairs, the connections between Cuba and Catalonia, and the impact this transatlantic relationship has had on contemporary Catalan identity. Riera thus evokes this shared history through her reference to the ship in *Cap al cel obert*.

Furthermore, it is not lost on the reader that Riera basically elides the entire voyage in the narrative. The reader must deduce, along with Maria, what transpired during the transatlantic crossing. By deliberately eliminating the narration of Maria's illness and Isabel's death, Riera draws greater attention to these events. Maria

Fortesa's survival, as well as her specific role in the rest of the narration – which is the bulk of the novel – together suggest an underlying optimism regarding the fate of the nation.

### *Writing the Nation*

As we have mentioned, the existing scholarship on *Cap al cel obert* has focused on Riera's patently postmodernist portrayal of official and unofficial histories, as well as the multiple perspectives she uses in her narrative. As in Riera's other narrative work, certainly individual voices, rather than official or governmental documents, are the privileged means by which memories are produced, performed, and preserved in *Cap al cel obert*. As one scholar summarizes:

[h]istorical reality can be glimpsed through letters, rumours, legends, brief notes, official documents and, more importantly, memories. These memories, passed from generation to generation, are usually opposed to official History.

Riera's goal is to dismantle official historiography by showing the forces and interests that really drove it, everything that lies behind it. (Ramón 17-18)

The unofficial history is, of course, juxtaposed to the official authorities who write their own version of what transpires. Thus the reader gets a glimpse of the motives and the wheeling and dealing of those in power through a “polyphonic discourse” via what seems to be an extradiegetic omniscient narrator (Cotoner Cerdó). In *Cap al cel obert*, various sources combine to offer multiple perspectives from which histories are

recounted; confident in its postmodernism, the novel never offers only a single source of truth.

One key to Riera's technique for exposing multiple perspectives in her novel is the act of writing. In much of her fiction, Riera has displayed a tendency to use writing to highlight the tenuous and conflicted relationship between official history and the stories of individuals. In particular, Riera uses female characters to illustrate the woman's shadow role in creating and (re)telling and/or (re)writing history, showing the unofficial stories that make up the other side of History's coin. As Gerda Lerner states, "Riera intends to avoid the traditional male centered historiography in *Cap al cel obert*...to light up areas of historical darkness" (cited in Ramón 20).

In *Cap al cel obert*, writing is crucial not only to the construction of history, but also to how truth and lies are conveyed. Female characters participate in acts of subversive and deceptive writing, and they also suffer the consequences of having produced the written text. Letter writing, specifically, figures prominently, contributing to the multiple perspectives on events and relationships that are woven throughout the text. Characters often compose letters – and memories – to formulate an alternative version of an established history.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, falsified letters, gossip,

---

<sup>3</sup> *Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora* (1975) and *Jo pos com a testimoni les gavines* (1977) constitute previous examples of conflicting stories that question the authenticity of the role of the author or indeed any storyteller; in this regard, *Cap al cel obert* does present certain typical characteristics found in Riera's work.

rumors, and intrigue work together to produce the machinations of political power and control over its subjects. Kathleen Glenn goes so far as to suggest that:

Much more deft [than her portrayal of the Other, given the lack of voice for black characters] is Riera's use of epistolary cross-dressing and impersonation, with their attendant possibilities of seduction and ambiguity...[whereby] Each correspondent attempts to seduce her presumed addressee and succumbs to the power of the passion she feigns. ("Carme Riera, Por el cielo").

However, while the epistolary element of seduction in *Cap al cel obert* does offer some interesting material for analysis, to a certain extent it merely constitutes typical Rierian narrative technique. More interesting in *Cap al cel obert*, I would argue, is Riera's treatment of poetry: Riera uses Maria Fortesa's poetry to develop ideas about the development of political nationalism. This technique represents an interesting turn in her fiction, and we will now turn to it.

The various political proposals for Cuba's future that surface in *Cap al cel obert* do reflect the turbulence and conflict of the era. Several characters stand in as spokespeople, as it were, for the spectrum of political viewpoints of the era. Maria Fortesa, for all that she is a new inhabitant of the island, stands out as the voice of Cuban patriotism. In a key moment in the novel, Maria decides to take up her former habit of writing poetry, precisely when she is pregnant with their first child:

La imminència de l'arribada del fill la feia ésser més estricta amb ella mateixa, com si volgués preparar-se també per oferir-li el millor de la seva ànima; tornà a

fer versos i un capvespre especialment confident, amb cel boirós, fredolenc, els mostrà [i.e. els seus poemes] al senyor de Fortalesa, que l'encoratjà a seguir perquè li semblà que allò li podria servir de distracció. (181)

The cold and the fog alluded to in the moment of her rebirth as a poet are also explicitly associated with Catalonia in other parts of the novel, particularly in contrast to the hot, tropical Cuban climate. It is possible to argue that Riera exoticizes Cuba with this contrast, but overall it seems to be used nostalgically to remember or commemorate Catalonia. We are told, for instance, during the political discussion in the Secció Literària, that Jeroni Albertí

...encara que s'havia vist forçat a emigrar molt jove, mai no deixaria de ser d'on era ni de sentir com a Pàtria seva la Plana de Vic, on havia nascut, ni tampoc d'enyorar, malgrat que no tingués cap intenció de tornar-hi, les boirosses contrades...que ponderava sovint, sobretot per poder dejectar la llum del Carib... (183)

It is interesting to note that on an evening that the reader is led to associate with Catalonia, then, that Maria feels inspired to share her poetry with Josep. Additionally, Riera seems to suggest a connection between Maria's pregnancy and her poetry: the fruit of her body and the fruit of her soul, as it were.

What is noteworthy is that the "best of Maria's soul" makes strong statements about *pàtria*, a layer emphasized by the climate connected to Catalonia in the text.

The conversation between husband and wife about Maria's poetry results in a

particularly significant poem that she composes for the senyor de Fortalesa. In this first poem that we read from her Havana writings, she explores the concept of *pàtria*, which she identifies as Cuba, not her previous home of Mallorca:

Pàtria és més que naixença:  
per mi la dolça terra,  
que acull i que abressola,  
és Cuba. Oh Cuba,  
pàtria meva,  
tu em dons la identitat! (181)

For Maria, then, *pàtria* can be, under certain conditions, any land where one ends up living. She seems to have left her birthplace behind her definitively. In any case, for Maria, the new *pàtria* must be a land “que acull” and that gives a warm welcome to its new inhabitant. In this moment in the plot, Maria believes that her new land and the new society in which she finds herself accept her without the slightest hesitation.

Furthermore, the fact that she takes up writing in part because of her pregnancy points us again to an optimistic outlook on the future. Maria is with child – the blatant religious connotation is too obvious to be ignored – and perhaps she expects her son to be a shining light of patriotism; her new homeland will be his, as well.

As the novel progresses, it becomes increasingly obvious that *Cap al cel obert* – despite its connection to *Dins el darrer blau* so heavily emphasized by scholarship – rather than being primarily about Mallorcan Jews, per se, constitutes instead a

fascinating commentary on Cuba and Catalonia, and, perhaps even more importantly, on the concept of nation. The author has made direct comments regarding her intentions in writing the novel that have been somewhat overlooked by scholars, but that I believe must be considered critically in this context. Riera has stated:

Quería escribir sobre las relaciones entre Mallorca y Cuba, en definitiva, entre Cataluña y Cuba...Entre 1850 y 1860 es el periodo en que se gesta la emancipación...Quería abordar un poco el proceso de independencia cubano, y ver cómo ese nacionalismo se relacionaba con el catalán. El proceso de industrialización de Cataluña viene de Cuba. Muchos de los que allí hicieron grandes fortunas contribuyeron luego aquí a hacer la Cataluña moderna. Uno de los rasgos de este cambio de siglo es que nos hemos quedado sin memoria. Es muy difícil tener memoria de la construcción de Cataluña en la edad moderna. Y yo escribo sobre cuestiones históricas para refrescar mi memoria.

(cited in Piñol)

To a certain extent, Riera's statement merely confirms what a careful look at her novel reveals. Yet what further complicates this picture is how Riera uses Maria's poetry and her overall character to analyze the "Cuban independence process" and the way in which modern Catalonia comes to exist as such.

Through her husband's connections, Maria's poem is published *El Diario de la Marina* and she reads it aloud in a meeting of the literary section of the Liceo Artístico y Literario, founded by a character described as "el català Ramon Pintador" (182).

The historical figure, Ramon Pintó, is the first and one of the most important Catalans on the island who defend “interessos emancipadors cubans” in the 1850s (Costa 81) and it is extremely important to note that he was also the author’s inspiration for the protagonist Maria Fortesa.

There were a number of Catalans who became involved in the actual Cuban fight against the Spanish crown, but Pintó stands out as a unique personality in this period. Pintó’s activities created a link between *cubanidad* and *catalanitat*, as he organized Jocs Florals on the island and elicited Cuban participation in them; he encouraged the flourishing of Cuban and Catalan cultural activities on the island with the support of the Liceo de La Habana (Costa 81). Additionally, he participated in the Cuban revolutionary process, as head of the Junta Revolucionaria Cubana and, as one historian puts it, “era català i mantenia contactes amb els patriotes cubans, unes circumstàncies que irritaven profundament els espanyolistes més radicals” (Costa 83). It is imperative to keep in mind Ramon Pintó’s role in the formation of an idea of Cuban nationality when we consider Maria Fortesa’s poetry and the meaning that this protagonist offers us regarding the concept of nation.

In the fictitious version of the Liceo’s literary section, there are explicit discussions regarding the concept of *pàtria*, patriotism, and the possible future of Cuba. Some members are one hundred percent against the publication and public reading of Maria’s poetry: “La idea, de cap manera!” exclaims one of the men at the meeting of the Secció Literària, “Què vol dir la senyora de Fortalesa amb això de



Pàtria no és naixença? Si la naixença ho és tot!” (184). Maria’s poem sparks a discussion of homeland and patriotism, in which the range of views of the time period come out.

The president, Pintador, finally asks the group to leave ideology aside. Jeroni Albertí responds solemnly that “un patriota mai no pot oblidar la seva causa. Parli del que parli i faci el que faci, és un apòstol de la religió nacionalista” (184). His typical opponent, Miguel López de Ampuerto, becomes angry and stands up to join the argument:

Tots pensaven que el seu espanyolisme [de López de Ampuerto] exaltat el portaria a envestir fet un brau contra Albertí, perquè ambdós els tenien acostumats a les seves picabaralles; però, encara que encetà el seu discurs amb un suggerent ‘Els espàrrecs d’Aranjuez sempre seran millors que els de Vic, perquè sí, perquè ho dic jo, que sóc d’allà. *A ver, ¿qué pasa?*’ féu una pausa i aprofità per mirar Albertí... ‘*Sin embargo, señores, no me referiré hoy a los asuntos nacionalistas sino a los femeniles.*’ (184)

At first glance, with language like “religió nacionalista,” Riera would appear to portray nationalism as a fixed dogma, a negative, and perhaps it is not unreasonable to think this is what she intended to say.

We must ask, then, whether we can *really* speak of the range of views of the time period in *Cap al cel obert*. I would suggest that to a certain extent, Riera has inserted anachronisms into the text, taken from her own views on contemporary

Catalan cultural and political debates. Let us examine for a moment what is taking place in nineteenth-century Cuba and exactly how ideas about patria/nación are unfurling. Even though Cuba is relatively late in gaining its official independence, the nineteenth century is fraught with political instability and is characterized by uprisings throughout the Latin American colonies against the Spanish colonial power.

However, this century also constitutes a crucial period of development in both Cuba and Catalonia in terms of patriotic and nationalist thought.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the criollo bourgeois classes were generally quick to support the colonial authorities in quashing any slave rebellions. Not only did they fear for their own lives and property, but, as Moreno Fragnals explains, the creole plantocracy had not been in favor of independence thus far because they had a lot to lose economically if a war broke out:

A la independencia se arribaba por la guerra y la guerra era la ruina y muerte de la clase. En una sociedad colonial y con predominio de trabajo esclavo, los intelectuales de la plantocracia sentían que era de «buen gusto» ser liberal y antiesclavista, en una posición doblemente enraizada en el neoclasicismo y el romanticismo. (167)

Despite this tendency referred to here, one's economic class or even one's place of origin did not necessarily determine one's political leanings in Cuba, at least in the early decades of the nineteenth century; a wide range of political views were found among both *criollos* and *peninsulares*: “hubo liberales y conservadores, esclavistas y

antiesclavistas, independentistas y enemigos de la independencia, tanto entre peninsulares como entre cubanos y, por tanto, el lugar de nacimiento no definía necesariamente una ideología o una posición política” (Moreno Fragonals 168). These are the years of the “protohistòria de l’independentisme cubà” (Costa 23). These decades are generally characterized by a wide variety of political views; Cuban society as a whole cannot yet be said to be fully geared toward the goal of independence.

As the years wore on, the creole bourgeoisie was sometimes politically at odds with the peninsular bourgeoisie, in part because of competing economic interests, and in part because of splintering political views. Even Saco’s group was “permanently in conflict with the *peninsulares*” because they were the “first generation of Cuban intellectuals with a utopian and romantic vision of ‘Cuba’ as an entity separate from Spain” (Gott 55). Moreno Fragonals describes the conflict between criollo and peninsular bourgeoisies under Tacón’s rule in terms of competing liberal views and their economic relationship with the mainland:

Una vez más se enfrentan en Cuba el liberalismo español (que trata de poner la colonia al servicio de la metrópoli) y el liberalismo criollo (que intenta usar la metrópoli como salvaguardia del papel de Cuba en el equilibrio internacional americano, pero reservándose para ella la explotación económica de la Isla).  
(190)

The mid-nineteenth century is thus a time in which the criollo Cuban classes began to mobilize against the colonial authorities, with a greater desire for autonomy or even

independence, and a growing sense of *cubanidad* as a separate identity from “Spanish,” i.e. from the Peninsula.

Yet Maria, with whom the author leads the reader to sympathize heavily, stands out as a beacon of innocence, despite or perhaps because of her patriotic fervor. “Asuntos femeniles” notwithstanding, Maria ends up becoming, through her poetry, a sort of representative of revolutionary thinking, a precursor of the desire for independence, although this does not seem to have been her intention, per se, according to the characterization of naiveté presented in the novel.

Why does Maria’s poetry strike such a strong chord with the colonial authorities, and moreover, what do the terms homeland and nation mean in Riera’s text? In the nineteenth century, Cubans on the island defined Cuba as the “patria” and Spain as the “nation,” following in part the idea put forth in the 1812 Constitution referring to Spain as Nation (Costa 14). This holds true for Catalans at this time, as well. For Aribau and Verdaguer, to take two famous examples, Catalonia was *pàtria*, but Spain was the *nació*. As we have seen, it is not until the Guerra de Cuba that Catalans begin to speak of their own homeland as their Nation, rather than the Spanish state.

However, it must be noted that Riera’s references to “nationalist religion” and “matters of nationalism” in the fictional version of the Liceo are a bit out of place. Her self-described disdain for anachronisms notwithstanding, these references to nationalism, set in a time when the term did not yet refer to the meanings ascribed in

Maria's poetry and the Liceo's meetings, are indicators of Riera's position on *current* Catalan nationalism – not, I emphasize, any sort of documenting of historical facts taking place in Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, it is also true that by the time of the pertinent historical epoch, the *criollos* born on the island felt increasingly separate from the Peninsula and therefore felt an ever-pressing necessity to gain greater freedom and autonomy. As early as the 1830s, the overlap in association between “Spanish” and “Cuban” was weakening (Costa 16). By the mid-century, when Maria publishes her poetry, the process of transition from patriotism to nationalism is initiated in real-life Cuba.

Rafael Rojas explains that:

El tránsito del patriotismo criollo al nacionalismo cubano, que se extiende desde mediados del siglo XIX hasta 1898...produce una ampliación social y racial de la subjetividad nacional, al desarrollarse el consenso de la abolición de la esclavitud e incorporarse las capas bajas de la población blanca, negra y mulata a las opciones políticas del anexionismo, el autonomismo y, sobre todo,

---

<sup>4</sup> The reference to nationalist religion, in particular, perhaps implies a post-Nazism or post-Balkan judgment of all forms of nationalism as irrational and dangerous. This post-national attitude toward nationalism, moreover, is typical of those who wish today to crush calls to protect the status and use of the Catalan language or references to indigenous Catalan culture. As a Catalan speaker and author who chooses to write in the language, Riera, of course, does not fall into this category, *per se*; yet she would appear to remove herself from current debates on Catalan national identity by marking nationalism as an irrational and even irrelevant negative concept. However, in the context of contemporary Catalonia, where Francoist attempts to obliterate Catalan culture are still felt strongly, and indeed where implicit and explicit attempts to do so still occur, it is difficult if not impossible to remove oneself from the political aspects of the linguistic and cultural debate, as Riera attempts to do. There is no Switzerland of Catalan Studies, so to speak: little if any neutral ground on this particular point.

el independentismo. (6)

In other words, it is around this time that “el concepte de pàtria fins a esdevenir nació” is being formulated by the Cuban movements that would ultimately develop new ideas of national identity (Costa 19). In her poems, we see that Maria apparently already considers herself to be a member of this intellectually rebellious group of self-identified Cubans, even though she is technically an adopted member, and a new one at that. Her poetry constitutes evidence of this sentiment, but also, in a way, so does the use of her husband’s last name. When she marries Josep de Fortalesa, Maria begins to call herself Maria de Fortalesa instead of Maria Fortesa, because, as her husband warns her, Fortesa might be recognized by the other Mallorcans on the island as a Jewish name. So Maria literally takes a new identity, just as her poem indicates, by going to live in Cuba, which “[li] dóna la identitat.”

Eventually, like the historical figure Pintó, Maria ends up being accused of participating in revolutionary activities against the Captain General, the local colonial authority. Significantly, Maria’s poetry figures as primary evidence of her guilt in her trial. One poem that the prosecutor reads during her trial and describes as clearly “compromès” is the following:

I la cubana terra m’acull i me conhorta.

Consol en els seus braços jo sento que he trobat.

La palma tan ufana que el cel ens assenyala,

La palma tan ufana demana llibertat. (323)

The prosecutor, after reading these lines, “preguntà a la sala si eren ben evidents les al·lusions secessionistes: a quin tipus de llibertat podia referir-se Maria Fortesa sinó a la independència?” (323). The plot that follows, however, leaves the reader thoroughly in sympathy with Maria as a victim. Despite Maria’s apparent innocence regarding subversive political activities – and she is characterized as being rather innocent and naive in general – it is nonetheless through her writing that a discourse on this patriotism and nascent national identity is constructed in *Cap al cel obert*, connecting the narrative to the actual historical period in which the island is hurling itself toward a full-blown armed struggle for independence.

### *Leaving All to Chance?*

The Captain General Rodríguez de la Conca chooses Maria as a scapegoat to make an example out of someone who dares commit treason and rise up against the colonial structure of power. He confirms his decision by the curious way of consultation with an oracle. Rodríguez de la Conca knows quite well that Maria simply had the poor luck of being nearby when he received an anonymous note informing him that the hot chocolate at a party at the Fortalesa’s house contained a poison:

La víctima havia estat triada amb tot l'esment possible...Maria de Fortalesa era al seu costat quan li arribà la notícia. Un cop de mala sort enviat per un atzar nefast...Si la nova li hagués arribat a un altre lloc o un altre moment, tot haguera

estat distint. Però no era culpa seva que la casualitat involucrés aquella senyora d'una manera tan enfarfegadora. (326)

In short, the protagonist Maria Fortesa suffers accusation of treason simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and her supposed death at the end is her ultimate punishment.

Despite Maria's seemingly clear innocence, the Captain General decides to prosecute her in court, even devising reasons for absolving himself of any guilt or responsibility for having chosen her as an arbitrary victim:

Però ell, què hi podia fer si havia escrit uns versos compromesos?... Sa Excel·lència era negat per a la poesia i no entenia per quins set sous els revolucionaris solien establir de seguida relacions amb els poetes. O tal vegada sí. Tal vegada l'explicació provenia d'un mateix origen: la manca de seny, la incapacitat de poder preveure res. Com deien els versos de l'encausada? ...parlaven de Pàtria i Llibertat, com sempre, però això no estava prohibit ni era censurable. Potser aquella desgraciada es referia, com s'entestava a argumentar el defensor, a la pàtria espanyola. Però de seguida girà full: era jueva, i els jueus no tenen pàtria. Cuba era la seva Sepharat... (330)

Of course, on one hand, the identification of Maria as a Jew simply augments her condition as an innocent victim. Maria's perceived Jewishness also resurrects the older Spanish concept of *limpieza de sangre*, implying, of course, that Maria is impure because of her *converso* history.



On the other, the reference to Sepharad (that is, to Spain) and to Maria's Jewish background contains additional layers of meaning, given the specific history of the Jewish population in Cuba, including the Sephardic Jews descended from the Jews that were expelled from Spain by the Inquisition. Anthropologist Ruth Behar has explored the history of the Sephardic Jewish community in Cuba in her film *Adio Kerida* (2002). Sephardic Jews, Behar explains, "are misunderstood and often discriminated against...The Cuban Sephardic community, both on and off the island, offers so rare a mix of cultural traditions...that it remains a mystery and ha[d] not yet [before *Adio Kerida*] been portrayed in any depth in literature, art, or film" ("About *Adio Kerida*"). Cuban-American author Achy Obejas fictionalizes this community in her novel *Days of Awe* (2001). The protagonist, Ale, who discovers she is descended from Sephardic crypto-Jews, mulls over the connections between Jews and Cubans:

Other Latin Americans, and some Americans who've had contact with Cubans, call us the Jews of the Caribbean. It is not a phrase much known in Cuba itself, but it has a familiar currency in exile. It's meant as an epithet, playing off negative stereotypes about Jews...Essentially anti-Semitic in nature, calling us the Jews of the Caribbean is supposed to deem us as untrustworthy partners in business...it's almost an accident that, like Jews, we are a people in diaspora and that, like Jews, we are a people concerned with questions and answers and the temperament of a god that could make us suffer, like Job, so inexplicably and so capriciously. (104).

Mystery, discrimination, exile, untrustworthiness, inexplicable and capricious suffering: the statements by Behar and Obejas's protagonist, contemporary to *Cap al cel obert*, could easily have been made instead about Riera's novel.

Moreover, the myriad layers of Maria's character are constructed to emphasize and re-emphasize her status as innocent victim. Maria is a woman who lives in Cuba during a heated moment in the development of Cuban national identity. Her character is based on the figure of a man from Barcelona who was involved in Cuban revolutionary actions, organized Catalan national activities in Cuba, and was sentenced to death for conspiracies. She is named after the mother of Christ and turns into a Christ figure herself as an innocent Jew persecuted on behalf of a nation of people. She is from Mallorca, but her writing connects her to Cuba, to the Catalan community abroad, and to Catalonia.

Later in *Cap al cel obert*, the reader also discovers the reason that the Captain General has decided to keep his choice of Maria as a victim is that an oracle confirmed his choice, despite or because of his feeble attempts to rationalize his own actions. While the Fortalesa brothers allow their fortune to be decided by cards, states Fernando Valls, Captain General Rodríguez de la Concha “es decanta, en canvi, per executar la sentència un cop ha consultat el que pensa fer amb una vident que li tira les cartes, la qual es limita a confirmar-li els desitjos més íntims que ell té” (305-306). As Valls points out, there is a narrative reason that Riera has chosen to write the novel in this way: the move from the Fortalesa brothers' bet to the consultation of the

oracle by the Captain General brings the reader full circle and leads to the conclusion of the novel, by way of tying together the concept of chance and luck across the narration.

The extant scholarship has made much of this idea of chance as it plays out in *Cap al cel obert*, particularly regarding Maria Fortesa's fate in the end. Riera has even maintained that "*Toda la novela es una meditación sobre el azar. Sobre cómo el hecho de estar en un sitio en un momento determinado hace que cambien las circunstancias*" (cited in Obiols, emphasis mine). Poor luck, bad timing, being in the wrong place at the wrong time: all of these negative aspects of chance impact Maria's life and cause her to be unjustly condemned for treachery. The luck of the draw likewise leads the Captain General to confirm his decision to execute Maria, and the same had decided which of the Fortalesa brothers would leave and which would stay in Cuba.

At the same time, we must consider both the historical version of the novel's subject matter and the contemporary context in which Riera is writing, in which the very existence of Catalan literature and culture are hotly contested by certain factions from within Catalonia and other parts of Spain. A brief review of the narrative might lead us to conclude that chance rules all in *Cap al cel obert*. By extension, we could assume the author is likewise saying, to a certain degree, that chance rules all in mid-nineteenth-century Cuba; that it decides the direction in which the political winds blow; that the need preceived by communities to formally recognize their national identities is the result of no more than random occurrence. However, none of Maria's

characteristics have been granted naively, and of course none of them have fallen to her by chance. By swapping Catalan activist Ramon Pintó for Mallorcan female Jew Maria Fortesa and adding the element of random luck, the author redoubles Maria's victimhood, as if it were not enough to inscribe her status as a woman, as a Jew, as a person falsely accused of treason, and as a Christ figure.

### *A Final Journey, Cap a la Nació*

On one level, we could summarize *Cap al cel obert* by stating that the novel delves into the intricate, power-driven relationship between history, politics and money; those who control the official channels of government will retain the right to portray history as they see fit, and they will do whatever is necessary to continue their grasp on power. This point comes across strongly through the Captain General's musings on his own position of power in the colony:

Manar un exèrcit era molt més senzill que no governar una ciutat....Manar un exèrcit no tenia secrets. Governar, sí. Més que no la guerra, la política és l'art de la simulació. Governar volia dir no actuar mai de cara, emprar la mà esquerra, més fastigosa i innoble que la dreta, pactar aquí i fer concessions allà.  
(331-332)

However, on another level, we find an interesting portrayal of the relationship between Cubans and Catalans during a crucial moment of history, in which Cubans

were building toward the idea of a Cuban identity, independent from Spain, and when the bourgeois criollos were beginning to shift from *anexionismo* to *independentismo*.

For all that Riera and the scholars writing on *Cap al cel obert* have called attention to the idea of chance as it plays out in the novel, I counter that the final chapter of *Cap al cel obert* and the ironic “dispensable” epilogue – as the title, “I un epíleg prescindible,” tells us – put forward an enigmatic conclusion to the story of Maria Fortesa/de Fortalesa. The Captain General Rodríguez de la Concha organizes a spectacle with a hot-air balloon for the exact moment in which Maria is to be put to death for treason. The hot-air balloon operator takes the balloon far above the people who have gathered in the plaza below to witness Maria’s execution.

In this complex epilogue, the reader learns that the son of Maria and Josep de Fortalesa was raised by his godfather, became a lawyer, and spent his life trying to clear his mother’s name. The son’s daughter – Maria Fortesa’s granddaughter – decides as an adult to look back through the old papers of Maria’s case compiled by her father. She thereupon discovers that there exists a *romanç* sung by an elderly blind man in Mallorca, the same Raül who appears in the beginning of the novel, before Maria and Isabel leave for Cuba. The *romanç* recounts the story of the “desventurada o molt sortada Maria,” suggesting – after an idea also proposed in the final chapter – that perhaps Maria had survived, saved by “amics que li volien bé” (350).

If Maria *may* have survived, we can infer some interesting points about her participation in the moment of development of Cuban nationalism or, indeed, about

the future of the nation. On one hand, even if Maria has escaped her death sentence, she now serves a permanent new sentence of exile from both Mallorca and Cuba, the latter of which, not incidentally, was called her Sepharad. On the other hand, however, we can point to the survival of her son and his future generations in Cuba, the remnant of the *romanç*, and the legacy of her ideas as offering optimistic possibilities for the nation to survive and develop, even at great cost.

I thus perceive in this deliberately ambiguous ending a paradoxical note of optimism for the future, or at a minimum, the possibility for optimism to exist. I suggest that we can read in this last voyage, which closes the body of the narration, a crucial statement about both modernity and the nation. In contrast to the dark sea voyage across the Atlantic near the beginning of the novel, in which many passengers fall ill or die, the hot-air balloon, though ostensibly tied to Maria's scheduled death as a scapegoat, is nonetheless connected to her likely escape and an outwitting, of sorts, of the colonial power structure.

Furthermore, the hot-air balloon stands as a symbol of progress, of impending modernity – modernity, we will recall, that was so coveted by Cuban society as the years clicked over to the new century – moving into spheres above the ground, into new uncharted territory, beyond the reach of those on land or sea. Let us recall the crucial fact that Maria's character was based on Ramon Pintó, who was an important Catalan participant in the efforts to define a Cuban identity and nation and who took part in subversive revolutionary activities. Likewise, Maria acts as the voice of Cuban

patriotism and participates in the process of developing a sense of national identity and homeland on the island. Moving from the sea to the air through the course of the narrative both shifts the space from the site of migration and slave trade to the bird's-eye view from above, and advances technological progress from ships to air balloons.

Thus in conclusion, I would argue that one way to read Riera's portrayal of the so-called national question in *Cap al cel obert* is that the ruling powers can and will sometimes attempt to quash innocent and positive expressions of nationalism. What *Cap al cel obert* has to say about contemporary Catalan politics, then, may very well be more provocative than what previous scholars have read into it, even as they have hinted at the possibilities of the novel speaking to the topic. Maria wrote in favor of patriotism and claimed a homeland for her own; she suffered as a scapegoat for her innocent display of enthusiasm, yet she escaped her death sentence with the essential assistance of friends “que li volien bé.”

If we can say, on one hand, that Maria had participated in the birth of a Cuban patriotism that precisely became molded into a firmer concept of Cuban national identity, the ambiguous conclusion of the novel allows us to think, on the other hand, that the destiny of any nation, like the hot-air balloon, is up in the air. We might be tempted, along with the author and her disdain for “religió nacionalista,” to place the fate of the nation in the random hands of chance.

However, Maria's own fate shows that the destiny of a nation, even when in peril of being put to death, retains the possibility for rescue and furthermore retains the possibility for surviving into future generations. Therefore those who are "friends who wish well" on any national project can and must exercise a great influence by rescuing victims who suffer as a result of expressing pride in their national culture and identity. The radical lesson we can take from this novel, which Riera almost certainly did not intend to give, is that those *amics que volen bé* must comply with the necessity of defending those national projects, instead of letting them float, lost, *cap al cel obert*.



## CHAPTER 4

### LOCATING THE CATALAN NATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: IMMIGRATION AND EXILE IN CONTEMPORARY BARCELONA

“En els últims temps es parla sovint d’immigració...” – Najat El Hachmi

#### *Ballester: A Cuban-Catalan Artist*

The past three chapters have examined how various aspects of the relationship between Cuba and Catalonia have produced effects on Catalan national identity throughout the twentieth century. In this final chapter, we will delve into the present day and ponder some issues facing Cuban-Catalan relations in the future. The objective here might well be to pose questions rather than answer them. Of relevance are questions such as: What does it mean to be Catalan in the twenty-first century? Will the relationship with Cuba that we have discussed so far still have any bearing on Catalan national identity?

As its springboard for discussing these questions, the present chapter will analyze *Enlloc* (1999-2005), the photographic project of Cuban-Catalan artist Juan Pablo Ballester (Camagüey 1966-), in the context of these questions; we will also delve into a related examination of the current situation of immigration in Catalonia as related to linguistic questions and the challenges facing Catalan speakers in Spain today. Broadly speaking, Ballester is a relatively unknown artist, but his work

nonetheless provides an appropriate final chapter for this post-1898 study, in part because of the contemporary context of post-1898 Cuban-Catalan relations, of which his own story provides a glimpse; and in part because of the way his view on Catalan nationalism as a (supposed) outsider reflects the cultural conflicts in Catalonia today. I would like to illustrate, on one hand, how Ballester's work, particularly the *En ninguna parte* series that makes up the first part of *Enlloc*, dialogues with the greater Cuban art tradition. Yet on the other hand, through his series as it finally stood in 2005, which he calls *Enlloc*, Ballester undoubtedly places himself into the context of being a consumer of, and participant in, current Catalan affairs. In this light, he should be considered in some sense as an "other" or "new" Catalan according to various proposed terminologies – although, as we will see, these are also perhaps inadequate – and his work should therefore be considered as part of the Catalan art scene in contemporary Barcelona.

Ballester was born on September 16, 1966, in Camagüey, Cuba, a small town in the eastern central part of the island. After studying in the Escuela Elemental de Arte in Camagüey, Ballester obtained a prestigious scholarship as a young teenager, to study fine arts at the Escuela Nacional de Arte (ENA) in Havana. He graduated from the ENA in 1985 and from the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in 1991. Along with many of his colleagues from ISA, Ballester left Cuba for Spain as a political refugee in 1992. After spending two years in Madrid, he moved to Barcelona and has lived there since.

Although he also received training in painting and in plastic arts, Ballester works primarily in photography and sometimes in video.<sup>1</sup> He has held numerous solo and group exhibits in Spain, in cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, and Valencia, and he has participated in collective art exhibits in other parts of Europe and Latin America. Ballester's projects have often focused on problematics of reality, imitation, facts, gender, and the complexities of identity in an adopted home country. The interrogation of "reality" and what can be (in a sense, literally, in terms of the viewer seeing the photograph) seen as "truth," or how images represent or index anything at all, are all central to Ballester's interests. Ballester's works are found in museums in Cuba, Mexico, the United States, and Europe, especially Spain. Very little has been published thus far about Ballester's life and œuvre; in fact, since he is still young, the full potential influence of his artistic work has not yet been realized.

The artist is living proof of the connections between Catalonia and Cuba that have been the subject of analysis throughout this study. Ballester's Catalan last name came from his great-grandfather, who went to Cuba to fight during the 1895-98 war. Now, in a return to his family's place of origin, Ballester lives in Catalonia. *Lamono* magazine on contemporary art calls him an "artista catalán de origen cubano" (Villazala), but he might well be called a Cuban artist of Catalan origin. In a certain sense, he can truly lay claim to both places. As hinted at earlier, I will be dealing with

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, his video project *Basado en hechos reales* (1999), which stemmed out of his photography series by the same name (1997). See HAMACA's website for a description of this installation, which included both video and sound.

him here both as a Cuban living in Barcelona (and therefore, not only as a Cuban artist forming part of that tradition, but also as a singular example of how the Cuban-Catalan relationship stands in the twenty-first century); and as a Catalan, *perhaps* qualifying as “new” or “other,” as we will explain in further detail below.

### *Ballester's Place in Cuban Art*

According to Tim Wride, “[p]hotography in the Cuba of Fidel Castro has been and remains a thriving means of artistic expression” (25). In a sense, Ballester’s work (most especially that of the 1990s) dialogues with, and forms a part of, an established post-revolutionary Cuban artistic tradition. Along with other contemporary Cuban artists, Ballester has “developed an alternative set of photographic practices” (Mena Chicuri 41). Ana Mendieta and Tania Bruguera are two excellent – and well-known – examples of other artists who have employed similar practices, on their own but also in conjunction with Ballester. In fact, Ballester has collaborated in the past with various Cuban artists of note; including Bruguera, who displayed her work in an exhibit that Ballester co-curated with Iván de la Nuez, called *Cuba: La isla posible* (1995), which took place at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona. Ballester has also been a member of the “Havana artists’ collective ABTV, whose conceptual work was influenced by post-modernist theories;” he also collaborated in performance with Cuban-American artist Coco Fusco (b. New York, 1960) and María Elena Escalona at the ARCO 1997 Latino Art Fair (“Visual Artists”). The 1997

“guerrilla performance” involved the three artists in question donning Quechua knit hats and ski masks, selling T-shirts with text that “compare[d] and contrast[ed] the [real] price [in pesetas] of Latin American art in Europe and the cost of selling it at ARCO with the cost of surviving as an undocumented Latin American immigrant in Spain” (including, for instance, how much a *jinetes cubano* charges a Spanish tourist, how many illegal Latin American immigrants were estimated to be in Spain at the time, how much a fake passport costs, and so on) (“Sudaca Enterprises 1997”).

Some of Ballester’s techniques include “appropriation, collage, and manipulation; the use of the artist’s studio as symbolic space; the conversion of the artist’s body into a visual symbol...and the use of photographs as a record of performances” (Mena Chicuri 41). In a previous project, for instance, Ballester used his own body as a prop to reenact the bodies of some of the Cuban rebels who had been tortured and executed after their capture in an attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953 in a failed coup d’état against President



**Figure 1, courtesy of Juan Pablo Ballester**

Fulgencio Batista, under Fidel Castro’s leadership (see Figure 1 for the most widely known example from this project). The use of Ballester’s own body in his photography might remind us of Bruguera’s (usually naked) body in her videos and

live installations, such as *La isla en peso*. While in some ways Ballester's use of his body is somewhat less extreme, the result is equally shocking, as it's meant to be. Ballester's posed reenactments question not only the nature of violence and the documentation of armed conflict, but also the concept of masculinity and the limits of reality.<sup>2</sup>

Although Ballester carried out *En ninguna parte* (the first series included in *Enlloc*) to fruition in Spain, there are certain elements that link this project to the broader post-revolutionary Cuban photography tradition. *Enlloc* was initially described as an "open project," (Mena Chicuri 42). Ballester went further at the time, specifying it was a "work in progress" ("Juan Pablo Ballester – ENLLOC (Nowhere)" 1).

Ballester finally brought the series to a close in 2005. *Enlloc* can be divided into two segments, according to the chronology of the development of the project. The first segment, from 1999 to 2002, was originally titled *En ninguna parte*, Castilian for "nowhere" or, more literally, "in no place." This part of his series was shown as a separate exhibit on its own and later incorporated into the longer version, *Enlloc*. A large portion of the (overall scant) commentary written about *Enlloc* remarks mainly on these earlier photographs. In this segment, young men and their fierce breeds of dogs, pulled from the streets of the artist's own neighborhood, stand behind bars and in the artist's bedroom to be photographed (see figures below). For *En ninguna parte*,

---

<sup>2</sup> These photographs deserve further commentary elsewhere, as do photographs of Ballester from earlier series during the Cuban Special Period, but the present study will limit analysis in order to focus on *Enlloc* and related topics.

Ballester converted his own living space into a studio, by bringing young men from the neighborhood into his home to photograph them.

Another Cuban photographer, Ernesto Leal (who is more widely recognized than Ballester) likewise used his own apartment for a project in 2000 called *Aquí tampoco*, during the same time that Ballester was using this technique. Although it was executed differently, and with different subject matter, in Ballester's *En ninguna parte*, Leal's project provides another instance, both in technique and in suggested theme (i.e., place, non-place, or negation of place), of how Ballester's work has dialogued with contemporary Cuban photography even as he was already established in Spain.<sup>3</sup> Ballester's practices overall illustrate his avant-garde approach to photography and his insistence on pushing the limits of the relationship between the art and its audience, or between photographs and their viewer.

Overall, the slim bit of commentary that does exist on *En ninguna parte* and the umbrella project *Enlloc* has not gotten at the heart of what is going on in Ballester's work. There is a heavy tendency, for instance, to read Ballester's production entirely

---

<sup>3</sup> Unlike Ballester's *En ninguna parte* and subsequent *Enlloc*, however, Leal's *Aquí tampoco* focused on close-ups of nearly unidentifiable objects around his house, especially near the floor: baseboards, the bottom of a refrigerator, the back end of a tennis shoe. All were dark greenish-blue in tone (not terribly unlike Ballester's image with the foot/shoe: see Figure 2, below). Leal "invites, even challenges observers to find the undefined object they seek...But as the title of the piece affirms, it is not to be found...Leal's images are immediate and...physically invasive to bother personal and private space" (Wride 69-73). What is (un)remarkable is that Wride, the curator, notes that Leal "embeds in his work a social and political commentary as well as a personal assertion of identity" (73). Even though Wride's statement that "to make art in Cuba is to be political" (73) rings true, I find the reference to Leal's "assertion of identity" to be in the same vein as the automatic labels that have been applied to Ballester's work.

through a biographical lens, i.e. more or less an attitude that because he is from Cuba, his work must be related to exile and identity, so the only material worth remarking on are the connections between his life and his work, and how his work illustrates the fact that he is an exile.<sup>4</sup> Manel Clot also acknowledges that Ballester “suele asociarse muy a menudo, aunque quizás de un modo excesivamente mecánico e inmediato, a la presencia de un compromiso ‘político’ en el arte,” which Clot attributes in part to Ballester’s exile status and in part to a “declarada construcción de perímetros genéricos procedentes de los inevitables sentimientos de refugio y de extrañamiento que su trabajo ha ido mostrando en sus diversas configuraciones a lo largo de los últimos años” (8). The simplistic correlation made by observers between Ballester’s work and a sense of political responsibility, has been primarily in reference to the earlier pieces of the series originally titled *En ninguna parte*.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Not to mention the lack of critical scholarship on the role of gender in his oeuvre over time, which is an entirely separate topic too complex to delve into in the present chapter, but rather requires a separate study.

<sup>5</sup> One recent and much more interesting exception is the exposition *Medianoche en la ciudad* (29 Jan.-27 Mar. 2011), presented jointly by ARTIUM and the Centre d’Art La Panera de Lleida. This collective exhibit presented photography, videos, installations, graphic art, and fragments of novels that “dan testimonio de cómo la noche modifica la geografía, la percepción y las experiencias de la ciudad...para dar una visión lo más amplia posible de aquello en que se convierte lo urbano al llegar la oscuridad de la noche” (“ARTIUM presenta”). *Medianoche en la ciudad* featured photographs from *En ninguna parte*. ARTIUM’s description of Ballester’s photographs in this context of focusing expressly on role and effect of the night, remarked that “los espacios públicos se viven y experimentan de forma distinta durante el día y durante la noche, y por ello se prestan a la construcción de ficciones. Así sucede con los jóvenes que Juan Pablo Ballester...parece oponer a la ciudad” (“ARTIUM presenta”). Ballester also participated, along with Carles Congost and Azucena Vieites, in a roundtable discussion at midnight on the eve of the opening day of the exhibit.



Let us examine a couple of photographs from this series to elucidate a few additional points. At the beginning of the series, a lonely sneakered foot steps off of a



**Figure 2, courtesy of Juan Pablo Ballester**

green tiled floor (Figure 2). This first photograph immediately sets the dark tone and the solitude that characterizes the first part of the series: many photographs are at night, a few at dusk.<sup>6</sup> Many of the photographs in *Enlloc* present images of a sort of bittersweet solitude: shoes, burning underwear, and characters are all featured alone; the forest and the landscape

loom ahead, devoid of human presence. It is as if there were secrets to hide, or a private world to be entered. The foot in question seems poised in mid-step, as if caught stepping off, about to depart on a journey. A journey does seem to be what Ballester's first several photographs of *En ninguna parte* narrate. And undoubtedly, a narrative structure is evoked throughout the series, as Ballester creates and recalls certain characters and passes them from one scene to the next, demanding a narrative reading.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Therefore these photographs were chosen to be featured in the exhibit *Medianoche en la ciudad* (2011). The role of the night in Ballester's series would be worth delving into in greater critical detail in a separate study.

<sup>7</sup> This is particularly true of the second segment of *Enlloc*.

The images that follow in the rest of the first segment of the project have been commented on in a fair amount of detail as readings of “immigrants” and other figures in the urban fabric. Juan Aliaga, for example, explains that the young men and their dogs we see in various images in the first half of the series “form part of a vaguely defined urban tribe who, mistakenly or not, are perceived as dangerous and violent” (n.p.). This type of description is repeated throughout most of the commentary that came out at the time on *En ninguna parte*.

However, I would counter that focusing on this one aspect is simplistic and even, perhaps, misses the point by focusing on too narrow of an aspect of identity as such, whether of an “urban tribe” or otherwise. There are other elements of these photographs that, in my view, present much more interesting material for analysis. For instance, the bars through which we are looking at —spying on?— the young men are actually caging them in. Or, we might ask, who is inside and who is outside? Are we, the viewers, trapped behind bars, looking out at a free subject? Or are the young men bound inside by our preconceptions? It is limiting and superficial to relegate these men merely to the realm of the supposed “scopophilia of the artist”



**Figure 3, courtesy of Juan Pablo Ballester**

(Aliaga), not to mention relegating them to an urban tribe that is *so* vaguely defined by the commentary in question so as to become nonsensical as a category or critical tool. In any case, the young men are gazing back: in several instances, they are looking straight into the camera's eye, challenging the viewer.

This is not to say that identity is irrelevant in Ballester's work. In a certain sense, of course – *of course!* – Ballester's exile condition does surface in his photography, insofar as he admits a certain fascination with the exploration of identity due to his placement in another homeland and accompanying feeling of being unable to return to Cuba. Responding in an interview to a question about the tendency to ponder identity in his photography, Ballester submitted that perhaps it came from a need that is “inherent to any process of immigration,” which in turn entails two distinct, contradictory and problematic processes: integration into the new society and re-affirmation of one's own identity (cited in Villazala). Ballester explains further that the need to investigate identity through one's work “se agudiza cuando al lugar de ‘acogida’ le obsesiona construir y reafirmar la suya propia...para que algo parezca monolítico han de pasarse por alto las diferencias ‘ajenas’, negarte la posibilidad de ser igual desde las diferencias. Cuando trabajé en la serie de ‘En ninguna parte’ ese era el lugar en donde me sentía...” (cited in Villazala). In an email to the author, Ballester added to his earlier comments that “en rasgos generales...mi trabajo habla sobre los procesos de integración y/o extrañamiento que se producen al emigrar a una cultura obsesionada en la construcción de su propia identidad, la experiencia de 'habitar' en

un nuevo lugar con un fuerte discurso nacionalista” (“De Juan Pablo”). It is worth pointing out that despite Ballester’s exile/political asylum seeker status, he refers to “immigration,” and “integration” rather than exile, which – aside from the photography itself and its context – lends additional support to the idea that his work should be considered in the broader context of immigration to Catalonia, not simply or exclusively with regard to his relationship to the Cuban diaspora.

### *Contextualizing Enlloc: Immigration to Catalonia*

Of interest here, then, is Ballester’s place as a Cuban in Catalonia in the broader context of immigration to Catalonia. We have thus far made passing references to both immigration and integration in contemporary Catalonia; it is useful at this point to examine a few of the specifics of the past and present situation, including, particularly, the time frame when Ballester was working on his *Enlloc* project. One of the challenges facing Catalan language and culture in the twenty-first century is precisely immigration.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> It should, I hope, already be obvious to the reader, but it is worth noting explicitly that the “problem” of immigration in Catalonia presented here is *not* equivalent (for all that it might be tempting to draw parallels in negative attitudes toward immigrants that do definitely exist to varying degrees in both countries) to the “problem” of immigration as perceived by certain segments of the population in the United States. The histories of the two countries are, of course, extremely different, precluding simplistic comparisons of their respective immigration situations today. While there are certainly foreign-born residents who have illegally overstayed their visas to work in both places; and there are conservative sectors in the United States who perceive a threat to the English language due to the presence of large numbers of Spanish-speaking residents, English is a global language that is in no broad danger of extinction; Catalan, by contrast, faces significant challenges to its very survival. Nor, for that matter, has the United States, as a country, ever endured the kind of

In general terms, of course, immigration is by no means a new issue to Catalonia. The end of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth also encompassed massive emigrations from all areas of Spain. Many who left Spain at that time were from rural areas and went to the Americas to join family there and seek a new life. Because of the migrations internal to Spain – despite the decrease of the autochthonous Catalan population due to the numbers of those who left in these early years – the overall result was an eventual increase in the total population in Catalonia. Large waves of newcomers from other parts of Spain came to Catalonia to find work at various moments. In the 1920s, the primary place of origin was Aragon, followed by Murcia; in the 1950s and 1960s, Andalusia.

Indeed, throughout the twentieth century, Catalonia was a “country of immigration;” this has become common knowledge, as sociologist Salvador Cardús highlights (“The Memory of Immigration” 37-44).<sup>9</sup> Yet immigration to Catalonia is one of the most troubling issues for contemporary Catalonia and the survival of

---

attempts at what essentially amounts to cultural and linguistic genocide that Catalans have suffered over the centuries (although, on the other hand, Native American tribes might certainly have reason to sympathize with Catalans, given the history of the Indian Schools like that in Carlisle, PA). In an age when languages are becoming extinct around the globe every year, there is good reason to be concerned for the long-term survival of Catalan, given the discrimination and outright repression faced by speakers of the language; and this is why Catalans are bent on creating and maintaining measures that will protect the language. In sum, the immigrant population is one factor (of many) that presents palpable challenges to maintaining the use of Catalan across all sectors of society; and this cultural situation, which has its roots in Spanish/Castilian history of domination, is quite different from the current situation in the United States.

<sup>9</sup> Spain, by contrast, has been “traditionally a country of emigrants (Latin American and Caribbean countries being their main hosts)” (Antón et al. 237).

Catalan national identity in the future, in large part because of Francoism and its legacies.

The willingness of – and occasionally the need for or, at times, imposition on – Catalonia to accept workers, first from other areas of Spain, and, more recently, from Africa and Latin America, has been a longstanding condition that has greatly affected the modern economic and political history of Catalonia. Today, the trend continues, as thousands of immigrants flock yearly to Catalonia to join family members and to seek economic and educational opportunities lacking in their home countries.

Novelist and essayist Francesc Candel (1925-2007) elaborated on his own experiences living among the immigrant population in Catalonia, including going to free public school under the Generalitat before the Civil War, in his series of books on immigrants, whom he terms *altres catalans*.<sup>10</sup> Candel's own family came to Barcelona from Ademuz in 1930, when he was only five years old; they subsequently lived in the “Casas Baratas” in the neighborhood of Can Tunis (now Zona Franca), where many immigrant families lived. His family eventually relocated to another area of Barcelona. Candel's extensive publications on the subject revealed a side of Catalonia that had been previously under-acknowledged in terms of formal study or analysis; he demonstrated clearly that there was a whole group of people who were experiencing – and contributing to – Catalonia, its people, its language, and its culture,

---

<sup>10</sup> See *Els altres catalans*, *Algo más sobre los otros catalanes*, *Los otros catalanes veinte años después*, *Els altres catalans del segle XXI*.

through different eyes, and he called attention to their existence. These *altres catalans* became incorporated over time, and their presence has been a crucial element that shaped modern Catalan society.

Candel first offered the term *altres catalans* in an article that he was asked to write for the journal *La Jirafa* in 1958. This article led to his innovative masterpiece on immigration to Catalonia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Els altres catalans* (1964). Candel's book dealt in a general sense with the “conflicte català-castellà i la marginació dels immigrants per part dels catalans i de l'automarginació dels immigrants de tot el que sonava a Catalunya” (Sinca, cited in Relats).<sup>11</sup> Jordi Font ties Candel's publications on immigration to the Catalan worker's movement, although he points out that the fears Catalans held regarding their new neighbors' ability to provoke final assimilation of Catalonia into Spain did not materialize. Rather, Catalonia functioned as it had previously: “obert i integrador” (Cardús 38). Candel's term “other Catalans” specifically denoted arrivals to Catalonia from other regions of Spain, constituting an alternative to the derogatory term *xarnego* (in Castilian, *charnego*) and other negative terminology in circulation at the time. Candel posited that perhaps through learning the Catalan language, *xarnegos* would cease to be such and would be admitted as “Catalan” (157). With the concept of *altres catalans*, Candel conceived a novel working

---

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that Candel originally accepted the idea for expanding his article into a full-length book project from a proposal made to him by Pujol and Benet, via Max Cahner (Relats). In light of this, despite the innovations present in his work, Candel's terminology *altres catalans* might be viewed, at least in part, as a conservative effort to erase differences in order to obfuscate the presence of non-native Catalans and push for a certain political agenda.

theoretical framework to deal with the newcomers, in order both to acknowledge their differences and to address their incorporation into Catalan society.

And indeed, as anyone who is familiar with the *postguerra* will realize, there were many incoming workers to be incorporated. Immediately following the Guerra Civil were times of extreme difficulty; the 1940s were in fact nicknamed “the years of hunger” (*anys de fam*), and there were many mouths to feed across the entire Peninsula. However, when hunger and immediate physical survival were no longer primary concerns, a recovering populace began looking to rebuild, and many of them headed for Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia, due to greater possibilities for work opportunities there. All told, the numbers are staggering: around 3,000,000 *altres catalans* came to Catalonia in the twentieth century, and around half of those arrived during the latter part of Francoism, between 1950 and 1975. In fact, the largest wave of the twentieth century took place 1961-65, with the peak occurring in 1965 (Candel 111). The total population of Catalonia thus grew by an extraordinary 325% in the course of the twentieth century. In practical terms, this considerable population change means that currently, “approximately three out of four Catalans have amongst their recent ancestors one who was an immigrant,” an astonishing percentage, indeed (Cardús 38).

It is easy to understand that without the influx of these arrivals, Catalonia’s population would be significantly lower today, given – in addition to the earlier outgoing waves of Catalan emigrations to the Americas – the typically low birthrates



in Catalan families, compared to families in other parts of Spain. In fact, Cardús predicts that Catalonia's population would now total to less than an appallingly low 2.5 million people. But beyond the population demographics, Cardús advocates viewing immigration as having been essential to the development of Catalonia qua nation. He goes so far as to say that without immigration, Catalonia would have suffered "cultural irrelevance" and economic stagnation, rather than growth, which may have even provoked substantial emigration to other countries (38). As such, immigration constitutes a major source of Catalonia's past and current success and its promise for the future.

As has always been the case, Catalonia was (and continues to be) home to some of the largest numbers of immigrants in Spain due to the opportunities offered by its more extensive industrial development. The three autonomous communities that received the most immigrants 1998-2002 (the period corresponding with *En ninguna parte*, leading just up to when Ballester was about to begin the second segment of *Enlloc*) were the Comunidad de Madrid, Catalunya and the Comunitat Valenciana. In this period, the number of registered foreign residents in Catalonia tripled; Barcelona is home to the second largest population of foreign residents in Spain (*Los extranjeros residentes* 11). However, the character of the incoming population has changed significantly compared to early days of the *altres catalans*. No longer are the largest groups coming from other parts of Spain; rather, many incoming foreigners hail from various parts of Latin America and Africa, particularly Morocco in the latter case.

The statistics reflecting the demographics of the immigrant population from around when Ballester was working on his *Enlloc* project give some sense of the broader circumstances in which he found himself at the time. According to the official Spanish census of 2001, carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), a total of more than 6,000,000 immigrants were living in Spain at the time (Censo de población y viviendas 2001). Many of these already possessed Spanish citizenship, but 1,890,015 registered foreign residents (without Spanish citizenship) were living in Spain at the beginning of 2002 (*Los extranjeros residentes* 53).<sup>12</sup> Ballester was one of these residing without citizenship at the time; in fact, he waited in Spain illegally for seven years before he was finally conceded official status of political asylum by the government, and in 2007 he obtained Spanish citizenship.

Specifically in Catalonia, more than 145,000 immigrants were from Central America, the Caribbean, and South America in 2001 (*Censo de Población*). A majority of the foreign residents are first generation. The countries from which the most registered foreign residents come are Morocco, Ecuador, Colombia (*Los extranjeros*

---

<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that the definition of “immigrant” that the Instituto uses is arguably problematic: an *inmigrante* is a person who was born in another country and is older than 15 years of age, and who has been living in Spain for at least one year. This obviously leaves out many people who might otherwise be considered immigrants (for example, those who are younger than 15 but old enough to feel strong culture shock or experience linguistic difficulties upon arriving in a new country), but much more problematic is the open-endedness of the term, which allows for no *disintegration* of immigrant status, i.e., no *integration* of the person in question, no shedding of the condition of foreigner. Despite its shortcomings, I will employ the term as the Instituto has defined it, for the purposes of discussing the information supplied by the census and for discussing this population as viewed by locals in both Catalonia and Spain.

*residentes* 55). Cubans who have obtained Spanish citizenship were 3.6% of the total number of foreign-born residents in Spain (*Los extranjeros residentes* 55).

The Cuban population living in Spain – most of whom have left in exile and some of whom are under political asylum, as was Ballester – is concentrated mostly in major cities like Madrid and Barcelona. To understand better the specifically Cuban population in which Ballester found himself during his undertaking of *Enlloc*, we may note that as of 2007 (shortly after his project was completed), there were 20,000 Cubans registered at the Cuban Consulate in Barcelona; of these, approximately 8,000 were living in Catalonia at that time (Cabr , *Cuba a Catalunya* 11).

The presence of the nonnative Catalan population is felt in schools, businesses, and the local economy. In the political sphere, how to deal with legal and illegal immigration, as well as how best to “integrate” the immigrants, has become a greatly contested issue in current Catalan society. While Card s acknowledges that immigration is not absent from today’s discourse on Catalan identity, especially in the more nuanced analyses and conclusions of certain intellectuals and public figures, he argues that immigrants have not come to form part of a more *generalized* common knowledge. Their impact on the Catalan national *imagination* has been even weaker...One can say that in Catalonia the history of immigration has not come to be accepted as a feature belonging to Catalan identity, at least not in the habitual national discourse” (39). In addition to underestimating the “magnitude of the migratory phenomenon...Catalan people link their identities more closely to the traditional

origins than to the successive cultural contributions made by the new Catalans”

(Cardús 39. Cardús cleverly summarizes the problem: Catalonia is “un país d’immigració, doncs, encara que no necessàriament d’immigrants” (7).

Despite Cardús’s admonition, the contemporary situation of *altres* or *nous catalans* is rather complicated. There are varying levels of integration (itself a troubling term) or incorporation into Catalan society. Many foreign-born persons tend to work certain undesirable jobs; young women especially tend to work as underpaid housekeepers and nannies.<sup>13</sup> When Cardús refers to “new Catalans,” he is referring more or less to the same population that Candel calls “other Catalans,” although in Candel’s case, we should recall, *altres catalans* originally denoted native Spanish speakers, i.e. immigrants from other parts of Spain.

More recently, Candel modified or expanded his term in the book *Els altres catalans del segle XXI*, written jointly with Josep Maria Cuenca. Candel and Cuenca interviewed dozens of what they have termed the “other Catalans of the twenty-first century” who, as they explain, include people who have been living in Catalonia since the 1970s, at which point a wave of immigration began, of foreigners rather than from the rest of the Peninsula. These people came as children and young adults, have grown up in Catalonia and are now raising their own families there. In Candel and Cuenca’s book, Moroccans, Dominicans, Argentineans, Chinese, and others tell their

---

<sup>13</sup> See Antón et al. As anyone familiar with the anecdotal evidence might expect, this study found significant wage differentials between locals and Latin American/Caribbean workers in Spain.

stories of hardships and successes, escapes from oppressive regimes, opportunities, and the slippery, troublesome road toward becoming a full-fledged member of Catalan society.

But when has one become such a member? Candel believed that “només una integració econòmica i social real, tangible, respectuosa amb les creences i pràctiques culturals de cadascú i interculturalment dialogant pot donar garanties d’un futur mínimament harmoniós no exempt, és clar, de dificultats” (16). As we have seen with the figures provided by the INE, there are problems with calculating the number of “immigrants” and foreign residents based on place of birth; indeed, “no instrument exists with which to determine who has overcome...the condition of being an immigrant and has successfully been incorporated into the larger social context of Catalonia, which tends to be a common situation” (Cardús 42). The terminology itself is problematic, which is naturally why Candel embarked on his quest to find an alternative term in the first place. Perpetual references to “immigrants” ensure that newcomers to Catalonia will never be acknowledged as full-fledged *Catalan* participants in Catalan society. However, the term continues to be used broadly. Cardús criticizes the social sciences for their contributions to “stigmatizing the condition of being an immigrant” which has not “allowed most immigrants to move beyond the status of ‘foreigners’.” (42). Poignantly reflecting this social reality, Ballester has himself expressed one of his key goals in life as “dejar de ser extranjero,” to stop being a foreigner (Villazala).

According to Cardús, the Catalan public tends to view immigration as a danger to Catalan identity insofar as the influx of foreigners, especially Castilian speakers, appears to threaten the survival of the Catalan language, generally regarded as the basis of authentic Catalan culture. In part, this reflects a widespread anti-immigrant attitude that is present across all regions of contemporary Spain.<sup>14</sup> Yet there is another aspect of immigration that presents a challenge: many new arrivals who hail from Latin America do not agree with the linguistic policies ostensibly protecting the use and status of the Catalan language. Some resent the idea that they should need to learn another language when, in fact, Catalans do speak “Spanish.” This is not a new issue. Candel bluntly summarizes his understanding of the Latin American immigrant’s typical attitude about the language issue in his book from twenty years ago:

Para él, en Catalunya se hablaba el castellano o español, y «además», el catalán, un «además» que encerraba...una especie de «capricho» de los catalanes. O sea, que hablaban de esa manera porque querían. Si «sabían» hablar castellano, con

---

<sup>14</sup> See Antón et al. for a more detailed mention of this problem. The CIS conducted a poll in 2006 that revealed widespread negative attitudes toward immigrants across Spain; immigration was, in the general view, “the most important problem faced by the country” (Antón 234). What is not specified here are the statistics from Catalonia. However, by all accounts, as evidenced by Cardús’s work, there are still hurdles to overcome in this respect. Racism and ethnic discrimination are real problems everywhere, including in Catalonia, and the wage gap suffered by undocumented workers in Spain is a real hardship that needs to be addressed. I am not by any stretch trying to diminish the importance of these facts. What I am saying here is that there are equally real socioeconomic factors pertaining specifically to the foreign-born population (which have been established by empirical studies as relating to factors such as educational background and mother tongue), most particularly those of Latin American and Caribbean origin, that present additional complications in the attempts to protect the generalized use of Catalan.

lo fácil que resultaba hablar el castellano y lo difícil que era hablar el catalán, ¿por qué no hablaban «siempre» en castellano, nos homogeneizábamos y nos ahorrábamos de una vez toda clase de problemas?...Ellos no sabían el catalán y los catalanes sí sabían el castellano. ¿Entendido? Sí, entendidísimo y elemental, querido Watson. (40-41)

Even though this description employs a sarcastic tone and was written about the *altres catalans* twenty years ago, it still rings true today. As confirmed by recent sociolinguistic studies, there exists a great difference in attitude toward Catalan depending on one's mother tongue. Ángel Huguet and Judit Janés found, in their study of teenage students of immigrant origin in Lleida and Osona schools, that students of Latin American origin had a notably more negative attitude toward Catalan than their counterparts from other parts of the world (254).<sup>15</sup>

However, the complexity of the current immigration situation is such that Candel's work has, as yet, not spun off or inspired similar umbrella studies of the foreign-born population living in Catalonia today. As Candel's biographer describes it, "és tan difícil el que va fer [Candel] que no va crear escola. Ha tingut admiradors, però no un hereu clar. De tots els colombians, equatorians, etc., que ara viuen aquí no tenim ni idea de qui són. Ni els coneixem ni ells coneixen els catalans, perquè el pont

---

<sup>15</sup> They do note, however, that the majority of immigrant students had an overall positive attitude toward Catalan, with a bent toward a neutral attitude toward both Spanish and Catalan.

que va ser Candel no hi és” (cited in Relats).<sup>16</sup> There is a need for further research on Catalonia’s foreign-born population; but more importantly, there is a definite need to acknowledge the presence and significant contributions of these persons to Catalan society and culture, as Cardús points out.

In part, what is needed is to go beyond the duality immigrant-native. Even “other Catalans,” in my view, does not fit the bill, any more; nor does Cardús’s “new Catalans,” because the application of adjectives only serves to continue a distinction. Ballester, while he may very well be an “other Catalan of the twenty-first century” or a “new Catalan” according to the respective terminology, would probably prefer to just be labeled as being “from Barcelona.” But even this label, which purges the Catalan capital of its cultural referent, has its problems, as we will outline below.

### *From Cuba to a Catalan Nowhere*

*Un refugio: “¿Enlloc?”* – Juan Pablo Ballester

As we have seen, Ballester has endured his own difficulties on the road to Spanish citizenship and integration into Catalan society. There are reasons, as elucidated above, to view his work in the context of Cuban art, rather than in the

---

<sup>16</sup> He moreover does not think that literature and social essay have found a *generalized* place in Catalonia for immigration and/or immigrants; the example of Najat El Hachmi’s *Jo també sóc catalana* (2004) also does not suffice for him as being in the same vein as Candel’s work: “la Najat és marroquina, i la immigració d’avui ha multiplicat les procedències. A més, és molt més complexa i menys miserable, perquè avui qualsevol immigrant pot tenir mínimament aigua, llum i gas, i els Candel no en tenien, per exemple. La Najat és molt bona, però té poc a veure amb aquella situació” (cited in Relats).



context of his new life in Catalonia. Yet *Enlloc* as it came to be displayed in full in 2005, which was carried out in Barcelona and deals explicitly with Catalan nationalism, should be considered (at the very least, additionally) in the latter context, rather than strictly in the context of Ballester's place in Cuban photography.<sup>17</sup>

As mentioned, the questions of identity and belonging seem rather trite, given the extreme quantity of scholarship on identity dealing with Cuban exile. Those who have commented on Ballester's work —albeit extremely briefly and not in useful critical depth— have focused superficially identity and stereotypes based on class, race, immigration status, or urban roles. These questions are indeed present in Ballester's work, but the way in which they have been described does not even begin to untangle the more subtle features of his photography. Rather than being seen simplistically as a Cuban exile who happens to live in Barcelona, Ballester should be viewed as a participant in the greater contemporary discussion on Catalan identity, which is still ongoing in Barcelona today several years after his *Enlloc* project. Although he ostensibly attempts to criticize “nationalism” (defined ambiguously) and create a fictional place – a *nowhere* – beyond the cultural and political polemics revolving around Catalan national identity that have been taking place over the past decades (including through the present), Ballester's work reproduces or re-enacts these polemics by creating an overtly Catalan nowhere in his photographic series.

---

<sup>17</sup> Yet even if compared to work of other Cuban artists, *Enlloc*, I would argue, is in fact more radical than Leal's *Aquí tampoco*, and is as equally fascinating as works by some of the more well-known artists who are established in Cuba or the United States, like Leal and Bruguera, respectively.

The political nature of his photography in *Enlloc*, viewed in a more critically complex way, beyond the limit of his own personal life experiences (while naturally not discounting them), is undeniable: the significance of photographs of adolescent boys with Catalan uniforms of the *mossos d'esquadra*, and men with erections wearing Catalan flags must be analyzed in greater detail. It is therefore the latter part of the *Enlloc* series, which concretely pinpoints Catalan national symbols and strips them of their surroundings, that is of greatest interest.

It was for this second series (2003-2005) that Ballester changed the title of the entire project (including the photographs originally included in *En ninguna parte*) to the Catalan term, *Enlloc*, and expanded the series to include new photographs and a shift in focus that sheds interesting light on the first part. In this series, Ballester dresses professional models in *mossos d'esquadra* uniforms for certain images; and photographs of aroused, nude and semi-nude men for others. In this case, we no longer have the “authentic” youths from the street, young men pulled into Ballester’s apartment to be captured in their “real” so-called urban uniforms; this time, Ballester is dealing with hired models from a modeling agency.

*Enlloc* is a fascinating word that nearly means the opposite of what it might seem to mean. Standing alone, the preposition *en* in Catalan often means “in” (although it can be rendered as various other prepositions in English, depending on context) and *un lloc* is a place. Moreover, *en lloc de* means “instead of” or, literally, “in place of.” Therefore it might seem perfectly logical to conclude that *enlloc* should

mean something about being in a particular location, something like “in place” or “situated.” On the contrary, *enlloc* surprises (the new language learner, at least) by meaning *nowhere*.

Switching to the Catalan term *enlloc* certainly raises a flag for the thoughtful viewer, since Ballester is a native speaker of Castilian, not Catalan (though he understands Catalan and reads it, according to him, “perfectly” (“de jpb desde bcn!”). The change in language automatically charges the photographic project with different cultural, social, and especially political meaning than it possessed previously with the title in Castilian. Ballester offers that his use of the Catalan word *enlloc* is paradoxical and ironic toward “mi propio estado, y del estado en el que se encuentra el propio nacionalismo catalán en el que me veo arrastrado – y de éste en su crítica al ‘nacionalismo español’, todos a su vez en una comunidad económica europea inmersa ella misma en el proceso de globalización (“de jpb”). The use of the Catalan is not simply an innocent gesture meant to use the language of the autochthonous population; Ballester had already been living in Barcelona for years, including when he was working on *En ninguna parte*, and does not speak Catalan under normal circumstances. *Enlloc* thus inserts itself deliberately into contemporary Catalonia and its historically and currently debated topics on the status of Catalan language, the rights to self-expression and preservation of the indigenous language under dictatorships and after the transition to democracy after Francosim (which is widely acknowledged as insufficient at best, and non-existent at worst), and the difficulties of

protecting autochthonous Catalan culture in the midst of new Castilian-speaking residents arriving every year.

For the most part, each boy in the series is featured alone in the photograph.



Figure 4, courtesy of Juan Pablo Ballester

Each faces the camera more or less straight on with his head, but each body is in a unique position. One boy sits in a blossoming tree, cliché of springtime, youth, and new beginnings. Another squats in a mowed field, a dog by his side, recalling the young men from the earlier series (Figure 4). The rows of the mowed field trail off in the background nearly into a vanishing

point. Like in the image with the field, the path on which one boy in another photograph stands vanishes behind him in the forest. These vanishing points serve to drive home the point, as it were: from the initial step off the floor at the beginning of the series, Ballester's characters have vanished into *enlloc*, nowhere.

Of course, this is an ironical nowhere, in which location is everything and it is the spectator who ultimately becomes disoriented. Several boys stand casually posing for the camera with identifiable Catalan landscape in the background, such as the

Montserrat. Toward the end of the series, Ballester literally and figuratively strips his characters of their Catalan uniforms, but Catalan flags continue to appear incongruously. The last several photographs in *Enlloc* feature young men in various poses, naked or semi-naked and, importantly, aroused. The desiring subject only hinted at in photographs from the earlier series is now made visually and sexually explicit.



**Figure 5, courtesy of Juan Pablo Ballester**

Differing markedly from the earlier series, several of the photographs from the second part of *Enlloc* also include a female character who reappears in several photographs, usually paired with a long-haired blond male character. These two characters provide a sub-narrative within the series. At first, the two appear separately; he sitting on a white horse – no knight in shining armor here, rather a *mosso d'esquadra* uniform – and she

sitting on a log, holding a cigarette and staring off to one side, a Doberman Pinscher sitting calmly by her side. Several photographs (of other subjects) later, the two appear together, first in an embrace standing on stones next to a creek; then lying together in the grass, eyes closed as if in sleep. In this last photograph, the young man's uniform is prominent, and his hat, with its Catalan flag, rests on his abdomen.

The following shot is from further away: the young man is shirtless, the young woman on her knees, presumably undoing the front of his pants. The horse stands tied in the background, watching from a distance.

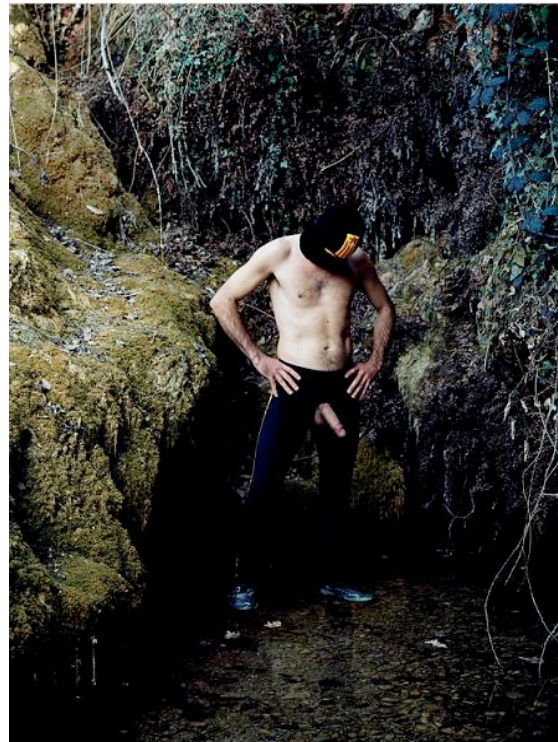
Seven photographs later, they reappear together for the last time; in this photograph – still in the middle of the forest – the man, still shirtless, lies on the ground, the woman sitting on his torso, grabbing his neck with one hand and brandishing a large knife in the air with the other (Figure 6). The dog lies peacefully by their side, as comfortably as if by the hearth, and the man's hat with its Catalan flag lies conspicuously on top of a bouquet of flowers strewn by the couple's side.

This last photograph with the anonymous couple, in which the young woman flaunts her knife, raises some questions. Has the woman, who is also topless (still with a bra on) at this point, been threatened by an apparent previous physical encounter? Or is she the one instigating the physical threat? On the other hand, the young man appears to be quite serene on the ground; perhaps this knife is expected. And if the young man is a *mosso d'esquadra*, who is the young woman supposed to represent? It is possible to read the young woman as an element that is threatening the status quo of Catalan society; although, on the other hand, the posed element of the image simultaneously questions the validity of this analysis even as it makes the suggestion. It is also hard to miss the fact that the two characters are physically opposite in appearance: he blond, she dark. Is Ballester the one relying on racial or ethnic stereotypes; or is he assuming that the spectator will rely on them? Or,



conversely, does he assume that the spectator will identify and resist them? Of course, all of this is nonsensical speculation, since there is no *actual* narrative accompanying the images, and there are no titles or captions officially linking the various images together. Yet the content of Ballester's series seems to coerce the viewer into such narrative speculations. The border between truth and fiction is indeed porous.

The images featuring this couple are not the only ones of great interest in the series. Among the various photographs featuring naked or semi-naked men, one image in particular stands out. This image shows a young man standing in a creek bed, surrounded by moss-covered rocks and



**Figure 6, courtesy of Juan Pablo Ballester**

dangling branches (Figure 6). His face is entirely hidden from the camera, with a ski mask on his head and his head bent down toward his chest, the eye slit in his mask just barely showing. As in several other photographs, the man here is aroused, and his erectile penis is sticking out of his pants. His hands rest on his hips; and his pale, bare chest stands out in contrast to the dark, damp rocks behind him.

I would argue that this is perhaps the most significant photograph in the entire *Enlloc* project; and, to a certain extent, it provides the key to reading the rest of the series. One of the most important elements in the image is the small but prominent flag on the front of the man's black ski mask. The flag is one of the versions of the *senyera*, the Catalan separatist flag. The *senyera*, which, in fact, is generally accepted as an adaptation of the Cuban flag, features a star in a triangular field, from which the stripes emanate toward the other end. The lone star symbolizes independence; the red and yellow stripes come from the traditional Catalan flag. The *senyera* was first created by Vicenç A. Ballester and dates to around 1907 or 1908 (Crexell 25), although the later date is preferred by some organizations.<sup>18</sup> Joan Crexell notes that Vicenç A. Ballester had visited Cuba as a youth and must have admired Cuba for its independence struggles; this Ballester also dedicated the 1905 issue of his separatist magazine *La Tralla* to Cuba" (Crexell 72). The separatist flag, then, is a prominent feature of this photograph, but the fact that the subject's face is hidden is significant. The ski mask donned by the man in question suggests violence, which I take to mean that Ballester is implying an inherent threat present in Catalan separatist movements, or perhaps in what he sees lumped together as any sort of "nationalist" sentiment.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> The Comissió 100 Anys d'Estelada, for instance, adopts 1908 as the year of creation, according to the "estelada original" that appeared in a photograph in 1908 (estelada.cat).

<sup>19</sup> On a side note, while I am criticizing Ballester for his view as I understand it based on what I read in his images and offering evidence to the contrary, it should also be noted that Ballester's background as a Cuban *is* in this context important for understanding his view. The vast majority of Cubans who have grown up exclusively under the Revolution are terribly weary and wary of anything "political," particularly anything that carries the faintest whiff of anything "national." Too



### *By Way of Conclusion*

Whether the suggestion of violence inherent to Catalan nationalism (however defined) – or even, given the ski mask and erect penis an allegory for national rape – is indicative of Ballester’s own attitude or not is largely irrelevant. The reality is that Ballester’s image, whether intentionally or not, reflects the fact that in contemporary Spain, anti-Catalan discrimination is rampant, bordering on a type of racism.<sup>20</sup>

As is well-known, Catalonia has a long history of struggling against external domination, as illustrated by the *Diada*, the Catalan National Holiday, celebrated on September 11, to commemorate the surrender of Barcelona in 1714, which marked only one of various chapters of repression in which the Catalan language was prohibited. More recently, under Francoism, sophisticated and systematic attempts were undertaken to obliterate any trace of Catalan culture, including the use of the Catalan language. For the Francoist regime, as Borja de Riquer explains,

només hi havia franquistes a seques...El català va ser exclòs de la cultura oficial. Tot allò que afectava el català, començant per la llengua, era mal vist, es considerava que estava contaminat de separatisme i antifranquisme. El

---

many years of “Patria o Muerte” will do that to a person. In that sense, Ballester’s attitude is typical of virtually anyone from Cuba who is under age 50 and is therefore perfectly understandable. I also do not discount the very real possibility that Ballester’s image is suggesting that *others* perceive a threat inherent in political Catalanism, rather than that he himself believes this to be true. Either way, however, the suggestion should not go unanswered.

<sup>20</sup> Tree points out the comparison between anti-Catalan sentiment and anti-Semitism. Famous authors such as Pío Baroja have explicitly compared Catalans to Jews with their stereotypical negative labels (greed, etc.). In 1907, Baroja claimed that “Everything in Catalonia has a markedly Semitic character” (Tree 20-21).

franquisme no accept[à] no sols el catalanisme, sinó la catalanitat. (cited in Aragay)

Part of the legacy of Francoism makes itself evident in the battles over the right to speak and use the Catalan language in all spheres of life in territories where it has traditionally been spoken. Catalans are right to feel defensive and to fear for the future of their native language and culture.

Indeed, efforts to protect the use of Catalan in all aspects of life have often met resistance, criticism, or even insults and physical threats. Often this discrimination is internal to Spain, but the occasional outside criticism is also hurled. In June of 2008, the Directora General de la Política Lingüística, Margalida Tous, sent a letter to Air Berlin, requesting that Catalan be used on flights alongside of Castilian. The head of Air Berlin, Joachim Hunold, responded with a series of angry diatribes:

Hoy el castellano ya no es una lengua oficial...Hay pueblos de Mallorca en los que **los niños ya no hablan el castellano**. En las escuelas, el castellano es una lengua extranjera más...¿Y los que vuelan a Galicia o al País Vasco querrán que nos dirijamos en gallego o en vasco? ¿Es que ya no hablan en castellano?...La partición de España en nacionalismos regionales es de hecho un **retorno a los mini estados medievales**. Hasta ahora me pensaba que vivíamos en una Europa sin fronteras. (“Air Berlin denuncia la discriminación del español”, emphasis in the original)

Hunold's statements may be shocking, but this should not, unfortunately, be for their mere utterance. They do not represent a unique occurrence, nor are they indicative of strictly an outsider's attitude.

In fact, rather than fading as the Franco years become ever more distant, the anti-Catalan discrimination present in Spain has actually become stronger in recent decades. Borja de Riquer explains that Spanish society as a whole:

...encara té herències múltiples del franquisme. Una de les més clares és que l'espanyolisme va arrelar bastant més del que semblava...Hi ha editorials de diaris que fa 20 anys no s'haurien atrevit a publicar. Pensaven el mateix, però no s'atrevien a escriure-ho. Ara tenim un nacionalisme espanyol agressiu sense complexos. El discurs de la pluralitat no ha arrelat i això és en bona part un llegat cultural i ideològic de la dictadura.<sup>21</sup> (cited in Aragay)

Thus Hunold's comments merely echo the Francoist-inspired, anti-Catalan sentiment of some Spanish citizens and permanent residents who believe that Catalan is being unfairly privileged to the detriment of Castilian, which they see as threatened.

An examination of actual events indicates that it is Catalan, not Castilian, which is under threat. One example is the fact that the Catalan-language TV channel, TV3, was barred in 2008 from being shown in the Comunitat Valenciana. A distinct but equally troublesome problem is *espanyolisme* present in Catalan media that was created

---

<sup>21</sup> Riquer cites the use of mass media in spreading vicious brands of *espanyolisme*: "Com deia Vázquez Montalbán, la televisió va arribar a un país de semianalfabets" (cited in Aragay). See also mention of Alexandre's study of TV3, above.

precisely to resist such hegemonizing movements; some critics would argue, as Víctor Alexandre has done, that “[e]spanyolitza mil vegades més un telenotícies de TV3 que *La mañana de la COPE* [ultraconservative Catholic-run radio station]...TV3 és l'eina d'espanyolització més important de Catalunya” (cited in Forteza).<sup>22</sup>

As I revise this chapter, there are ongoing protests taking place in cities all over Spain. The so-called *indignats* (or more frequently, *indignados*) have gathered in what has been termed the “Spanish Revolution” or the Movimiento 15-M. Like the many Arab revolutions that have taken place recently, the so-called Spanish Revolution utilizes Facebook and other online modes of communication, and purports to revitalize democracy and fight for the rights of the downtrodden population of Spain. One observer points out the underlying *espanyolisme* in this “Spanish” Revolution, which, as she notes, “no va ser tan espontani com ens volien fer creure ni tan apolític com ens van voler vendre...És una organització força centralitzada, amb propostes comunes moltes de les quals dictades des de la Plaza del Sol de Madrid” (Forcadell).<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> This is not to be confused with the separate criticism that the vocabulary and structures used in Catalan-language programming is too low-level. Gustau Muñoz believes that “[t]he small concessions to popular mass culture...are often criticised...On the contrary, there ought to be more ordinary things on. Catalan culture will be ordinary or it will not be at all” (cited in Muñoz 131-132). What Muñoz is getting at here is that in order to survive long-term, Catalan must be used in all areas and at all levels of society, not exclusively in high culture. Even though part of the low-level aspect referred to involves heavily Castilianized vocabulary and syntax, the criticism brought up by Alexandre is nonetheless a different, and frankly more worrisome, matter. Alexandre argues that the *espanyolisme* present in TV3 programming is much more effective and penetrating because it is unsuspected by the Catalan-speaking viewers, who subconsciously and uncritically accept the content of the programming as being “theirs” or “ours” because of the language in which it is presented.

<sup>23</sup> Forcadell continues thus: “Aquests arguments tan puerils i tan antics, a la vegada, ens podrien fer somriure si no fos que es van utilitzar inicialment per evitar que l'acampada de la plaça de Catalunya

As Ferran Suay blithely states, “No necessitem cap revolució espanyola. La manca de democràcia que aquests indignats acusen és precisament una herència espanyola. Ve de l'absència d'una autèntica transició, després de la mort de Franco” (n.p.).

Even today – or especially today, as Riquer indicates – it can be said that Catalan faces a certain brand of democratized (that is, legitimized and endorsed by both the state and the people) discrimination and maltreatment. Attempts on the part of Catalan politicians and activists to create protective measures to ensure the long-term survival of the Catalan language are often viewed with suspicion, both by Spaniards at large and by newcomers to Catalonia from other countries or other parts of Spain.<sup>24</sup> Matthew Tree, an English-born, longtime resident of Catalonia who has published numerous books in both English and Catalan, his adopted language, has documented the widespread anti-Catalan sentiment prevalent in contemporary monolingual Spain.<sup>25</sup> Tree notes how “curiously enough, although now all Catalans can speak Spanish, from time to time, grouplets of Spanish politicians and intellectuals

---

es declarés favorable al dret a l'autodeterminació del poble català...el mateix dret que els acampats de Barcelona reclamen per al poble sahrauí i per al poble palestí, però en canvi van lluitar fins a l'últim moment perquè no es reconegués per al poble català” (n.p.).

<sup>24</sup> This includes actions on the part of laypersons and even youths. One disturbing example is that of Èric Bertran, who in 2004 was arrested on charges of terrorism at the age of 14, detained and forced to undergo extreme psychological examination and treatment, for having sent an email to several businesses demanding that they display signage in Catalan (alongside of Castilian), as required by law. Víctor Alexandre fictionalized Bertran's traumatizing experience in a dramatic work, *Èric i l'Exèrcit del Fènix* (2005).

<sup>25</sup> As defined by “areas of Spanish territory in which Castilian – aka *Spanish* – is the only official language, and which are home to about 25 million people, out of a total Spanish population of just over 40 million” (15).

still insist on insisting that the *Spanish* language is being persecuted in Catalonia” (20, emphasis mine).

Catalan historians and scholars, such as Josep Maria Solé i Sabater, have documented case after case, year after year, of precisely the reverse, which is far more real and all too common: organized attempts to persecute and repress the use of Catalan. Tree indicates that “anti-Catalan prejudice, fomented openly in certain Spanish media and by certain Spanish politicians, has resulted in harassment [and] verbal abuse” (25). So widespread is anti-Catalan prejudice in Spain today that “Just to live in and form no matter how modest a part of the Catalan cultural universe, is in itself seen as indifferent or undesirable or politically incorrect or downright distasteful or even bloody horrible in monolingual Spain...this is an untenable situation” (Tree 28).

Jordi Porta has observed smartly that “nationalism” is una paraula que fa nosa a molts, sobretot als que ho són i no se’n volen reconèixer...Actualment hi ha els nacionalismes propis d’aquells països que senten perillar la unitat a causa de la seva realitat plurinacional interna i la dels que reclamen l’alliberament perquè estan sotmesos a un poder polític extern” (n.p.).<sup>26</sup> This danger to the perceived unity of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Porta continues:

També es considera que a l’època de la globalització no tenen sentit els nacionalismes però resulta que cada vegada apareixen més països independents o més reclamacions d’independència...D’altra banda, el polític de moda, Bara[c]k Obama no té cap problema per proclamar l’orgull de la nació americana. En definitiva, ser nacionalista català sense complexos és el símptoma que encara està per resoldre un reconeixement institucional satisfactori de la nació catalana. (n.p.)

country is precisely what is felt by those in Spain who prefer to see expressions of Catalan culture eliminated in order to maintain that unity – or rather, to create it, since it has never actually existed in the first place.

In addition to generalized efforts offered by the Generalitat to educate the population and provide subsidized services for learning Catalan, some openly Catalanist political parties have attempted to counter negative campaigns by fostering social awareness of Catalan issues and political movements to seek greater concessions of rights for Catalans. Senator Miquel Bofill, from the party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), introduced a movement in 2008 to encourage King Juan Carlos to learn Catalan, which the ERC explains would be a gesture of egalitarianism and tolerance toward the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Iberian Peninsula. The ERC presented a document, “1,027 questions for the Spanish state about what is is not doing but should do through Catalan,” which expressed the wish of the ERC not only to “denounce, but also to advance” the normalization of the Catalan language (“ERC vol que el rei aprengui català i que l'exèrcit l'ensenyi als militars.”). Unfortunately, such measures have usually fallen short of their goals and

---

Porta’s mention of Obama and American nationalism (which is normalized, widely accepted, seen as unthreatening within the U.S. itself) makes clear a) the exception that is made of the Catalan case within Spain, which is no more “extreme” than other forms of nationalism; b) that expression of pride in national culture is a normal fact of contemporary life, even though the very real possibility always exists for actual extreme cases to surface, such as Nazism; and c) that those who call Catalans nationalists by rote are merely exposing their own nationalism (toward what they view as a unified Spain or “Spanish nation”).

in many cases have not generated widespread (enough) support, even from some communities in Catalan-speaking regions.

Furthermore, despite Hunold's unfounded claim that Mallorcan children no longer speak Castilian, the reality is that the use of Catalan is declining sharply, even as the number of residents who understand it is increasing due to the bilingual education assured by the Catalan school system.<sup>27</sup> In the Balearic Islands, the level of Catalan understood and spoken by the population over age 16 has declined significantly in recent years.<sup>28</sup> According to a study in 2010 by the Institut d'Estadística de les Illes Balears, the average number of people in the Balearic Islands who understand Catalan is 85% (which itself is arguably a low figure), but the average percentage who can read is 70.82% and the average percentage who can write is only 47.9%. By individual island, the highest percentage of those who can read and write Catalan is in Menorca, yet there also, the percentage has fallen significantly from previous levels in 2007. Moreover, the use of Catalan varies tremendously by age group: while 71% of those above age 65 speak Catalan "almost always" in the Balearic Islands, a mere 29.14% of those ages 16-35 do. Perhaps even more alarming is the fact that over 45% of the Balearic population considers Castilian to be their language, whereas only approximately 36% considers their language to be Catalan ("Enquesta modular

---

<sup>27</sup> Although, as mentioned in more detail below, even the educational system in Catalan is being threatened.

<sup>28</sup> The Balearic Islands are not even the Catalan-speaking region with the highest number of people who understand (but do not necessarily speak) the language; that rank belongs to La Franja de Ponent, followed by Catalunya in second place (Querol et al. 19).



d'hàbits socials 2010: Usos lingüístics”).<sup>29</sup> None of these statistics is a good sign of the future health of the language. In fact, Querol’s study grouped use of Catalan into three revealing (and alarming) categories: *penetració nul·la* (Alguer, Catalunya Nord), *penetració baixa* (la Franja, Illes Balears) and *penetració mitjana* (Andorra, Catalunya) (138). There are plenty of reasons to suspect that Catalan is in danger of dying in the coming decades, if more is not done to protect its status and ensure its socially acceptable use in all registers and across all spheres of life in Catalan society.<sup>30</sup>

Thus it is clear that as a linguistic community facing serious obstacles for its continued existence, Catalans have an uphill battle ahead: “el primer que ha de fer [el poble català] per poder-se defensar, és prendre consciència de les agressions que pateix. Després, cal que esculli el camí polític i cultural més convenient per tal de no ser víctima de nous atacs i poder plantar cara a l'Estat que l'opprimeix” (Alexandre 51). While the ERC’s action to convince the royalty and the military to start utilizing Catalan may seem radical to some, for example, it must be acknowledged that the political struggle to ensure the enduring use of the language is difficult to counter against anti-Catalan sentiment and other obstacles. As one writer puts it:

---

<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, as Querol and others have pointed out, “la correlació entre la llengua de la persona entrevistada i els seus usos lingüístics declarats...no sempre és tan òbvia. Per exemple, a les Illes Balears, els qui declaren que la seva llengua és, per exemple, l'alemany o l'anglès es comporten, en molts de sentits, com els hispanòfons, encara que per això no deixen de considerar-se germanòfons o anglòfons” (145). See Querol, Capítol 6.

<sup>30</sup> To take one example outside of the Principat, Querol’s study revealed that although 69% of the population in Catalunya Nord understand the language and around 37% speak it, only 1.6% identify with it as “their language” (148). But even in Catalunya, only 54% identify Catalan as “la seva llengua d'identificació” (Querol 149).

Espanya sempre farà el que consideri oportú per preservar el seu projecte nacional i lingüístic... Sempre discriminarà i deixarà "a la lliure elecció" el català on sigui minoritari en el seu entorn (Franja, País Valencià), i imposarà el castellà "per protegir-lo" on la llengua catalana tingui més importància (Principat)... Espanya fa el que faria (i de fet fa) qualsevol estat independent del món: protegir la seva llengua, cultura, història i identitat. ("Suprem i immersió")

Given the lack of democracy in contemporary Spain and the discrimination so often faced by the Catalan community, it is easy to understand why some Catalans have despaired altogether of the possibilities for change within the current political structure.

Thus for some Catalans, the best way out of the predicament is simply to break ties with Spain, which they have always viewed as colonizing or imperialist toward Catalonia in any case. A series of studies conducted by Marc Belzunces at the Consell Superior d'Investigacions Científiques (CSIC) between 1991 and 2008, under the umbrella of the Cercle d'Estudis Soniranistes (CES), revealed that 35% of the population in Catalonia was in favor of explicit and permanent separation from Spain (that is, full independence), while 45% was against independence. Specifically, 2,000,000 Catalans have declared their separatist sentiment ("Un estudi compta dos milions de catalans independentistes."). While the number of separatists is less than half the population, 2 million people still represent a significant voice. Moreover, a large majority (72.2%) of Catalans declared that they were dissatisfied with politicians

in Spain, according to a survey conducted by the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO) de la Generalitat in October 2008 (“Més del 70% dels catalans, insatisfets amb els polítics”).<sup>31</sup> The Spanish state, centered in Madrid, has clearly fallen short in meeting the needs of its diverse population. Unfortunately, this situation is nothing new.

Such is the difficulty facing Catalonia to retain the right to its Catalan identity that a few years ago journalist Patricia Gabancho called Barcelona “the capital of what?”: “la ciutat que [Pasqual] Maragall projecta no és exactament la capital de Catalunya, una ciutat amb una cultura, sinó un artefacte comercial, és a dir, un paquet turístic, d'inversió i de comerç: la que acabaria sent ‘la millor botiga del món’” (“Barcelona, capital de què?”). In addition to the growing numbers of native Spanish speakers in Barcelona, the attraction of tourist dollars has led to efforts to *espanyolitzar* the city culturally, in particular in how the city’s culture is presented to the outside world. Small wonder that otherwise well-educated visitors to Spain have often never

---

<sup>31</sup> In 2009, an opinion poll was taken in the small village of Arenys de Munt. Madrid attempted to prevent the poll from taking place; a judge banned it formally, and the president of the PP in Lleida requested help from the central government to stop the poll; she was on record as stating, “en la obligación de hacer cumplir la ley y **convocar un referéndum con objetivos independentistas es una irresponsabilidad** por parte del alcalde y está fuera del marco legal de la acción política de un ayuntamiento” (“El juez suspende la consulta,” emphasis in the original). It was so controversial that the town’s name “had become a household name to millions and was duly flooded by thousands of independence well-wishers and three hundred journalists and less than a hundred Falangists who gave the fascist salute protected by four hundred Catalan policemen” (Tree 171). The success of the Arenys de Munt poll, in which over 96% voted that they favored independence, spawned further polls and referendums. A macroreferendum was carried out in December of 2009, with around a 30% voter turnout. The results were considered a “fracaso total” by conservative press (see, for example, A. Baiget’s article “Fracaso total del referéndum sobre la independencia catalana: vota menos del 30%”). However, compared to elections, a 30% turnout is actually quite high, and the percentage of voters in favor of independence was actually 94.71%, an incredibly high segment of those voting (Vallespín).

heard of Catalan and do not know that Catalonia has a unique history of cultural, economic and legal development from Spain. It would seem that Ballester's "Nowhere," for all that he intended it to be ironic toward his own condition, precisely reflects the increasingly evident reality that Catalonia is having its Catalan character dismantled, to use a sadly appropriate pun, as we speak.

## CONCLUSION

### *What We Have Covered*

As we have seen, the present study aimed to address certain key moments or instances of contact between Cuba and Catalonia, beginning immediately with the early post-colonial period following the Cuban War of 1895-1898. The overall conclusion that I have drawn from my investigations of the many rich aspects of the cultural, political, literary, and artistic relations between Cuba and Catalonia is that Cuba came to hold a role of greatly increased importance in the Catalan imaginary after independence in 1898. In the early twentieth century, this importance and influence is manifested in the admiration held for Cuba by political Catalanist groups and in the architectural expression of Catalan culture in Cuba. In the middle of the twentieth century, Cuba's importance for Catalonia relates both to the difficult situation in Catalonia under Francoism and, slightly later, to the Cuban Revolution and its immediate (and eventual) impact on leftist movements in Spain and across many Latin American countries. Toward the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, which I connect in part with the centennial of Cuba's independence of 1898, Cuba gained an innovative place in Catalan literature. The first decade of the twenty-first century has revealed a new area of interaction, still nascent, in which Cubans participate in Catalan society as part of the larger immigrant population in

Catalonia. This last trend might well be described, in time, as a bridge between two more generally separable or definable eras of Cuban-Catalan relations.

Of course, fortunately or unfortunately, even lengthy studies must necessarily eliminate potential topics of discussion to allow for clarity and focus. Thus the present project, naturally, does not by any means profess to analyze all to-date insufficiently covered areas of investigation on the relationship between Cuba and Catalonia. Below I will explore some ideas for potential topics of interest when the time comes to revise this dissertation into an expanded manuscript in the future.

### *Modernisme Caribeny in More Detail*

Although this chapter included a broad range of information and analysis, there is always room for further development. Undoubtedly, this chapter should include at least two new areas in a future work: 1) analysis of details of the Modernista architecture in Cuba, i.e., in-depth scrutiny of the significance of individual elements such as furniture, balconies, sculptures, façades, etc., complete with accompanying photographs of details; and 2) at the very least, a preliminary analysis of the significance of Modernista architecture in cities outside of Havana, particularly in the eastern part of the island. The eastern cities received large numbers of Catalan immigrants at times; Santiago de Cuba alone received over 25% of Catalan immigrants to Cuba from 1851 to 1898 (Fontanet Gil 41). Some of the most progressive Catalan

publications<sup>1</sup> and the most radical separatist groups were located in Oriente, in particular the Cathalonia Blok Nacionalista Catalunya de Guantánamo, the Casal Nacionalista de Camagüey, and the Catalunya Grop Nacionalista Radical de Santiago de Cuba.<sup>2</sup> The latter was originally created as the Centre Catalanista but was restructured in 1907 (J.M. Ferran, *La constitució* 42). It would be fascinating to discover whether, or how, the Modernista architecture in these cities differs from that in Havana, and whether the separatist groups in these areas made any significant references to the architecture in their publications. As there is even less that has been published on eastern Modernisme caribeny than on that of Havana (which is itself already relatively scant), this research would almost certainly require a trip to the eastern part of Cuba to consult archives in the pertinent cities.

### *Eugeni D'Ors: American (or Cuban) Key to Understanding La Ben Plantada?*

The present work delved heavily into the Modernista movements as they developed specifically in architecture. Left out of this project, as the reader will have noted, is a section dealing with the subsequent Noucentista movement, spearheaded by Eugeni D'Ors. D'Ors's texts have been scrutinized at various points in time through various lenses, of course, despite the controversial political stance he

---

<sup>1</sup> Consider the fact that the Catalan-language periodical *La Gresca* was established in Santiago de Cuba 1869, well before the inauguration of the infinitely more famous *Diari Català* (Fonanet Gil 56).

<sup>2</sup> Amazingly, these centers continued in operation until 1961, when the new revolutionary government finally shut them down (Fonanet Gil 34).

eventually came to hold. However, D'Ors's well-known piece *La ben plantada* has layers of significance that remain to be explored and that would be pertinent to an expanded version of this project. Another potential chapter in a future version of this work, therefore, would be an in-depth analysis of *La ben plantada* and D'Ors's view of Cuba. D'Ors had, of course, a personal connection to the island, as his mother was Cuban. But there are also references, both internal and external, to the importance that Catalonia's relationship with the Americas had in the author's development of his ideas about Catalonia. Harrington refers to D'Ors's statement, for instance, that Teresa "had been born in Asunción to a family from el Garraf (the traditional heartland of Catalan immigration to America) and that this contact with American culture had made them, and hence the Catalan nation which they were to represent, more existentially vital" (95). What remains to be determined is to what extent Cuba, specifically, figured into D'Ors's philosophy. This research could potentially reveal fascinating areas of D'Ors's thought that would impact both Cuban and Catalan Studies.

### *Conangla and the Pre-Civil War Exile in Cuba*

Much research on exile in Catalan Studies has focused on the Civil War and post-war exodus; in the case of the Americas, probably the country receiving the most scholarly attention has thus far been Mexico. Yet what about the pre-Civil War exiled Catalans? The pre-Civil War exile community in Cuba, especially in relation to the



dictatorship under Primo de Rivera, had a profound impact on the development of political Catalanism of the twentieth century. One of the key areas of research for a future version of this manuscript almost certainly must be a chapter devoted exclusively to the Catalan separatist movement that took place in exile in Cuba.

A key figure in this case would be Josep Conangla i Fontanilles, who, in some ways, might be called Prat's leftist counterpart in exile.<sup>3</sup> Several scholars, such as Joaquim Roy, Lluís Costa and Thomas Harrington, have discussed various aspects of Conangla's life and works, but Conangla is nonetheless virtually unknown outside of Catalan Studies and indeed is, unfairly, not terribly well known even within this field. Writings by Conangla and between him and other leaders such as Macià would be of great interest to expanding the current project to include a broader look at the twentieth-century relations between Cuba and Catalonia.<sup>4</sup>

In any event, Conangla was a prolific writer, and he not only first went to Cuba in 1895 in the military, but eventually spent years living in Cuba and became an avid journalist and public speaker on political topics. In addition to publishing speeches and texts on Catalan and Cuban politics throughout his life, Conangla also published

---

<sup>3</sup> Harrington compares Conangla's pragmatism with Prat's insofar as Conangla "recognized the efficacy of the more 'religion-based' national culture planning efforts being carried out by the right-leaning followers of Prat on the peninsula...[which] permitted him to, in effect...turn the *Centre Català* of Havana into an important laboratory for the creation of an alternative repertoire of options within the Catalan cultural system" (107).

<sup>4</sup> Even though Macià eventually strayed from the radical political ideas that he had developed in conjunction with Conangla and other Catalan leaders in Cuba and in Catalonia, he still would be of interest to include in a future version of this work, either in conjunction with Conangla or perhaps even on his own.

poetry and memoirs of his wartime experience in Cuba. Rare copies of a number of Conangla's hard-to-find works are housed in libraries and archives in Cuba, some of which I had the opportunity to consult at the José Martí National Library during a trip to Havana in 2010. I foresee using this and other material to be obtained in future research trips to Cuba, particularly items in the archive at the Sociedad de Beneficencia de Naturales de Cataluña, to develop a chapter on how Cuba – perhaps looking again at the post-1898 context – factored precisely into Conangla's ideas. Harrington posits that the “Cuban group [of Catalans under Conangla's leadership] provided not only a space for dialogue but also a new institutional basis for progressive Catalanism” (110).<sup>5</sup>

### *Cuba Trend in Contemporary Catalan Literature*

One of the obvious topics from Chapter 3 that bears further exploration is the place of Riera's work in the broader trend of featuring Cuba in contemporary Catalan literature, and characterizing this trend more generally through a comparative study of a number of literary works. A few examples of works that fall into this group have been mentioned in the introduction and the relevant chapter. It would be quite productive to study these and other similar works individually and as a group.

---

<sup>5</sup> In the article at hand, Harrington also discusses the role of the Galician community in Cuba. However, as he points out, Catalonia was “considerably more advanced than Galicia in the realm of generating nationalizing institutions,” but Cuba still functioned to provide a space for the “creation of new political options which had the effect of facilitating the adoption [of] markedly more radical postures within the nationalist discourse at home” (110).

Additionally, Àlex Broch and Isabel Segura have published a book titled, appropriately, *Cuba en la literatura contemporánea catalana*, which I have unfortunately been unable to obtain for the present investigation. A future version of this work should and will include further research along these lines, including an incorporation and/or critique of ideas and characterizations of the trend in contemporary Catalan literature from the analysis by Broch and Segura, as well as pertinent bibliography on any additional literary texts of interest. Perhaps another aspect of an expanded version of this chapter might also include not only literary texts, but also more in-depth analyses of films such as *Havanera 1820*.

### *Stateless Nations: Connections and Challenges*

Some of the content from Chapter 4, namely the issue of immigration in contemporary Catalonia, would be quite interesting to explore in conjunction with, or in comparison to, how this issue is handled in other stateless nations. Stateless nations often look to one another for examples and precedents on how to handle linguistic policies and the like. “The peoples of Quebec, Catalonia and Euskadi (the Basque Country), Scotland and Wales are among the most obvious groupings which, to a greater or lesser extent, dispute the political identities conferred on them by the states to which they belong” (McCrone n.p.).

Quebec is the stateless nation that is perhaps most often compared to Catalonia. There are indeed many links between Quebec and Catalonia that go

beyond certain circumstances or attitudes that bear simple comparison. These connections include official collaboration between the two governments. As one scholar puts it, “Nos deux pays, le Québec et la Catalogne, ont en commun le fait de considérer leurs langues respectives...comme le trait fondamental de leurs réalités nationales dans un contexte qui se caractérise par l’internationalisation économique et culturelle” (Reniu i Tresserras 185). For example, Reniu i Tresserras cites examples of direct influence from linguistic policy implemented in Quebec on similar laws instituted in Catalonia, particularly the *Charte de la langue française (loi 101)*, which defines the French language as the most important element of Quebecois national and cultural identity (185). This specific law, along with the overall linguistic policy in place in Quebec, Reniu i Tresserras goes on to explain, have constituted a model of reference for Catalonia, such as for the *Llei de Normalització Lingüística* of 1983 (186). This helps to explain why the “entente entre la *Direcció General de Política Lingüística de la Generalitat de Catalunya* et l’Office de la langue française du Québec a été permanente et importante” (Reniu i Tresserras 186).<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Catalonia and Quebec, along with various other stateless nations, are constantly submitted to tremendous pressure in technological spheres, which:

---

<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that Quebec and Catalonia as stateless nations are alike in all ways, or that policies are uniformly applicable in both cases. Some critics have rightly pointed out, for example, that Quebec has never faced the attempted extermination that Catalonia has endured (Reniu i Tresserras also indicates that in certain sectors such as “l’entière normalisation linguistique des entreprises, l’informatique ou le doublage et le sous-titrage de films, même si, nous, Catalans avons suivi avec admiration la politique linguistique québécoise, nous avons également constaté l’impossibilité d’appliquer, pour l’instant, une politique semblable en Catalogne” (187).

oblige les citoyens à un bilinguisme personnel qui dérive souvent vers un bilinguisme de plus grande amplitude, introduisant de la sorte une incertitude dans le processus de normalisation et d'hégémonie des langues propres, incertitude qui les oblige à réviser régulièrement leurs politiques et leurs lois.

(Reniu i Tresserras 185)

Similar statements have been made in studies of other stateless nations and so-called minority linguistic communities. Particularly the challenge to survive under the pressure of global markets that respond, above all, to the desires of the dominant cultural-linguistic groups (in these cases, English and Castilian) to the detriment of less widely spoken languages, lends a compelling element of commonality and motivation to collaborate in efforts to re-think protective policies for languages and cultures at risk. Immigration presents a similar challenge, in some ways, on which an in-depth comparative investigation would bring to bear interesting light.

### *Looking Toward the Twenty-First Century*

The scope of this project essentially ended with the threshold of the twenty-first century. Perhaps in a revision of the present study, the photography of Juan Pablo Ballester could be juxtaposed with other visual and/or literary texts of Cuban artists and writers living in Catalonia. There are a number of additional key questions that would be pertinent to investigate in the future. For instance, it remains to be determined whether the twenty-first century represents a new era of Cuban-Catalan

relations. I suspect that Cuba's influence on Catalonia that so characterized the period after 1898 will wane in the coming decades, but more time is needed to answer this fascinating question. Much will also depend on the politics in Catalonia and in Spain, and on how Catalan autonomy, linguistic policy, and immigration policies are handled in the coming years.

Another factor affecting the nature of Cuban-Catalan relations currently and in the coming decades is, of course, the economy. A recent survey determined that the number of Catalans who had left the country because of the current economic crisis had increased by 9% in 2010. Of the thousands of Catalans who had left to try their luck abroad, a little over 400 established themselves in Cuba in 2010 (Elcacho). While this number does not place Cuba among the countries who received the highest numbers of Catalans (the top three were France, Argentina, and Andorra), the number is still significant enough that perhaps, given enough time and a continued or even increasing trend (especially if Cuba transitions to a democratic government and/or a more open economy, both of which are reasonably likely, the latter more so), there exists a real possibility for renewing a Catalan presence in Cuba and/or for maintaining Cuba's status as an important influence on the Catalan imaginary. The possibilities are truly exciting.

## WORKS CITED

- Acanda, Jorge. "Cuba in the Americas: Looking Inward, Reaching Out." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 39.4 (2004): 14. Print.
- Acanda, Jorge et al. "Releyendo a Gramsci: hegemonía y sociedad civil." *Temas* 10 (1997): 75-86. Print.
- "Acte solidaritat amb Cuba." *PSUC.org*, n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2011.
- "Air Berlin denuncia la discriminación del español y el abuso del catalán." *20Minutos.es*, 6 May 2008. Web. 27 May 2011.
- Alexandre, Victor. *Jo no sóc Espanyol*. Barcelona: Proa, 1999. Print.
- Aliaga, Juan Vicente. "Juan Pablo Ballester - Brief Article." *Galería Ray Gun. ArtForum*, 2000. Web. 15 Nov. 2008.
- Antón, José Ignacio et al. "Labor Market Performance of Latin American and Caribbean Immigrants in Spain." *Journal of Applied Economics* 13.2 (2010): 233-261. Print.
- Aragay, Ignasi. "El renovat espanyolisme és una herència del franquisme." *Avui: Cultura*. 21 Feb. 2010. Web. 05 May 2011.
- "ARTIUM presenta la exposició colectiva Medianoche en la ciudad." *ARTIUM*, 27 Jan. 2011. Web. 1 June 2011.
- Bakhtiarova, Galina. "'Americanos,' indios, mulatas y Otros: Cataluña y Cuba entre el deseo colonial y nostalgia imperial." *Memoria colonial e inmigración: la negritud en la España posfranquista*. Ed. Rosalía V. Cornejo-Parriego. Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2007. 39-52. Print.
- . "A Tale of Two Habaneras: Transatlantic Journeys of a Cultural Sign." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 1.2 (2003): 117-30. Print.
- . "Transatlantic Returns: The Habanera in Catalonia." *Quaderns-e de l'Institut Català d'Antropologia* 3.a (2004): n.p. Web. 2 Feb. 2010.
- Baiget, Àngel. "Fracaso total del referéndum sobre la independencia catalana: votó menos del 30%." *El Confidencial*. 14 Dec. 2009. Web. 18 Feb. 2011.

- Balcells, Albert. *El Nacionalismo Catalán*. Madrid: Historia 16, 1999. Print.
- Ballester, Juan Pablo. "de jpb desde bcn!" Message to the author. 1 July 2008. Email.
- . "De Juan Pablo Ballester desde Barcelona!" Message to the author. 17 May 2008. Email.
- . *Enlloc*. *Juanpabloballester.com*, 2005. Web. 1 May 2008.
- . "Más Sobre Enlloc." Message to the author. 11 June 2008. Email.
- Behar, Ruth. "About *Adio Kerida*." *RuthBehar.com*. Web. 14 May 2011.
- Belén Lord, Carmen. "The New Art: Modernisme." *Barcelona and modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, Dalí*. Ed. William H. Robinson. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2006. Print.
- Baroni, Patricia. "Calle Cárdenas." *Réseau Art Nouveau Network*. Web. 27 Oct. 2010.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 163-172. Print.
- Broch, Àlex. "Cuba en la literatura catalana contemporánea." *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* 648 (2004): 63-71. Print.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. "Hegel and Haiti." *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (2000): 821-865. Print.
- Cabré, Tate. *Catalunya a Cuba: un amor que fa història*. Barcelona: Ediciones 62, 2004. Print.
- . *Cuba a Catalunya: el llegat dels indians*. Valls: Cossetània, 2008. Print.
- Cacho Viu, Vicente. "Pròleg." *Els modernistes i el nacionalisme cultural, 1881-1906*. Barcelona: Ed. de la Magrana, 1984. v-xxxvii. Print.
- Candel, Francesc. *Los otros catalanes*. [1. ed.] Madrid: Ediciones Península, 1965. Print.
- . *Los otros catalanes veinte años después*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1986. Print.
- Candel, Francesc and Josep Maria Cuenca. *Els altres catalans del segle XXI*.



- Barcelona: Planeta, 2001. Print.
- Carbonell, Neus. "The Ethics of Dissidence: Resistance and Relationality in Carme Riera's *Dins el darrer blau*." *Moveable Margins: The Narrative of Carme Riera*. Eds. Kathleen Glenn et al. Lewisburg: Bucknell, 1999. 218-30. Print.
- Cardús i Ros, Salvador. "La immigració com a lloc de memòria nacional." *AUSA* XXIII.159 (2007a): 7-13. Web. 7 Dec. 2008.
- . "The Memory of Immigration in Catalan Nationalism." *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 18.1 (2005): 37-44. Print.
- Carothers, Timothy. "Civil Society." *Foreign Policy* 117 (1999-2000): 18-24, 26-29. Print.
- Castells, Antoni. "El llegat del catalanisme." *Una idea de Catalunya: els anys que vénen*. Ed. Jordi Font. Lleida: Pagès, 2008. Print.
- Censo de Población y Viviendas 2001*. Madrid: INE, 2001. Web. 1 Dec. 2008.
- Clot, Manel. "En ninguna parte." *Enlloc*. 2005. Web. 15 Nov. 2008.
- Cole, Ken. "The Process of Socialist Development." *Latin American Perspectives: The Cuban Revolution Confronts the Future* 29.3 (2002): 40-56. Print.
- Colmeiro, José F. "La narrativa policíaca posmodernista de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán." *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea* 14.1/3 (1989): 11-32. Print.
- Comité Nationaliste Catalan de Paris. "La Question Catalane: L'Espagne et la Catalogne." *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*. Paris: Imprimerie de D. Dumoulin et Cie., 1898. Print.
- Conversi, Daniele. *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation*. Reno: U Nevada UP, 2000. Print.
- Cornejo Parriego, Rosalía. "Por el cielo y más allá de Carme Riera: fluctuaciones y fijaciones raciales en un folletín colonialista." *Cincinnati Romance Review* 30 (Winter 2011): 3-16. Print.
- Costa, Lluís. *El nacionalisme cubà i Catalunya: comunicació política, social i cultural entre Cuba i*

- Catalunya*. Barcelona: PAM, 2006. Print.
- Cotoner Cerdó, Lluïsa. "Carme Riera." Trans. Robin Vogelzang. Web. 22 Feb. 2010.
- Coyula, Mario. "Antonio frente al tranvía." *Revolución y Cultura* 2 (2003): 43-47. Print.
- Crexell, Joan. *Origen de la bandera independentista*. Barcelona: El Llamp, 1984. Print.
- Domènech i Montaner, Lluís. "En busca de una arquitectura nacional." *Arquitectura española contemporánea: documentos, escritos, testimonios inéditos*. Ed. Ángel Urrutía Núñez. Madrid: COAM, 2002. 38-45. Print.
- Elcacho, Joaquim. "La crisi fa que hi hagi un 9% més de catalans a l'estranger." *Avui: Societat*. 18 May 2011. Web. 1 June 2011.
- "El Documental." *Cuba siempre fidelísima*. Web. 21 May 2011.
- "El meu avi." *Acords.net*, n.d. Web. 15 May 2011.
- "El règim de la Nova Planta." *Generalitat de Catalunya*, n.d. Web. 05 May 2011.
- "Enquesta modular d'hàbits socials: Usos lingüístics." *Institut d'Estadística de les Illes Balears*. 2010. Web. 29 May 2011.
- "ERC vol que el rei aprengui català i que l'exèrcit l'ensenyi als militars." *Avui: Mon i Política*. 5 Dec. 2008. Web. 5 Dec. 2008.
- Ette, Ottmar. "Manuel Vázquez Montalbán: Gott in Havanna oder die Redlichkeit des Intellektuellen." *Intellektuelle Redlichkeit-Intégrité intellectuelle: Literatur-Geschichte-Kultur*. 2005. 193-206. Print.
- Fernández Retamar, Roberto. "The Enormity of Cuba." Trans. Goffredo Diana. *boundary* 2.23 (1996): 165-190. Print.
- Ferran, Joan M. *La constitució catalana de l'Havana*. Lleida: Pagès Editor, 2005. Print.
- . *La saga dels catalans a Cuba*. Barcelona: Fundació Casa Amèrica Catalunya, 2009. Print.
- Ferran, Ofelia. "Memory and Forgetting: Resistance and Noise in the Spanish Transition." *Disremembering the Dictatorship: the politics of memory in the Spanish*

- transition to democracy*. Ed. Joan Ramon Resina. Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000. 191-222. Print.
- Figueres, Josep M. *El primer diari en llengua catalana (1879-1881)*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1999. Print.
- Font, Jordi, ed. *Una idea de Catalunya: aportacions al debat del catalanisme*. 1st ed. Vol. 1. Lleida: Pagès Editors, 2008. Print.
- Fontana, Josep. "X. La crisi del sistema." *Història de Catalunya* 5. Ed. Pierre Vilar. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1987. Print.
- Fontanet Gil, Irina. *Sostener la Memoria: Catalanes en el Oriente de Cuba*. Barcelona: Cultivalibros, 2011. Print.
- Fora Grillons! Periodich Nacionalista Catalá*. Ed. Joseph Ll. y Deu. 1.1 1906). Print.
- Forcadell, Carmen. "Algú ho havia de dir." *Avui: Opinió*. 11 June 2011. Web. 11 June 2011.
- Forteza, Anna. "Espanyolitza mil vegades més un telenotícies de TV3 que *La mañana de la COPE*": Entrevista a Víctor Alexandre." *Victoralexandre.cat: Entrevistes*. 18 Oct. 2006. Web. 4 May 2011.
- Fradera, Josep M. *Colonias para después de un imperio*. Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2005. Print.
- Frampton, Kenneth. "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance." *The Anti-Aesthetic: essays on post-modern culture*. Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983. 16-30. Print.
- . "Prospects for a Critical Regionalism." *Prospecta* 20 (1983): 147-62. Print.
- Frank, Marc. "Cuban Dollar Days Come to an End." *ABC News/Money*. 9 Nov. 2004. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- Gabancho, Patricia. "Barcelona: capital de què?" *Avui*: p. 24. 21 Dec. 2008. Web. 21 Dec. 2008.
- Galeote, Teresa. "La aznaridad, de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán." *el inconformista digital: periódico independiente desde el suelo*. 15 April 2004. Web. 15 Mar. 2011.

- “García Albiol, proclamat alcalde de Badalona.” *Avui: Política*. 11 June 2011. Web. 11 June 2011.
- Genovès, M. Dolors. “Introducció.” *Cuba, sempre fidelísima*. TV3.cat. March 1998. Web. 30 Mar. 2011.
- Gerrand, Peter. “The worldwide diaspora of Spain’s regional communities: its reach, its history and its modern relevance.” *CERC Working Papers Series 3* (2008): 3-60. Print.
- Glenn, Kathleen M. "Carme Riera, Por el cielo y más allá." *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 27.2 (2002): 347. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 1 May 2011.
- Gott, Richard. *Cuba: A New History*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004. Print.
- Harrington, Thomas S. “Agents of an Intersystem: Contributions of the Cuba-Based Diaspora to the Construction of the Nation in Galicia and Catalonia.” *Catalan Review* 15.2 (2001): 95-114. Print.
- “Juan José Millás i Eduardo Galeano, VII Premis de Periodisme Vázquez Montalbán.” *Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya*, 22 Dec. 2010. Web. 27 Feb 2011.
- "Juan Pablo Ballester - ENLLOC (Nowhere). 20.5-2.7.2004." *Artfacts.Net Ltd.* 2005. Web. 1 Dec. 2008.
- Junqueras, Oriol. *Els Catalans i Cuba*. 1st ed. Barcelona: Proa, 1998. Print.
- Larramendi, Julio. “Detalles de herrería.” *Réseau Art Nouveau Network*, n.d. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.
- . “Interiores.” *Réseau Art Nouveau Network*, n.d. Web. 27 Oct. 2010.
- Llanes, Lillian. *1898-1921, la transformación de La Habana a través de la arquitectura*. La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1993. Print.
- Los extranjeros residentes en España, 1998-2002*. Madrid: INE, 2002. Web. 1 Oct. 2008.
- Mackay, David. *Modern Architecture in Barcelona, 1854-1939*. New York: Rizzoli, 1989. Print.
- Maluquer de Motes Bernet, Jordi. *Nación e inmigración : Los españoles en Cuba (siglos XIX*

- y XX). Oviedo: Jucar, 1992. Print.
- . "Las consecuencias económicas de las guerras de 1898." *Revista de Occidente* 202 (1998): 264-77. Print.
- Marcos, Subcomandante. *Our Word is Our Weapon*. Ed. Juana Ponce de León. New York: Seven Stories, 2001. Print.
- Marfany, Joan-Lluís. *La cultura del catalanisme: El nacionalisme català en els seus inicis*. Barcelona: Biblioteca Universal Empúries, 1995. Print.
- Martí-Olivella, Jaume. "Cuba and Spanish Cinema's Transatlantic Gaze." *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 5 (2001): 161-176. Print.
- McCrone, David. "Autonomy and National Identity in Stateless Nations: Scotland, Catalonia, and Quebec." *Scottish Affairs* 17 (Fall 1996): n.p. Web. 4 April 2011.
- "Medianoche en la ciudad." *ARTIUM*. 27 Jan. 2011. Web. 1 June 2011.
- Mena Chicuri, Abelardo G. *Cuba Avant-Garde: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Farber Collection / Arte Contemporáneo Cubano De La Colección Farber*. Trans. Félix Lizárraga. Ed. Susan Delson. Gainesville, FL: U Florida, 2007. Print.
- "Més del 70% dels catalans, insatisfets amb els polítics." *Avui: Política*. Web. 5 Dec. 2008.
- Mesa-Lago, Carmelo, and Jorge Pérez López. "Cuba's Economy: Twilight of an Era." *Beyond Transition: The Newsletter About Reforming Economies*. The World Bank Group. Mar-Apr 1999: 22-25. Web. 4 Mar 2011.
- Moreiras-Menor, Cristina. "Regionalismo crítico y la reevaluación de la tradición en la España contemporánea." *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 7 (2003): 195-210. Print.
- Moreno Fragonal, Manuel. *Cuba/España, España/Cuba: historia común*. Barcelona: Crítica/Grijalbo, 1995. Print.
- Muñoz, Josep M. "After Frankfurt, Catalan culture today." *transfer* 05 (2010): 114-33. Print.
- "Nostra salutació á Cuba." *Fora Grillons! Periodich Nacionalista Catalá*. 1.1 [Santiago de

- Cuba, Cuba] October 1906: 2. Print.
- “Nostre separatisme.” *Fora Grillons! Periodich Nacionalista Catalá*. 1.1 [Santiago de Cuba, Cuba] October 1906: 2. Print.
- Obejas, Achy. *Days of Awe*. New York: Ballantine, 2001. Print.
- Obiols, Isabel. “Carme Riera retoma la historia de los judíos conversos de Mallorca en ‘Cap al cel obert’.” *Elpais.com*. Web. 4 Mar. 2010.
- Orringer, Nelson. “Introduction to Hispanic Modernisms.” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 79 (2002): 133-148. Print.
- Ortega, Julio. “Prólogo.” *Nuevos hispanismos interdisciplinarios y trasatlánticos*. Ed. Julio Ortega. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2010. Print.
- Peña, José M, and Jon R. Snyder. “‘Art-Nouveau’ Stained Glass and Ironwork.” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*. 18 (1992): 222-241. Print.
- Pérez, Carmen. “La ‘catalan revolution’ que parla castellà.” *Avui: Opinió*. 11 June 2011. Web. 11 June. 2011.
- Pérez, Louis A. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. Print.
- Pérez-López, Jorge, and Carmelo Mesa-Lago. “Cuban GDP Statistics Under the Special Period: Discontinuities, Obfuscation, and Puzzles.” Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy 19. Web. 5 Mar 2011.
- Pérez-Stable, Marifeli. *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*. NY: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.
- “Período Especial.” *Defensa Nacional*. *Cubagob.cu*, 1999. Web. 13 Nov. 2010.
- Permanyer, Lluís and Lluís Casals. *Josep Puig i Cadafalch*. Barcelona: Polígrafa, 2002. Print.
- Piñol, Rosa Maria. “El folletín era el género idóneo para escribir sobre la Cuba del XIX.” *Cubamet internacional*. 22 March 2000.
- Porta, Jordi. “Ser nacionalista té mala premsa.” *Òmnium Cultural*. 4 Dec. 2008. Web. 15

Jan. 2009.

Querol, Ernest et al. "Llengua i societat als territoris de parla catalana a l'inici del segle XXI." Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007. Web. 19 May 2011.

Ramón, Emilio. "Discourse, Memories and Facts: The Perceptions of History and Her-story in Carme Riera's *Cap al cel obert* (1999)." *Journal of Catalan Studies* 2008: 16-31. Print.

Recio, Milena et al. "Sociedad civil en los 90: el debate cubano." *Temas* 16-17 (1999): 155-75. Print.

Relats, Vincenç. "El problema de Candel és que no podia dir mai que no." *Avui Diàleg* p. 20. 24 Dec. 2008. Web. 24 Dec. 2008.

Reniu i Tresserras, Miquel. "Le Québec et la Catalogne." *Revue d'Amenagement Lingüistique* (Fall 2002): 185-87). Print.

Resina, Joan Ramon. "A Spectre is Haunting Spain: The Spirit of the Land in the Wake of the Disaster." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 2.2 (2001): 169-86. Print.

---. *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Print.

---. "Cold War Hispanism and the New Deal of Cultural Studies." *Spain Beyond Spain: modernity, literary history, and national identity*. Eds. Brad Epps and Luis Fernández Cifuentes. Lewisburg: Bucknell, 2005. 70-108. Print.

---. *El cadáver en la cocina: la novela criminal en la cultura del desencanto*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1997. Print.

---. "Modernism in Catalonia." *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*. Ed. David T. Gies. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

---. "Modernist Journals in the Països Catalans." *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 53: 2 (2002): 388-98. Print.

---. "The Catalan *Renaixença*." *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*. Ed. David T. Gies. Cambridge University Press, 2004. *Cambridge Histories Online*. Cambridge University Press. Web. 470-78. 27 Feb 2011.

- . "Whose Hispanism? Cultural Trauma, Disciplined Memory, and Symbolic Dominance." *Ideologies of Hispanism*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Vanderbilt UP, 2005. 160-186. Print.
- Riera, Carme. *Cap al cel obert*. Barcelona: Destino, 2000. Print.
- . *Dins el darrer blau*. Barcelona: Destino, 1994. Print.
- . "¿Por qué novelas históricas?" *La Vanguardia: Culturas* 330 (15 Oct. 2008): 5. Web. 15 May 2011. <http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/lavanguardia/lvg081015c.pdf>
- . "Una ambición sin límites." *Moveable Margins: The Narrative Art of Carme Riera*. Ed. Kathleen M. Glenn et al. 21-29. Print.
- Riquer, Borja de. *Modernismo y Modernistas*. Barcelona: Lunwerg, 2001. Print.
- Rodríguez, Eduardo Luis. "The Architectural Avant-Garde: From Art Deco to Modern Regionalism." Trans. John Beusterien and Narciso G. Menocal. *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 22 (1996): 255-77. Print.
- Rodríguez-García, José María. "Re: MÁS sobre el Congreso Transatlántico de Wake Forest." Message to the author. 7 April 2011. E-mail.
- Rojas, Rafael. *Motivos de anteo. Patria y nación en la historia intelectual de Cuba*. Colibrí, 2008. Print.
- Roy, Joaquim. *Josep Conangla i Fontanilles (Montblanc 1875-l'Havana 1965): patriarca del nacionalisme català a Cuba*. Tarragona: El Mèdol, 1999. Print.
- Sabaté Llobera, Núria. "Dos relatos del exilio catalán en Cuba: Teresa Pàmies y Josep María Poblet." *Alpha* 29 (2009): 303-14. Print.
- Segura Soriano, Isabel. "Presentación." *La saga de los catalanes en Cuba*. Barcelona: Fundació Casa Amèrica Catalunya, 2009. Print.
- Skerrett, Delaney M. "Language and Authoritarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Cases of Estonia and Catalonia." *Estonian Papers in Applied Linguistics* 6 (2010): 261-76. Print.
- "Solidaritat amb Cuba: Campanya de suport econòmic." *Revolta global esquerra*



- anticapitalista*. *Revoltaglobal.cat*, 25 Oct. 2008. Web. 3 Feb. 2011.
- Solidaritat amb la revolució cubana*. Spec. issue of *Avant* 980 (2009): 1-8. *Pcc.cat*. Web. 2 Feb. 2011.
- Solis Díaz, José Miguel. "Huella catalana en Matanzas." *Radio Rebelde*. 10 May 2010. Web. 3 June 2010.
- Smith, Anthony. *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*. Malden: Blackwell, 2008. Print.
- Stillo, Monica. "Antonio Gramsci." *Theory.org.uk: Media/ Gender/ Identity Resources*. Web. 27 Feb 2011.
- Suay, Ferran. "Acampats i autodeterminats?" *Avui: Societat*. 7 June 2011. Web. 11 June 2011.
- "Sudaca Enterprises 1997." *Coco Fusco: Performances*. 1997. Web. 13 May 2011.
- "Suprem i immersió lingüístic: Enterrant l'autogovern català." *Racocatala.cat: Editorial*. 23 Dec. 2010. Web. 9 June 2011.
- Thompson, Ginger. "In Reply to Tightening of Sanctions, Castro Bans the Yankee Dollar." *The New York Times* 27 Oct 2004. Web. 12 Mar. 2011.
- Toll, Gil. "L'emigració catalana a Cuba" *TV3.cat: Vídeos a la carta*. 29 Mar. 2011. Web. 9 May 2011.
- Tomich, Dale. "The Wealth of Empire: Francisco Arango y Parreño, Political Economy, and the Second Slavery in Cuba." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.1 (2003): 4-28. Print.
- Tree, Matthew. *Barcelona, Catalonia: A View from the Inside*. Barcelona: Catalonia Press, 2011. Print.
- "Un estudi compte dos milions de catalans independentistes." *Avui: Mon i Política*. 17 Sept. 2008. Web. 17 Sept. 2008.
- Valdivieso, L. Teresa. "Carme Riera: una indagación crítica." *Confluencia: Revista Hispánica de Cultura y Literatura* 19.1 (2003): 92+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 22 May 2011.

- Vallespín, Ivanna. "La participación en las consultas sobre la independencia en Cataluña roza el 30%." *El País*. 13 December 2009. Web. 18 Feb. 2011.
- Valls, Fernando. "Primera lectura de *Cap al cel obert* de Carme Riera." *El mirall i la màscara: vint-i-cinc anys de ficció*. Barcelona: Destino, 2000. 301-314. Print.
- Vázquez Montalbán, Manuel. *Marcos: el señor de los espejos*. Madrid: Mateu Cromo, 2001. Print.
- . *Y Dios entró en La Habana*. Aguilar: Madrid, 1998. Print.
- Venegas Fornias, Carlos. "Havana Between Two Centuries." Trans. Narciso G. Menocal and Edward Shaw. *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*. 22 (1996): 12-35. Print.
- Vilar, Pierre. *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne*, Vol 3. Paris: SEVPEN, 1962. Print.
- Villazala, Eva. "Juan Pablo Ballester: el traje nuevo del emperador." *Lamono* 39 (2007). Web. 3 Dec. 2008.
- "Visual Artists." *Cintas Foundation*, n.d. Web. 2 June 2011.
- Wride, Tim B. *Shifting Tides: Cuban Photography After the Revolution*. Los Angeles: Merrill, 2001. Print.