

The Past as an Actor in Barcelona's Contemporary Metropolitics

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Barcelona has plenty of personality: commercial dynamism, vibrant sports and gastronomic cultures, numerous and varied museums and amusements, some of the world's most curious and revered architecture, all set upon a Mediterranean coast that pairs ideal climate with a shapely geography. It is no wonder that Barcelona also boasts an impressive tourism sector. Of the population of Catalonia, about 7.5 million people, over 5 million live in the Barcelona metropolitan area, making it the largest metropolis on the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, the municipality shelters only 1.62 million residents organized into recognizably distinct neighborhoods that confer a sense of livability. In recent decades, especially since the 1992 Olympic Games, Barcelona has undertaken an urban regeneration that has made the most of its many assets. With all of this in mind, thinkers and actors beyond the city's borders –city managers and regional planners, political scientists and economic researchers, local event promoters, and agents of international tourism– speak of a “Barcelona model” intending to describe the formal and stylistic change processes that contribute to the city's success and that are worth emulating elsewhere (Marshall 2000; Monclus 2003; Casellas and Pallares-Barbera 2009).

Success, however, is not easily transferable, in part because Barcelona is a changing metropolis, not a fixed template readymade for replication; in fact, there has never been a singular Barcelona model but rather many endeavors each of which has been directed at its own special purposes (Degen and García 2012). Moreover, Barcelona's weaknesses are becoming more apparent so that, as it turns out, the city may not be such a good model to copy (Delgado 2007; Muñoz 2008). We need a better appreciation of Barcelona's particular vulnerabilities, not only to prepare remedies for the city's manifest ills but also so that the emulators learn better which errors of omission and commission they should avoid elsewhere.

Discussions of design, governance, and tourism that get built up into arguments about the model city too often elide Barcelona's rich history. This is an oversight, especially since recognizing the historical roots of Catalan culture as a constitutive element of Barcelona's recent growth to prominence makes it clearer why that prominence now seems so fragile. Catalonia as a place and people, a nation, reaches back more than a thousand years (Villar 1947; Bisson 1986). The umbrella term "Catalanism" addresses a potent historical reality (Colomines 2014). Broadly and historically construed, Catalanism has continued to provide continuity despite the great variety and diverse interests of Catalan political parties, unions, economic interests, neighborhood associations, etc. This is no less the case even if we agree that Catalan heritage from which it is manifested is socially-constructed or even a 'lay religion' of recent vintage (Prats 2009).

This article explores Barcelona's present relationship to its past, in particular its medieval past. Since researchers and practitioners tend to disregard history's agency when looking for answers to contemporary urban problems, I'll begin by demonstrating that the medieval past is essential to Barcelona's special character. Having made that case, the core of this paper will be a demonstration of the ways that Catalans, Barcelonans in particular, have put the past to work. For Catalans the past is not, as is sometimes said, a foreign country (Lowenthal 1985). Instead, they treat it more like a powerful patron saint, an intangible but real presence who acts upon the present to give shape to the future. This understanding of the past does not disregard truth, in fact it seeks veracity where it can be found, but more than that it emphasizes the creative recombination of the various parts of a cultural inventory –bits of history, myth, and legend– from which the narrative of Catalan collective conscience gets constructed. For visitors, too, the medieval, or the imagined medieval, is never distant. The supernal medieval atmosphere of energetically modern Barcelona pervades the experience of tourists, immigrants, and expats living in the city, and tells us much about why Barcelona is an unparalleled destination. But here we introduce the problem that closes the paper: the relationship between Barcelona's historic cultural distinctiveness and its phenomenal attractiveness to outsiders, a

relationship which for several decades was mutually beneficial, has become dysfunctional. Massive inflows of non-Catalans, and the need to maintain infrastructure, services, and ideologies to support them, are weakening Catalanism as a foundational constituting element of life in Barcelona.

Inventory and the Central Narrative

The collective interests that became distinctively Catalan began to emerge at the end of the ninth century and were well consolidated by the fourteenth century. Events in the early modern period then carved a clear break between past and present in the historical memory of the politics and culture of Catalonia and its capital, Barcelona. Catalans have two strong reasons for holding fast to their medieval past.

First, Catalonia reached the zenith of its territorial and cultural elaboration in the medieval period. Second, Catalonia's fall from the heights of international prominence and cultural splendor came at the threshold of the modern age. Just as other nations were becoming states, the Catalan people found themselves subjugated to a colonizing Spain that had Castilian dynastic inheritance at its center. Analysts often assume that a medieval legacy cannot remain potent, and they are probably right that for most people in most places it is too far in the past to have much relevance. But the sharp break in the central narrative of Catalan collective memory, the before and after of the most potent series of dates –1410, 1486, 1714, has caused Catalans to keep their medieval past close in mind precisely so that it remains an essential and active contributor to contemporary Catalan culture (Keown 2011: 4). Jordi Pujol, who from 1980 to 2003 served as President of the Generalitat, the governing body of the Catalan state, was very explicit about this when he insisted “our current autonomy has a link to our medieval past... It is something that comes from the profundities of history” (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009:180).

When Catalans consider the birth of their nation they usually recall Wilfred the Hairy as a legendary progenitor. Wilfred was a count of Barcelona who died in 897 defending Barcelona against the army of the Muslim Qasi rulers of Zaragoza and Lleida. His life and

death have been celebrated, elaborated, and exaggerated, especially by the poets and writers of the nineteenth-century Catalan *Renaixença*, so that from some fragments of truth have grown much useful fiction. As the story goes, the Frankish King who was the nominal Christian lord of the frontier zone south of the Pyrenees arrived late to the battle at which Wilfred died (the French king is Charlemagne in some tellings, Charles the Bald or Louis the Pious in others –all died before Wilfred’s demise). The king so admired the count’s selfless defense of his Christian people that he gave the Pyrenean frontier to Wilfred’s successors. The king signaled the perpetuity of his compensatory gift by plunging his hand into Wilfred’s bloody wound and drawing it over a nearby shield. He thereby was creating the symbol of the newly independent lands, the alternating gold and crimson stripes of the *Senyera*, the Catalan flag (Freedman 1988; Anguerra 2007).

Various Catalan flags are presently in use, one of which, setting a star within a blue triangle upon the red and gold bands, is the ever-present signal of *independentistes*, those who seek to regain independence from Spain. Beyond flags, nowadays red and gold bars adorn everything from baby’s pacifiers to government buildings as a sure sign that the Catalan people do not bow to the authority of Madrid. The diversity of Catalan flags indicates the heterogeneity of internal Catalan politics, and even signals tensions within Catalan society, while the abundant displays of red and gold bars in all their variety confirms the sense of shared origins (Hargreaves 2000: 58-95).

Credit for the expansion of Catalonia as a political and territorial entity and for the consolidation of a Catalan people with distinct cultural attributes, including language, is owed especially to the two medieval leaders: Count Ramon Berenguer IV (d. 1162) and the Count-king James I (r. 1213-1276). In 1137, Peronella, the child queen of the kingdom of Aragon, became the betrothed of Ramon Berenguer IV, Count of Barcelona, who, with his predecessors, had created Catalonia by combining, through marriage and conquest, the county of Barcelona to neighboring counties. At that time she was less than two years old and he was twenty-three; their marriage was consummated in 1151. The union joined Catalonia to the small and landlocked Kingdom of Aragon in an uneasy territorial confederation. James I, “the Conqueror,” (b. 1208; r. 1213-1276), added the Muslim

strongholds of Majorca and Valencia to these dominions. By the end of the thirteenth century the successors of Wilfred, Ramon Berenguer, and James ruled a collection of territories that included the Kingdom of Aragon, the several counties comprising the Principate of Catalonia, the Kingdom of the Balearic Islands, the Kingdom of Valencia, the Kingdom of Sicily and the Kingdom of Sardinia and Corsica.

Historians traditionally call this diverse political and cultural composite the Crown of Aragon and they call its leaders count-kings. Catalonia, although not a kingdom, maintained political and cultural dominance over all of the other territories. This point of truth has been a constant source of irritation to some Catalans, who would prefer to speak of a Catalano-Aragonese empire rather than a Crown of Aragon (Perellada i Cardellach 2002; Zimmerman 1989).

Through the fourteenth century the Crown of Aragon extended its control over a loose Mediterranean empire that included mercantile dependencies as distant as Athens. The potency of Catalan territorial expansion was matched by vigorous developments that made it an international leader in law, record-keeping, governance and administration, and the arts (Bisson 1986; Vives Vicens 1954; Vilar 1947). The *Usatges*, first codified by Count Ramon Berenguer I in the mid-eleventh century and later strengthened and reissued by his great-grandson Ramon Berenguer IV, have come to exemplify an important stage in the medieval development of written law on its way to taking modern form. The court of James I produced a *Book of Deeds*, a first-person account of the Conqueror's life and reign, sometimes called the first autobiography by a medieval European king. Historians deem the *Usatges* and the *Book of Deeds* of primal importance to the forging of Catalan language and culture in the years when Catalonia was taking shape as a peninsular and Mediterranean nation rather than an appendage of southern French lordship (Ibarz 2009: 79-81).

The story of Catalan achievements turns tragic at the approach of the modern age. Wilfrid's line of descent ended in 1410 with the death of Martin the Humane without an heir. The Compromise of Caspe resolved the succession crisis that followed in favor of the Trastámara branch of the Castilian royal family. The marriage in 1469 of Ferdinand II, King of Aragon, to his cousin Isabella, Queen of

Castile, strengthened the Trastámara dynasty's hold. These were the "accidents" of dynastic misfortune that turned Catalan political narratives to a story of decline. In the following decades, Castilian hubris drawn from New World exploits along with anxieties about Spanish unity led to the methodical repression of Catalan culture. Over the course of the succeeding centuries the rulers of "Spain" sought to weaken the Catalan nation. Spanish and French kings signed the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1659 that divided Catalan-speaking lands among French and Castilian royal rivals. Social and economic pressures within Catalonia, heightened by the conditions of mistreatment by a centralizing government in Madrid, led to destructive civil wars inside Catalan lands.

Catalans refer to this era from the fifteenth into the early nineteenth century as a period of decadence. They tend to treat it peripherally, as something on the edges of their real history, their medieval one. Certainly they see it as a period when events transpired against them rather than they influencing events. The story of Catalan *decadència* culminates in the events that ended the War of Spanish Succession, most especially the siege and defeat of Barcelona in 1714 (Sales 1989: 21). After the war, the victor, Philip V, imposed the *Nueva Planta* decrees that denied Catalans the historic political and cultural autonomy encapsulated in their constitutions of late medieval provenance. Since Philip's time, kings and dictators have done their best to destroy Catalan language, culture, and political institutions, which nonetheless have survived against insurmountable odds. For example, the Generalitat was abolished as a result of the *Nueva Planta* and did not reemerge until 1932, during the period of the Restoration. It was abolished again under the regime of Francisco Franco, which executed the President of the Generalitat at that time, Lluís Companys (Segura i Mas and Barbé i Pou 2011). The Generalitat operated as a government in exile until 1977.

Catalan identity is a medieval inheritance, although the vocabulary and sentiment of modern Catalan nationality and Catalanism as a political project are features of more recent thought and practice. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century actors –intellectuals, politicians and business leaders, modernist architects and modern artists, and also leaders of the excursionist movement and managers of

the tourism sector— promulgated the myths, created the folklore and tradition, and rebuilt the infrastructure that gave weight and substance to assertions of Catalan distinctiveness (Prats 1988; Pujol 2013).

Through their efforts, all good Catalans know the main lines of the national narrative, which reads like this: Catalans have been a free people since ancient times, even if outsiders (Iberian or otherwise) have oppressed them in recent centuries. The ancestors of modern Catalans participated in forms of popular sovereignty that put them at the vanguard in the creation of the most civilized organizational forms. To put it succinctly, Catalans since the medieval period have been precocious —smart, progressive, enterprising, and democratic. It is noteworthy that one of the most succinct presentations of this narrative was produced by the lieutenant mayor of Barcelona in a prefatory statement to a book devoted to cultural tourism for internal Catalan consumption (Bosch and Melero 2007: 5).

Whether to deem these tenets of the Catalan narrative true or false does not concern us at the moment. In fact, Catalonia has had plenty of internal social conflicts that complicate the story considerably (McDonogh 1986); it would be interesting in another setting to describe how Catalanism obfuscates this part of its reality. What matters at the moment is that, for many Catalans, this story produces visions of the past that require political action in the present for the purpose of creating a very different future: Catalans hold their medieval past close in memory because they want back the liberties that they believe were taken from their ancestors.

Creative Construction

It is commonly acknowledged that Barcelona’s “medieval grandeur left the city with one of the most impressive and varied Gothic building legacies in all Europe” (Simonis 1999: 10). The Generalitat’s own inventory of Catalan tourism offerings identifies “medieval splendor” as the chief asset that connects tourists to the core narrative of Catalan identity (López i Palomeque and Anton Clavé 2009; Font i Garalera 2010). Barcelona is a dynamic modern city that nonetheless is fed most abundantly by the medieval past. Nearly every visitor to

Barcelona passes through its Barri Gòtic, the nucleus of the city that still shows evidence of more than two thousand years of continuous habitation. Visitors to the gothic quarter are drawn into narrow winding streets named for important medieval saints and lordly families, like the Montcadas, and the guildsmen, like the *argenters*, *carders*, and *teixidors* who once plied their trades there. Any short list of Barcelona's most visited monuments include the Cathedral dedicated to the martyr-saint Eulalia and the churches of Santa Maria del Mar and Santa Maria del Pi. Few visitors know by name the Palau Episcopal and Casa De l'Ardiaca, and the complex of other buildings surrounding the Plaça del Rei (Palau Comtal, Saló del Tinell, Capella Palatina de Santa Àgata, Casa Padellàs), but as they walk past those places they imbibe Catalonia's medieval heritage.

The value of Catalonia's medieval inheritance goes beyond an accidental survival or superficial display of artifacts: the idea of Catalan medieval patrimony has been planned, constructed, and managed for purposes that include augmenting tourism and demonstrating to international observers Catalans' devotion to their own distinctiveness. Each of the edifices mentioned above was ignored, disused and deteriorated until nineteenth-century elites, defining themselves in reference to an idealized past, began the imaginative rehabilitation of an evocative medieval past. The nineteenth-century medievalizing project was not unique to Catalonia (Geary and Klaniczay 2013), although the unique circumstances there gave it special poignancy that it has maintained, unlike anywhere else, up to the present.

What we have left are much less medieval structures than an infrastructure that we have learned to imagine as medieval. The most sensational example is the façade of Barcelona's cathedral, which may look medieval but is not (a fact that guidebooks ignore). Two architects in the years around 1900 gave the cathedral its new medieval face since, from their perspective, the real medieval of the Cathedral's Catalan gothic was much too plain to attract attention. The architects, José Oriol Mestres and August Font i Carreras, participated with a group of intellectuals and elites who, with Antoni Gaudí, read the crumbling medieval architectural stock around them as a rich foundation upon which to promote Catalan distinctiveness to both

Catalans and outsiders. This is only one example of the early appearance of efforts to manufacture tourist experience in Barcelona and Catalonia (Casellas 2009; Cocola Gant 2011).

What is important about the cathedral for present purposes is not how many people enter the sanctuary but, rather, how visitors let its façade move them in such a way that they imagine themselves to be in a medieval space energized by present circumstances. Barcelona's cathedral square (Plaça de la Seu), has considerable importance as a civic space. It is home on Thursdays to a regular assortment of stalls selling antiques and miscellany, referred to as a "gothic market." Saturdays bring to the same square aficionados, sometimes numbering in the several thousands, of the *Sardana*, a dance popularized in the nineteenth century and then promoted as Catalunya's national dance with medieval origins. On any odd day one might find in the square a musical or theatrical performance, a workers' union manifestation or a political rally, the beginning of an auto or foot race, or some other spectacle. These are all part of the lived experience of Barcelona residents, and they thus work to remind Barcelonans in small everyday ways of the liveliness and lively history of the place in which they live. They are also part of what makes Barcelona interesting to visitors. Any one of the myriad everyday events in Barcelona has the potential to draw visitors into a deeper awareness of and appreciation for the Catalan past. Such occurrences are also cumulative, as will be suggested in the examples that follow. Once evoked, the medieval imaginary carries a lot of weight for Catalans and their visitors, permitting connections to Catalanism that have considerable variety and subtlety.

Barcelona is not alone in its regard for the creative use of Catalonia's medieval past. Medieval recall manifests in cities, towns, and villages throughout Catalonia and is also very much available in the in-between spaces, the many thousands of hilltop castles and out-of-the-way monastic settlements that make up a good part of the region's mystique. The monasteries of Poblet and Ripoll are among the places reconstructed in moments of Catalan nationalist vigor that have become important destinations for heritage-seeking Catalans and non-Catalan tourists in the present. Stories of the purposeful reinvention of the medieval could be told about Girona and Besalú,

famous for their (reconstructed) medieval walls, bridges, Jewish quarters, etc., sold to locals and tourists as the real thing. In many small towns the *casc urbà* or central district formerly enclosed by medieval walls has been entirely reconstructed for the purpose of awakening local spirit and attracting visitors. Súria, a small salt mining town an hour's drive from Barcelona that exemplifies the trend, holds a *Fira Medieval d'Oficis*, now in its thirteenth year. Súria's *Fira* has all of the necessary attributes of medieval fairs anywhere – sword fights and falcon exhibits, blustering men in Renaissance split doblots, tools of torture and witches, lots of sausage, and, of course, fires in the streets. The *Fira* in Vic, similarly decorated with fire and sausage, is a grander affair purposed for a larger town that attracts a broader array of local, regional, national, and international visitors. In both places one encounters a sea of Catalan flags. Nowadays, the version of the flag representing the *independentista* movement is especially visible, as are the obligatory booths encouraging the signing of petitions in favor of a vote on Catalan independence.

The medieval sensibility is one of the key attributes that ties Barcelona to its Catalan hinterland. The best example of a point of convergence is Montserrat Mountain, about 1 ½ hours by train from the capital. Montserrat is where the spiritual pulse of Catalan nationalism is most strongly felt (Conversi 2000: 126-127). It is also a significant site where Catalanism engages non-Catalans. It ranks high on Turisme de Barcelona's list of tour packages, and receives about 3 million visitors a year, a number that is not without its problems (SacredNaturalSites 2014). Approaching it from any direction one encounters the series of uplifted and eroded peaks (the highest is St. Jeroni, at 1236 meters) that jut out of the surrounding low-lying valley like an uneven saw blade several miles long and pocked by caves. The whole massive protuberance is often partly shrouded in ethereal cloud cover. Its natural qualities raised the mystical sensibilities of Iberia's prehistoric inhabitants, who left remains in the mountain's many caves. Modern visitors to Montserrat typically begin and end their visit at the Benedictine Monastery of Santa Maria de Montserrat tucked into a high mountainside brink. The monastery, which boasts a history of over one thousand years, is host to the national patroness of

Catalonia, a manifestation of the Madonna whose sculpted image is *La Moreneta*, Our Lady of Montserrat, held in a place of honor above and behind the monastery's principal altar. To attract and accommodate visitors, the monks have now so grossly overbuilt their monastery that it feels oddly like a Disneyland for Catholics, complete with trolley rides, cafeteria meals, long waiting lines, and free boys' choir concerts. Despite the overload of tourists, the affection among many Catalans for the place continues to run deep, in part because of the active work of the monks in promoting and defending Catalan culture (twenty-two of Montserrat's activist monks died during the Spanish Civil War, and the Catalan language was used in the mass even throughout the years that the Franco dictatorship prohibited it). In February, 2014, several thousand pilgrim hikers and bikers climbed the mountain to celebrate, under the guidance of La Moreneta and her monks, the *Renovació de la Flama de la Llengua*, that is, the forty-fifth annual event in commemoration of the contribution of the Catalan language to Catalan identity (La Flama, 2014). The intersections at Montserrat of local tourism, medieval religious and cultural heritage, and Catalan national politics are easily measured in religious writing, tourist guidebooks, Catalinist blogs, and everyday events and conversation.

Certainly the influence of the imagined medieval past in the places where tourists and others come upon occasions for Catalan self-discovery should not be exaggerated; however, that influence is extensive, with modes of intersection that are many, varied, and colorful. While I have described a few historic sites and settings, it should be remembered that similar zones of conjunction are very numerous both inside and outside of Barcelona. Even the buildings designed by the chief progenitors of Catalan Modernism must be counted here. Many of the tourists who gawk from the streets below at the now-famous buildings designed by Antoni Gaudí i Cornet, Lluís Domènech i Montaner, and Josep Puig i Cadafalch, have only a vague understanding of the cultural and historic context in which the modernists worked. Nonetheless, it is clear to students of the period that what suffices for tourists as a novelty is grounded in intensive medievalizing. The training, ingenuity, and aspirations of the architects and artists whose buildings are now iconic made

medievalizing tendencies into key components of their artistic vocabulary. Gaudí and the others, fascinated by their nation's medieval past, took up medieval symbolism explicitly to fan the flames of Catalan identity.

We can take as an example the imagery of Sant Jordi and the dragon, a ubiquitous symbolic referent that dominates the medievalizing syntax of all the leading architects and artists of Catalan modernism. Catalonia's male patron, Sant Jordi (the same Saint George who has a long tradition of military service to England), is the corresponding male figure to Catalonia's female patron, Montserrat. He has been honored in Catalonia since the eleventh-century when, according to tradition, he appeared on his ghostly white steed to aid Pere I in his fight against Muslim foes at the Battle of Alcoraz. Stories of Sant Jordi the dragon slayer, and of his patronage of lovers, are of later provenance.

What concerns us at the moment is the historical importance and contemporary relevance of Sant Jordi, who appears not only as a staple icon in the decoration of medieval churches throughout Catalonia but is also prominent in the work of the modernists. The façade of the Casa Amatller, one of the principal buildings of interest on Passeig de Gràcia, standing right next to Gaudí's Casa Batlló, features a whimsical relief by the most famed of the Catalan Modernist sculptors, Eusebi Arnau, of a spry Jordi engaged in combat against his dragon foe. Architectural historians have concluded that Gaudí brought Jordi and the *drac* into the designs of all of his buildings in recognition of the prominence of the core Catalan symbolism. The wrought iron gate he designed at the entrance to his father's estate takes the form of a dragon. The gables on the roof of the Casa Bellesguard serve as the eyes of a three-headed serpent covered in roof-tile scales (Garcés 2014). Gaudí took great personal interest in the location of the Casa Bellesguard from his youth because of the site's historical significance. What remained there were the foundations of a palace built by Martin the Humane, the last ruler of the great medieval Catalan dynasty. Gaudí was so impressed with the site's symbolic potency for the resurgent Catalanism of his time that he set out to find a patron who would buy the site and set the architect to work there. Sant Jordi and the *drac* have been so ubiquitous that

during preparations for the 1992 Olympic Games public protests ensued when organizers chose the abstract dog-like Cobi over the Catalan *drac* as the promotional mascot (Hargreaves 2000: 63-64).

A reader might imagine at this point that the creative use of the medieval past is itself something old and out-of-date, a reheating for tourist consumption of *Renaixença* leftovers; but this is not the case. Acts of creative reconstruction that purposefully recall the medieval past are apparent in some of the most recent additions to Barcelona's built environment. Two examples of creative adaptive reuse are the *Mercat Santa Caterina*, just across the Via Augusta from the Cathedral plaza, and the *Drassanes* at the end of the Rambla nearest the portside monument honoring Christopher Columbus. The *mercat* underwent a very lively renovation a decade ago that made it another of the city's architectural jewels by laying a new multi-colored waved roof and a fresh wood and steel interior over its nineteenth-century face. But the site on which the market rests was also an archeological zone that recognized the importance of the market space going back to the medieval period. Therefore, a little space toward the back of the building became one locus of the multi-site Museum of the History of Barcelona (MUHBA). One can see there the remains of the fourteenth-century church and convent of the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans, who found in market-goers a ready audience for their preaching. Materials available in several languages at the site tell about the social dominance of the Dominicans, including their control of the market space in the time of Barcelona's medieval heyday. The *Drassanes* was the shipyard that built the crafts that propelled Barcelona's late medieval Mediterranean expansion. After Castilian kings suppressed Barcelona's seaborne mercantile dominance, the cavernous ship-building factories languished and decayed, and their use turned to barracks and jails. But the *Drassanes* is now a marvelous museum, the *Museu Marítim de Barcelona*, devoted to the history of ships and shipbuilding and to telling the story of Barcelona's history as a major medieval European seaport.

The complex of buildings that form the *Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau* is another example of adaptive reuse that, like the *Mercat Santa Caterina* and the *Drassanes*, makes both the old and the

really old work for specifically presentist purposes. The architect, Lluís Domènech i Montaner, who designed and built the complex in the years from 1901 to 1930, sought to accentuate the medieval-within-the-modernist. He published his aspirations in an article in which he asserted the need to draw from Catalonia's medieval traditions in order to revive a distinctly Catalan architectural language that political and cultural exigencies had interrupted (Domènech i Montaner 1878:158). The hospital is caked in a decorative apparatus of medieval symbols and medievalizing symbolism too extensive to discuss in detail here. In general terms, the designs, decorations, and details refer back to the origins of the site as a hospital complex founded by Martin the Humane in 1401. The renovation that brought the complex to public attention was completed in 2014 at a cost of eighty-million euros.

The agents of change here had several goals beyond creating another expensive piece of Barcelona eye candy. One was to relieve tourist pressure on Gaudí's iconic monster project the *Sagrada Família* by offering a nearby attraction that might well become its rival (with nearly 3 million visitors annually, the *Sagrada Família* and the neighborhood around it are under intense pressure). Another was to activate the space as an international cultural and performance center where the Catalan inheritance can be presented alongside and as an equal to the world's great cultural traditions (Ministerio de Fomento 2014). It should not be forgotten that the sites mentioned above do performative, presentational, and didactic work.

I have only briefly mentioned festivals, although festival culture offers important opportunities for interaction between locals and others that turn to Catalan inculcation (Richards 2007). A little more should be said at least about Barcelona's two principal festivals as opportunities for the creative rehearsal of the past in the present. The feast of Saint Eulalia occurs every February. Celebrations honoring Eulalia are of medieval origin, and are well documented from the 18th century. Since the 1980s the feast has become a weeklong series of parades and festival activities sponsored by the city government, the Ajuntament of Barcelona. The public party invites tourists to participate in creative recall: the Ajuntament's publicity about it calls Eulàlia "the symbol of solidarity for our city, the defense

of justice, and the promise of youth” (Ajuntament, 2014). Eulàlia held a singular pride of place as Barcelona’s patroness until the sixteenth century, at which time she had to make room for the growing influence of a co-patron, Mare de Déu de la Mercè (Mary of Mercy). By the twentieth century, La Mercè’s festival in September had grown huge, becoming Barcelona’s biggest party. One result, according to common civic memory, is that Eulàlia is in such a snit that she regularly brings rain down upon the festival-goers. Despite the perennial forecast, La Mercè is a grand opportunity for Barcelonans to celebrate their medieval past by bringing out the *gegants* of real and legendary medieval characters, by lighting the *carrefoc* devil’s fires, and by showing honor to their co-patroness in religious processions, the building of human castles, etc. The Mercè is also an important tourist spectacle and, not so paradoxically, an opportunity for many Barcelonans to breathe a collective sigh of relief, as the event signals the end of summer and a reduction in the number of tourist invaders.

Museums must have their place in this survey of the sites and occasions for creative Catalan recall. Barcelona is a museumgoers paradise, one especially well staged for the propagation of Catalan sentiment. All of the major museums – the National Museum of Art of Catalonia (MNAC), the Museum of the History of Barcelona (MUHBA), the Museum of the History of Catalonia, the Maritime Museum – resonate with Catalan pride of place and call directly upon visitors to connect with the special circumstances of the Catalan story. The newest addition to the museum mix, the Born Centre Cultural, does this in either of its guises (it is part civic social-cultural space and part museum dedicated to the events of 1714 that leave Catalans with particularly strong anti-Spanish memories). It is a kind of Alice-in-Wonderland rabbit hole, moving people from the present and through the centuries of early modern *decadència* to transport them back to a medieval Catalonia that resounds with pride and purpose. The museums dedicated to Picasso, Miró, Dalí, and Tàpies also direct considerable attention in their promotional and educational materials to the efforts of their artist subjects to assert their Catalan identity, to address their Catalan inheritance, or to advance the cause of Catalan collectivity.

Promulgating the Imagined Past

Catalans like to tell and retell their story, to themselves and to others. The modes of teaching and learning Catalan self-reference are very numerous, including but going well beyond participating in the medievalized built environment discussed thus far. They include, for example, a very lively market in popular and popularizing books in Catalan. The books collecting short historical tidbits, biographical vignettes, legends and tall tales amount to a kind of genre (e.g., Cortijo 2010; Montfort 2011). An extensive inventory of fact and fiction about the Catalans and their past from which authors can draw make these books quite diverse in some respects, although they all share two functions: They retell the essential Catalan narrative of a period of medieval splendor followed by Castilian obstructionism, and they proffer some expression of the heartiness of Catalan language, culture and political action in the face of tremendous adversity.

For many years, the Generalitat subsidized publication of these books, along with books on Catalan cuisine, novels by Catalan authors, and collections of stories and traditions for children, in part to stimulate an expansion of readership in the Catalan tongue. Financial support to bookstores continues because, as one government official put it “book shops... are an essential element of our cultural DNA” (Ajuntament 2013). The significance of Catalan book culture is measurable – Catalonia accounts for about half of all books sales in Spain. Books are also part of the festival culture and the culture of civic space use, both of which are integral to engagement of non-Catalans in the Catalan story. Visitors to Catalan lands cannot avoid the fact that language is a touchstone of Catalan inheritance.

Much of the propagandizing about Catalan identity and purpose seeks specifically to engage Catalan audiences. Children in the Catalan schools, for example, make shields of red and gold bars and then march around the classroom as they sing about the exploits of the count-king James I (e.g., CEIP San José de Calasanz 2008). But many acts of cultural reproduction meant for Catalan audiences have the positive spillover effect of bringing Catalan tradition into contact with external audiences. A clear example is human castle building. *Castells* get built when twenty to forty or more *castellers* link hands

and support each other by grabbing legs and butts so that they can climb one upon the other to create towers of up to ten human stories tall. UNESCO counts Catalan *castells* among the masterpieces of intangible human heritage. *Independistes* have turned to calling them, in English, “statues of liberty”. The castle builders and the musicians who accompany them on *grallas*, double-reed horns of supposed medieval origins, put on a great spectacle as they prepare and then execute the *tres de deu amb folre i manilles*, the *quatre de vuit*, and various other configurations. At root this is a neighborhood activity, but it also binds an extensive system of neighborhood associations to Catalanism as a national sentiment in action. In recent decades castle building has become infused with the spirit of competitive sports, so that huge gatherings of several thousand castle builders competing for pride and prizes have become annual events attended by tens of thousands of spectators. Both the small local performances and the outsized stadium events are tourist attention grabbers. The building of human castles is not, strictly speaking, of medieval origin, although it is often characterized as such, or is at least recognized as a practice derived from Catalonia’s medieval geography as a land of castles. It has become a signature example of Catalans reminding themselves of their medieval past that is also read by tourists and others as an awe-inspiring performance of Catalan difference (Subirà i Claramunt 2011).

Beyond thoughts and actions intended for internal consumption, Catalans are fully aware that the success of their long-term nationalist project requires an audience that reaches beyond Catalans themselves. Catalans know that their experience is not entirely unique. Other people in other places fight to defend “sub-national” identities within the contexts of modern nation states that limit distinctiveness. Among its efforts to operate as a nation within a state, the Catalan governing institution, the Generalitat, has established political offices colloquially called “embassies” in Brussels, Paris, London, Berlin, and New York. The Generalitat sponsors conferences and publications for the purpose of maximizing international support for the diminution of Spanish sovereignty. The independence-spirited Assemblée Nacional Catalana actively

promulgates its efforts in several languages (Green 2007; Guibernau 2006; Keating 1996).

Some Catalans talk of separating from Spain, and their talk gets put into action in ways meant to attract maximum international attention. A recent spectacular example is the Catalan Way to Independence (*Via Catalana cap a la Independència*). Part of the National Day of Catalonia (*La Diada Nacional de Catalunya*) celebrations of September 11, 2013, the exercise resulted in a human chain of over 1.5 million persons. The path traversed by the hand-holding activists offered a symbolic reminder that their local history precedes the history of the modern Kingdom of Spain (just as it precedes Spain's two Republics and two dictatorships in the modern period). The event was an exercise in remembering – a performance of collective identity. It was also a brilliant publicity stunt that successfully captured international attention, including an opinion piece by Artur Mas in the *New York Times* (Minder 2013; Mas 2013). A similarly staged public spectacle –creation of a *senyera* fifteen miles long comprised of Catalans who wore either Crimson or gold shirts and arranged themselves in alternating rows– occurred as part of the *Diada* celebrated on September 11, 2014.

Especially around election times one also sees in Barcelona and throughout Catalonia the slogan in English “Catalonia, the next European state.” A similarly brash display of separatist politics is a signature shibboleth produced in English, a message for international consumption: “Catalonia is not Spain.” It is graffiti-painted onto rocks on Montserrat's mountainside, and it appears in professionally produced mega-banners prominently displayed at major cultural festivals, for example when FC Barcelona meets Real Madrid at Barça's Camp Nou soccer stadium. Even Barça's current publicity motto, “More than a club,” gets rendered in English as well as in Catalan. The vague slogan is so gently and wonderfully evocative that it fully encompasses all of the history that sets Catalonia apart – the team's official websites make it clear that the slogan evokes the nationalist aspirations of the region that the team represents (FCBarcelona 2014). A promotional campaign entered into jointly between the Barça club and the Catalan tourism promoters makes use of the slogan (Catalan News Agency 2012).

Modern Dysfunctions and the Creatively Used Past

In recent decades Barcelona has undergone very dramatic changes. These include: several waves of immigration, first from Andalusia and other parts of Spain and more recently from Latin America, North Africa, China, and elsewhere; an explosion of the real estate market for foreign second-home and beach-home buyers, and more generally an increase in expatriates moving into the city and its suburbs; and massive increases in the number of tourist visitors to the city. The economic and social consequences of each are well documented. What is less well understood is the threat that these changes pose to the memory of Catalonia's national past and what the loss of its connectedness to the past will do to Barcelona's identity as an exemplary city.

Immigration was once a boon to the Catalan economy, and some say that the immigrant influx was an invigorating factor when Catalan nationalism neared a point of claustrophobic degeneration (Cardús i Ros 2005). But immigration now threatens Catalan identity in at least two respects. First is the real possibility that Catalan historical memory may become the inheritance of a minority population of Catalans inside a Catalonia populated mostly by non-Catalans. The number of those who identify as historically Catalan, or Catalan by heritage, is already less than half the population. Jordi Pujol in his time as President of Catalonia (1980-2003), puzzling over the demographic shift, offered an inclusive model of regional identity: a Catalan is a person who lives and works in Catalonia and feels Catalan. Pujol understood that under a centralist Spanish state he would need to help the new immigrant population identify as Catalan. His approach, applied energetically through the Generalitat's pro-Catalan language policies, helped the Catalan national project survive and grow (Stobart 2012). The current President of Catalonia, Artur Mas, also insists that anyone can become Catalan by learning about and participating in the language, history, and traditions that make Catalans distinct. The governments of Barcelona and Catalonia still show success in assimilating immigrants into Catalan language and culture, and because the ability to speak Catalan continues to serve as a barrier to social and economic advancement, many immigrants show

eagerness to learn the language. But the severely bifurcated nature of Spain's economy, especially pronounced in Barcelona, given its strong tourism and commercial sectors, weighs against assimilation for many. Middle and upper wage-earning native Catalans, along with their ex-patriot business partners, live very different lives from a majority population of non-skilled and low-wage immigrants living in enclaves where they speak their own heritage languages (Alcobendas, Rodriguez-Planas and Vegas 2012). In this context Catalanism becomes boutique history and politics, chic but potent as cultural capital only in refined circles.

Second, the demographic shift exacerbates other points of division inside Catalan society. As in London, Paris, Rome, and other metropolitan centers in Europe, the underclass status of many immigrants confounds the tourist experience. Petty crime, even if more or less well controlled, persists as a problem in tourists' minds in part because street behavior feeds stereotypes and negative perceptions. Tourists cannot help but witness African immigrants playing hide-and-seek with the police as they go about hawking knock-off purses and sunglasses. Tourists intuit, moreover, that the Asian immigrants peddling little light up toys cannot possibly make a living selling such trinkets. In addition, in response to a perceived threat to indigenous values, a small minority of native Catalans have reacted against recent waves of Muslim immigrants. Fortunately for newcomer immigrants and tourist visitors, Catalan xenophobes are not as numerous or grotesque as their kindred elsewhere in Europe (Nadal Asina 2011). Meanwhile, Barcelona's cultural and political dominance of Catalonia has drawn attention. Catalans from beyond the metropolis, members of the intelligentsia and intellectual class among them, have recently made it clear that Barcelona no longer serves their interests. Barcelona, they say, has become a vampire sucking the Catalan life blood out of its hinterland (Bosch et al. 2000).

All of these examples suggest that Catalanism may be coming loose from its foundations, but the most serious threat to the continued potency of the Catalan past in Barcelona is the over-exploitation of the city's resources by the tourism sector. Tourism is a huge part of the economy of Barcelona and Catalonia. In 2013, when Spain overtook China as the third most visited country worldwide, with revenues from

foreign tourism totaling 59 billion euros, Catalonia, with only about 7 percent of Spain's population, accounted for nearly one quarter of all tourism spending in Spain (Mas i Martin 2007; El País 2014). Observers say that the influx now amounts to a siege, a peaceful but not unproblematic invasion (Davidson 2011: 111-112; Pack 2006). If tourists are the new besiegers, then the record arrival of 31,600 of them by sea in a single day in May of 2014 makes cruise ships the new siege engines (Catalan News Agency 2014). It is no wonder that locals suffer from *turismofobia*. That many of them no longer see the historic and political center of town as their own has become the subject of full-length documentary videos (e.g., Chibas 2014).

Moreover, that the tourist-heavy center of the city stinks because of insufficient sewage infrastructure is widely reported on blog sites, not only by locals but by tourists reporting on the olfactory unpleasantness of their trips. Barcelona's tourism promoters tout the award-winning cleanliness of the city's waters, but they do so by swimming against a tidal wave of trash carried there by the daily crush of tourists, which an army of one hundred and more workers cleans up overnight, before the next day's polluting fun-lovers show up to repeat their offenses. Locals pay more than their share of the financial and psychological costs of tourism, which, for example, puts pressure on overstressed transportation services (Albaladejo and Bel 2009). Tourism has, of course, contributed to employment, although most of the sector's jobs are at the bottom of the wage scale (García Pozo et al. 2012). Barcelona has worked vigorously, as I have demonstrated here, to make tourism and Catalan heritage work together. For some leading researchers, however, the management of patrimony and the promotion of tourism are two logics that fail to communicate compatibly even as they draw upon the same resources (Prats 2011).

All of the problems and processes described here are operative in many directions of experience and measureable at various levels of analysis. Massive immigration and mass tourism are manifestations of urbanization and globalization. Alternatively, at the level of national politics, reading back upon Spanish history over a half-century, we can view the expansion of tourism and the migration of Castilian speakers into Catalonia as part of a Franco-era conspiracy intended to dilute the strength of Catalanism. There are regional readings, too:

some say that the general trends are exacerbated in the Catalan case by factors that include its recent transition to democracy, the crucial timing of demographic shifts inside Spain, the Mediterranean's early starting position in the mass tourism race, and also the prominence and success of the 1992 Olympics as a tourism phenomenon. All of these explanations have merit. One might add, however, perhaps most controversially, that Catalan politicians could have done better to mitigate the costs of these phenomena as they have unfolded.

The aforementioned costs of Barcelona's recent success "undeniably... come at the expense of a further erosion of Catalan specificity" (Davidson 2012: 110). The question is what to do about the problem. There are no easy answers, although two possibilities are certainly clear. First, to put it bluntly, Barcelonans will have a tougher time demonstrating to others what is unique about their city, and will even make it unrecognizable among themselves, if they continue to commodify the Catalan collective conscience in actions, for example, like turning the monumental section of Park Güell into a fee-based tourist park (Jorro 2013). Catalans will need to find a way to defend themselves against the tourist siege. Second, it is apparent that a shift has occurred in the role of culture, from "expressive of place and linked to the development of a renewed Catalan and democratic identity, to become a functional tool that can be shaped and manipulated to ensure social cohesion and market the city's brand" (Degen and Garcia 2012:1030). Barcelonans must continue to creatively explore and recite their past, doing so as a cultural and political imperative, in order to reclaim the inheritance of their urban place from those who would trademark and sell off distinctively Catalan assets. Finally, the demographic shift may be the most difficult to treat. Catalans held fast to their culture through civil wars, despotic kings, and dictatorships. Time will tell if Catalanism can survive the mobility of modern populations. What might help is for Barcelonans, whether of the Catalan variety or those who originate from some other place, to recall that they live in a place with a distinctive, high-value, but fragile, history and culture.

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