Prostituting the Global City:
The Case of Twenty-First Century Barcelona

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation argues that contemporary urban spaces such as the city of Barcelona are metaphorically being prostituted. To understand this approach I propose a concept that is new to the fields that I am investigating: the prostitution of urban space. The prostitution of urban space is a global phenomenon developing in the twenty-first century, in which local governments in alliance with powerful financial companies invest in cities and convert them into consumable products.

The totality of the city (streets, monuments, buildings, culture, identity) is converted into an easily consumable product directed at the global economic system and the foreign visitor, eager customers that desire to consume the metropolis rapidly, as a luxurious, pleasant, and fun commodity. This often results in violent gentrification practices that evict residents from their homes, erasing multicultural histories of communities and peoples. The foreign visitor or tourist then enjoys the services that the metropolis offers, pays his dues, and consumes the exotic, seductive, and clean city, a product especially designed for him. In this scheme, governmental officials and financial and real estate groups act as pimps, or procurers of the prostituted metropolises.

My dissertation examines how authors negotiate with the prostitution of urban space developing in Barcelona through movies, documentaries, theater plays, short stories, graphic novels, and art exhibits. Documentaries like *La extranjera* (2015) by Miguel Ángel Blanca, theater plays like *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* (2004) by Lluïsa Cunillé, and short stories such as "La ofrenda" (2013) by Teresa Solana create alternative urban visions for the city of Barcelona, which defend strategies to control tourism, give public space back to citizens, and strengthen the historical and cultural characteristics of the city.

I have discovered that the materials advocate for the necessity of change, and indicate the direction and the values that the city should follow in the future. They defend the idea of a democratic, historically and culturally rich city, with regulatory policies to control tourism, and the development of strategies to give public space back to residents. Tourism, then, is not categorically opposed in their works. In fact, in most of the cases these authors understand it as a part of the identity of current Barcelona, but they nonetheless emphasize the need for control and regulation of the industry. They also endorse an economic system that, instead of focusing on the interests of global financial corporations, supports working-class, low-income inhabitants.

I propose that these artistic and cultural reactions have been successful in raising awareness on the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona; however, I have found that the city continues to relentlessly promote her global image. While still dependent on tourism, the current local government is marketing the metropolis under a new narrative, which promotes the city as a multi-cultural, feminist and democratic space. This implies that the prostitution of urban space will continue in the city albeit the critiques and social responses analyzed in this dissertation, especially under a neoliberal economic system that perpetuates all forms of consumption and commodification.

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# Chapter 1

## Prostituting the Global City: The Case of Twenty-First Century Barcelona

### 1.1. Introduction

The summer of 2019 while visiting Barcelona I felt immersed in a dialectical and visual battlefield where the spaces of the city were at stake. On the front line of this symbolic combat were long-term residents rebelling through protests, banners, and stickers against the local government's decision to focus its economy on the tourism industry, and on reshaping Barcelona into an attractive, global, hip metropolis. These different narratives, concentrated in the same urban space, reveal the condition of space as a social relation, and also a political battleground, an observation famously noted by Henri Lefebvre (Fraser 34). The souvenir shops, luxury hotels, boutiques, and tapas restaurants that are found in every neighborhood surrounding downtown Barcelona are urban alterations designed to support a narrative that revolves around tourism. These modifications do not only alter urban settings, but also change identitary, historical and cultural traits that are gathered in the city. In Barcelona, a considerable portion of the population does not agree with the urban restructuring undertaken over the last two decades The city government, supported by real estate and global financial companies which are investing in Barcelona as a booming city for business and leisure, constructs spaces to seduce the foreign visitor. During their stay, visitors eagerly consume an image of the city (and the city itself) that was prepared to seduce them. It must be noted that, metaphorically speaking, the tourist and *his* consumption of an attractive, seductive spatial city body through monetary transactions resemble the functioning of prostitution. For the purposes of this dissertation, I understand the "spatial city body" to be the physical spaces of a metropolis, such as streets, plazas, buildings, monuments, and parks, that conform the entirety of the city and delimited it as a structured unit. Spatial

bodies, just as human bodies, can metaphorically be consumed. In the case of Barcelona, the current urban planning and its economic focus on the tourism industry and foreign investment facilitates this consumption for short-term, high-income visitors.

In the same spaces designed for the tourist, long-term Barcelona residents are protesting the tourist narrative created by the town hall with banners that denounce property speculation and stickers that read slogans such as “tourists go home”, which tourists encounter throughout their visit. Their protests indicate that they do not identify with the image the town hall is developing for the city and the metaphorical prostitution of space I mentioned before. It also reveals the existence of two very different discourses for the urban organization of the city, usually represented in social and cultural representations through the dichotomy of *exterior* and *interior* Barcelona, i.e. *tourist* and *real* Barcelona. In this way, the spatial body of the city is an object, which long-term residents, local government and financial powers are dialectically and visually fighting to possess. They do so through similar technologies; the city hall creates commercial campaigns to stimulate tourism through film and tourists capture the city with photographs. At the same time, artists utilize these same mediums to protest the commodification of space. In cultural materials, long-term residents, activists and authors express their believe that the metropolis can become a more democratic and hospitable space if citizens participate directly in the means of production and signification of urban space. However, it is important to question whether their urban project is utopian or can actually be developed in the neoliberal economic scenario currently established in Barcelona.

All of these dynamics were obvious to me in Park Güell, the famous park and tourist destination created by Antoni Gaudí. The park, which first opened to the public in 1926, was free until 2013 and is now divided between free and paid admission areas. This unnatural separation

to the park was announced as an initiative to protect the space from overcrowding by tourists and subsequent possible damages. However, it is also very beneficial economically for the town hall and the tourism industry: the park received nine million visitors in 2016 (Mead), most of them paying ten dollars to visit. Associations like *Defensem el Park Güell* voiced their discontent with what they understood as a strategy to privatize the park (Arias-Sans and Russo 247). In a more visual approach of fighting against the tourist narrative implanted in the city, long-term residents also took over the walkways of the free admission areas to reflect their opinion on the uses of the park. They wrote graffiti that read "tourist go home" and placed "tourism kills the city" stickers, anti-tourist slogans that became popular and are now found on buildings and store blinds all over the city. This type of residents' protests became influential; similar resistance strategies appear currently in other global cities such as Berlin and Venice, where tourism is also a thriving economic asset.

In Barcelona's Gothic Quarter, medieval streets that date back to the fourteenth century cohabitate with tourists consuming not only tapas, but also the views of the city from the restaurant patios on which they sit. Blocking the view in several of these narrow streets are enormous banners that hang from balconies, denouncing the property speculation that the neighborhood is suffering due to tourism. Neighbors in the Gothic have criticized in Catalan newspapers the "parquetematización" of the neighborhood, i.e., the turning of the space into a theme park for tourists. Long-time residents have talked about the fleeing of businesses that provided basic services, which now serve the tourism industry. They also state that they feel pressured to leave the neighborhood and hand it over to tourists: as a neighbor puts it in a 2018 article: "te dicen que sobras, que esto es para los turistas y para el comercio, que como vecino sobras" (Cols). In order to facilitate its consumption, the spatial body of the city needs to become

minimally signifying for tourists: its signs must be rapidly legible by everyone and at home in all places. Creating this simulacrum of a city involves eliminating any *supplement* or *excess*, concepts which poststructuralist discourse understands as anything that can disrupt the unity of the signifier.[1] In the case of Barcelona, this implies elements that question the sanitized view of the city prepared for foreign visitors. Consequently, long-term neighbors signify the 'excess'; because their protests and anti-tourist discourses have the power to "trouble the waters of hierarchical power relations" (Runions 66), the local government and financial companies develop strategies to expel them from highly visited areas. One of these strategies is urban harassment, i.e., the series of techniques that real state developers create to pressure neighbors to vacate their homes, such as raising rent, and offering unfair but very needed compensation to those who agree to leave their apartments (Fernández González 234-242).

The conflict between long-term residents, the town hall and its economic interests, and visitors from around the world is not only spatial and dialectic: it is also a physically violent process in various ways. Turning a space into a tourist commodity involves violent economic processes such as the rising of apartment prices, which generates non-payments and evictions for long-term residents. There were more than 4,000 evictions per year between 2015 and 2017 in Barcelona (Marchena). Most of them required police intervention, situations that can turn physical quickly, with clashes between police, and anti-eviction protesters and evicted families. Moreover, during the summer of 2019 Barcelona experienced a series of violent robberies and stabbings, with eleven cases involving a violent death. Since 2016, violent robberies have soared by 58% (Sànchez), around forty cases of violent theft occur each day (Congostrina). Organizations such as the Federación de Asociaciones de Vecinos y Vecinas de Barcelona have

[1] The philosopher Jean Baudrillard defines his idea of *simulacrum* as "something which replaces reality with its representation" (Mambrol). In the case of Barcelona, many foreign visitors identify the branded portrayal of the city as a representation of reality.

already established a link between criminality and the tourism industry (López). The high crime rates are a consequence of the socioeconomic conditions developing in the city and a form of pathogenic vulnerability for long-term residents. As Mackenzie et al. indicate, pathogenic vulnerabilities develop when individuals' vulnerabilities are exacerbated due to sociopolitical oppression or injustice (9). The transformation of the city into a global tourist destination is not only affecting long-term residents through the rising prices of their apartments and evictions, but it is also making them more susceptible to violent attacks. It is important to remember that tourists become also vulnerable to this type of violence: they are another target of the robberies occurring in the metropolis.

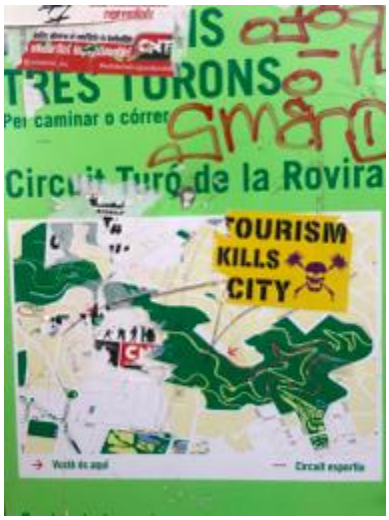


**Image 1.1.“***Tourism kills city” sticker on a map of a park next to Park Güell*, 2019


**Image 1.2.“***Prou!! Especulació inmobiliària que ens fa fora del barri” (“Stop the property our neighborhood” banner in the Gothic Quarter), 2019*

The current, violent atmosphere developing in Barcelona due to its branding as a global tourist destination has an extended history. During the summers of 2017 and 2018, activists from the anti-tourist organization Arran vandalized tour buses full of terrified tourists, slashing tires and spray painting slogans criticizing mass tourism. In 2017 an exhibition entitled "Barcelona [tm], Barcelona Mata", displayed in the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, in downtown Barcelona, presented short videos of the city's tourist areas over the motto "safari turístic" ("tourist safari"), and claimed to represent "todas las voces oprimidas bajo el peso simbólico de un imaginario de ciudad que no nos representa". The trajectory of this conflict, however, dates back to the beginning of the 2000s, with the construction of the 2004 Fòrum Universal de les Cultures, which shaped the beginning of a new urban period in Barcelona. The urban changes produced by the Fòrum did not consider the interests of the residents, which, notably, had been taken into account for the massive transformation of the city that took place in preparation for the 1992 Olympic Games. While both of these events were strategically planned to favor international recognition and city branding, from the early 2000s the residents' needs for larger public spaces and affordable housing were put aside in favor of developing the local economy and an urban narrative designed to satisfy global financial companies and the global visitor. The economic crisis of 2008 exacerbated the feeling of abandon in lower-income, working class residents, who were most affected by the miserable living conditions that the crisis created. Such conditions were aggravated by phenomena like the commodification of space and gentrification. These processes, directly related to the local government's decision to center its economy on the tourism industry and foreign financial investments, grew steadily throughout and after the recession, turning neighborhoods into highly demanded land and displacing low-income

populations in the process. While the increase in rent prices that usually occurs with these phenomena forces residents out, it attracts higher-income inhabitants, who can afford to live in the area, and tourist lodging through companies like Airbnb.

Movies such as *Biutiful* (2010) show how the 2008 crisis impacted Barcelona. Focusing on the immigrant subject, the movie depicts poor and sick characters in a sick city, infected by a metaphorical cancer (the cancer of neoliberalism) that, according to the director, will eventually kill the metropolis as well as its inhabitants. Social and artistic reactions such as *Biutiful* very often refer to the city as an entity that is harming its inhabitants; this reveals the spatial alienation some residents develop in contemporary neoliberal cities such as Barcelona, which compels them to perceive the city as an active aggressor. However, as I have mentioned before, it is important to consider that the powerful parties behind the organization of urban space are ultimately responsible for the processes of commodification and gentrification denounced in these works. Since the 1970s Barcelona, as many major European cities, experienced a process of deinsdustrialization that dramatically increased the growth of the tertiary sector (Bell qtd. in Selby 14). At the end of the twentieth century government officials in metropolises recognized that the city was no longer a location for traditional industry but for new businesses based on the service sector, such as urban tourism. Urban tourism developed a new profitable manner to use urban space, as it recognized the city's attractiveness in terms of consumption and showed substantial economic growth and development when implemented (Selby 14-15). Driven by economic interests, governmental officials and financial powers create place-marketing campaigns that introduce new cultural, identitary, and economic signifiers into global urban spaces, to which part of the population cannot affiliate. It is not the city, but local and national governments, financially supported by real estate and financial companies, that raise rent prices

in working-class neighborhoods, forcing low-income inhabitants to relocate to the outskirts, and transforming their homes into tourist apartments and short-term rentals. In the case of Spain, the national housing policies, which are applied in all autonomous communities in the country, promoted urban speculation already during the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975), when Barcelona was planned through the Porciolismo urban approach (1957-1973). According to McNeill, the Porciolismo system, lead by Francoist Mayor Josep Maria de Porcioles i Colomer, "gave spatial form to the archetypal mode of anarchic capitalism, as the city became a site of sprawl and destruction" (118). This capitalist perspective of space continued on throughout the twentieth century, as can be seen in laws such as the Ley 6/1998 de 13 de abril, de Régimen del suelo y valoraciones, aslo know as "la ley del todo urbanizable". This legislation, enacted by the Partido Popular (PP), the principal right-wing Spanish party, specified that any terrain not specifically protected in the country was available for urban development. "La ley del todo urbanizable" accelerated speculative processes, considering housing needs a tool for economic growth instead of a social right, and promoted the phenomenon of mass tourism (Sala Barceló 59), which developed immensely in Barcelona. In this way, powerful agents such as banks, financial companies and real estate companies ally with the economic interests' of governments to utilize urban space and satisfy their economic and political objectives, most commonly through the tourism industry. They develop a distinct history, culture and identity for metropolises, i.e. they brand cities for consumption in a highly competitive neoliberal global market. As Kavaratzis and Ashworth indicate "a place needs to be differentiated through a unique brand identity if it wants to be, first, recognized as existing, [and] secondly, perceived in the minds of place customers as possessing qualities superior to those of competitors" (189). In

this way, cities become objects of seduction with the purpose of attracting suitable spatial consumers.

My dissertation focuses on this type of urban dynamic, on the city planning, branding and marketing that has greatly intensified not only in Barcelona, but around the world, since the onset of the twenty-first century. Local government and global financial powers invest in cities and advertise them as the perfect leisure destination, as an attractive, hip place to be. The body of the city (its streets, monuments, buildings, culture, and identity) is converted into an easily consumable product for the global economic system and the foreign viewer, eager customers who desire to consume the metropolis rapidly, as a luxurious, pleasant, and fun commodity. In order to become attractive to the global visitor, investor, or wealthy resident, the city is restored: old buildings, parks, and squares are remodeled and monumentalized, and venues and infrastructure that were missing are provided. This urban restoration is designed to appeal the tourist, and therefore, does not usually satisfy but rather disregard the locals' needs, especially those living in tourist areas. The resultant urban consumption is quick and the city is consumed in just a few days: the foreign visitor then enjoys the services that the metropolis offers, pays his dues, and consumes the exotic, seductive, and clean city, a product especially designed for him. Focusing on this idea of the rapid consumption of a branded spatial body, which I interpret as feminine, I argue that contemporary urban spaces in cities such as Barcelona are metaphorically being prostituted. Their local governments, in alliance with big financial and real estate groups, act as pimps, or procurers. To understand this approach I will utilize a concept that is new to the fields that I am investigating and will be expanded in this chapter: the prostitution of urban space.

My dissertation investigates the aforementioned prostitution of urban space and the social, political, and economic context surrounding it through the analysis of cultural and artistic materials created in the twenty-first century in reaction to the urban dynamic developing in Barcelona. Through the production of theater plays, movies, documentaries, graphic novels, short stories and exhibitions, authors are creating alternative urban visions for the city of Barcelona, ones that develop strategies to control tourism, give public spaces back to citizens, and strengthen the history, culture and historical memory of the city. By developing and showing alternative interpretations of urban Barcelona, they are building a sense of agency and confronting the spatial organization that the city supports currently and that is preying upon them.

While the materials criticize the current urban planning of the city and its consequences for both public space and its residents, they do not represent real efforts at mapping the city of Barcelona. The authors do not seek to develop concrete new urban strategies in the architectural sense. However, through artistic and cultural means, they point to the necessity of change, and indicate the direction and the values that the city should follow in the future. In general, they defend their right to own the spatial body of the city. Neighbors socialize, transit and occupy the streets more so than politicians and financial institutions, which usually experience the city from a distant position of power. In fact, many of the investors speculating with market housing in the tourist neighborhoods of Barcelona are not even located in the city. Long-term residents consider themselves rightful users of urban space, and therefore, they reclaim their right to actively participate in the urban organization of Barcelona. In their cultural materials, they express their desire to transform the metropolis into a more democratic, historically and culturally rich city, with regulatory policies to control tourism and the construction of hotels or tourist apartments,

and the development of policies that give public space back to neighbors. Tourism, then, is not categorically opposed in their works. In fact, in most cases these authors understand it as a part of the identity of current Barcelona, but they nonetheless emphasize the need for control and regulation of the industry. They also endorse an economic system that supports working-class, low-income inhabitants, and that is not based on the interests of real estate investments and global financial corporations.

These artistic creations will be studied in connection to the claims of long-term residents and the neighborhood associations that they have created as part of the same activist grassroots urban movement. These social and artistic standpoints are complementary, as many of the producers of the artistic productions that I examine participate actively in campaigns of local activism. According to sociologist Manuel Castells, urban social movements are formed when different social groups associate with each other to express urban struggles and question the state apparatus (377). He also mentions the ability of urban social movements to bring radical change to society by uniting different struggles under the same movement: "[T]he new questions posed by the urban problematic are expressed in action that reopens the roads to revolution in our societies by linking other forms of conflict with those arising from the productive system and from political struggle" (378). In this way, I consider the grassroots movement developing in Barcelona an activist movement, which works from different perspectives (socially and artistically) to reframe the current tourist narrative of the city and better fit the neglected needs of long-term Barcelona residents. Their urban complaints are also related to a major political struggle to reclaim the development of a more democratic, progressive-thinking, historically rich city. The protests against tourism are connected to a history of urban insurgence that in Barcelona dates back to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), when the metropolis became a

receptive environment for rebellious, anti-fascists sympathizers. This Barcelona of the past, to which long-term residents and artists often refer, is remembered to call attention and protest the peaceful, sanitized Barcelona that the foreign viewer seeks to consume. [2]

It is important to clarify that not all residents of the city are responding to the current urban planning through artistic and cultural means, in the same way that not all the inhabitants of Barcelona are against what I term the prostitution of urban space. I also must explain that by showing the reactions of part of the population to the current urban planning, my investigation does not support their claims, but aspires to showcase and analyze them. Although I consider the tourist the main consumer and target of the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona, this project does not seek to blame the tourist for the existence of these phenomena. My research does not support a nativist argument, based on the local inhabitants' origin or the time spent in their homes before the processes of commodification and gentrification affected them. On the other hand, my investigation does assert that the powerful interests organizing urban space are responsible for the suffering of lower-income, working-class inhabitants, who have endured miserable living conditions due to this phenomenon, especially since the 2008 economic crisis.

On a separate note, I must point out that my research does not focus on language choice. Some of the materials examined in this dissertation utilize Spanish or Catalan, or both languages at the same time, to express their urban criticisms. In the current Catalan political and social climate, with 48% of the population supporting independence from Spain in 2013 ("Independentisme"), it is clear that choosing Spanish or Catalan to create a novel or film can have political implications. While authors might be supporting or condemning independence claims selecting one language over the other, in the case of the materials examined in my

[2] Although this is generally the case, it is important to document the appearance of a new culturally oriented tourist, which is interested in the city's history. However, the version of history offered to this type of tourist is biased and simplified to facilitate the historical narrative's consumption.

investigation, this does not directly intervene in their critique of the prostitution of urban space. For this reason, language politics are not actively discussed in my analyses.

### 1.2. Barcelona's urban development

Barcelona has been a metropolis undergoing continual urban renovation and marketing campaigns since the nineteenth century. The first major changes to the spatial distribution of the city occurred during the 1859 Plan Cerdà, a planning strategy to expand Barcelona beyond its city walls, which dated back to Medieval and Roman times. The Plan Cerdà was democratic in nature, as it provided "decent housing for all social classes, abundant light and access to green space for all dwellings, services and public transport" (Miles and Miles 79). The city representatives changed their focus outwards with the 1888 Universal Exposition and the 1929 International Exposition. In a very similar branding strategy to the one developed during the 2000s, these events were designed to promote the metropolis to the foreign visitor, as a modern cultural capital, not only of Spain, but also of Western Europe and the Mediterranean. Although the Universal Exposition had a positive urban impact for the city (some of its projects included the electrification of La Rambla and the finishing of la Ciutadella Park), the celebration was condemned by some due to subsequent price inflation and a higher city debt (Friedman 87-89). However, as mentioned by Francesc de Paula Rius i Taulet, a politician of the time and one of the biggest promoters of the Exposition, from that moment on the city would have the necessary experience to celebrate another massive exposition in the future (qtd. in Friedman 87). This knowledge is important to understand why the city embarked on later projects such as the International Exposition, the 1992 Olympic Games project and the 2004 Fòrum Universal de les Cultures.

After the 1929 International Exposition, Barcelona did not host any major event for more than sixty years, due to the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship. During the war, Barcelona was an important target for Franco because it had become a strong Republican and antifascist settlement. It was also the capital of Catalonia, which had asserted a significant degree of autonomy from Spain in 1931 with the establishment of the Generalitat de Catalunya, the government of Catalonia, under the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939). The city was bombed in 1938 in a series of airstrikes that lasted three days, devastating the whole city and killing a thousand civilians (Villarroya and Lo Cascio 84). Even after the war was over, Franco continued to punish Barcelona for having been one of the most rebellious metropolises;[3] the city's urban space was intentionally neglected and the destruction of the war and the bombings were still very present in its streets until the fifties. From 1957 to 1973, Francoist Mayor Josep Maria de Porcioles i Colomer inaugurated a new urban approach, which activated a city that had been socially, culturally, and economically dead for more than two decades, called *Porciolismo*. The Porciolismo system was developed to aid speculation, investment and corruption (Pauné), and facilitated an uncontrolled industrialization of certain spaces in Barcelona, which also promoted immigration from rural areas in Spain. This situation favored the bourgeoisie and construction firms, but it damaged the lower classes, the newly arrived immigrants, and fostered the unequal spatial distribution of a city that was still trying to recover from the war (Ribera-Fumaz 56).

Barcelona's economic system and urban design was transformed after the Spanish transition to democracy, when the city's economy started to become dependent on foreign capital and tourism, during the administration of Mayors Narcís Serra (in office from 1979 to 1982) and

[3] In *Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the military in twentieth century Spain* (1990), Paul Preston comments on the idea of Franco's revenge on Republican sympathizers. After the war was over, Franco prolonged their suffering with punishments such as executions, which lasted for the totality of the dictatorship, fascist indoctrination in schools, and the construction of El Valle de los Caídos.

Pasqual Maragall (in office from 1982 to 1997). Both of these Mayors played a critical role in the development of urban tourism in Barcelona; Serra and Maragall branded the city as a global, tourist destination, and are examples of the dominant urban trend in European cities during the eighties, when "local governments increasingly adopted the style of 'entrepreneurial government' and place marketing" (Selby 14). While exploiting the tourism industry and revealing Barcelona to the world were clear objectives for these city leaders, the urban transformations of this time were also closely related to the improvement of its cultural and educational infrastructure, with the objective of recapitalizating the city's industrial areas. Serra and Maragall interpreted public space as a new location of culture for the visitor, the investor, and also residents; this conception brought profitability to the city's formerly industrial neighborhoods while taking the citizens' mobility and necessities into account. This understanding of urban space was similar to the one undertaken during the Plan Cerdà, and was also present during the urban changes made for the Olympic Games (79), which spurred the restoration of the city's outskirts, historical center, and port area. The social and cultural approach to urban planning, however, was eliminated after the Olympic years (Balibrea 211-213; Illas 10; Miles and Miles 80). From that moment on, the economic interests of both the local government and transnational financial companies have completely dictated the direction of the city's urban development. Balibrea explains that, already during the Olympic years, the neighbor-oriented urban projects performed in decayed neighborhoods "had very little in common with the huge structural transformations required to implement projects such as those of the Vila Olímpica, Poblenou, Diagonal Mar or Sant Andreu/Sagrera". (213) Moreover, although the monumentalization of the outskirts and the renovation of public spaces in the city during the eighties and nineties were designed to fulfill the residents' needs, these created more national

and foreign interest, generating gentrification and privatization processes in the renovated areas (214). After the Olympic urban modifications were deemed successful, the local government remained open to external capital and new collaborations with financial and real estate investment companies for more dramatic transformations. This created an extreme economic dependence on external investors and diminished the city hall's capability of responding to the residents' needs, as the uses of urban space had to be dictated by the funding sources. In this way, the urban transformations initiated under the leadership of subsequent Mayors Joan Clos, Jordi Hereu, and Xavier Trias have taken a toll on the city's public spaces, and a large part of the population that inhabits them. Historical and multicultural neighborhoods such as el Raval and La Barceloneta have suffered violent gentrification practices and tremendous urban modifications that have effectively converted them into theme parks for tourists.

These urban phenomena are not completely opposed by the totality of the population: some locals are deeply intertwined in the resignification of their urban spaces, for example, by turning their apartments, or rooms in their homes, into short-term tourist accommodations through companies like Airbnb. However, many working-class Barcelona neighbors and populations of low economic capacity have been (re)moved from neighborhoods, directly through the construction of hotels and commodities for tourists, or indirectly through the rising prices of apartments, houses, and businesses in their areas. Between 2014 and 2016, the rent for apartments in Barcelona rose by more than 17% (Aznar). The district of Ciutat Vella, in downtown Barcelona, lost 11% of its population between 2008 and 2018. This population was moved or relocated to cheaper neighborhoods, or in the worst cases, have eventually become homeless (Congostrina). Neighbors leave due to the commodification of the area, with tourism turning their homes and their neighborhoods into high-demand, desirable land for real estate and

financial companies. In 2016 Agustín Cócola established that 52% of buildings in Ciutat Vella are tourist apartments (qtd. in Blanchar). This data shows how the body of a neighborhood that traditionally accommodated immigrants and low-income people can be rearranged, along with its conflict, history, and residents who do not support the tourist branding of the city, to seduce recipients of short-term, luxurious living conditions. This urban speculation technique preys upon the inhabitant as much as the tourist, albeit in different ways, and the designers of the city's seductive image profit from it.

Some of the neighbors who were especially affected by the prostitution of urban space have created associations in response to issues such as the establishment of illegal tourist apartments, the eviction of locals, and noise compliances in the areas where nightlife has developed. Resistim Raval, an organization in one of the most visited neighborhoods of Barcelona, announces on their website that their goal is the defense of their residents and the neighborhood, which they describe as "un barrio popular, humilde y rebelde … no para el dominio de turistas, gente rica y grandes negocios". Associations such as this one stand as powerful examples of the damage that the prostitution of urban space has created in Barcelona for a significant part of the population, especially citizens living in the most visited areas. At the same time, these organizations foster visibility and direct global attention to the issue, which can promote resistance to further commodification in the city.

These social and artistic discussions about the urban organization of the city have reached the political sphere in recent years. In 2015 Ada Colau, an activist associated with the Spanish anti-austerity movement Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH), won the local mayoral election utilizing a grassroots political campaign. Under her leadership, Barcelona's city council has passed measures to regulate tourism and real estate investment in the city. For instance, in

2016 the city hall started two disciplinary files, which included a 600.000 euros fine, against vacation rental marketplace applications Airbnb and Homeway for posting properties that do not have a tourist license (Gulliver). In 2017 she issued a law know as Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamientos Turísticos (PEUAT) that temporarily ceased the construction of new hotels and the issuing of licenses for tourist apartments (Burgen). In 2019 her government applied a 33% increase in the fee for bars and restaurant terraces, spaces very frequented by visitors (Blanchar). Her political party also published a book called *Ciudades sin miedo* (2018), a project started in Barcelona, which brings together fifty local governments around the world, and expands on Colau's bottom-up political approach. The book works as a manifesto of intentions which emphasizes the importance of controlling tourism, creating tools for empowering low-income, working-class inhabitants, and feminizing politics and space. Her citizen-driven perspective can be observed in her monthly meetings with representatives from Barcelona's different neighborhoods, where they discuss their concerns and demands.

In her political addresses, she has referred multiple times to the idea of a gendered Barcelona that recovers her spaces, responding to decades of urban control, and historical and spatial repression, which shows that a feminine urban perspective has made its way into the political arena through the citizens. Most importantly, she has also publicly and directly called on citizens to recover urban, political, and cultural space and feminize it. As she has repeatedly mentioned, this gendering of politics is not premised on the complete elimination of male perspectives, although it is an explicit alteration to the organization of Catalan and Spanish governments, which have been ruled and designed by men until very recently. Her mayoral election is already an important modification in this regard, as there has never been a woman Prime Minister of Spain or a woman President of the Generalitat. She is also the first female

mayor in the history of Barcelona. According to Colau, feminizing politics means finding alternative political views that allow for more bottom-up cooperative ways of leading the city. The feminization of politics also prioritizes the needs of common people and its necessities above any other interest or type of power (Gessen). It is necessary to note that Colau's viewpoint stems from her active participation in the anti-austerity 15M movement, which was a social, political, and cultural movement created as a reaction to the governmental policies taken by the EU and the Spanish government during the 2008 economic crisis. They defended a bottom-up, leaderless, horizontal, non-violent view of approaching politics.

Colau's intention to feminize politics connects to the ideas of feminist thinkers Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. In "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) Cixous explains that there is a masculine writing, which historically represents the majority of literature and has repressed a whole feminine literary vision. To change this situation, the author insists that women have to write for and about women (875). Kristeva coined the concept of *chora* to refer to the semiotic phase, which "deals with the unconscious and child's desires and emotion" (Sedehi et al. 492), that every infant experiences before entering the symbolic order, i.e., language. Kristeva associates the symbolic with patriarchal order while the semiotic chora represents a feminine space, which will be repressed by society and the order that language imposes (Sadehi 1491). Just as Cixous and Kristeva are reclaiming a feminine space in disciplines that for centuries were ruled by patriarchal order, Colau intends to feminize politics and, from that space of power, also feminize urban space, historically two areas where men have been prominent. Her call to feminize space has been artistically appropriated by some authors, and my project reveals what new urban perspectives they have to offer.

While her feminist take on politics and urban space is innovative and her legislations on tourism are the first thoughtful attempts to control commodification in the metropolis, it must be noted that Colau's initiatives are still perpetuating the prostitution of space in the city. Even when her regulations have brought a stop to the construction of new hotels and the local government's investment in tourism has declined since she took office ("Pressupost Obert"; "Pressupostos anteriors liquidats"), the city continues to be promoted through an alternative narrative, as a product with high culture and moral values. The local government is now identifying the city with feminist and liberal perspectives, historically and culturally rich narratives, and moral values such as being open to welcome refugees, which also attracts foreign visitors. This new narrative appeals to a tourist that is culturally inclined and supports progressive and liberal values; this is a type of visitor that is aware of Barcelona's tourist crisis, but still visits famous landmarks in the city. However, he is also interested in the past history and current problems of the metropolis, from the residents' protests due to the effects of the tourism industry to the violent riots caused by extremist supporters of Catalonia's independence. [4] In this way, Colau's citizen-driven perspective and legislations such as the PEUAT, which have slightly decreased the power of the tourism industry, still perpetuate the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona.

### 1.3. Theoretical approaches

My perspective on Urban Studies includes the approaches developed by authors Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, who are among the first scholars to theoretically analyze space. Benjamin is crucial in Urban Studies research due to his

[4] The Catalan independent movement, which seeks Catalonia's separation from Spain, recently gained traction in 2009. In 2015, after a referendum of independence deemed ilegal by Spain was celebrated, the Catalan parliament approved a motion to create an independent republic. The Parlament leaders were then arrested by the Spanish forces and the President of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, went into exile. All of these events and its repercussions caused massive protests in the streets in Barcelona that sometimes turned violent, with the burning of dumpters and cars, and clashes with the police.

conceptualization of the *flâneur*. The flâneur, Baudelaire's symbol of modernity, was an idler in nineteenth-century Paris who had the freedom to observe, investigate and enjoy the newly created spaces of the capitalist city, such as cafés and boulevards. While the flâneur is theoretically present in my investigation to explain the inherent masculinity existent in urbanism, the concept is of limited use for my research because it is essentially masculine. Middle-class women were assumed to be at home and did not have the opportunity to stroll the city alone at the time (Johnston and Longhurst 73), and therefore, they are not part of the concept.

I employ the Lefebvrian "Right to the city" to analyze how Barcelona residents feel deprived of this right, as they have been excluded from the reshaping of the metropolis. As David Harvey explains, since the city cannot be separated from inhabitants' societal ties, lifestyles, aesthetic and technological values, the right to the city represents much more than just that the citizens' right to participate in the transformation of city spaces. In this way, I support Harvey's claim that the right to the city is as a crucial human right: "it is a right to change ourselves" (23). This is an idea repeated in the authors' literary and visual materials that I analyze. While they certainly denounce that the population does not have a role in the urban decision making process, taken over by property speculators and real estate investment companies, the connections artists create with the global neoliberal market, the 2008 economic crisis, gender and sexuality, race and immigration, and memory, and traumatic and affective discourses indicate the city has important repercussions on individuals that transcend the distribution of space in the metropolis. Lefebvre's differentiation between planned and practiced city, the city as designed by architects and the city lived by residents during their everyday life, is very present throughout my investigation in the contrast between *interior* and *exterior* Barcelona, also referred as *real* and *tourist* Barcelona by some authors. Although I argue this

dichotomy simplifies the complex spatial dynamics existent in the metropolis, it is a common resource that artists use to represent the disassociation residents' feel in areas such as the Gothic quarter or La Barceloneta, where spaces were drastically transformed to satisfy the foreign visitor. Lefebre's argument that space can be a product and a means of production, and at the same time, a social reality and set of relations and forms, is useful for my interpretation of space as a body that becomes a product, a vessel for representing the ideas of the powerful parties that control urban space.

I work with De Certeau's interpretation of the city as a written text, as I examine the urban transformations in Barcelona and how residents reacted culturally to them through critical literary methodology. My project also uses De Certeau's distinction between place and space, the latter being "a practiced place". Forms of resistance like the ones analyzed in my dissertation can develop in *space*, because it escapes the rigidity and order that organizes *place* (117). Furthermore, De Certeau's *walker* and *voyeur* roles accurately represent the spatial power struggle developing between city planners, tourists, and residents in Barcelona. While the *voyeur* holds a position of authority and arranges an assembly of possibilities in space, without actually experiencing it, the *walker* "actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge" (98). However, similarly to the concept of the *flâneur*, developing my argument solely through the ideas of Lefebvre and De Certeau would not be useful due to their gendered perspective. Focused on the male spatial experience, these authors do not account for the historical marginalization of women in urban spaces.[5]

[5] Several spatial scholars use these authors as a basis for current investigations. Books like *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (1977) by Manuel Castells, *Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City* (2005) by Ben Highmore, *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies: Henri Lefevbre and the Humanities* (2015) by Benjamin Fraser, and *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (2012) by David Harvey, utilize Lefevbre for understanding contemporary urban dynamics around the world. Other works such as *Cities in a World Economy* (2005) and *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (2014) by Saskia Sassen, *Globalization, Violence, and the Visual Culture of Cities* (2009) by Christoph Lindner, and *El espacio público como ideología* (2011) by Manuel Delgado, consider the present-day metropolis within the framework of ideology, the global economy, globalization, violence, crisis and social movements. While all of these

My dissertation includes a contrasting line of thought, building on the arguments by Elizabeth Grosz, Elizabeth Wilson, and Maria C. DiFrancesco and Debra J. Ochoa, who reflect on gender in connection to urban spaces. My project uses their studies, which reflect on gender in connection to urban spaces, as a foundation for the conceptualization of the prostitution of urban space. Grosz has studied the city in connection to the body, especially the feminine body. I employ her argument that the city reinscribes the body and the body transforms the city, developing a two-fold relationship that involves a reciprocal influence (242), to explain the association between women and urban space, especially through the concept of the spatial body of the city. While Grosz focuses on the interconnections between the metropolis and the body, Wilson creates a historical account on how both women and cities have been ordered through the concept of disorder since the nineteenth century. My project utilizes her ideas on the concept of the spectacular city, in which women were part of the spectacle (Wilson, *The Sphinx* 16), to explain how women and city have been historically objects of consumption for the male gaze. Wilson also briefly mentions prostitution as a metaphor for the city, connecting it with commodification and mass production: "prostitution became, in any case, a metaphor for the whole new regime of nineteenth-century urbanism" (Wilson, "The Invisible" 105). Although she references the phenomenon that my dissertation studies, she does not develop the concept and does not focus her research on it. My investigation employs Wilson's consideration of prostitution as a metaphor for urbanism and expands it, applying it to the concrete, contemporary context of Barcelona. DiFrancesco and Ochoa studied the relationship between gender and Spanish urban spaces through post-millennium literary and visual narratives. My project employs their argument on the historical masculinity of Spanish urban design, which can be seen in the

publications are significant when examining current global metropolises, they are interpretations that do not explore the city in connection with dynamics of gender and sexuality.

organization of cities like Barcelona and in the audiovisual representations of this city, with shots of skyscrapers that emphasize a masculine urban landscape (6). However, their work is limited for my investigation because it focuses especially on the division of public and private space, a research strategy also present in the investigations by Grosz and Wilson.

I argue that the considerations of these authors are limited to understanding the current state of contemporary global cities, as women in metropolises are no longer as restricted by the traditional separation of domestic and public spaces. While gender dynamics still determine how women navigate spaces, their role in the city is multifaceted due to evolving circulation patterns that are connected to complex economic changes, such as the transition from purely industrial societies to post-industrial systems that incorporate more women into the workforce. Women have also changed their consumption and educational habits through their presence in spaces like universities, mall centers and restaurants. My thesis addresses these current urban dynamics for women and advances the viewpoints of Grosz, Wilson and DiFrancesco and Ochoa through a spatial perspective based on sexuality and gender with the terminology *prostitution of urban space*.

My investigation connects these ideas to the branding of cities and their transformation into sexualized and commodified objects to seduce the eager global visitor. From the late 1970s onwards, global cities' economies started to shift their focus to the service and knowledge-based industries rather than on manufacturing; consumption, culture and leisure became central for metropolises "as cities were forced into a global interurban competition for investment and economic growth". Urban tourism served to counteract decreasing urban industrial bases and fiscal crises, as an economic asset that is easy to promote and requires little investments apart from promotional campaigns (Novy and Colomb 9). In the case of Barcelona, by the end of the

Franco dictatorship the city had deindustrialized rapidly, suffering from two oil crisis and uncertainties due to the political transition. The awarding of the 1992 Olympic Games in 1986 positioned Barcelona's image internationally, which attracted the private investment necessary to remodel the city (Colantonio 48). During the eighties, the local government launched several urban campaigns under the slogan "Barcelona, posa't guapa" ("Barcelona, get pretty"), which personified the city as a woman that needed to polish her image, i.e. her urban spaces. My project examines spatial branding and marketing techniques like this one, which are often connected to cases of genderization and sexualization of space, to develop an understanding of contemporary cities that has not been studied before.

My project dialogues with the extensive academic bibliography on Barcelona by authors Joan Ramon Resina, Edgar Illas, Stephen Luis Vilaseca, and Mari Paz Balibrea. I employ the historical analyses of the city of Resina and Illas as a foundation for the historical context necessary to understand the current dynamics of the city. However, my investigation diverges from Resina's approach, which is based on a nationalistic point of view. This author indicates that the city lost its Catalan identity after the Olympic Games, and links this loss of identity with the current commodification of the city. While commodification is also very present in my dissertation and I also consider Catalan nationalism while examining some of the cultural materials that mention it, my investigation does not focus on this concept. I agree with Illas' interpretation of the current commodification of Barcelona as a goal of the local government, and not as an unintentional, uncontainable process. I also employ his understanding of the Olympic Games as a mainly positive event for the city, a point of view which is not shared by Resina, who considers the Olympic Games the event that opened the way to the commodification of the city. I share my main methodology with both of these authors, as they established a precedent

within academic studies of Barcelona of using literature that reflects on Barcelona to examine the city. My project advances and expands their scope of investigation, as I not only study literature but also genres like graffiti, public performances, and graphic novels and films, bringing the vast academic and cultural research on Barcelona up to date. Moreover, Resina and Illas have not considered the branding of the city as a sexualized and feminine product for the foreign visitor, which is the main focus of this investigation.

While Resina and Illas examined Barcelona's urban dynamic up until the celebration of the 2004 Fòrum Universal de les Cultures, the subsequent urban period has been investigated by Vilaseca and Balibrea. While Vilaseca focuses on the development and cultural representations of the *okupa* movement, I employ part of his examination on the post-Olympic urban transformation of Barcelona and the key actors that initiated said renovation. Balibrea's considerations are crucial for my project because she also approaches the branding and marketing of the city for the tourist, and adds some memoristic considerations. The contributions by Vilaseca and Balibrea are limited in that, as I have argued, current metropolises cannot be interpreted without studying the dynamics of gender and sexuality that are present in global urban spaces, and especially in Barcelona, as a paradigmatic case of this trend. My approach to Barcelona is valuable and innovative because it interlinks Gender and Sexuality Studies with Urban Studies. Furthermore, I introduce the prostitution of urban space as an explanatory term for understanding contemporary cities around the world. This is a new approximation that has not been examined by Resina, Illas,Vilaseca and Balibrea in regards to Barcelona, or by any other research I have encountered thus far concerning other urban spaces.

I employ theoretical approaches to tourism and the consumption of space such as *the tourist gaze,* a term coined by John Urry, which explains that tourism-policy makers condition

how objects and places are experienced, usually through a gaze characterized by consumption (Crawshaw and Urry 176-177). My project uses this concept due to the long-term residents' perception that urban space in Barcelona no longer meets their needs, but rather it is presented so as to visually appeal to the foreign viewer. The act of purchasing landmark souvenirs and taking pictures, the latter defined by Susan Sontag as the intention of possessing a space where an individual feels insecure (9-10), is crucial to my understanding of the tourist experience as a desire to consume a space that is foreign to the visitor, and therefore, risky and exciting at the same time. Once the tourist returns home, pictures and souvenirs also serve as proof of an individual's cultural sophistication and capability to survive in an exotic environment. Spaces with economies based on the tourism industry are aware of these dynamics and attempt to maintain their exotic attractiveness, commercializing with their identity and cultural traits, while renovating their less desirable areas and adapting new tourist places. They do this to minimize, but not completely eliminate, the feeling of estrangement in the visitor. The tourist needs to see and feel the exoticism in the space, conveying the idea of dangerousness while actually remaining safe and quite familiar.[6] My project also dialogues with scholars that analyze tourism in connection to consumerism, and gender and sexuality. I utilize Craik's argument that the tourist gaze satisfies the desires of a voyeuristic male perspective to analyze how the tourist gaze derives from the male gaze and is related to other masculine urban concepts such as the *flâneur* (130). My dissertation employs the perspectives by Jordan and Pritchard and Morgan, scholars who examined the sexualization of the landscape and how feminine landscapes are often permeated by colonialist discourses (95; 168). I use their ideas as the basis for the conceptualization of the feminization of space, intrinsic to the prostitution of urban space.

[6] Other works that study the figure of the tourist from a similar perspective and that are present throughout my dissertation are *Consuming Places* (1995) by John Urry, *Consuming Cities* (2004) by Steven Miles and Malcolm Miles, and *Leisure and Tourism Landscapes. Social and Cultural Geographies* (2000) by Cara Aitchison et al.

The branding and marketing of cities as feminine and sexualized products must be examined in the context of the neoliberal framework, because this economic and political order is central to the shift of cities' economies towards consumerism, tourism and global projection. To address how neoliberal urban developments affect vulnerable populations, I utilize Žižek's *systematic violence*, which is "the violence inherent in a system . . . the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation" (9). This type of violence, which is "no longer attributable to concrete individuals . . . but is purely objective, systemic, anonymous" (13) relates to the kind of aggressions that the commodification of the city inflicts on its citizens, for example, through the pressure of banks that want to create profit out of highly desirable properties, which ultimately leads to evictions. I examine this type of violence as an inherent characteristic of capitalism, commodification, and the tourism industry –however, it is difficult for the citizen to pinpoint the perpetrator that originated it. Some of the actors participating in the prostitution of urban space, such as banks and real estate companies, are institutionalized and impersonal, which explains why the violence they produce is diffuse, without a clear origin. The characteristics of systematic violence explain the tendency of tourism protesters to easily assigned extreme dichotomic roles (hero/villain, good/bad) to agents participating in the tourism industry. This helps inhabitants discern a very complex urban dynamic that, nevertheless, cannot be understood fully in those simple terms.

While Žižek's reflections do not include considerations of gender and sexuality, this is present in the works by Sayak Valencia, Silvia Federici and Rita Segato. My dissertation includes the ideas of Valencia, Federici and Segato on how the body, especially the feminine body, is the true victim of capitalism, an economic system that is inherently masculine and that can be considered a new type of war with novel types of violence—economic, social, sexual,

mediatic, etc.— that affect women (199; Federici; 63-64). I employ these considerations in the analysis of documentaries such as *La extranjera*, in which the author directly relates the neoliberal economic system and the prostitution of urban space with violence, pressure and tension directed at feminine bodies.

My dissertation also employs the concept of cultural trauma, which occurs "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness" (Alexander 1). The materials studied in my thesis indicate that some residents of Barcelona develop a type of cultural trauma because they feel estranged and alienated in the new spaces designed in the metropolis. Many past memories of the city, which are embedded with residents' personal memories in its buildings and plazas, have been eliminated in the processes of commodification and gentrification. Historical and personal markings present in houses, in streets, and in public squares have been modified or even removed to adapt to the tourist narrative. For instance, the spaces in the neighborhood of el Raval, very active anarchist and activist headquarters during the 1909 Setmana Tràgica and later on, during the Spanish Civil War, are now luxury apartment complexes, hotels, and restaurants directed at foreign visitors. This urban transformation also entails the removal of populations that can no longer afford the prices in the district. In this way, the tourist narrative is eliminating both the historical memory in constructions, which are renovated and modernized to appeal to a higher income resident, and the memory present in the inhabitants, who are being displaced. As a response to a city that no longer articulates their history, authors have appropriated the artistic medium to express and process their traumatic experience. Their cultural trauma may include the aforementioned elimination of memories, but also the challenges of transferring to a cheaper

area, the demolition of their childhood apartments, protests, evictions, and becoming the victim of urban harassment techniques.

I argue that the residents' cultural trauma has been exacerbated by the 2008 economic crisis, which increased already existing economic and social disparities created by the prostitution of urban space. All of the cultural materials that I examine were created after 2008, and therefore, they are influenced, affected, and shaped by the Spanish economic crisis, and the movements that the crisis spurred, such as 15M. I utilize the thoughts advanced by Olga Bezhanova and Luis Moreno-Caballud, who studied the art that the crisis produced, because the materials studied here can be considered part of what Bezhanova defines as crisis literature (xiii). Although the artists that I analyze focus on condemning the prostitution of urban space, their materials also refer to the neoliberal system, protests, immigration, the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship, all of them elements that appear in crisis literature. My project also dialogues with Judith Butler and her notion of developing resistance through showcasing vulnerability, which she formulated observing the street protests that the crisis spurred globally. The fact that all of the materials that I analyze expose the vulnerabilities of the city and its inhabitants so as to develop agency and create hope connects my investigation to the ideas that Butler has put forward. The economic crisis and the resulting vulnerability that it created in residents are especially striking in materials like *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra* (2015), by Jorge Carrión and Sagar Forniés. In this graphic novel, the immigrants' misery in a post-2008 Barcelona is depicted in a very clear manner with the final objective of uncovering their underworld experience of the metropolis, and providing them with agency.

## 1.4. Terminology: the prostitution of urban space and urban postmemory

### 1.4.1. Prostitution of urban space

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, prostitution is the act of engaging in sexual relations for money. This definition overlooks the harsh reality behind sex work; stigmatized and illegalized, most prostitutes work under the abuse, mistreatment, and control of a pimp or procurer, a male "who controls the actions and lives off the proceeds of one or more women who work the streets" (Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 1074). I argue that the dynamics of the relationship between pimp and prostitute reproduce themselves spatially in contemporary global cities. In my interpretation, which is metaphorical in nature, local governments and real estate and financial companies act as procurers who sell, control, and abuse the city's body, with the metropolis having no control over their actions. Both prostitution and tourism-as-prostitution entail a monetary exchange to perform actions on the sex worker's body, or the city's body. In both cases the activity is corporeal; prostitution users pay for physical access to the worker's body just as tourists pay to corporally experience the city's spatial body.

The powerful parties in control of urban space advertise and remodel the city until it satisfies the requirements of the profitable narrative they want to develop: the metropolis then becomes a relaxing tourist destination, a booming business center, or maybe an exciting, hip city. With monetary investments provided by financial and real estate companies, powerful parties turn the city into whatever foreign visitors want *her* to be, concealing diversity, identity, history, and even residents in the process. To refer to the processes of controlling, commodifying, and marketing urban space, in connection to gender and sexuality, which local governments and powerful financial institutions utilize to present cities as a consumable product for transnational companies, the global economy, and visitors alike, I use the phrase *prostitution of urban space*.

The prostitution of urban space happens globally and urban researchers have documented the consequences of the phenomenon in several studies. However, they have analyzed the

process imprecisely. The elimination of culture and heritage documented in Al Satwa (Dubai), a historically low-income, immigrant neighborhood transformed into a private development of high-end hotels and skyscrapers (Alawadi 349) can be considered an example of the prostitution of urban space. Another illustrative case is the redevelopment of Puerto Madero (Buenos Aires), which involved the construction of high-rise luxury condominiums that supposedly would promote social mixing and public infrastructure provision to surrounding areas, like the shantytown of Rodrigo Bueno (Bang Shin and López-Morales 19). In fact, this urban transformation further separated the area from the rest of the city, in an urban strategy labeled "segregation by mega-project" (López-Morales et al. 1079). These studies describe urban violence, commodification, and gentrification processes occurring in these spaces; however, they approach these phenomena through a very simplistic analysis that classifies them as basic manifestations of neoliberal urban development.

I interpret neoliberal urban development and the prostitution of urban space as two separate, but related processes. My project defines neoliberal urban development as any urban modification developed in a city that supports the neoliberal economic system. On the other hand, the prostitution of urban space is a specific subcategory of neoliberal urban development that implies completely reorganizing a city with the objective of selling the metropolis to the global market, looking to attract a visitor who is an outsider to that particular urban space. The prostitution of urban space usually includes numerous cases of spatial segregation, urban violence, gentrification, commodification, and intense protests by residents, elements that are not present in all cases of neoliberal urban development. Furthermore, another element that separates neoliberal urban development from the prostitution of urban space is that the latter is a gendered and sexualized phenomenon.

There are processes of sexualization and feminization of space in all cases of prostitution of urban space to a greater or lesser extent, an argument that I have developed following several considerations. Historically, the conceptualization of the nation and territories as feminine is present in nation-building projects worldwide (McClintock 355). This land feminization is often manifested in the figure of the mother in nationalistic discourses, as it was the case throughout the Franco dictatorship, during which Spain was compared to a nurturing and fertile female body (Morcillo 13). The city has also been considered a feminine entity in that the metropolis is a site of spectacle, of which women become part of the object of the gaze, especially the masculine gaze (Wilson 16). Developed during the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of the "spectacular city" relates women with the spectacle of consumer culture through shopping, mass media, and fashion. With the image of woman in magazines, mannequins, and models in the streets, "the city itself came to be identified as a desirable and seductive woman" (Meskimmon 15). The gendering of space has a wide historical trajectory and the phenomenon is still very much present in current urban dynamics. Women continue to represent both the product and the target of consumer culture, especially in the fashion industry, in cities around the world, and nation-states still refer to the nation as feminine in nationalistic discourses. The feminization and sexualization of space, and the notion of both the city and women as spectacle are exemplified in this 2012 Emirates commercial campaign, in which the picture of a sensual woman persuades the foreign viewer into visiting Dubai.

**Image 1.3.** "Emirates Dubai Mall", BBDO.

It is important to remember that it is usually men (housing and urban development representatives, architects, urban planners, real estate and financial executives) who are responsible for the organization of contemporary global cities. Even as women have gained higher levels of recognition in governmental institutions, as of December of 2018, they represented only 24.1% of the members of national assemblies (Inter-Parliamentary Union). Moreover, the urban planning and architecture industries remain dominated by men: data collected from ten major 2017 urbanism conferences show that six out of every ten public speakers in panels were men (Johnston-Zimmerman). This data supports the idea that men are in control of urban space, utilizing the spatial body of cities to seduce foreign visitors and create economic gain through their visits. Taking all of this into account, if the body of the metropolis is controlled, narrated, and sold by men, and gazed from a male perspective too, as a desirable, consumable female, the metaphorical forced prostitution of urban space that my argument defends becomes clear.

At this point it is worth mentioning that Barcelona, as a paradigmatic case of the prostitution of urban space, is a clear example of the feminization and sexualization of space. The urban regenerations and events of the Universal and International Expositions, the Olympic Games and the Fòrum were thought out and developed by mayors, architects and businessmen: all men in control of the public spaces of a city always imagined as feminine. The portrait of Barcelona as a feminine city is noted, for example, in the nickname Rosa de Foc (Fire Rose) that

the city developed during the Tragic Week in 1909. Another example can be found in several urban campaigns under the slogan "Barcelona, posa't guapa" ("Barcelona, get pretty") started in the eighties by the local government. Said urban campaigns were commemorated in a book to celebrate ten years of the campaign in 1996, the cover of which I included below, where a white woman with long, blond hair represents Barcelona. This is obvious due to the clip that is holding her hair, which is inscribed with the famous Barcelona flower tile that can be found all over the metropolis. The female figure in the commercial is purposely groomed; although she has straight hair, her fringe and tips are wavy and she has an ornament on the top of her head, which clarifies she has dolled up for the image. Through the ad's slogan, the city is metaphorically treated as a woman who needs to modify her urban spaces, her appearance, to sexually attract the public that would visit them. Although not sexualized, the interpretation of Barcelona as a woman continues to be used in current ads that the town hall utilizes to promote festivities. This can be seen in the poster for la Mercè 2019, an annual festival that celebrates the patron saint of Barcelona. In this second poster, also included below, a black woman is Saint Mercè (Our Lady of Mercy) and in her hair, the artist represents urban markings of Barcelona, such as the Mediterranean Sea, one of the top towers from Gaudí's building Casa Milà, and Joan Miró's sculpture Dona i Ocell. The ads are considerable different due to reproducing distinct historical times and political strategies to the urbanization in the city. The first image, produced during the term of Mayor Maragall, does not seem to reproduce the local population' features but represents the global visitor the city was trying to attract at the time. The Mercè poster, created during Mayor Colau's term, depicts a black woman. According to Maria Corte, the poster artist, this work is inspired by her own family, which immigrated from Argentina, and aspires to represent Barcelona's local population, including the immigrant residents ("The poster"). This poster is also more representative of

Colau's political perspective, which is in favor of immigration and welcoming refugees, and claims to center its political actions on the residents' social, cultural and spatial needs. Although the images represent distinct historical and cultural contexts, they are similar in that Barcelona is, in both cases, the woman depicted. The urban spaces are the women's hair, and therefore, the women are the city. This interpretation of space is reminiscent of the "spectacular city" concept, that I already mentioned in this chapter, where women became part of the spectacle of the modern city.


**Image 1.4.** *Barcelona, posa't guapa. Diez años de campaña* (1996). Ajuntament de Barcelona


**Image 1.5.** "A Mercè" by Maria Corte, 2019.

Reacting to the prostitution of urban space, which developed profusely in Barcelona since the early 2000s, but also maintaining her female characterization, the cultural materials that my dissertation studies advocate for an alternative urban vision. The artists' works defend their right

to recover the spatial body of the city, currently organized by the economic interests of the local government in conjunction with financial and real estate coompanies. Through political and social action, authors aspire to modify the urban planning of Barcelona and reestablish their influence over the city's spaces, strengthening historical and cultural characteristics, and giving public space back to citizens. Instead of being exploited for tourism and financial purposes, Barcelona is envisioned as a feminine entity that deviates from the current urban planning and controls commodification with tourism regulatory measures.

### 1.4.2. Urban postmemory

My dissertation employs the concept of postmemory following the thought of Andreas Huyssen, James E. Young and Marianne Hirsch, the latter two being the most influential authors in my work. My thesis uses Hirsch's thought of postmemory as an intergenerational transmission of memories and bodily experiences from a generation that experienced a traumatic event to the next one (3-4). Hirsch presents two types of postmemory: familiar and affiliative. While familiar memory is developed between members of the same family, affiliative memory can be transferred between individuals who do not share a family bond. My understanding of postmemory focuses on its affiliative use. However, I differ from Hirsch's point of view in two aspects. This author considers that affiliative postmemory affects only the affected generation and the generation after, i.e. the children of the survivors. My understanding of affiliative memory transcends the affected generation and the generation after, involving the ones to come after those too. Any new generation can use, be inspired, moved, or transformed by postmemory, and the level of involvement with the memoristic exercise is not constrained by how close the generation is to the victimized generation.

My approach to memory also focuses on a spatial dimension that is absent in Hirsch's work, as my thesis uses a subcategory of postmemory which is new to the field and that I have termed *urban postmemory*. Urban postmemory is any postmemoristic discourse structured around an urban environment or a metropolis. The metropolis becomes the central axis of the memory, and the city is in itself the reason behind the reappropiation of the memory. This means that the final goal of the postmemoristic exercise is to modify or reformulate a characteristic or several characteristics of a particular urban environment. In the traumatic experiences recounted by descendants of Holocaust victims, the main purpose of remembering is to obtain some kind of justice and recognition for the victims, and become aware of what happened so the event does not happen again. In the case of urban postmemory, the objective is to obtain justice and recognition for the city itself. Many of the cultural materials that I examine recall Barcelona during times of unrest and rebellion, such as the Setmana Tràgica or the Spanish Civil War, to call attention and protest over the current uses of urban space. This past Barcelona is employed in cultural materials to problematize the complications that centering Barcelona's economic resources on tourism and the global visitor have produced nowadays. Gesturing back to the radical city of the civil war authors suggest that values other than probability, such as a sense of community and union between citizens, should be defended and should guide the city's development. This connection with the past aspires to affectively encourage the spectator or reader to rise against the tourist urban narrative, and participate in the process of the city gaining control of her spaces, i.e., her body, like it did during the Spanish Civil War.

Exercises of urban postmemory are often presented in a nostalgic and affective narrative to stimulate an emotional reaction in the spectator or reader. As mentioned by Hirsch and Spitzer, nostalgia usually "involves a contrast between "there" and "here," "then" and "now," in

which the absent is valued as somehow better, simpler, less fragmented, and more comprehensible than its alternative in the present". (258). In this way, nostalgic, past Barcelona is where the values of democracy, liberty and communitarianism reside. Authors also recall that during this time, the city's public spaces were dedicated to the residents' and their common objective, which during the Spanish Civil War was defeating the Nationalist forces. Referring to the revolutionary city and the Republican supporters in a positive light, authors indicate that the democratic and libertarian values represented by these ideas are absent in the current metropolis, whose economic dependence on foreign investment and the tourism industry has neglected the needs of lower-income, working class residents. Artists also portray this historical period as a moment in which inhabitants united against the Nationalist forces, and compare the fascist threat to the dangers posed by real estate and global financial companies taking control of the city's economy. Through this association, they encourage the cultural material's recipients to protest the current urban planning as a community, and reclaim the citizen-centered perspective represented by the past city.

It must be noted that the exercises of postmemory represented in the cultural materials examined in this dissertation are unrealistic in that they unite the threat of the Nationalist forces to the current urban planning as two equally malevolent agents, creating a dichotomic division between evil powers against good, defenseless residents. Manipulated memory narratives like these ones, however, are frequently used in cultural materials because they can easily engage recipients. Equating the injustices committed by the Nationalist forces to the inequalities created by the tourism industry, authors hope to affect the recipient's set of values and beliefs, which are always connected to strong emotional responses (Nussbaum 27). Emotional responses, in turn, can create physical reactions in the recipient, inspiring actions such as participating in protests

against gentrification. In this way, with their nostalgic portrayal of Barcelona and dichotomic divisions between supposedly good and evil actors, in the past and present times, authors create an affective response in the recipients, and inspire them to participate in the grassroots urban movement which they are defending.

Urban postmemory cannot only be found in oral, written, visual or audiovisual testimonies, but is also inscribed in urban settings such as buildings, squares, and monuments, which passersby reinterpret and incorporate to their postmemoristic discourses. In this particular aspect, urban postmemory comes close to Young's definition of the *counter-monument*, as one of its basic characteristics is the interaction that it creates with passersby (30). New visitors and generations interact with memorials that refer back to a past, to which they incorporate new interpretations. However, it is not only monuments that transfer memory discourses into passersby. Buildings, squares, shops, and any other type of urban environment are able to elicit a postmemoralistic discourse. In this way, spectators watching a documentary about an old Barcelona building with bullet holes in its walls can elicit a memoristic discourse about the Spanish Civil War; they can then be inspired to write a novel, which centers on Francoism and how damaging it was to the city of Barcelona. A plaque erected to remind passersby of the existence of shantytowns near the beach where the building of the Fòrum now stands can stimulate a memoristic discourse about the elimination of the Other in post-Olympic, tourist Barcelona. Discourses of urban postmemory similar to these examples are analyzed throughout my thesis, but they are crucial in chapter three, which centers on the critique of the prostitution of urban spaces in Barcelona through memory discourses.

**1.5. Description of chapters**

My thesis is divided in four chapters, and a conclusions section. The first chapter serves as an introduction to my dissertation as well as to the historical development of Barcelona as a global tourist destination from the nineteenth century to current times. In this chapter I also examine urban space literature in dialogue with gender and sexuality studies, crisis and trauma studies, and cultural urban studies. I develop a chronology of urban space methodologies, discussing the perspectives created by scholars such as Lefebvre, de Certeau, Fraser, Illas, Wilson and Grosz, and comparing and connecting them with my own approach and the terminology I utilize in my dissertation, i.e., the prostitution of urban space and urban postmemory. It is important to consider that this chapter and its theoretical approaches are described in general terms – that is, the ideas presented are applicable not only to the city of Barcelona, but to any urban space that is affected by the prostitution of urban space. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding the close readings and analysis undertaken in the following chapters. It also broadens my thesis's breadth, which allows my approach to reach a larger audience in the field of Cultural Urban Studies.

The second chapter, "Consuming the City: Tourism and the Masculine Gaze over Barcelona in "Marc Mystery" (2011) and *La extranjera* (2015)", studies materials which focus their critique on the commodification of Barcelona, commenting on the post-Olympic urban modifications that the city has undergone to satisfy foreign investors and the tourism industry. These materials criticize tourism, neoliberalism, and the transformation of Barcelona into a feminized and sexualized product to be consumed by an outsider visitor. One material examined in this chapter is the graphic short story "Marc Mystery", which is part of the graphic novel *Barcelona TM* (2011), a compilation of twenty-five shorts stories about the city. Chapter two analyzes the story, which looks into the mind of an architect who has gone crazy contemplating

the Sagrada Familia church. This building is represented as a woman he wants to possess. The character, which is a patient in a psychiatric unit, imagines himself as a detective who is working in a case in his office. During his hallucination, the *detective* has sex with a woman while looking at the Sagrada Familia, who is also sketched as a woman. In fact, the church is represented as a naked woman, with her legs open. With this story, I argue that the authors are clearly referring to the prostitution of urban space, criticizing the narrative of the city as a sexual, consumable product, and the series of urban transformations that the city has undergone after 1992. Chapter two also studies the experimental film *La extranjera* (2015), by Miguel Ángel Blanca, which develops the story of a local Barcelona man who kills a tourist. While the plot unfolds, the director displays videos and images of tourist spaces in Barcelona, alongside with political addresses of mayors of the city who have supported tourism, with the objective of creating an analogy: tourism is killing the city, and soon the residents will take its revenge. All of the materials considered in this chapter present a critique of the current urban model, which is based on tourism and the support of foreign investment, and signal the necessity for an alternative urban plan for the city.

The third chapter, "Remembering the city: urban postmemory in *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* (2007) and "La ofrenda" (2013), discusses the materials that interpret the city with reference to the concepts of historical memory and post-memory, and showcases cases of urban postmemory. It examines the elimination of historical memory in urban spaces and the resurgence of spatial post-memory as processes that are constituent parts of the prostitution of urban space. I propose that all of the materials share an approach to memory that recovers the historical background and memory of the city quite explicitly. This is made obvious in the literary representations due to the characters' remembrances of their memories, or their relatives'

memories, in the past city. In *Barcelona, mapa d'ombres*, by Lluisa Cunillé, the majority of the scenes occur inside the rooms of an old couple's apartment, which conceals diaries with incestuous family secrets that date back to the Franco dictatorship. Decades after the acts have been committed the memories of those secrets still haunt the characters, in a similar way to how the city is still haunted by the Francoist memories of its past. This chapter also analyzes a short story by Teresa Solana, "La ofrenda", in which a doctor loses his mind after he performs an autopsy on his professional colleague Eugènia Grau, whose organs are incredibly beautiful. During the doctor's visit to Eugènia's apartment, Solana describes the circumstances that emerged in Sant Antoni, Eugènia's neighborhood, during the conflict of the Tragic Week, a week of combat that took place in Barcelona in 1909, after the Spanish government recruited Catalans to fight in colonial Morocco. The imagery of the conflict reappears at the end, when the doctor is in the morgue, surrounded by dead bodies that he has opened up, trying to find a reproduction of the beauty of Eugènia's organs. Solana remembers a time of vulnerability in the Barcelona of the past and links it not only to the current city, but also to the bodies that comprise the metropolis, especially the feminine body.

The fourth chapter, "Othering the City", focuses on materials that critique the current urban model from a minority perspective. This chapter analyzes the displacement and obliteration of minority cultures. These are characteristics of the prostitution of urban space, and can be analyzed not only in terms of gender and sexuality perspectives, but also in connection to the Other. Whether the authors are, or speak for, immigrants and low-income citizens, they all consider the urban planning of Barcelona and its evolution, and realize that the spaces of the city target them as outsiders. For some minorities the reflection on urban space takes a memoristic turn, as they realize that their identities are no longer part of a city that accepted them decades

before, but no longer does so. The film *Biutiful* (2010) displays the two opposite sides of Barcelona, the "tourist" and the "real" city, both maintained by the labor of immigrants. When the tourist city cannot contain the real city anymore, the immigrant body receives the tension of their contradictory discourses in the form of violence. In *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la Chatarra* (2015), Jorge Carrión and Sagar Forniés delve into the experience of the *chatarreros,* or scrap dealers, and uncover an immigrant "underworld" full of hunger, pain, and suffering, that is concealed behind the same spaces advertised globally for the tourist. All of the materials I examine in this chapter show that xenophobia is still present in the city, and that the local government and the branding of Barcelona as a tourist city contribute to hiding and erasing the history of minorities, in a city which has been always populated by immigrants and low-income, working-class inhabitants. The materials emphasize that minorities sustain the tourist image of Barcelona with their labor while the city, paradoxically, conceals their identities and spaces, and tries repeatedly to eliminate them. The authors' advance an urban planning for the city that includes spaces for minorities, and that erases xenophobic and class-biased values.

Lastly, the conclusions section illustrates my findings with respect to the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona and its representation in the cultural materials that I analyze in this dissertation. I also point to future progressions of the phenomenon, both artistically and socially. Recent occurrences such as the 2017 terrorist attack in Las Ramblas, in which sixteen people were killed, and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic have affected and will continue to alter the city's urban planning and its artistic representations.

## Chapter 2

## Consuming the City: Tourism and the Masculine Gaze over Barcelona in "Marc Mystery" (2011) and *La extranjera* (2015)

### 2.1. Introduction

In 2016 the Arts Santa Mònica Center, a public venue that displays contemporary art and exhibitions in downtown Barcelona, inaugurated the exposition "60dB / 16kHz. BCN. ¿Sientes la violencia?". The series of photography, documentaries, visual compositions and poems in this exhibit were created to "reflexionar acerca de algunas formas de violencia no explícita que ocurren en una ciudad como Barcelona" ("60dB / 16kHz. BCN"). The exposition also called attention to gender and sexual violence in the city in a roundtable titled "Barcelona, el cuerpo y espacio púb(l)ico". In the seminar, four sexuality and gender activists, all of them women, discussed how urbanism is masculinized. They talked about the unrealistic spatial division that, according to the activists, still affects the organization of cities, which indicates that women's space is in the privacy of the home, where they carry out their reproductive role, while men have control of public space.

Historians argue that there is a tendency of decline in the status of women from the Middle Ages to the Victorian Age (Flather 24). During the early modern period women enjoyed greater spatial freedom, for instance, females usually went to the market and controlled finances while men stayed home to complete agricultural work. With the advent of capitalism and the rise of a class society, "female marginalisation was reflected in, and reinforced by, progressive loss of access to public space by women" (24). The division between domestic space and workspace accelerated due to fundamental changes in social and spatial organization created by the

Industrial Revolution, and the household became distinctively identified as feminine while public space was masculine, designed to host work and politics. The development of modern cities during the nineteenth century incorporated this gendered division of space, and for this reason, since the beginning urban space was designed by and for men, excluding women. The activists indicated that the masculine influence on space is still palpable in current metropolis, and it generates different kinds of violence; for example, the way some streets are poorly illuminated at night creates feelings of vulnerability and insecurity in women. As Alba Medrano, one of the activists, mentions during the talk, women's fears of being assaulted or mugged increase when walking alone in dark streets, making them feel that "ese espacio no es para ti" (Medrano et al. 4:54-4:58). This quote indicates that certain urban spaces, such as unlighted allies, are not only not designed with women's needs in mind, but also create feelings of unbelonging in females. Several scholars have supported that these feelings of spatial vulnerability are very frequent in women's urban experiences (Fairchild and Rudman; Aguerri and Delgado). In fact, women often create coping strategies to resist urban harassment such as dressing discreetly and talking on the phone while walking alone at night (Aguerri and Delgado 20). In order to confront masculinized urbanism, the activists proposed the creation of a "geografía feminista", which they defined as applying a gendered perspective to urbanism and creating "intervenciones para alterar esa realidad [masculinizada] que estamos observando" (Medrano et al. 8.25-8:28). As examples of feminist geography they mentioned projects like the website http://carrersdones.icgc.cat/, which includes a map of Catalonia with the location of streets named after women. Even when they did not mention it, I understand Mayor Ada Colau's feminine urban perspective as another instance of this feminist geography. Through the "política de feminización de la movilidad", her party aspires to facilitate public transportation systems for women and dependent individuals who are

at greater risk of suffering sexual abuse or violence when moving through public space (Ochoa et al. 155). Another example is the 2019 city government's campaign in the Barcelona subway, titled "volem viatjar tranquiles". Shown continuously in the wagon's screens, the campaign's video reminds travelers that misogynistic attitudes will not be tolerated on the subway.

Another feminine perspective to urban space the activists presented was public disgrace, a subgenre of pornography recurrently filmed in Barcelona in the last few years.[7] The roundtable's speakers defended that women controlling and using their bodies and sexualities in the streets, as they do in public disgrace, create an alternative narrative to the current vulnerable situation of females in urban spaces. Public disgrace is a type of pornography that usually includes BDSM practices and public humiliations perpetrated on an actress, who supposedly misbehaved and needs to be disciplined.[8] The woman, naked and chained, is paraded by other actors through the streets of a city. The individuals, who portray a dominant role, march her, spanking and insulting her, while passersby look at and touch her. This type of sequence, where the female body is exposed and consumed by the camera, the actors and passersby alike, is the initial scene in public disgrace videos. Later on, more explicit sexual scenes develop indoors. Although the activists at the roundtable indicated that public disgrace has the potential of reformulating the current association between women and urban spaces, they recognized it is a problematic form of "geografía feminista". The physical abuse that actresses receive in public disgrace videos is enjoyed by the viewers. Moreover, only established pornographic companies can monetarily afford to film it, and for this reason, the actresses participating are cisgender and

[7] It must be noted that Barcelona is an important center of pornographic production; in fact, the city has been labeled as the European capital of porn (Piñeiro Michel). Especifically, it has become a common setting for public disgrace videos since pornographic companies can afford to pay the city hall's fines for filming nude scenes outdoors (Medrano et al. 1:03:10-1:03:19).

[8] BDSM is a series of erotic experiences that include bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, and sadomasochism practices.

have normative bodies. This means they follow the global beauty standards that fulfill the desires of the main consumer of pornography: men.

Although many forms of pornography expose the female body for consumption, several feminists have developed sex-positive perspectives that include pornography as a useful tool for women's sexual liberation. For instance, Erika Lust, a Swedish erotic film director and standard-bearer for the feminist pornography movement, has stressed that "porn can be an instrument of education and liberation for women who are still struggling with shame, guilt, and sexual repression" (26). Following Lust's ideas, the activists at the roundtable foreseen the genre's potential in rewriting the vulnerable experience of women in space if filmed by feminist pornographic companies.[9] They also indicated that "es un acto político tomar las calles con consciencia de disidencia, y … reivindicar que queremos espacios públicos donde podamos estar desnudas y grabar porno" (Medrano et al. 1:14:48-1:14:58). I agree with their interpretation, as as a woman willingly using her body for her personal pleasure or monetary gain is a symbol of resistance per se, after centuries of women's sexual repression. This is especially so in public spaces. Historically urbanism and urban spaces were planned for and by the male subject. This can be seen in the figure of the flâneur, inherently masculine, and in the notion of the spectacular city, in which women and their bodies became part of the consuming allure of the nineteenth century modern city. It is also visible in the urban planning and architecture industries, which are still dominated by men: as of January 2020, currently only 17% of registered architects are women ("Women in Architecture"). For this reason, I argue that expressing female sexuality and desire in a historically masculinized and misogynistic realm, like urbanism, becomes an act of dissidence. Pornography filmed in the streets can then be an empowering tool, especially if

[9] In feminist and ethical pornography, videos usually concentrate on female pleasure; scenes do not focus on degrading women, unlike plenty of mainstream pornographic videos. There is extensive talk about consent and safe sex during filming. Moreover, many of the actors are not cisgender, and represent diverse bodies and sexualities.

filmed by feminist pornographic companies. It can allow women to reappropriate their sexuality in a space that was not created for them, but to use them, for example, through the spectacular city concept.

The roundtable also examined the connections between women, public space, and sexuality in the photo included below. The image includes Anneke Necro, one of participants in the panel and also a pornographic actress, who is standing on a downward flight of stairs. She is in the middle of the photograph, slightly inclined and sideways, her gaze concentrated in something the spectator cannot see. A concrete wall that seems to be part of a Brutalist-inspired structure forms the background.[10] The rigid wall creates a stark contrast with the malleability of Necro's body, which is the main focal point of the image. The focus is especially in her legs and buttocks, which she is willingly showing, pulling up her black dress. Although her expression is not clear, she seems as emotionless as the background she is in. Necro is situated in a grey, unrecognizable and expressionless public space. Even when her body is the focus of the photograph, since the model is sideways and her body is a little tilted to the left, as if she was about to fall, the spectator's gaze is forced to notice the descending movement in the image. In a later email exchange with me, Yasmina Moya, the photographer, expressed that in her photographs she and Necro wanted to explore the "descontextualización y resignificación de espacios públicos de Barcelona, especialmente aquellos que están sobrefotografiados por los turistas" (Moya). Her words further the perspective that the activists developed in the roundtable: exposing the naked female body in the streets is a subversive act, one that offers a recontextualization of the masculinized organization of cities, which instigates the cases of male urban harassment presented by the activists.

[10] Brutalism is a style of architecture that originated in the 1950s in the United Kingdom. Brutalist buildings are usually minimalist, massive geometric structures constructed with materials such as poured-concrete.

The photograph's central focus on the female body also reflects on the surveillance on women's bodies in the city of the twenty-first century. Their sexuality continues to be, as it was in the nineteenth century, "one source of threatening ambiguity and disorder" for men (Wilson, *The Sphinx* 6). However, it is through their capability of creating disorder and transforming the environment that women find liberation and freedom in the metropolis (6). This can be related back to Moya's picture: Necro's body is geometrically rigorous, with her boots firmly planted on the ground. However, there is a sense of disorder and transformation of the environment in the contrast between the partially exposed human form, full of curves and mobility, and the expressionless Brutalist backdrop.

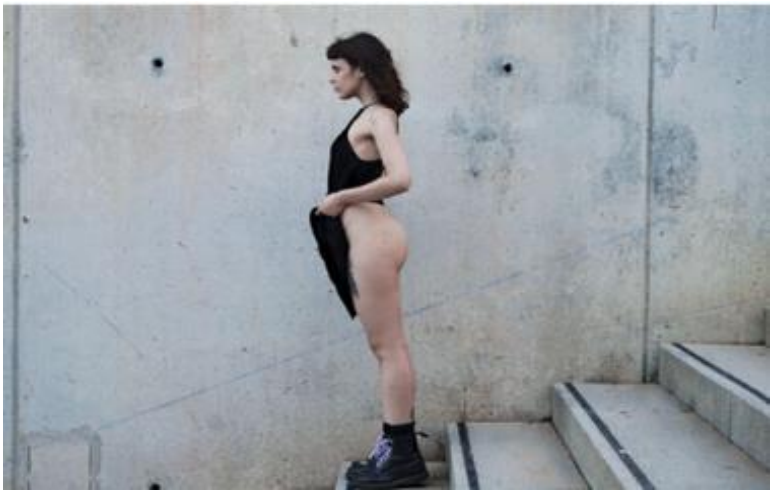

**Image 2.1.** Photo that advertised the roundtadble "Barcelona, el cuerpo y espacio púb(l)ico", by Yasmina Moya.

Although the roundtable's participants established an interesting association between women's spatial vulnerability in the city and how controlling their bodies and their sexualities can empower them, I support that two critical subjects were missing in their talk: tourism and commodification. This was especially striking due to the location of the talk, which took place in the Arts Santa Mònica Center, situated in front of La Rambla, where the commodification of

Barcelona is incredibly palpable through souvenir shops, tapas restaurants, hotels and the constant, massive tourist crowds occupying streets over few Barcelona residents. Moreover, the tourist gaze could have been a part of their analysis of public disgrace filmed in Barcelona. In these pornographic films the participants speak English, which indicates they are directed at a foreign audience, and while the women are paraded around Barcelona, the gaze of both residents and tourists visiting the metropolis scrutinizes them. According to Laura Mulvey, who studied cinematic narratives and visual pleasure, women in erotic spectacles play and signify male desire. Male pleasure in looking is active, while the female gaze holds the stare, and is therefore passive (62). Following Mulvey and other authors such as Susan Sontag, who indicates the camera acts as a phallus (10), cameras and films enact the male gaze. Therefore, the active gaze of passersby and tourist on these women participating in public disgrace videos also reproduce the dynamics of the male gaze. It must also be noted that these videos will reach a global audience, which will consume and desire not only the actress, but also the exotic urban space where the pornography was filmed. As a matter of fact, Barcelona is exoticized and erotized through the filming of streets and sights of the city while the actress is paraded around, and the screaming of stereotypical words such as "olé" during the sex scenes. Here it is noticeable that the tourist and the male gaze are interconnected, an association identified before by other scholars. Jennifer Craik indicates that the tourist gaze is characteristically male, structured through the objectification of the sight "for the gratification and pleasure of the normatively male tourist" (131). It is also important to take into account the historical continuation of the male gaze, from the figure of the flâneur, to the tourist; as John Urry mentions, "the strolling *flâneur* was a forerunner of the twentieth-century tourist" (138). It is clear then that the tourist gaze

stems from the male gaze. I understand both of these gazes to have been crucial in the organization of metropolises, with the objective to control and genderize urban space.

Moreover, the activists did not establish a clear connection between women's bodies, the spatial body of the city, and the consumption and commodification of both. Although they signal that being naked and filming pornography in urban space is a political act, I argue this political dissidence cannot be understood without establishing a connection (albeit metaphorical) between women and city, two bodies that have been historically controlled and consumed by the masculine gaze. Moya's photograph creates a connection between the model's body and the city, however, the political implications of the photo are ambiguous: there are no elements signifying an insurgence. Necro's body, just as the actresses that participate in mainstream public disgrace, follows the normative standards that satisfy the masculine gaze. Nothing in the photograph indicates a liberation of her sexuality or her body from the male gaze; in fact, the inclination in Necro's body and the downward movement of the photograph suggest that she is about to hurt herself, as she will likely fall. The pose in the photograph can be related to Elizabeth Wilson's commentary on females strolling urban space in the nineteenth century, who were considered "fallen women" under the male gaze (*The Sphinx* 6). There are also no components representing the emancipation of the city from the tourist gaze. For all these reasons, even when the activists interpreted the image as a political statement about the resistance created when showing and owning the female body in urban space, I analyze it as a representation of the prostitution of urban space. I understand Necro's body as the desirable female subject and the space she stands in signifies the desirable city, both bodies connected and consumed by the male viewer.

In this chapter I examine two artistic materials that analyze gender, space, and sexuality in relation to the tourism industry, a point that was missing in the activists' roundtable. Through

establishing this final connection to tourism, the artists refer directly to the prostitution of urban space as it has developed in Barcelona over the last twenty years. The authors denounce it from two different mediums: a graphic novel, and a documentary film. None of these materials offer a specific political solution to the prostitution of urban space, rather they prompt the citizen to be aware of the phenomenon. This chapter also problematizes the fact that the authors examined are male, and contrasts their perspective on the city, developed through the male gaze, with the activists' feminine viewpoint on urbanism.

### 2.2. "*Marc Mistery" (2011): Consumption of a feminized Barcelona through the graphic medium*

In the graphic short story "Marc Mystery" (2011), Corominas and Martín Pardo reflect on the topics voiced during the roundtable in connection to the savage capitalistic tourism practices developing in Barcelona. Although the authors have not explicitly stated the story's object of criticism, my analysis makes clear that the story draws on the spatial body of Barcelona and women's bodies, and the consumption and commodification of both, to denounce the prostitution of urban space. "Marc Mystery" is included in the graphic novel *Barcelona TM* (2011), a collection of twenty-seven stories written by thirty-three authors, inspired by the concept of trademark Barcelona. Consequently, tourism is very present throughout the stories; it occupies the graphic novel's cover, drawn also by Corominas, which features a female wearing a dress and sunglasses, most likely a tourist, taking a picture of something out of the reader's gaze. The cover's design anticipates two crucial elements of "Marc Mystery": the power dynamics of the gaze, characterized by the woman taking a picture and the reader's incapability to decipher what she is picturing, and the connection between women's bodies and the city, represented by the woman's body that almost blends into the background palm trees, a type of tree that is very present in Barcelona.

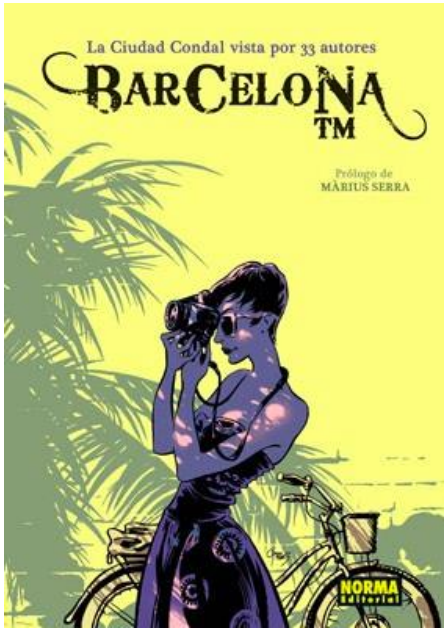


**Image 2.2.** Cover of *Barcelona TM*

Corominas and Martín Pardo, the authors of the short graphic story, are consolidated Spanish comic artists. Apart from their collaboration in "Marc Mystery", separately they both have created scripts and drawn for graphic projects in different genres, ranging from science fiction, drama, erotic, or social. One of Corominas' most acclaimed works is *Dorian Gray* (2011), a graphic adaptation of the Oscar Wilde novel. He also participated in *BCN Noire* (2018), a collection of noir stories situated in the city. Aside from *Barcelona TM,* Martín Pardo took part in several projects with strong social and political intention, such as *Revolution Complex* (2011), a graphic reaction to the 15M movement, and *Diferente* (2019), the profits of which were dedicated to a non-profit organization for refugees. This type of social content has gained traction in graphic novels, especially after the publication of *Maus* (1980-1991) by Art Spiegelman. *Maus* is a serialized graphic novel that depicts Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Holocaust survivor; in this way, the comic becomes a historical document that serves as a memoir, a testimony, and an autobiography (Su Park 147).

The topics that *Maus* discusses, such as trauma, (post)memory, (post)history, and generational transmission, have converted it into one of the first comics to be examined in academia. However, it must be noted that graphic novels have been traditionally delegitimized in scholarly institutions as a lower cultural form. Although researchers are currently realizing the potential of comics as critical pedagogy tools, many socially and politically aware materials like the short graphic story analyzed in this chapter, "Marc Mystery", and the graphic novel where it appears, *Barcelona TM*, still go unnoticed by scholars. As Smith mentions, comics are an interesting medium to express social inequalities because "the syncopation of personal storytelling across media (language and image) and space/time (boxes and gutters)" stimulate the readers' involvement, rising awareness and political implication on the issues discussed in the graphic novel (63-64). For these reasons, I understand graphic stories to be as effective as literature or film to discuss social, economic and political inequalities, and to create social action around phenomena such as the prostitution of urban space.

"Marc Mistery" (2011) is a graphic short story about Marc, a muscular, reputable private eye who works in Barcelona. His body is overly exaggerated, especially his muscles and penis, and strongly visible, as he is naked throughout the story. His office overlooks the Sagrada Familia temple, which is first drawn as a woman with her legs and vagina open. During the story, Marc has a sexual encounter in his office with Lucille, the sister's victim of the case he is investigating. The visibility of her body is also important, as she is overly eroticized, drawn with large breasts and a seductive smile, and naked, just as the Sagrada Familia. In this way, there is a mirroring scene between Lucille and the Sagrada Familia, both inviting the private eye into them, presenting themselves as eroticized, consumable bodies. In the last page of the comic, an astonishing revelation is discovered: the private eye does not exist. In reality, Marc is a sick,

unstable, skin-and-bones architect confined in a psychiatric unit, who has imagined the whole story. Although his illness is unspecified, while a nurse injects medicine into his arm, his gaze focuses intensely on the Sagrada Familia, now sketched as the real temple. I interpret the architect's illness as a reference to the savage capitalistic tourism practices that have affected the city, making it ill, since the new millennium.

I argue that this graphic short story is a critique of the prostitution of urban space developing in Barcelona. The Sagrada Familia is a crucial element in the authors' criticism: as the most touristic landmark of Barcelona, the temple appears in "Marc Mystery" as a representation of the whole city, affected by the savage capitalistic practices of the tourism industry. The temple is sketched as a sensual woman ready to be penetrated, which envisions the idea of a gendered Barcelona converted into a commodity for the international visitor to consume. This feminine Barcelona represents the "marca Barcelona" or Barcelona Brand, the international façade of the metropolis created by the local government, which brands the city as a product for consumption.[11] There is also a clear connection between women and space with Lucille and the Sagrada Familia: both of them are objectified, portrayed in a seductive posture, asking to be consumed by the man. The real Marc, who is not a private eye but an architect, lost his mind just as the current planning of the city has lost its way. Both the architect and the urban planning in the city have fallen ill due to the unsustainability of the current neoliberal urban development and the savage tourist practices unfolding in Barcelona. Although the authors are not specific about the urban organization they imagine for Barcelona, their idea of the city includes a separation from the masculine gaze that traditionally has organized metropolises.

[11] The Barcelona Brand originated after the urban transformation of the 1992 Olympic Games. To develop an appealing international profile, the local government developed a marketing campaign emphasizing the uniqueness of Barcelona's identity and cultural traits. The Barcelona Brand has evolved over time, from emphasizing the innovative social and cultural approach to urban planning during the Olympics, to focusing on the promotion of the tourist city and, recently, the development of the *smart* city. These different narratives were created to differentiate Barcelona from others in the world and make the metropolis attractive both to visitors and investors.

Gazing at the city as an alluring product capable of attracting wealth is no longer valid for long-term residents, after enduring the disastrous consequences of commodification and gentrification processes in their neighborhoods. The authors believe residents are rightful owners of the spatial body of the city, and in this way, long-term neighbors should actively participate in the development of a more hospitable and democratic metropolis. In the following pages I examine the focus on the male body and the masculine gaze, the connection between the sexualized bodies of the Sagrada Familia and Lucille, the crime fiction references, and the references to an interior/exterior dichotomy both in the city and in Marc's mind to understand the authors' graphic protest on the current urban spatial organization in Barcelona.

Corominas and Martín Pardo establish the primacy of the masculine body and gaze from the first page of the short graphic story. As can be seen in **Image 3**, the cover represents a pulp magazine, whose title is "Marc Mystery". As it is mentioned in the middle-top of the first page of the comic, the magazine is in its July issue and it costs fifty-five cents. The bottom-half of the cover shows two floors of the building where Marc's office is located, and the window of the detective's office is in the center of the page. Before analyzing the detective's presence in the first page, it is important to note that the cover's format resembles the American detective fiction magazines that were quite popular from the 1920s to the 1950s. Pulp magazines were disposable, mass-produced publications not considered high-quality literary content, and which boomed during the interwar period, "driven by falling costs and rising literacy" (Smith 19). They targeted an urban working class, mostly male audience (Anderson 59). The protagonists of pulp magazine were epitomes of masculinity; they were tough, violent detectives who constantly seduced or were being seduced by women (Agnew 124). In these stories, women were often victims, criminals or femme fatales; they rarely acted as private eyes. The detective needed to

"understand [the language of] the streets" because his job involved strolling the streets of the city, just like the flâneur, to find a murderer (Worthington 122). He had the capacity to blend into different urban registers, analyzing from the poorest districts to the wealthier neighborhoods.


**Image 2.3.** Cover of "Marc Mystery" magazine (p.37)

Urban space was since the beginning present in pulp magazines, and continues to be an important element in related genres to pulp, such as hard-boiled fiction and crime fiction. Just as in "Marc Mystery", urban space in crime fiction novels signifies more than just a setting; the urban realism in crime fiction often represents abuses of power and affluence, and a critique to the capitalist system (Willett 56). The dynamics of gender are also crucial elements in crime fiction. Similarly to "Marc Mystery", women in crime fiction of the period appeared in the plots as criminals, or in order to satisfy male fantasies. Many times they represent femme fatales; deviant, provocative women who signify the "chaos and disorder of modern cities and the corruption of capitalist societies" (Stolarek 6).

It is important to mention the extensive tradition in Spain and especially in Catalonia of utilizing crime fiction to criticize urban planning strategies and urban transformations. During Francoism (1939-1975), the Spanish Transition to democracy (1975-1982), and Democratic Spain, Barcelona recurs as more than just a setting, but as a character, in the novels of authors such as Manuel de Pedrolo, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Maria Antònia Oliver and Isabel Franc, among many others. Pedrolo and Montalbán's works explore the city usually from the perspective of a misogynistic, private eye (or a male character that acts as a private eye) that brings to mind the figure of the flâneur, and the concept of the male gaze. In their plots, women were often femme fatales that allure detectives into tragedy. Both of these authors used their novels to make social, political and moral critique on topics such as the erasure of historical memory, cultural censorship or the urban planning of the city. For instance, in Pedrolo's emblematic novel *Joc Brut* (1965) the author criticizes post-war Barcelona during the capitalist speculative period of *Porciolismo*.[12] Montalbán and his Pepe Carvalho series, started in the 1970s, used a popular genre, la "novela por fascículos" or serialized novels to document Spanish society from the last years of Francoism to the early 2000s and repeatedly depicts and mentions corrupt urban policies developing in Barcelona (Saltzman 184).[13] In most of his novels the author makes a differentiation between the Barcelona of marginalized people, or "real" Barcelona, and fake or simulated Barcelona, which represents the Olympic and tourist city.

The separation from these genre conventions began with the inclusion of female detectives. Diana Aramburu has studied this feminine perspective on the genre, named femicrime

[12] Porciolismo was the Francoist urban strategy initiated by mayor Josep Maria de Porcioles (in office from 1957 to 1973) that facilitated an uncontrollable industrialization of the city. Barcelona became a model for anarchic capitalism, according to Donald McNeill, "a site of sprawl and destruction". The system favored the bourgeoisie and the city elites, composed by many property developers who speculated with valuable urban space of a prosperous city, and one that received large waves of poor immigrants coming from the countryside in need of housing (118).
[13] Montalbán criticizes Porciolismo and the urban transformations created during the Olympic Games as processes that diminished spaces of memory for the proletariat, leftists, and marginalized populations—inhabitants with whom both Carvalho and Montalbán sympathize.

by some scholars, which boomed during the last decade although it has its roots in the period of the Spanish transition to democracy (6). In crime fiction written by women, women depart from the femme fatale archetype: "the female body functions as a critical tool of resistance to pinpoint the ineffectiveness of the legal system's response to gender violence" (6). In femicrime the city is still crucial; in fact, the critique of gender violence is often linked to a critique of gender dynamics in space. Femicrime then denounces the lack of a feminist geography, the concept introduced by the activists at the roundtable that opened this chapter. In Maria Antònia Oliver's *Estudi en Lila* (1985), Barcelona and female private eye detective, Lònia, evolve simultaneously. The private eye repeatedly comments and analyzes spaces in the city and how such spaces have changed over time while experiencing changes herself, through self-realizations brought up by her female collaborators and victims. In Isabel Franc's short story "El enigma de su voz" (2010) the protagonist is Emma García, the first lesbian detective to appear in Spanish *femicrime* (48). Through her main character, Franc examines the Olympic period as an urbanistic visible cover up of a Francoist social, political and economic context that still affects Barcelona. Authors such as Montalbán, Pedrolo, Oliver and Franc criticized the organization of urban space in Barcelona in a very similar manner to Corominas and Martín Pardo, which indicates the latter authors relied knowingly not only on pulp elements but also on the Spanish crime fiction extended urban critique to create their own urban criticism.[14]

The private eye in "Marc Mystery" is a clear representation of the masculine, tough detective of pulp and crime fiction: his masculinity is made obvious by his exaggerated muscular body, which is shown completely naked on the first page (**Image 5)**. The *detective*, Marc, is

[14] The tradition of criticizing urban planning policies through crime fiction since the beginning of the genre also indicates that the current prostitution of urban space is rooted in regulations, urbanism and ways of understanding economic development that date back to the Franco dictatorship. *Porciolismo*, the system that created an uncontrollable industrialization of the city from the fifties until the seventies, is a clear example of a precedent factor of the current urban dynamic.

looking out of his window: he is nude, smoking, with a hat covering part of his face. He is exposing his body to the exterior, to the city, and as he looks out, the reader gazes in. Looking through his office window the reader becomes a voyeur, invading his privacy and his bodily presence. There is a dialogue between the male gaze and the reader's gaze, as while Marc looks out the window, the reader is invited to glance into his office. The reader becomes a voyeur that consumes Marc's body while he consumes Lucille and the Sagrada Familia. This stimulates a reflection on the comic recipients' way of looking, and reacting, to the consumption and commodification of Barcelona. Above the window, occupying the top half of the page is the title of the magazine, and under it, two enormous eyes, topped with a hat. These eyes are the detective's eyes: this is a close up of Marc's gaze, which is covered by the hat in the drawing below that shows his body. The significance of the detective's body and eyes is accentuated by their location: they are in the center of the cover; it is the first thing the reader sees when looking at the page. Although all of these elements form part of the pulp, crime and hardboiled fiction imaginary, there is an important deviation in this cover from traditional covers of these genres: the attention is on a male body and the male gaze instead of a feminine body. As can be seen in **Image 6,** detective stories such as *The Big Sleep* (1939) by Raymond Chandler usually included women in their covers to attract the mostly men audience which consumed them.


**Image 2.4.** Detail of the "Marc Mystery" cover (p.37)

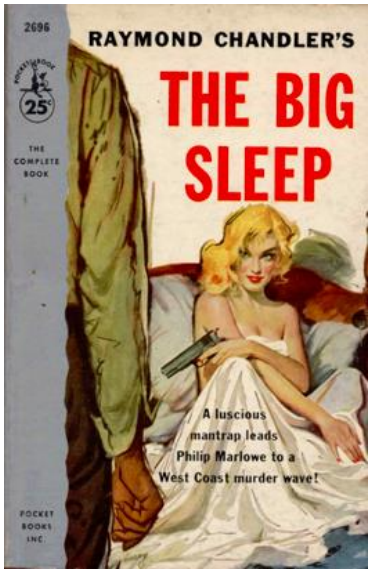


**Image 2.5.** Cover of *The Big Sleep* by Raymond Chandler

In "Marc Mystery", Marc's body and gaze are prominent in the cover, but also in the rest of the comic. His exaggerated masculine body is constantly exhibited through his office window, in a continual intent of connecting his masculine attributes to the city, and especially to the feminine Sagrada Familia. As a matter of fact, Marc's body is not present only in the strips that focus on Lucille's nakedness and in the Sagrada Familia sketched as a woman (**Image 7**). The authors' focus on the hyper masculine body, and especially on Marc's exaggerated penis and muscles, is potential evidence of the authors' intent to caricaturize pulp magazine's tough, male detectives. Corominas and Martín Pardo utilize the genre, reversing the gaze that in traditional crime fiction is not focused on the male detective but on female bodies. They utilize this strategy to criticize the masculine perspective that has been imposed on the city, which has driven Barcelona to the prostitution of urban space that one sees developing currently. Hypermasculinity is what brought real Marc to be in a psychiatric facility, as he has

bodybuilders' pictures in his computer while receiving his medicine in one of the last strips of the comic. The masculinity that the traditional detective represents is portrayed as unmaintainable, just as the urban planning focused on fostering the tourism industry, which he is observing through his office window. The detective's masculinity also reflects on the history of urban planning in Barcelona, which traditionally has been planned by men.


**Image 2.6.** Details on the sexualization of Marc's body, the Sagrada Familia, and Lucille's body (p.39)

There is also a mirroring effect between fake private eye Marc, with his exaggerated masculine attributes, and sexualized and opulent Sagrada Familia, waiting for him outside of his office window. In fact, the Sagrada Familia is the element connecting urban space and the male gaze and body in the story. It must be noted that the Sagrada Familia stands in the graphic short story as the representation of Barcelona in its totality. Selecting the temple to characterize Barcelona is a comprehensible choice, as it is one of the most emblematic buildings in the city. Throughout time, the basilica has been marketed to fit the political and economic objectives of the local powers and administrators. For instance, in the nineteenth century the building was used by the Catalan Church and bourgeoisie to represent not only the city, but also Catalan nationalism and identity (Garcia-Fuentes 66-67). In fact, Antoni Gaudí, the temple's architect, created the Sagrada Familia towers imitating the shape of the Montserrat mountain, which is another symbolic element of Catalan imaginary (70). During the twentieth century, after the

Spanish Civil War and during the Franco dictatorship, the nationalistic narrative to the temple was eliminated. Gaudí and his work were mainly promoted as foreshadowing modern architecture, an imaginary that was easier to consume for foreigners (70). After the transition to democracy, mayor Maragall's cultural branding of the city in preparation for the Olympic Games characterized the Sagrada Familia, once again, as a symbol for the city and Catalan identity. This strategy was useful as the local government was revealing Barcelona and its supposedly unique identity traits to the world.

Another crucial moment for the branding of the temple was its consecration in 2010, a religious event that was estimated to bring a benefit of 29.8 million euros to Barcelona (Marine-Roig 107). During the consecration, the basilica was promoted in connection to the Barcelona brand in mass media; this marketing campaign brought almost an extra million visitors to the city the following year (108-110). Currently the temple supports its construction with ticket sales bought by tourists.[15] Therefore, to continue developing, the Sagrada Familia needs to be appealing to visitors. This is visible in the newer parts of the temple that were constructed after the death of the architect. As Marine-Roig mentions, the new façade of the basilica stands "closer to some spectacular contemporary hi-tech architecture … than to Gaudí's works", aimed to fit into a "touristically broader, more modern and friendlier concept" (73). Even in its structure, this iconic structure has been transformed to facilitate its consumption by tourists. This strategic branding has been really successful; currently the temple receives almost five million tourists every year (Subirana). It is the most visited and recognizable site in Barcelona, and the most visited heritage site in Spain (Ivereigh quoted in Marine-Roig 97). For all of these reasons,

[15] The temple is still not finished. When Gaudí died in 1926, he left his original plans as guidance to complete the temple. However, many of these documents burnt during the Spanish Civil War. Since then, architects have tried to reconstruct and interpret the remaining archives, although it is unclear if Gaudí would approve of the newer developments of the basilica.

the feminized Sagrada Familia in "Marc Mystery" characterizes Barcelona as a whole, but it is also a representation of the powerful tourist branding developing in the city. Sketching the temple as a female ready to be penetrated, the authors criticize the branding of this specific building, and of Barcelona in its totality, as a consumable product directed at the foreign viewer.

Just as in the crime fiction works by Pedrolo, Montalbán, Oliver and Franc, in "Marc Mystery" Barcelona is not just the setting of the story but a character; in this case, a woman. This woman is Marc's object of desire; this is illustrated by his gaze, which is focused on the temple, and also by the positioning of his body through the short graphic story, which is facing the window of his office that directly looks at the Sagrada Familia. As shown in **Image 7,** at the beginning of page three of the story, the first strip shows the detective looking at the temple, which is sketched into the shape of a woman laying on her back, with her legs up and her labia and vagina exposed. The detective is ready to penetrate the submissive *woman* at the other side of the window; the temple is literally a woman that he wants to possess. The strip's eroticism replicates a scene in a pornographic movie. The reader's gaze reproduces the male gaze that most pornographic videos satisfy, as the viewer's perspective is situated behind Marc's body, watching the feminine temple. While the detective's gaze is centered on the basilica, the reader has visual access to the temple, but also to Marc's body. This dual gaze is important, as it encourages the reader to reflect on their voyeuristic perspective, that is consuming Marc's body, but also the spatial body of the city, represented through the female Sagrada Familia.

In the middle of page three, Marc's attention turns from the Sagrada Familia to Lucille, the woman who has hired him to solve her brother's murder (**Image 7**). She is completely naked, just as the temple he sees through his window, but she is sitting on the sofa of his office. It is important to note that Marc's body is between the Sagrada Familia and Lucille, both of them

females waiting to be penetrated and controlled by him. With Marc's body and attention turning directly from the temple sketched as a woman to Lucille, a real woman, the mirroring effect and connection between the feminine body and the spatial feminine body of the city is made obvious.

After Lucille and Marc have sex, the reader is shown Marc's real situation, a plot change that is conveyed in a bubble: "pero al final del sexo... Siempre espera la realidad" (p.40). A white strip precedes the depiction of the story's turn from imagination to reality: Marc is not a private eye, he is an architect confined in a psychiatric hospital. As can be seen in **Image 8**, just as the fictitious detective did, the real Marc continues to stare at the Sagrada Familia out the window of the psychiatric unit where he is located. His desire for the temple and the temple itself are the only elements uniting the two parts of the story: they are present both in Marc's hallucinations and in the real world. The sex scene functions as the hinge between Marc's fantasy life and his real life. Spatially, the Sagrada Familia represents this distinction, first sketched as a woman's body, and then as it is in reality, a temple. With the Sagrada Familia connecting the hypermasculine detective and the sick, architect Marc, Corominas and Martín Pardo show the confluence between male desire, and the touristic manipulation and prostitution of Barcelona's urban space. Yet they also illustrate the falseness of this equivalence: once Marc imagines himself having sex, his real, less potent persona is revealed. The city's sexualized veneer also drops away. The feminine version of the city is only a hallucination, a product of his mental illness, and metaphorically, a reference to the savage capitalistic tourism practices that have commodified the city, making it ill, since the new millennium. It must be noted that Marc's body is still very present in this part of the graphic short story, although he is no longer muscular: he looks rather skinny and debilitated. At this point the reader discovers that real Marc is also the victim of the case that the fictitious private eye was investigating. In page three it is revealed that

Lucille's brother was obsessed with bodybuilding, and on page four the real Marc has bodybuilding magazines and bodybuilders images on his computer screen. The architect is fixated on muscular men because his weak, unmanly body is incapable of penetrating the city, as his counterpart private eye did. Spatially, he is also unable to possess the metropolis due to his confinement. The gaze he continues to dedicate to the real Sagrada Familia indicates the architect is confined due to his obsession to transform the city. This indicates the authors' understanding of the current urban development in Barcelona as unsustainable and ill. Enclosed in his room due to his mental illness, and with a weak body that does not allow him to possess the metropolis, his only manner to continue controlling Barcelona is through his powerful gaze.


**Image 2.7.** Details on real Marc and the real Sagrada familia (p.41)

The male body and gaze focused on the Sagrada Familia and Lucille, both sketched as women, then represent the desire of men to control and consume women, but also the feminized urban space of Barcelona. As mentioned during the roundtable that opened this chapter, the current power of the male gaze over urban space points back to the historical development of urban space, being traditionally planned for and by men. Here it is important to remember the

figure of the flâneur, the masculine archetypal occupant and observer of the rapidly changing and growing European cities of the nineteenth century, and the foundation for the theoretical concept of the male gaze (Wilson, *The Sphinx* 93). In literature, the hard-boiled detective inherits some characteristics from the flâneur, especially the interest to operate and stroll the city as an observer. Private eye Marc longs to possess the Sagrada Familia, just as the flâneur is "a man of pleasure … a man who takes possession of the city" (Wilson, "The invisible flâneur" 98). Both figures are also male, and observe the city through the male gaze. At this point, it is important to remember that the male gaze is also the basis for the tourist gaze.

This emphasizes an extended trajectory of a gendered logic of urban movement that, as represented in "Marc Mystery", also includes the architect. The architect has traditionally been understood as an authoritative figure, as he has the power to transform domestic and urban environments that will be utilized by millions of people. He is a creator of space, closely related to literary authorship in that both literature and architecture work "con la realidad, con el objeto, con lo concreto, en la búsqueda por parte del autor de una posible verdad superior que de ellos se revele" (Fuster i Martí 15). Politically, both the architect and the writer can use their creations for propaganda purposes (Silva Ardila 287). I propose that the architect is also connected to the flâneur. However, while the flâneur is content with strolling the city and observing the urban spectacle unfolding around him, the architect intents to modify the space that surrounds him according to his spatial needs.

Just as the flâneur represents the embodiment of the male gaze (Wilson, "The Invisible Flâneur" 98), architecture is also a profession closely related to masculinity (Battersby 10; Sanders 11). Although the field always showed hostility against women, it was during the Renaissance when the conception of the artist, and therefore the architect, was primarily

associated with masculine sanity, separated from the supposedly inherent female emotionality (Battersby 12). This glorification of the architect and its capacity of representing masculinity characteristics continued into the twentieth century with architects such as the modernist Harry Weese, who mentioned that buildings are "masculine and aggressive" (Battersby 10). As Sanders demonstrates, even the materials employed for construction go through a gendering process. Wood paneling, "coded as ruggedly masculine", is used in recreational and professional interiors like men's clubs or corporate board rooms (14). Whether observing, controlling, or constructing in space, the masculine perspective has always been the main organizational concept.

The masculine perspective present in architecture and in urban planning has been very visible in the powerful economical and political parties organizing Barcelona until very recently. Mayors Narcís Serra (in office from 1979 to 1982) and Pasqual Maragall (in office from 1982 to 1997) monumentalized the city for the 1992 Olympic Games through the development of cultural spaces (museums, theaters, sport complexes) and the recapitalization of industrial land, which attracted national and foreign interest and investment (Balibrea 211).[16] After the Olympic project, the 2004 Fòrum Universal de les Cultures was the subsequent celebration that the city hosted. Inaugurated during Joan Clos' term (in office from 1997 to 2006), the Fòrum was branded as a space for the development of social movements. However, some residents interpreted the urban transformations that it implied and the massive funding provided by financial companies as an exercise in hypocrisy by the city hall (Delgado quoted in Rius and Sánchez-Belando 116).[17] The criticism received after the Fòrum's celebration emphasized that

[16] Out of economic support received for the 1992 Games, 36.8% derived from private initiatives. One third of these were funded with foreign capital, focused on the construction of housing, hotels and business centers (Brunet 227).
[17] The event was a strategic urban campaign to renovate the east coast of Barcelona, finish the project of the 1992 Vila Olímpica, and attract more international recognition to the city (Botella 166). Moreover, while the Fòrum boosted tourism, it negatively impacted the vulnerable low working-class population, mostly of immigrant origin, of the Sant Adrià del Besòs neighborhood, whose housing complexes were in the way of the construction planned for the event (Monferrer i Celades 12).

the city hall needed a new narrative of global positioning for the city, which would allow the metropolis to not completely depend on the tourism industry and real estate investment. Mayors Hereu (in office from 2006 to 2011) and Trias (in office from 2011 to 2015) developed an alternative economic structure for Barcelona based on the tertiary sector, especially on the development of services, knowledge and new technology (López Fuentes 40).[18] While city branding was still an active strategy, the establishment of an entrepreneurial city allowed Barcelona to promote its image without celebrating any major event; as López Fuentes mentions "el macroevento pasaba a ser la ciudad en sí misma, su espíritu y liderazgo innovador" (77). Throughout all of these urban transformations, the city representatives' economic interests were sustained by financial institutions such as La Caixa, the biggest savings bank in Catalonia, with a board of directors that were and continue to be overwhelmingly male. According to Stephen Luis Vilaseca, La Caixa played a major role in attracting capital and tourists to the city, buying real estate companies such as Inmobiliaria Colonial and stakes in construction companies like FOCIVESA (16). Moreover, one of La Caixa directors, Javier Godó Muntañola, is also board director of the MACBA museum, epicenter of the cultural revival that prompted speculative and gentrification processes in the neighborhood of El Raval, in downtown Barcelona.[19] [20]

[18] Already during Clos' term, the plan Districte d'activitats 22@BCN was approved. This plan had the objective of recovering the neighborhood of Poblenou, traditionally an industrial area, through a tertiary process that would use its industrial infrastructure and adapt it to host technological activities (López Fuentes 41). Following in the steps of his predecessor, but adding a cultural background, as Maragall did during the Olympic urban transformations, Hereu inaugurated a cultural and technological outreach plan called La ciutat per la ciència (2004- 2007). La ciutat per la ciència's focus was to promote scientific culture as a central element of the city's leadership position (42).

[19] Historically the Raval has been an inmmigrant, low-income, working class neighborhood. As mentioned by Vilaseca, it has been the focus of many urban plans to eliminate prostitution and drug trafficking in its streets (133). The new cultural equipment constructed in the neighborhood during the 2000s (the MACBA Museum, and the school of Geography and History of the University of Barcelona) prompted a significant rise in rent prices and the displacement of thousands of neighbors, whose buildings were rehabilitated or demolished. The luxury hotels, apartments and boutiques surrouding the new cultural infraestructure have attracted upper-class tourists and middle class individuals, who can afford the higher prices in the area (Vilaseca 133; Díaz and Ortiz 405).

[20] Vilseca also mentions that Godó is the current director of the most read newspapers in Catalonia, La Vanguardia, and that he "utilized his newspaper to champion the restricting of several uses of public space in 2005 that favored the wealthy at the expense of the poor" (17-18).

These male politicians, supported by financial institutions like La Caixa, businessmen like Godó and male architects such as Oriol Bohigas and Pierre De Meuron, respectively responsible for the urban modifications of the Olympic Games and the Fòrum, have prostituted Barcelona since the end of the twentieth century. Throughout decades the city has been envisioned as a product to attract foreign wealth through different marketing campaigns, characterizing the metropolis as a chic destination, a cultural capital, a booming business center, or a technological hub. These narratives included massive urban modifications to create an appealing space for the international visitor, which left many of the residents' urban complaints unsolved. For example, Mayor Hereu assured long-term residents that he would reduce poverty and promote social cohesion and economic prosperity; he also promised to create proximity between city administrators and local neighborhoods (Efe; Redacción, "Hereu"). His speeches were contradicted by his political actions, moved primarily by economic interests. In 2009 the city administrators monetarily supported a Barcelona investor's group to purchase Spanish airline Spainair; in the following years the city hall and the Generalitat dedicated 150 million euros to Spainair, 79% of which were financed from public funds, considering it a strategic move for the growth of Barcelona's airport (Redacción, "Generalitat"; Otero). This is important because this massive investment decision took place during the 2008 economic recession, which caused a 26.3% unemployment rate and contributed to 26% of Catalan population living below the poverty line (Nel·lo 108). During Trias' term, Barcelona was envisioned as a *smart city*: this technological-friendly narrative created more than 50.000 new jobs and attracted more than 8.000 million euros of foreign investment (López Fuentes 71). However, the social complaints that were already present in the city since the 2008 economic recession, such as facilitating access to decent and affordable housing, and the creation of a socially participative urban

planning, were overlooked during Trias' term. In fact, they were ignored until Mayor Ada Colau, an activist associated with the Spanish anti-austerity movement Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH),[21] took office in 2015.

Colau's victory in 2015 is significant due to the city's history of male-dominated government and urban planning. She is the first woman to become mayor of Barcelona and the first to make a serious effort to regulate tourism and real estate speculation in the metropolis.[22] Colau's bottom-up political approach, which stems from her participation in the 15M movement, is also explicitly feminine. Throughout her political campaigns and her time in office she utilized the term "feminización de la política" to refer to her political strategy, which according to her, prioritizes the needs of common people above other economic or political interests (Gessen). During several of her speeches Colau proclaimed herself to be "heredera de Maragall". According to Manuel Delgado, this meant embracing a moral discourse that included empowering lower-income, working-class residents (7), as Maragall intended to do when he included the residents' needs and the construction of cultural infrastructure in some of the Olympic urban transformations.

Although her feminist take on politics and urban space constitutes the first real political attempt to divert from the male gaze that brands Barcelona as a product for the foreign visitor, and she did indeed introduced several initiatives to address deep-rooted social complaints, it must be noted the Colau's government continues to internationally promote the city.[23] Her

[21] The PAH is an association formed by activists and residents, which offers resources and information to anyone that cannot affort to pay their mortgage or is in the process of being evicted.
[22] In 2016 the city hall started two disciplinary files, which included a 600.000 euros fine, against vacation rental marketplace applications Airbnb and Homeway for posting properties that did not have a tourist license (Gulliver). A year later, Colau's government issued a law known as Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamientos Turísticos (PEUAT) that temporarily ceased the construction of new hotels and the issuing of licenses for tourist apartments (Burgen).
[23] As a response to the high number of evictions in the city, exacerbated due to gentrification and the 2008 economic recession, in 2015 Colau created la Unidad Contra la Exclusión Residencial (UCER), a special anti-eviction team.

legislations on the tourism industry did not stop Barcelona from receiving 2.7 million passengers from cruise ships in 2017, making the city's port the first in Europe, and the fourth in the world. The Prat airport also registered a record number of arrivals in 2017 with 47.3 million, out of which 73.1% were foreign visitors (López Fuentes 57). Therefore, tourism is still encouraged in Colau's government, albeit through a different narrative. The city administrators currently brand the metropolis as a city with feminist and liberal perspectives, historically and culturally rich narratives, and moral values such as being open to welcome refugees, which also attract foreign visitors. Similarly to previous mayors, some of Colau's actions contradict the moral, liberal branding that the city defends. For instance, in 2016 the Mayor inaugurated a monolith in the Barceloneta beach as a tribute to the immigrants that died in the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe. At the same time, Colau allowed police to harass immigrants working in illegal sales to force them into accepting social integration measures (Delgado 12). Throughout her political campaigns, Colau listened to the residents' dissatisfaction with the current urban planning and promised an alternative manner to gaze at the city. However, her moral discourse and the legislative measures that she actually applied have proven insufficient at controlling the growth of the tourism industry and restructuring urban space to serve low-income, working-class residents.[24] This is specially so because the branding of the city continues, i.e., Barcelona continues to be prostituted for the foreign visitor.

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Data indicates that since 2014 eviction court proceedings dropped in 24%, while municipal actions in eviction cases quadrupled ("Colau consigue que se queden", Blanchar). The "superilles" concept was another one of the initiatives the city hall presented to satisfy the needs of long-term residents. Applied first in the neighborhood of Poblenou, this urban intervention converted nine street blocks into a pedestrian walkway, with playgrounds, gardens, tables and benches occupying now-unused roadways. Apart from reducing driving emissions in the area, superblocks return public space to residents and utilize empty lots that otherwise would contribute to further commodification and speculation (Bliss).

[24] Colau's interventions on tourism and urban space have also negatively affected some sectors of the population. The PEUAT created higher inflation in the hotel industry; with fewer hotels openings, the selling prices of hotels rose by more than 20% (EFE, "La moratoria hotelera"). Residents have also complained about the superilles, denouncing that they create traffic closures, less parking spaces, and changes on the location of bus lines (Puig).

In "Marc Mystery", the uncovering of the real Marc—an architect— is crucial for the authors' critique of the masculine perspective present in architecture and in urban planning in general, and in Barcelona specifically. From his position of power, which reenacts the voyeur role introduced by Michel de Certeau,[25] the detective Marc observes the city, his primary object of desire even over a naked woman, Lucille, sitting in the sofa in his office. Corominas and Martín Pardo utilize the gendered Sagrada Familia, a temple historically marketed to fit political and economic objectives since the nineteenth century, to illustrate the main narrative of consumption organizing urban space in Barcelona. Marc's hypermasculinity emphasizes the authors' departure from the traditional pulp and crime fiction and calls attention to the role of the male gaze in the sexualization and genderization of urban spaces, as it developed in the last twenty years in Barcelona.

The protagonist's exaggerated masculine attributes are also a reflection of the architect as an epitome of masculinity. Wilson has indicated that the architect was the prototypical Renaissance man, a hero of the era (*The Sphinx* 19-20), an idea that continued into the twentieth and twenty first century, as can be seen in the majority of male architects and mayors that have ordered Barcelona.[26] City administrators such as Maragall, Hereu and Trias, supported by architects such as Bohigas and financial institutions like La Caixa, fostered marketing Barcelona as an attractive product for the consumption of the international visitors. As Maragall mentioned in 1991 "les ciutats són com empreses que competeixen per atreure inversions i residents, venent a canvi localitzacions avantatjoses per a la indústria, el comerç i tota mena de serveis" (99). The longing in Marc's eyes from his room at the psychiatric unit speaks to his desire to continue

[25] According to De Certeau, the *voyeur* role holds a position of authority and arranges an assembly of possibilities in space. It is the contrary to the walker, who "actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge" (98).

[26] It must be noted that *Barcelona TM*, the graphic novel that includes "Marc Mystery", was published in 2011. For this reason, Corominas and Martín Pardo's story focuses on criticizing Hereu's time in office and previous city administrations.

selling "localitzacions" in the city, so as to obtain global recognition and continue the prostitution of urban space, an objective shared by all of the mayors mentioned in this chapter, including Colau. Although Marc's gaze is strong until the end of the short story, it must be noted that the architect is no longer able to take control of the city due to his confinement. Real Marc, sick and skinny, is the contrary to the hypermasculine private detective. The dichotomy between real and fake Marc mirrors the opposition between the real city lived in by the long-term residents, and fake Barcelona, formed by the made-up façade of the city and the feminine Sagrada Famila. In this sense, I understand the sick architect as the representation of an unsustainable urban planning, which is also sickening the city, victim of the savage capitalistic tourism practices established by city administrators.

### 2.3. *"Fuiste mala y ahora te toca sufrir": Long-term Residents' Revenge on the Prostitution of Urban Space in* La extranjera *(2015).*

*La extranjera* is an experimental documentary by Miguel Ángel Blanca, a Catalan musician, screenwriter, playwright and filmmaker. Blanca's filmography often utilizes the mockumentary film genre, in which documentary film and fiction are intertwined. As he mentions in an interview about *La extranjera*: "A mí me gusta trabajar el documental siempre desde ese halo de ficción … Ese híbrido es donde yo me siento cómodo" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 4:20-4:28). His fascination with the interrelation between fact and fiction can be seen in the author's most recent film *Quiero lo eterno* (2018). Stylized as a documentary, it focuses on a group of teenagers "que emprenden un viaje para encontrarse a sí mismos en otra realidad" (Fernández). Similarly, *La extrajera* is also experimental in format and mixes fiction and nonfiction elements, making it difficult to differentiate between them. The film's plot

focuses on a fictional Barcelona resident who kills a female tourist.[27] Although the murder is not shown in the film, the viewer witnesses how he finds her in a club, and then drags her unconscious body from the Bogatell beach to his car. From there, he takes her to his apartment, where she is kept on ice in the bathtub. This main storyline is interrupted constantly by images of tourist and non-tourist spaces in Barcelona, planes arriving to the city, speeches by Barcelona mayors' Trias and Colau, residents' testimonies, references to the 2008 economic crisis, and even a performance where a woman reads a poem while a man wraps his hands tightly around her neck. All of these extremely disparate elements, which mix reality and fiction, come together with the main plot to criticize the uncontrollable growth of the tourism industry and the prostitution of space that it caused in Barcelona.

The film is a reflection on the long-term residents' relationship with the city and the many tourists that inhabit it, especially during the summer. Blanca explains "decido hacer como un diario veraniego de la ciudad … un diálogo con las calles, con todo este tema del turismo" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 0:42-0:54). With the tourist's killing, Blanca represents the residents taking revenge against the prostitution of urban space. Instead of interpreting the killing as a suggestion that the filmmaker supports violent action against tourists or women, I understand it as an allegory for political action. In this way, *La extranjera* invites Barcelona residents to revolt against the transformations happening in the city due to the tourism industry. Local viewers can sympathize with the killer to a certain extent, as they share an identification with him based on a common dislike of the role of visitors in the city. At the same time, their identification with the killer prompts a reflection on what a reasonable approach to regulating

[27] During an interview about the film, Blanca referred to the woman in the documentary as being kidnapped instead of being killed (Campo Creativo Cero -información-). However, *La extranjera* shows the Barcelona resident dragging the tourist through the beach and keeping her in a bathtub on ice. In both of these scenes she remains motionless. For this reason, I understand that the man did indeed murder her.

tourism would be. I also argue that the killing of the tourist represents the death of the city, which has become an *extranjera* to its residents; as the author mentions "estábamos manteniendo algo y haciendo escaparate de algo que estaba muerto, que necesitaba … [una] renovación" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 2:05-2:40).

Blanca lived in the Raval, one of the main neighborhoods featured in the film and epicenter of the cultural revival developed in downtown Barcelona during the 2000s. For this reason, his denunciation of tourism also reflects on the residents' suffering due to property speculation and gentrification, which have caused a rise in apartment rents, evictions, and the transformation of the Raval into a thematic park for tourists (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 14:53-15:33), where luxury hotels, boutiques, and restaurants have substituted staple businesses. The filmmaker indicates that "Barcelona es un plató… un Show de Truman" created by the local government (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 6:44-7:22). This simulated, tourist city, converted into a product for the international visitor, does not maintain an organic relationship with its residents anymore. In fact, the author discredits past and current political approaches to urbanism in the city and supports that the urban organization of the city should be directed by residents: "¿quiénes sois vosotros [politicians] para hablar de esto? ¿podemos decidir los habitantes de Barcelona lo que queremos para Barcelona?" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 11:15-11:41). The film proposes an alternative urban organization based on the residents, who currently feel disconnected to the city's public spaces, as they attend the tourists' needs. This dissociation is explained by Blanca in the interview about the film: "Lo que yo sentía cuando paseaba [era]… una sensación de entre comedia ridícula…[y] terror, había como unas sensaciones muy extrañas" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 4:39-4:58). His testimony reveals the spatial alienation some residents develop in the commodified city; as they

no longer feel recognized in the spaces they transit, they become foreigners to their own metropolis. While the documentary is definitely effective in delivering its anti-tourism claims, this visual protest is problematic because Blanca criticizes the prostitution of urban space and envisions a new urban model for Barcelona through the same masculine gaze that is the basis of the phenomenon. In the following pages I examine Blanca's critique analyzing his dichotomy between the tourist and the real Barcelona, his references to tourism, the political class, the economic crisis and neoliberalism, and the conceptual relationship he establishes between violence, women, and the city.

Tourism references are a critical element in *La extranjera*. The film opens with a recording of people dancing in a discotheque; overlapping this shot is a close-up of two women dancing in the same club (01:00-02:24). This sequence happens in one of the several clubs located near the beach in the Port Olímpic area, a famous nightlife attraction in the Vila Olímpica. The location chosen to start the film is the first clear reference to the tourism industry and the urban modifications that it originated in the city. Constructed in the originally industrial area of Poblenou, the Vila Olímpica was the neighborhood erected for the athletes during the 1992 Olympic Games. Currently it is one of the most touristic and expensive areas of Barcelona, with extensive nightlife, hotels, restaurants and the seafront. This is where the Barcelona resident finds his victim; as a matter of fact, it is very possible that the killer is filming the recording in the club that opens the film.[28] Following this scene, there is a shot of the top of several Barcelona working-class apartment buildings topped with a cloudy sky, over which the title of the film appears (02:25-02:40). It is important to note that this is not the typical skyline of Barcelona; it is the opposite to the sunny beaches that appear in Barcelona postcards. After this, a recording of a security camera at Bogatell beach shows the killer dragging the woman's body through the sand

[28] It is worth mentioning that both the killer and the victim remain nameless throughout the film.

at sunrise (02:41-04:03). Utilizing security footage to showcase this scene, the filmmaker reflects on the gazing and policing of the city. Looking at the beach from above —a space of power—, the security footage represents De Certeau's voyeur role, which in "Marc Mystery" was depicted by the private detective observing the Sagrada Familia. This role reappears in *La extranjera* in the controlling view of the security camera, as it showcases how powerful parties gaze at the city, regulating spaces without actually experiencing them. In the case of Barcelona, these parties are the political and economic institutions fostering the growth of the tourism industry that Blanca is denouncing. Therefore, dragging the body in front of the camera can be interpreted as an act of rebellion against the control of the Barcelona brand. In this sense, the homicide is significant not only because she is a tourist, but also due to the space where the murder happened. Although we do not see the homicide, the killer found her in the tourist destination that opened the film—the clubs in Port Olímpic—and then pulled her body through one of the most visited spaces, the beach. Showing these tourist spaces in combination with the cloudy skyline and the murder, Blanca signals that the Barcelona Band does not embody the totality of the metropolis (represented by the apartment buildings), and that it actually conceals a dark reality behind it.


**Image 2.8.** Sequence that starts at the Port Olímpic clubs, then focuses on non-touristic apartment buildings with a cloudy sky and the title of the movie, and ends with the killing of the tourist.

Several scenes of the movie show tourists walking around tourist destinations such as La Rambla, the Sagrada Familia, and the Cathedral of Barcelona. One sequence focuses on the

tourists' movements in front of the Cathedral for three minutes straight; the camera follows visitors and documents their picture taking, filming how they repeat several takes until they are satisfied with a photo (22:43-25:29). This scene is interesting and can be interpreted in different ways. First, it concentrates on the act of taking pictures, which is crucial for the tourist. According to Susan Sontag, photographs are important to tourists because through them, they are able to possess spaces that otherwise would cause disorientation and make them feel insecure: "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge … like power" (2-6).

Tourists not only control spaces through pictures, but photographs are also an element that facilitates the visual consumption of space (Crawshaw and Urry 194). Urry explains that tourists are semioticians, in the sense that they collect signs (monuments, streets, buildings, museums) in pictures. Through capturing them in photographs, these spaces are "endlessly reproduced and recaptured" (3), always available for future reflections on their vacation. Urry and Sontag have also indicated the connection between tourism, the act of taking pictures and the gaze, specifically the male gaze. Sontag equates the camera with a phallus: "it is named without subtlety whenever we talk about "loading" and "aiming" a camera, about "shooting" a film" (10). These viewpoints are related to Mulvey's ideas, as she mentions that male pleasure in looking is active, while the female gaze holds the stare, and is therefore passive (62). The male gaze then control the lens, the framing and taking of the picture, while the element being photographed is possessed, submissively accepting the stare. This is also the case in the tourists' use of photography, especially because the tourist stems from the figure of the flâneur, the urban explorer of nineteenth century Paris which was implicitly male (Urry 138).

In the case of Barcelona, the gaze that tourists reproduce in their pictures is a sanitized view of the city encouraged by city planners. This view is controlled an ordered by marketing, includes a series of locations that tourists photograph, and contains a certain narrative that usually lacks conflict; as Benjamin Fraser explains, tourist photographs preserve "the image of an apparently homogeneous society in peace" (140). Here it is worth recalling the idea of Barcelona as a simulacrum of a city, where the branded representation of the metropolis in many cases substitutes reality. This is connected to the real and tourist Barcelona dichotomy, which Blanca represents in *La extranjera*. Tourist agencies, the local tourist office, the local government campaigns and travel websites such as Tripadvisor encourage visitors to discover an established list of tourist sites that compose the simulacrum of the city. Non-tourist areas, ordinary neighborhoods where immigrant and low-income populations live, represent the supplement or excess, which can be disruptive to the narrative of the sanitized view of the city. According to Homi Bhabha, the supplement has "potential to disrupt oppressive systems… providing alternative points of identification … [and] making sites of power and discrimination visible" (Runions 66). These neighborhoods, characterized by unimpressive architecture, and a higher presence of misery and homelessness, have the power to break the unified concept of the city brand. Therefore, the movement of tourist through non-tourist areas, or areas where the supplement is located, can undermine the coherence of the narrative created for them.

Although there is a new type of culturally-aware tourist emerging, whose interest concentrates on the history and conflict of their holiday destinations, usually tourists' pictures do not depict the protests against tourism or the massive demonstrations in favor of Catalonia's independence that gained momentum from 2010. Tourists also do not capture the high unemployment rates or the evictions of low-income populations. While a minority of culturally

aware tourists may be interested in photographing some of these elements, generally, for a tourist "to take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged … to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing" (Sontag 9). Even when sensitive to the economic, cultural, and social circumstances developing in Barcelona and Catalonia at the moment, foreign visitors perpetuate the Barcelona brand by pointing their cameras at attractions such as the Sagrada Familia, la Rambla, and Park Güell. Their role as tourist includes visiting a series of landmarks in front of which photographs must be taken. As the filmmaker mentions: "Aquí vienes a sacarte una serie de fotos, a tener una serie de experiencias que los demás te han dicho que tienes que tener… Aprendes algo que ya sabías que ibas a aprender" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 5:11-5:31). Although the tourism industry promotes traveling as an opportunity to grow as a person, visitors do not create new knowledge; they just fulfill a series of foreknown experiences prepared even before boarding the plane by the metropolis' global marketing.

By filming visitors capturing landmarks with their cameras, Blanca reproduces the tourists' desire to control and consume the landscape, but in this case, his focus is on the tourists themselves. The surveillance of the tourists during this scene expresses the need for control and regulation of the tourism industry, a very popular demand amongst long-term Barcelona residents and neighborhood associations. Moreover, filming people taking photographs calls attention to the artificiality of the process; the viewer sees different groups of people posing for several pictures, forcing smiles and hugs that last only for the duration of the pictures. Taking pictures in front of the Barcelona Cathedral, similar to buying postcards and eating paella in a crowded restaurant in La Rambla, are elements that complement the Barcelona Brand, which

according to the filmmaker, is just as fake as the smiles in the tourists' photographs.

**Image 2.9.** *Tourists taking pictures in front of the Barcelona cathedral*

In most of the shots involving tourists there is an unsettling electronic beat as background noise that adds an eerie feeling to what otherwise could be a normal recording of people sightseeing Barcelona. One of these scenes with modified background music follows a tourist bus until it stops in front of the Sagrada Familia. From a camera located on the bus' open rooftop, the spectator sees tourists taking pictures of the church and posing with the temple in the background, while the sinister background music plays (07:25-10:43). A voice off-screen reads a dramatic poem in Catalan that complements the music: "crisi mundial del capitalisme, es dissol la Unió Europea, Alemanya es parteix en quatre, Anglaterra i Franca entren en Guerra Civil … s'enfonsa el sistema econòmic." The poem envisions the dissolution of the European Union and the start of a civil war in England and France in the context of a global crisis of the capitalist system. This apocalyptic poem is read screaming with unsettling drums in the background, making the message disturbing and violent to the viewer. Blanca here connects the commodification of the city (the visuals focus on a tourist bus in front of the Sagrada Familia) with ideas such as the 2008 global economic crisis and the capitalist system. It must be noted that in a recent interview about the film, the director mentioned that "el turismo es lo más importante que hay…es la economía bajo lo que está todo" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 12:21-12:41). This scene showcases Blanca's understanding of tourism as the foundation of the

economic capitalist system. The poem and drumbeat that accompany the scene indicate that once tourism is no longer profitable in Barcelona, with an economy focused on satisfying visitors, long-term residents could find themselves in an apocalyptic scenery, similar to the conditions that developed during 2008 economic crisis.

**Image 2.10.** Scene with the tourist bus stopped in front of the Sagrada Familia.

As Joan Ramón Resina mentions, "Cities can be founded anew, whether as a result of historical crisis… when new conditions precipitate another mode of existence" (6). The global 2008 economic crisis drastically altered the functioning of Barcelona and the residents' lives. The recession resulted in massive job cuts that extended over years; in 2012 Barcelona had a population of over five million people, with fewer than two million employed. From 2008 to 2011 Catalonia suffered a 13.2% decline in wages that accentuated social inequalities, especially in lower-income, working class populations (Nel·lo and Donat 568). While residents were deeply affected by the recession, according to the city hall's budgets available in their website, investment in tourism grew steadily from 2007 until 2015, when Colau's administration took office ("Pressupost Obert"; "Pressupostos anteriors liquidats"). Barcelona, like many other cities around the world, chose to intensify rather than roll back marketing and tourism promotion policies following the 2008 crisis (Colomb and Novy 10). In fact, as already mentioned in the first section of this chapter, during the first years of the twenty-first century new ways of tourist transportation such as cruise travel developed in the city. A different narrative for the metropolis

based in technology and communications also started developing (Garay Tamajón and Cànoves Valiente 53). The Mobile World Congress, a business fair focused on mobile communication developments that moved to the city in 2006, began attracting high-end foreign visitors to the city. It is clear that city hall directed its economic resources to the growth of the tourism industry before, during, and after the 2008 economic crisis. Although tourism helped the city avoid complete financial devastation, the commodification of neighborhoods in combination with the economic crisis exacerbated property speculation, rising apartment prices, and the eviction of low-income and long-term residents.

Blanca highlights the connection between the economic crisis and the growth of the tourism industry and relates these two elements to the capitalist system, which is mentioned during the screamed poem. This is an obvious association since both tourism and capitalism are based on consumerism (Campbell quoted in Urry 13). At this point it is important to return to the unsettling drumming that accompanies the reading of the poem while the scene shows tourists taking pictures in front of the Sagrada Familia. Combining the furious drums and the screamed poem with the calm activity of taking pictures, Blanca implies that tourism might seem harmless, but it is a capitalist activity that is a form of violence in disguise. This is consistent with Slavoj Žižek's ideas in his book *Violence* (2008), where he addresses the concept of *systemic violence* as:

> The violence inherent in a system ... the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence … This violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their "evil" intentions, but is purely objective, systemic, anonymous. (9-13)

For Blanca, tourism is a type of systemic violence inflicted upon residents. Residents indicate that the growth of the tourism industry is to blame for the commodification and

gentrification of their neighborhoods. However, tourism is so systemically embedded in the economic functioning of the city that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly who is perpetrating violence on them. As mentioned by Žižek, this type of violence is not caused by concrete individuals; in the case of Barcelona, it is the global branding and the sanitized gaze of the city that marketing prepares for tourists that causes residents to be alienated from certain urban spaces of Barcelona. The Barcelona brand also turns neighborhoods into tourist destinations, which results in higher rent prices and, in the most extreme cases, evictions of low-income, long-term residents. For instance, the district of Ciutat Vella, featured in the film, lost 11% of its population between 2008 and 2018. This population usually moves or relocates to cheaper neighborhoods, or in the worst cases, eventually become homeless (Congostrina). Taking into account the violent repercussions that long-term residents can suffer due to tourism, especially those residing near tourist locations, I argue taking pictures of a building is not such an *inoffensive* activity; in fact, this activity is deeply necessary for the systemic functioning of capitalism in Barcelona.

The different types of violence that Žižek describes develop in and because of the capitalist system, which is a perspective also shared by Blanca. Here it is important to remember that the prostitution of urban space includes cases of spatial segregation, urban violence, and gentrification and commodification processes which occur because of cities' economic dependence on the neoliberal framework and on late capitalism. By including references to the capitalist system and the economic crisis, the filmmaker reveals that his criticism is not only about tourism. He is also condemning the prostitution of urban space, which implies a broader denunciation of Barcelona's economic system.

The film also develops a dichotomy between an *interior* or real Barcelona, and an *exterior* or tourist Barcelona. The filmmaker illustrates this opposition by contrasting tourist

landmarks full of visitors, scenes usually complemented with a background eerie music, with spaces utilized by long-term residents. Interior Barcelona is presented unaltered, with no additional music effects and therefore, in a more positive light. For Blanca, interior and exterior Barcelona represent two different ways to gaze at the city with two different populations. While interior Barcelona portrays the metropolis of long-term residents, where urban space satisfies their needs, exterior Barcelona is not a real city, but a simulated metropolis for tourists. This dichotomy first appears in the storyline of the Barcelona resident who kills the tourist. Through the homicide, the filmmaker showcases an antagonistic relationship between residents and foreign visitors, understanding them as two different sets of people: interior and exterior viewers of the city respectively. The spaces these individuals inhabit are also dissimilar. While the film shows tourists strolling across tourist areas such as La Rambla, riding the tourist bus, dancing in the Port Olímpic clubs, and taking pictures in front of the Barcelona Cathedral, the spectator only sees the killer in private spaces, such as his home and his car. The only time he makes an appearance in a tourist space, Bogatell beach, is when he kills the tourist. The homicide represents the residents' revenge against the prostitution of urban space, as he commits the crime in one of the most touristic spots in Barcelona. While the killer's motives are not explored in *La extranjera,* the continuous references to tourism in the film, from recording the landing of a plane in the city and visitors walking through different areas of the metropolis, to filming a television news broadcast commenting on the neighbors' complaints due to tourism, clarify that the homicide is a result of the transformation and alienation of the killer's environment. Despite the extreme violence, the viewer is supposed to sympathize with the killer, understanding his behavior as a metaphor for the unsustainability of the urban planning of the metropolis. The homicide is also a reflection on the violence that the transferring of individuals (in this case the

killer) from interior to exterior Barcelona implies. According to the filmmaker, defying the division of the city between spaces worth visiting and areas designated for residents can create conflict. This idea relates back to the sanitized gaze of the city and the possibility of undermining the tourist narrative when a traveler visits non-tourist areas in the metropolis.

The author places interior and exterior Barcelona in contrast in the sequence that follows the scene of the tourists taking pictures in front of the cathedral. In this sequence, the camera shifts its attention from the tourists to an old man walking with his three dogs in a narrow street of the Raval neighborhood. While he walks, he comes across several tourists until he turns and enters a street that is empty (26:08-27:30). Here the author showcases how in the Raval, interior and exterior Barcelona coexist in a very limited space.

**Image 2.11.** The old man's walk places interior and exterior Barcelona in contrast

It is significant that Blanca centered the film in the Raval neighborhood, as it is a clear example of the prostitution of space in the metropolis. This district, located in downtown Barcelona, was known during the twentieth century as the *barrio chino* in comparison to Manhattan's Chinatown. Historically it has been home to low-income, working-class and immigrant populations. As the epicenter of any sexual, cultural and social deviance in the city, during the nineteenth and twentieth century it became synonymous with high crime, mortality and prostitution rates. During both the 1909 Setmana Tràgica and the later Spanish Civil War, the Raval was also an anarchist and activist headquarters (McDonogh 175). A significant part of

this social and cultural memory, embedded not only in the population but also in streets, buildings and walls, was annihilated with the neighborhood's renovation in the early 2000s.[29] Although the rehabilitation plan included the construction of public housing apartments and the relocation of residents in the same area, neighbors criticized the destruction of historic heritage sites and the property speculation that the renovation generated (Díaz Cortés and Ortiz Guitart 402). Moreover, the city hall primarily invested in constructing cultural spaces for the city, such as the MACBA Museum and the school of Geography and History of the University of Barcelona, which attracted not only tourism, but also a middle-class population to the area (405). This new population is capable of paying the higher rents and is generally unfamiliar with the neighborhood's past. Since they are unacquainted with the environment, new residents usually do not relate to the buildings that endured the urban modifications and still contain a historical urban memory. As Balibrea mentions, for the middle-class, business executives, and tourists hat inhabit commodified neighborhoods like Poblenou, Paral·lel or the Raval, these old buildings and structures "can hardly be more than flat and mute citations" (209). This is also a direct effect of the branding and sanitizing narrative of the city, which creates a metropolis that is more easily consumable for visitors, with plain, renovated spaces lacking conflict. The remaining historical buildings in Raval become empty signs of a past that few, barring long-term residents and perhaps the occasional new comer interested in the neighborhood's history, can interpret.

Due to these circumstances, in the Raval neighborhood interior and exterior Barcelona are sometimes only separated by an alley where some residents still live, or a street without any buildings that are of interest for tourist, as part of the narrative that they are meant to photograph. The old man's walk functions as an introduction to interior Barcelona; it also serves as a

[29] The documentary *En construcción* (2001) by José Luis Guerín examines the transformation of the Raval in the new millennium. The film focuses on the population that inhabits the neighborhood and dialogues with the historical memory of the district.

reminder to the past of the neighborhood, when the area was a space occupied mainly by low-income populations and immigrants. After Blanca situates us in interior Barcelona, the next scene focuses on the annual neighborhood festivities of the Raval, one of which is a dog show. Except for some annual neighborhood festivities that have turned into tourist draws in Barcelona, such as those in the Gràcia neighborhood, these celebrations are still focused and dedicated to the neighbors' enjoyment. Filming these festivities, I argue that the director accentuates his intention of showing a non-tourist side of the city.

After this sequence the filmmaker continues our journey into interior Barcelona with more clips of neighborhood festivities (featuring other neighborhood festivals such as one in Poble Sec) and some other general shots of the Raval that feature empty construction sites and residents that are not tourists (27:31-34:00). It is important to note two aspects in these scenes: they all focus on residents using urban space as they wish, whether by walking, celebrating, dancing, or going shopping, and they do not have dramatic or eerie music in the background. Unlike the tourist scenes, the filmmaker showcases interior Barcelona without manipulating it, just as it is. The camera's unaltered expedition through the neighborhood festivities, i.e. "real Barcelona", indicates Blanca's positive view of a city that dedicates its urban spaces to satisfy the neighbors' needs and enjoyment.

**Image 2.12.** Sequence of neighborhood festivities and general shots of residents walking

Blanca utilizes an interior and exterior dichotomy to dramatically represent the effects of the prostitution of urban space, but the city's urban space is, in reality, very heterogeneous and

does not have clear delimitations between tourist and non-tourist areas. Simplifying Barcelona's spaces into easily separated dichotomies is a recurrent technique in cultural materials; the same mechanism appears in "Marc Mystery", other graphics novels such as *Barcelona. Vagabundos de la chatarra* (2015), and movies like *Biutiful* (2020). Although this representation tool effectively communicates the spatial criticism to the spectator, it does not represent how inhabitants and visitors live and experience the city, trespassing the boundaries of the supposedly touristic and non-touristic areas continuously. This happens sometimes unexpectedly, simply by turning off of a busier street into an alley. It must be noted that by utilizing this technique, creators are unintentionally reproducing the same impulse to organize and control urban space that constitutes the root of the tourist deformation of the city.

As I have mentioned In *La extranjera,* tourist Barcelona is a hoax, the simulacrum of a city, an invented commodity to profit from visitors' financial resources. The consideration of the city as a product for the foreign visitor is clear in a scene that starts in one of La Rambla's souvenir shops. The camera closes in on flamenco dolls and miniatures of the Sagrada Familia with a fragment of the movie *The Matrix* (1999) as background audio (12:26-14:08). Created by the Wachowskis, *The Matrix* is a futuristic movie in which humanity is unknowingly imprisoned in a simulated reality, the Matrix, created by conscious beings to subdue humans while using their bodies as an energy source (Allen). The audio included from this movie in the scene is a conversation between Morpheus and Neo, two of the main characters, in which they talk about what the Matrix is; Morpheus also tells Neo that he has been living in a dream world.[30]

[30] It is worth mentioning how culturally present *The Matrix* is currently. The idea presented by the movie, that humanity lives in a fake reality manipulated by hostile forces, is reproduced in far-right conspiracy theorist groups such as QAnon. QAnon followers refer to the process of realizing that the conspiracy is real as being "red-pilled" (Monge). This is a reference to the scene in the *Matrix* in which Neo chooses to take a red pill that uncovers the uncomfortable, life-changing truth behind the world's functioning.

The following scene features an open air showing of the movie in Barcelona. The camera records the screen playing the film while Morpheus speaks: "the Matrix is a computer generated dream built to keep us under control in order to change a human being into this [a battery]". Through the juxtaposition of *The Matrix* dialogue and the souvenir shop, Blanca suggests that tourist Barcelona is The Matrix; it is a fabricated world mapped by architects and economically powerful agents to keep tourists consuming. For Blanca, visitors are part of the individuals imprisoned in the simulated reality. According to the filmmaker, when he observed travelers taking pictures and visiting landmarks in the metropolis, activities supposed to be enriching, he noticed that they developed them as chores: "los turistas en realidad no se divertían… iban a hacer lo que creían que tenían que hacer" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 4:39-4:58). Just as the Matrix is a computer-generated dream to keep humans under control, the sanitized view of the city maintains tourists subservient, occupied not on enjoying their travels, but on consuming a narrative of the city they previously saw in movies, travel brochures, and literature. All of these media outlets, as Urry mentions, are crucial elements in the construction and reinforcement of the tourist gaze (3). In this way, visitors implement previous knowledge when vacationing: they know how the Sagrada Familia is because they previously saw the temple in pictures or videos, and they want to experience it as the Barcelona Brand promotes it. Although vacationing might seem like an indicator of financial stability and a comfortable life, in reality, real estate investment companies and global financial business in accordance with the local government are the actors controlling this Matrix, utilizing the tourists' economic power for their financial gain.

Tourists are not the only victims of fabricated Barcelona. As Blanca indicates, long-term residents are also participants of the Matrix: "Barcelona es un plató…Esos [long-term residents] son los figurantes en esa especie de Show de Truman…es esta idea de todos somos actores y

hemos construido esta ficción" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 6:44-7:22). Visitors and long-term residents are both prey to the powerful actors organizing the Barcelona Brand, as long as they remain compliant to the urban transformations developing around them. As a matter of fact, many long-term residents actively participate in the continuation of the Matrix by opening new souvenir shops, hotels, or turning their rooms into short-term tourist accommodations through companies like Airbnb. The filmmaker considers this population "figurantes", actors who encourage the sanitizing view of the city. I argue that Blanca exploits the powerful analogy between tourism and the Matrix to encourage viewers to awaken, exit the Matrix, and protest against the fabricated world that is surrounding them.

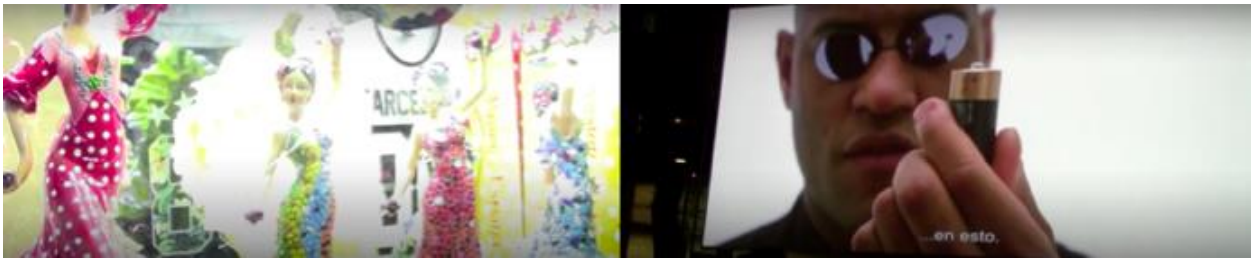


**Image 2.13**. Sequence that starts in the souvenir shop and ends with *the Matrix* open-air showing.

*La extranjera*'s critique to the tourism industry appears together with a strong gendered and sexualized perspective, which I interpret as Blanca's reaction to the phenomenon of the prostitution of urban space. As mentioned in chapter one, the gendering of space has a wide historical trajectory, for example, in countries that describe the nation and particular territories as feminine in their nationalistic discourses (McClintock 355). In the specific case of Barcelona, the city has been considered a female in several occasions. For instance, the metropolis was nicknamed Rosa de Foc during the 1909 Setmana Tràgica, and was encouraged to get pretty ("Barcelona, posa't guapa") in the marketing campaigns developed by the local government during the eighties. Blanca develops this connection between Barcelona and women through different devices. The title of the film, *La extranjera*, refers both to the tourist who is killed and,

in a metaphorical way, to the city changing so much that it became a foreigner to its residents. In another scene from the film, the camera records buildings in downtown Barcelona that are covered with commercial billboards while undergoing remodeling (22:06-22:13). These immense banners feature three sensual female models, one little girl, and only one man. In this sequence, which is presented between recordings of tourists walking through the city, the director portrays the union between women and the city, the branding and commercialization of the city as female, and alludes to the concept of the city as spectacle. Elizabeth Wilson explains that the modern city, with its long boulevards filled with shopping venues and fashion advertising, usually including women, has become a spectacle of consumer culture. In this spectacle "the contemporary woman is both consumer and consumed" (*The Sphinx* 139); fashion commercials featuring women are directed at a female audience, and at the same time, the imagery utilized in the city consumes female subjects. In this way "the city itself came to be identified as a desirable and seductive woman" (Meskimmon 15).


**Image 2.14.** The director films commercial billboards that cover downtown city buildings and feature seductive women.

These ideas are also related to the growth of prostitution, another form of consumption (in this case, sexual) that grew exponentially in modern metropolises. Since the nineteenth century cities around the world developed an explosive growth of population due to the Industrial Revolution (Wilson, *The Sphinx* 26). The disordered world of the city posed a challenge to man's ability to retain their hold on women, their sexuality, and the separation

between the private and public spheres (16). Within the new space of the contemporary metropolis sexuality was "one source of threatening ambiguity and disorder" (6), especially through prostitution, which "in the great city… was spreading everywhere" (39), and contributed to the spectacle of the city for men. In fact, prostitution was so widespread in modern cities in the nineteenth century that Wilson considers prostitutes the counterpart of the male flâneur (Wilson, "The Invisible Flaneur" 105). Prostitutes were amongst the first women to explore the industrial metropolis and its spectacle of consumption, working and taking control of public spaces that had been reserved for men during the eighteenth century.[31] In this way, women were an integral part of the modern urban spectacle since the beginning; they became products to consume, especially for men, but as Wilson clarifies, also for the fashionable women. I argue that by recording the billboards featuring female models that cover buildings in downtown Barcelona, Blanca clarifies that the connection between women and city through the consumption of their bodies (whether with sensual advertising or tourism) continues to be strong nowadays.

In *La extranjera the* city and women are usually related to the concept of violence, a triumvirate that is worth exploring. The first scene of the film, the killing of the tourist, is the first example of this triad. In a later scene, the film shows a violent performance by the cultural group àgape, in which a woman reads a poem while a man holds her by the neck, and progressively tightens his grip, making her lose her breath. The sequence ends with a close-up to the woman's face, which is red due to the pressure and the lack of oxygen, while she mutters the Catalan word "agonia" (39:12-41:00). It must be noted that the poem that the woman is reading does not refer to the city or women specifically. In àgape's website, the performance group, which started in 2005, indicates that they explore sensorial hybridization, utilizing gastronomy as

[31] As Wilson mentions, in Britain "women of the bourgeoisie had already begun to withdraw from commerce and other employments in the eighteenth century… It became undesirable and even indecent for a lady to walk in the streets unless she was accompanied by a husband" (*The Sphinx* 30).

a cultural anchor and broad field of exploration They also investigate the interaction between individuals and social bodies through a interdisciplinary methodology and approach ("Presentación"). I interpret this performance as a criticism to the patriarchal system that has historically oppressed women, and continues to force them into obeying and behaving through a set of masculine rules. Since the performance group studies exchanges between individuals and social bodies, I propose that they represented the societal pressure that women experience in the hand around the women's neck during the performance.

In this scene, I argue that women's suffering is connected to the city's suffering due to the prostitution of urban space. This is clear because Blanca includes the performance right after a montage of fragments of speeches delivered by different politicians during Ada Colau's inauguration as mayor in 2015 (35:52-39:10). In said montage, politicians show two contradictory viewpoints on the organization of the metropolis. The right-wing party representatives, such as Xavier Trias, from the Catalan nationalist party Convergència i Unió (CiU) and Barcelona mayor from 2011 to 2015, and Alberto Fernández Díaz, from the Partido Popular (PP) in Catalonia, respectively talk about Barcelona as a city open to the world and a metropolis that should support economic activities such as tourism. The left-wing party representatives, such as Gerardo Pisarello Prados, from Barcelona en Comú, Ada Colau, the current mayor of Barcelona, also from Barcelona en Comú, and Maria José Lecha González, from Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (CUP), mention the need to respect the residents' desires, control tourism and consider the city as more than just a brand to sell globally. It is important to point out that all politicians participating in the montage have deformed faces, with big foreheads and small mouths, a visual effect added by the director to the original recording. Additionally, a new unsettling drumbeat plays in the background while they deliver their speeches, a sound

effect also edited by Blanca. The combination of the drumbeat with the deformed faces makes their speeches less solemn, as if their messages were meaningless and they were just clowns participating in a circus performance. With this montage Blanca associates the politicians with the tourist narrative that they have created for the city, which also replicates a montage, through the taking of pictures of a series of sanitized attractions.

Immediately after this montage, Blanca adds the woman's performance ending in the word "agony". The sequence relates politics with violence perpetrated on the spaces of the city, and metaphorically indicates that politicians in the local government have their hands around Barcelona's neck. The order of these scenes also connects women and the city, both of them suffering: women because of the asphyxiating patriarchal system that objectifies and controls them, and the city due to a neoliberal urban model based on these same elements and the consumption of the metropolis, that also asphyxiates it. As I have demonstrated in my analysis of "Marc Mystery," there is a historical permanence of the male figure, and therefore of the male gaze, in the observation and development of metropolises: it began with the flâneur, who influenced the figure of the architect, and continued on to the tourist. This masculine influence was and is still palpable in architecture, construction, and urban planning industries. Through this sequence, Blanca clarifies that he considers the city a feminine entity that suffers due to the transformation of her urban spaces to satisfy the global visitor.

The following scene returns to the storyline of the killer and the tourist, showing how the man is keeping the dead woman in his bathtub with ice (41:21-42:00). I argue that the femicide serves as the ultimate representation of the city as a female, who has been destroyed due to the prostitution of urban space. It is worth exploring the significance of maintaining the tourist's body in ice, as the director explains that he attempted to represent "la ciudad raptada que pones

en una bañera con hielo…estábamos manteniendo y haciendo escaparate de algo que ya estaba muerto, que necesitaba esa renovación" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 2:05-2:40). The processes of marketing, controlling and commodifying the metropolis to maintain the Barcelona Brand has isolated long-term residents from the spaces of the city; for Blanca, this alienation represents the death of Barcelona. Likewise, the director indicates that the metropolis can no longer maintain an urban planning based on the growth of the tourism industry and foreign financial investment. Barcelona requires an urban renovation that Blanca envisions led by long-term residents like himself; in his interview about the film he explains that: "en el 2015 estaba muy luchador por reconquistar ciutat Vella" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 14:29-14:40). Although he does not specify a strategy to "reconquistar" the neighborhood, through the killing of the tourist, Blanca also symbolizes the citizen's revenge against the Barcelona brand. The filmmaker does not support violent actions against visitors, but urges long-term residents to recover urban spaces taken by tourists, as the sanitized gaze of the branded metropolis has reached its limits. Local viewers can sympathize with the killer to a certain extent: they identify with him through their common dislike of the role of tourists in Barcelona. At the same time, the viewers' identification with the killer becomes ethically problematic, and for this reason, prompts a reflection about what is a reasonable approach to regulating tourism in the city.

**Image 2.15.** Triumvirate of city, women, and violence. The sequence starts with politicians talking about the organization of the city, continues with the violent performance, and returns to the storyline of the tourist' homicide.

It must be noted that Sayak Valencia's idea of *gore capitalism* is reminiscent of this triumvirate between women, city, and violence. With this term she refers to the "prácticas capitalistas que se sustentan en la violencia sobregirada y la crueldad especializada" (17). According to this author, capitalism and related processes such as globalization and neoliberalism contribute to the dehumanization and violent actions against populations, especially minorities and women (16). Bodies are central to gore capitalism, specifically the body that endures pain and becomes a product for the economic system: "La destrucción del cuerpo se convierte en sí mismo en el producto, en la mercancía" (16).[32] Gore capitalism and the prostitution of urban space are both processes related to globalization and neoliberalism, based on the consumption of bodies (a spatial body, the streets, buildings, and monuments of a city, in the case of the prostitution of urban space). Both phenomena also subject populations to violence: in *La extranjera* Blanca metaphorically represents this violence through the killing of the female tourist. However, the prostitution of urban space is also a real, violent process when it generates evictions amongst long-term residents. Most evictions require police intervention and create clashes between police and anti-eviction protesters. Moreover, turning a space into a branded commodity attracts higher-income populations, and consequently, higher crime rates in the remodeled areas where they reside. In Barcelona violent robberies have soared by 58% since 2016 (Sànchez). In 2019, the metropolis experienced a series of violent robberies and stabbings, with eleven cases involving a violent death. Both the prostitution of urban space and gore capitalism are also a consequence of the patriarchy inherent in capitalism (199). Bearing all of this in mind, I argue that the sequence that I analyzed in the previous paragraph is a

[32] Similarly to Valencia, authors Silvia Federici and Rita Segato have also indicated that the body, especially the feminine body, is the true victim of capitalism, an economic system that is inherently masculine and that can be considered a new type of war with novel types of violence—economic, social, sexual, mediatic, etc.— that affect women (Federici; 63-64).

representation of the prostitution of urban space and gore capitalism, and it also showcases how these two concepts are connected to one another.

Returning to the politicians' scene, it is crucial to notice that Colau is part of the montage; as a matter of fact, Blanca's film was released at the same time that Colau started her term. Referring to the political climate of the time, the filmmaker expressed that Colau embodied "el cambio político… había como una ilusión porque algo iba a cambiar" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 1:07-1:20). Since the Spanish transition to democracy, the left-wing party Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC) ruled the local Barcelona government until 2015, when Xavier Trias from the Catalan nationalist party CiU took office. After decades of historically established parties ruling the city hall, Colau signified for many the opening of the political arena to the new left, a political movement surged after the 2008 economic crisis during the 15M mobilizations. Her bottom-up political approach, which promised to control tourism, create tools for empowering low-income, working-class inhabitants, and the feminization of politics, created hope for the development of an alternative urban planning in Barcelona. However, by gathering all political representatives in the same montage and utilizing a deformation effect in their faces, Blanca indicates that, although hopeful for change, he was rather uncertain of Colau's respond to the tourism problem. *La extranjera* does not comment on any of the recent local governmental measures that regulate the power of the tourism industry and direct the uses of urban space back to long-term residents; the film only gets as far as Colau's proclamation as mayor. In his interview about the film in 2020, however, Blanca commented that "ya no estamos empujados por esa ilusión inicial … [y] podemos poner ciertos peros a sus políticas" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 11:43-12:02). Although he does not offer an extensive criticism of Colau's political actions, he indicates that the initial excitement felt throughout her political campaign

has definitely disappeared, and that some of her policies should be criticized. In the same interview, Blanca also clarifies that the COVID-19 global pandemic and its devastating effects on the tourism industry complicate criticizing the political actions of Colau or any other politician (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 12:02-12:20).

Through the politician's montage the filmmaker also implies that all politicians, despite their distinct approaches to governing, cannot be trusted. As he mentions in the interview about the film, the montage and the deformation effect applied to the politicians' faces express his disbelieve in everything they represent: "no sabes si son gente real o parodias de ellos mismos" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 11:15-11:20). This accords with the metaphor of the *Matrix* presented earlier in *La extranjera*: politicians alongside architects and financial companies are the powerful actors that conceal, oppress and alienate both long-term residents and visitors that experience the fabricated world of branded Barcelona. His rejection of traditional politics, the unconventional music and poems he utilizes in his scenes, and his experimentation with the documentary medium suggests he supports an anarchical view on society, politics, culture, and also on the urban organization of the city. His fantasy of violent revenge against a tourist, i.e. an outsider to Barcelona, and his depiction of politicians as undeniable corrupt might also underpin a form of populism.

The ending of the movie returns to the triad of women, city, and suffering. After showing another recording at Bogatell beach, where this time the spectator sees the killer covering the tracks he left in the sand when he dragged the tourist's body, the final scene focuses on a female street performer in La Rambla, an important attraction for tourists. In the scene, she is dressing up in a blue costume before getting up on a stand and performing as a human statue. While doing this, a large group of tourists are looking at her, in an obvious visual representation of the tourist

gaze (1:04:56-1:07:25). The shot is accompanied by the song *La extranjera* by Pablo Und Destruktion, which talks about a lost love between two people from different countries. The chorus reads "fuiste mala y ahora te toca sufrir". Here women (the street performer), the city (the touristic space of La Rambla), and suffering (through the song's lyrics) are united again, as they were before in the homicide scene, or the performance by àgape, with a man holding a woman by the neck. There are two possible interpretations of this scene. First, the sequence can be a continuation to the storyline of the killer, especially since the previous scene focuses on him. The tourism industry has destroyed the city as neighbors knew it, and therefore, it is time for tourists to suffer because of their behavior. In another interpretation the lyrics can act as a warning to city leaders: the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona needs to end. This urban model is obsolete, and if it continues to negatively affect long-term residents, neighbors will deal with the problem and the city's global image will be damaged. This is already visible in many tourist locations in Barcelona, where long-term residents took over walkways and buildings walls, writing graffiti that read "tourist go home". Blanca envisions these long-term residents' responses to continue growing through demonstrations or occupations of urban space such as the ones that happened during the 15M demonstrations. In any case, I argue that in both interpretations of this scene, and throughout the film, Blanca wants to inspire viewers to rebel and protest against the current

spatial organization of their metropolis.

**Image 2.16.** Final scene of *La extranjera*

## 2.4. Conclusions

"Marc Mystery" and *La extranjera* are two examples of visual protests that criticize the prostitution of urban space. Using very similar strategies, such as the dichotomy of interior and exterior Barcelona, these materials indicate that the growth of the tourism industry is overwhelmingly destructive to the city and the residents' lives and needs to be stopped. They also create a connection between women and the city based upon the consumption of their bodies by the male and the tourist gaze. In this way, the authors of these materials establish a clear connection between women's bodies, the spatial body of the city, and the consumption and commodification of both, a discussion that was not examined during the roundtable analyzed in this chapter's introduction.

The roundtable, the graphic short story and the film share a criticism of the damaging effects of organizing urban space through and for the satisfaction of the male gaze. However, there is an important distinction in the way the materials approach this critique, which is related to the fact that women formed part of the roundtable while men created the materials that I analyzed in this chapter. Whereas criticizing the male gaze is not their main objective, both the

graphic short story and the documentary recognize that urban space needs to be reorganized from a new perspective which does not consider the city a mere product. Paradoxically, "Marc Mystery" and *La extranjera* criticize the male gaze while still looking at the city through it. This is recognizable in their sexualization of women, the relevance of their bodies and the very clear references to sexual and gender violence, in the case of *La extranjera.* In this way, the authors are advocating for the liberation of the city as a product while continuing to apply the same mechanisms that subjugated the metropolis in the first place. Women are still the objects of their narratives, and therefore, lack a voice. For instance, in *La extranjera* the killing of a nameless and voiceless woman is used as a political allegory. The violence represented in the film is disappointing if analyzed from a gender perspective, and it motivates a reflection on art forms and their capacity of going overboard. However, I interpret the femicide as a strategy to create a strong emotional response; the killing deeply unsettles the viewers with the objective of inspiring them to respond against the tourist city. Therefore, even when extreme, I understand Blanca's allegory as a powerful technique that can create social action.

For the city to be liberated from the commodification and gentrification processes caused by the growth of the tourism industry, the male gaze can no longer organize Barcelona. As an alternative, the concept of "feminist geography" introduced by the roundtable participants or Colau's "feminization of politics" are interesting new approaches to gaze at the city. It must be noted that some of Colau's political decisions, such as the PEUAT or the "superilles" concept, have proven to be insufficient to satisfy the long-term residents' needs and control the commodification of the metropolis, which continues currently. Nevertheless, Colau's feminine perspective must be taking into consideration, as it constitutes a deviation from the urban narrative developed in Barcelona in the last twenty years.

## Chapter 3

## Remembering the City: Urban Postmemory in *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* and "La ofrenda"

### 3.1. Introduction

In her first speech as mayor of Barcelona in 2015, Ada Colau insisted that the city needed a complete economic, political, social and, especially, cultural change: "els canvis cultural són canvis de veritat, són canvis de valors" ("Barcelona Ajuntament, "Investidura""). This cultural change, which included a modification of societal values, contained a different approach to memory, especially of two crucial periods of twentieth century Spanish history: the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975). Since taking office, Colau's government has advocated for the recovery of the Republican fighters' memory, which was systematically eliminated through assassinations, displaced in exile, and silenced in prisons during the Civil War and until the end of the dictatorship.

Colau's recognition to the left wing and anarchist sympathizers that participated in the Civil War was explicit, for example, during the inauguration of a square dedicated to Salvador Puig Antich in 2016. During the event, the Mayor connected Puig Antich, a famous anarchist and the last person executed through *garrote vil* in 1974,[33] and Barcelona by mentioning that the metropolis has an anarchist memory "que forma part de la seva ànima… [i] que nosaltres reivindiquem" ("Barcelona Ajuntament, "Ada Colau""). In another event in 2017, the mayor's administration changed a square's name from Juan Carlos I, Spanish king from 1975 to 2014, to Cinc d'Oros, the popular name created by Barcelona residents and that the square received at the

[33] Garrote vil is an execution method that first appeared in the Middle Ages. It consisted of a metal collar pierced with a big screw that would tighten progressively and eventually break the victim's neck. It was used in Spain from 1820 to 1978.

beginning of the twentieth century. Historically, this particular square served as an indicator of the political context of the city. During the Second Spanish Republic a monument paying tribute to the Republic was installed, only to be removed during the dictatorship and replaced by an obelisk commemorating the victory of the Nationalist forces, which was not removed until 2011 (Coderch). Taking this history into account, Colau's government interpreted the removal of the king's name and its replacement with the popular name given to the space by the residents as a sign of their support for the Republic. This was explicitly mentioned during the renaming ceremony, when Gerardo Pisarello, first deputy mayor of Barcelona, referred to Barcelona as a city that needs to recover its Republican memory and values (Sánchez).

I argue that the current local government's investment in historical memory is part of the renovated effort to continue to brand the city internationally. As mentioned in previous chapters, while Colau introduced initiatives to control the growth of the tourism industry and reestructure urban space to serve long-term residents, the branding of the city has continued on with a refined narrative. This narrative includes bringing reparation and recognition to the Republican memory so as to market Barcelona as a leftist, democratic metropolis with high moral values. However, it must be noted that this strategy is rather unusual in Spain, because the historical tendency in the country has been to silence the Republican sympathizer's memory, which does not accord with the version of history supported by the winners of the Spanish Civil War. It is estimated that 500,000 men and women were murdered during the Civil War, and to this day, families wait for the recuperation of the bodies, many of which are buried in mass graves all over the country.[34]

[34] Several associations for the recovery of historical memory claim that there are still 108,000 bodies in mass graves all over the country (Fernández qtd. in Colaert 20). In 2007, the Spanish government passed the "Law of Historic Memory", which provided subsidies to family members and associations to facilitate mass graves' exhumations. This was the first political involvement from the state in the exhumations. Before that, some local governments in autonomous communities like Catalonia supported projects to recover historical memory, and associations such as the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica carried out a hundred and fifty excavations since the 2000s (Bonjoch).

These numbers are even more shocking after considering that the crimes committed against Republicans by the Nationalists during the conflict were never acknowledged at any moment during the twentieth century. It was not a priority during the Franco dictatorship, and during the Spanish transition to democracy (1975-1982). As Stafford points out, the Transition was marked by the *pacto del olvido*, namely the "tacit agreement ... to leave the past behind and move forward into the future" (9). In this way, the country developed a form of historical amnesia. Instead of fully dealing with the crimes committed not only during the war but also during the dictatorship, one of the first actions of the newly crowned King Juan Carlos I was to pass an Amnesty Law in 1976, which was extended in 1977. Above all, as mentioned by Paloma Aguilar, the amnesty laws were based on the ideas of conciliation and formation of a collective memory that defined the Civil War as a conflict in which "those involved were equally guilty" (90). With respect to the dictatorship, the Transition's collective memory indicated that any attempts to discuss suffering under Franco's regime had to be suppressed in the name of national reconciliation (Ferrán 194). According to Aguilar, this version of history was approved by the majority of Spanish population, whose main preoccupation was not receiving justice for previous crimes but experiencing a smooth process of the democratization of the state (103). The decision to suppress memory is also explained in the fear of a possible repetition of the Civil War. This feeling was very latent amongst the population because Francoism still maintained power in certain economic, military, and political circles during the Transition (Colaert 12).

More recently, during the nineties and early 2000s, Spanish society started seeing the first political attempts to recover Republican memory under the leadership of leftist parties. In 2007 José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, president of PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) passed the *Ley de Memoria Histórica*, which stipulated the need of regional and local governments to

cooperate with Republican families trying to track down victims (Davies 21).[35] The government also created an 'Office of Victims of the Civil War and Dictatorship' and, in 2011, a website that indicates the location of more than two thousand mass graves in the country (Colaert 21). This new law was controversial from the beginning; part of the left-wing parties and human rights and historical memory associations considered it insufficient, while the right-wing parties such as Partido Popular (PP) and some sectors of the Catholic Church rejected it (Cajiao 31-38). Amongst the population, initial reactions to the law were quite mild. As Cajiao mentions, when the newspaper *El país* announced that the law was approved, the article did not figure in the ten most read of the day (57).[36] In 2019 a leftist coalition government of PSOE and Unidas Podemos led by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez ordered the removal of Francisco Franco's remains from el Valle de los Caídos. Located an hour away from Madrid, el Valle de los Caídos is a basilica and a monumental memorial situated on top of a mountain; its most noticeable element is a 150-meter Christian cross, the tallest in the world. Franco ordered the monument's construction in 1940, which was built by 20,000 political prisoners to supposedly commemorate the fallen during the Spanish Civil War. The monument is also a mass grave for more than 23,000 remains of Republicans and Nationalists, which were transported to the basilica and buried alongside not only Franco, but also Primo de Rivera, another Spanish dictator who was in power from 1923 to 1930. Whereas most of the Republican families supported the decision to remove Franco's remains from the basilica, during the relocation around a hundred far right and Francoist supporters chanted the Francoist anthem and gave the fascist salute. As can be seen in the

[35] Although it is commonly know as *Ley de Memoria Histórica*, the full name of the law is *Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas a favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura*.

[36] The population's disinterested might be due to the after-effects of the *pacto del olvido* and the historical amnesia promoted during the Transition period. It must also be noted that for many survivors that are still alive, the *ley de memoria histórica* is overdue. After decades of enduring painful memories without any kind of reparation or recognition, they prefer to forget about a time period that is mentally disturbing for them (Cajiao 58).

aforementioned political decisions, during the twenty-first century Spain opened the discussion on the recovery of its historical memory. This is also evident through the proliferation of literature, cinema, and other forms of culture that problematize memory, including novels like *Soldados de Salamina* (2001) by Javier Cercas and movies like *El espinazo del diablo* (2001) by Guillermo del Toro, just to name two examples.

Another political manifestation of this trend is city governments in Spain working to recover memory through modifying city topography. By eliminating Francoist monuments and Franco-era street names, local governments are obliging section 5 of the *Ley de Memoria Histórica*, which focuses on the removal of symbols that glorify the Civil War or the dictatorship. This can be seen in the two examples mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, which involved Colau's government inaugurating and renaming two public squares as a way to honor Republican and anarchist memory. Colau has been one of the major representatives of renaming and modifying topography alongside Manuela Carmena, Madrid's Mayor from 2015 to 2019 (Fàbregas).[37] However, it must be noted that such urban modifications are developing all over the country: the last Franco statue remaining in Spain, in the city of Melilla, was removed in 2021. I argue that this attention to memory in connection to urban environment demonstrates that streets, buildings and squares contain history written in bricks, walls, doors, and in the pavement. Moreover, current residents are living vessels for the history that occurred in the neighborhoods they inhabit, such as the memories they created in their spaces during the Francoist period and the Civil War.[38]

[37] Colau and Carmena are part of the same political party, Podemos, which has a strong political agenda on memory. This has been the only leftist party in Spain to include in their electoral program their intention of bringing Francoist perpetrators to justice (Torrús).

[38] The older generations in Spain have direct experience of the Francoist period, and to a lesser extent, of the Civil War. Therefore, the memories from these historical periods are still "living" memory for many people in Spain.

When an urban environment is transformed and its population is displaced, the memories located in those urban spaces and populations are relocated, and in some cases, eliminated. Even when residents still remember their experiences if they move out of their neighborhoods, as they are no longer inhabiting the spaces where the memories happened, these will not be triggered often. This can contribute to an eventual erasure. In the case of urban space, the demolition of buildings is especially dramatic; through the construction of new infrastructure, the historical memory in older structures is directly eradicated. This urban memory erasure process is visible in many neighborhoods in Barcelona, especially in the city center, where districts such as Ciutat Vella have been sanitized for foreign visitors. Although tourist areas need to preserve a level of exoticism to attract visitors, tourists usually require appealing accommodations and a relative sense of familiarity in the area to feel safe. One of the urban development strategies that sanitized the city center during the early 2000s was the remodeling of the Raval neighborhood, part of the Programa de Revitalización del Centro Histórico de Barcelona. Although the urban plan included the construction of public housing and the neighbors' affected by construction works were relocated in other buildings in the same area, long-term residents criticized it because it destroyed historical heritage in one of the oldest districts of the city. Furthermore, the renovated areas created higher speculation in the neighborhood (Díaz Cortés and Ortiz Guitart 402). In this way, even if unintentionally, the transformation of Barcelona and the redistribution of its population due to tourism-driven development continues with the dictatorship's legacy of selecting and eliminating parts of historical memory.

Rather than being driven by political reasons, this memory erasure was driven by the economic necessities of the city's local government. In a trend that started after the Spanish transition to democracy, Barcelona's economy became reliant on foreign investment and the

growth of the tourism industry. Consequently, during many years the urban strategies applied in the metropolis responded to financial and real estate companies' funding. When Colau took office in 2015, she promised to regulate tourism and to involve long-term residents in deciding the uses of urban space (Puente; Méndez et al. 125). Even when some of her government's initiatives, such as the PEUAT and the "superilles", address her campaign promises, the international projection of the city continued to be a priority for the city hall. However, instead of being branded as the perfect destination to vacation, under Colau's government Barcelona was marketed as a democratic metropolis focused on developing high-culture opportunities and respecting moral values. This new narrative also fostered the historical memory of the city, a strategy that satisfied left-wing voters and culturally inclined tourists. It must be noted that this is still the marketing approach at this time, as can be seen in the city hall's plan for tourism in 2020, which indicates the need to build a tourist narrative that emphasizes "the importance of heritage and memories" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 46). The local government's present focus is then cultural tourism, which is "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn … and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination"; this also includes the consumption of "historical and cultural heritage" ("Tourism and Culture"). Although many tourists still visit the city without applying a critical gaze to the attractions they visit, there has been an increase in tourists who specifically look for tours that connect with history and events such as the Spanish Civil War and how they affected the city. In 2017, an average of 71.66% of petitions for information at the Barcelona Tourist Information Offices were related to cultural tourism products (Gascón et al. 115).

Colau's elimination of Francoist symbols from urban space and her explicit intention to recover Republican memory can also be interpreted as a reappropriation of space and an exercise

of urban postmemory. As I mentioned in the first chapter, I propose that *urban postmemory* is any postmemoristic discourse that reappropiates a city's memory to reformulate the current urban environment. Urban postmemory is always structured around an urban environment: the metropolis is the focus of the memory, and the city itself is the reason behind the reappropiation of memory. I understand that someone is exercising urban postmemory, or representing an exercise of urban postmemory, when they recall past times of a city, usually during times of unrest or conflict, to call attention and protests the current uses of urban space in the same metropolis. In the case of Barcelona, authors portray the past revolutionary city during the Spanish Civil War as a moment in which inhabitants united against the Nationalist forces, and compare the fascist threat to the dangers posed by the current tourism-driven urban development. Exercises of urban postmemory focused on Barcelona are usually political, associated with democratic values that were supposedly present in the past city but are no longer available. Urban postmemory is also intensely affective; the connection with the past is often created through emotional and nostalgic narratives that are strong enough to stimulate a reaction in the spectator or reader. The ultimate goal of an exercise of urban postmemory is to raise awareness on urban problems, but also to inspire recipients to reflect critically. Their reflections can later on develop into social movements and protests. Through social and political action, they can even evolve into eventual real modifications of the organization of an urban environment. Connecting the vulnerability of the city and its inhabitants then and now, authors encourage the public to problematize the tourist urban narrative and participate in the creation of a new citizen-centered urban model.

In this chapter I analyze a theatrical work, *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* (2007) and a short story, "La ofrenda" (2013), that denounce the prostitution of urban space through the lenses

of historical memory. While still commenting on the feminization of the city and the maladies of urban tourism, the authors, Lluïsa Cunillé and Teresa Solana, criticize how the city was starved out of memory in the process of becoming a product for the foreign visitor. Both of these cultural materials arise as exercises in urban postmemory that recall mostly turbulent, vulnerable times of the past city, such as the Setmana Tràgica (1909), the Spanish Civil War, and the dictatorship. The authors relate these historical periods to current times through the emotional and bodily responses of the characters, to raise awareness and reflect critically on the unsustainability of the current urban planning.

### 3.2. Affective Remembering: Connecting Past and Present City through Emotions in *Barcelona, mapa de sombras*

*Barcelona, mapa de sombras* is a play by Lluïsa Cunillé that was part of the series "L'acció té lloc a Barcelona" in the cultural space Sala Beckett, located in Barcelona, during the 2003-2004 season.[39] [40] The series, in which other playwrights such as Pau Miró and Enric Casasses participated, required Barcelona to be the spatial setting of the plays.[41] This requisite was a response to the theater critics who criticized current Catalan theater for being overly out of place, globalized and nonpolitical (Prieto Nadal 65). After decades of producing activist theater focused on the Spanish Civil War, the dictatorship and its repression, during the 1980s a desire for renovation developed in Catalan theater. Even though some authors continued to create realistic theater, emerging playwrights became more interested in the dramatic form itself rather than in politics (John Gabriele and Candyce Leonard qtd. in Prieto Nadal 34). Thematically, plays by authors like Cunillé or Sergi Belbel explored the concepts of lack of communication

[39] The original theatrical work was written in Catalan. For this dissertation, I am using the Spanish version by teatroautor.
[40] From this time forward, I will refer to *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* as *Barcelona, MDS.*
[41] During the series, Pau Miró presented *Plou a Barcelona* (2004) and Enric Casasses participated with *Do'm* (2003).

and solitude, characteristics of the postmodern subject (Ragué-Arias qtd. in Prieto Nadal 35). According to the Sala Beckett's director, Toni Casares, "L'acció té lloc a Barcelona" was created to face the excessive indeterminacy, disorientation, globalization and lack of political commitment of current theater. The director also wished to demonstrate that theatrical works still had an "innegable dimensió social i ciutadana" (Casares qtd. in Prieto Nadal 65)", even when this dimension was absent in many recent productions.

*Barcelona MDS* is a play about an old couple that rents three rooms in their home in Eixample. The first three acts are comprised of three different interactions that occur in the rented-out rooms between the homeowners, called Ella and Él, and the tenants, named Mujer, Joven, and Extranjera. *Barcelona MDS* includes little action and focuses instead on showcasing intense conversations to the readers, allowing them to problematize the relationships between tenants and discover their crimes and infidelities. The fourth act is a conversation in another room, which is not rented out, between Ella and her supposed brother, called Médico, who is actually her son; she had him when she was younger, while in an incestuous relationship with her father. In the last act, Ella and Él are in their bedroom discussing their planned hoax: Ella will dress as Él once he dies to receive his full pension, which she needs to economically survive in the city. Legally, after Él's death Ella would be entitled only to half of his pension. To keep the full income, she will ask Médico to sign Él's death certificate as if it was hers. Then, dressed as man, she will sign the documents to open an account to deposit the money (Pujol 115). During the totality of the play, the old couple and tenants' conversations uncover dark personal secrets, such as Él's affair with Extranjera (who is pregnant with his child), the incestuous relationship between Ella and his father and Él's transvestism. However, as Antón Pujol mentions, *Barcelona MDS* is also formed from silences, fragmented narratives, and the characters' impending sadness

(100). There is also a ubiquitous sense of crisis that affects the characters' identity, the city, and the social and economic setting of the play. Apart from their personal situations and traumas, their state of crisis responds to their inability to connect with exterior Barcelona. The tourist city, haunting them outside of the apartment, creates feelings of displacement in the characters that replicate the experience of exiles. These elements are intertwined with the characters' memories of past and present events and with urban transformations occurring in Barcelona. There is also a recurrent appearance of fire, and an obsession with burning down the metropolis that relates back to the events that occurred during the Setmana Tràgica (1909), but also to the ongoing cycle of urban renovation and destruction that the city has experienced during centuries.

I argue that *Barcelona, MDS* utilizes the characters' memories of the Barcelona of the past during historical periods such as the Spanish Civil War or the Franco dictatorship to criticize the current urban organization of the metropolis. Cunillé connects the suffering and despair of the characters to a city that excludes them and does not represent them. The metropolis' urban transformation haunts and negatively affects their lives and memories in such a powerful manner that Barcelona seems to "bear all responsibility" for their traumas (Pujol 104). Nevertheless, the characters' memories of the metropolis are not all negative; Ella and Él recall the time he worked at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, a renowned opera house in Barcelona, during the nineties in a positive, nostalgic light. In act four, Médico comments that he perceived the city full of color only during the celebration of the 1992 Olympic Games (59). The positive recollections of the nineties indicate the play's approval of the urban planning and transformations developed for the Games, which as I already mentioned in previous chapters, included the citizens' mobility and housing necessities. *Barcelona MDS* portrays the Olympic project as directly opposed to the current urban organization, which has converted the city into an attractive product for the foreign

visitor to consume through monetary transactions. In this way, I propose that *Barcelona, MDS* stands as an exercise in urban postmemory, as it is a cultural material centered on the city, which reappropiates the city's memory to critically reflect on the current urban environment. While the play focuses on exploring urban space in connection to memory, in effect its critique of the current urban planning amounts to what I have defined as the prostitution of urban space. To understand how Cunillé examines urban postmemory in her play, in this section I will examine four prominent elements of the text: the location of the apartment and its significance, the duality between interior and exterior Barcelona, the recurrent references to fire, and the city's and its inhabitants' loss of identity, represented by the six characters who feel exiled in their own homeland.

*Barcelona, MDS* takes place in an apartment in Eixample, a very representative district in terms of the history of urban remodeling in Barcelona, as it was the area that was renovated during the 1859 Plan Cerdà. The Plan Cerdà was the planning strategy to expand Barcelona beyond its city walls and it became the first major urban modification that the city underwent in centuries, followed by the new alterations produced by the 1888 Universal Exposition and the 1929 International Exposition.[42] Inspired by Haussmann's Paris reform, Cerdà based his urban strategy in rationalism.[43] His urban renovation was egalitarian in nature; Cerdà projected his plan to be useful for all inhabitants, and condemned the isolation of different social classes in distinct

[42] During the nineteenth century, Catalonia shifted its economy from traditional manufactures to steam powered industrial production, which was limited in space by the ancient city walls (Olivar 22). The project by engineer Ildefons Cerdà aimed to overcome this problem; the plan included the construction of twenty meter-wide streets, markets every nine hundred meters, parks every one thousand and five hundred meters, new hospitals and forest areas, and the construction of thirty-one churches (Ajuntament de Barcelona). These urban modifications would provide light and green areas to the narrow, dark streets of the old city, inhabited mostly by low-income, working-class inhabitants.

[43] Haussmann's Paris reform was commissioned by Napoleon III and applied between 1853 and 1870. The renovation included the demolition of medieval neighborhoods believed to be overcrowded and unhealthy. As Olivar mentions, the urban transformation consisted of "a new urban layout of rational, wide, and uniform boulevards [that] was to be imposed on the old intricate network of streets, alleys, and cul-de-sacs." (316).

areas of the city (Olivar 163). At the same time, however, his project was primarily focused on creating the city that industrial capitalism and the emerging liberal bourgeoisie demanded (28). In this way, the plan eliminated previous urban spaces in the old city, and the working-class populations living in them were displaced. Moreover, the plan Cerdà created commodification and gentrification processes very similar to the ones developing currently; real estate speculation became high in the new renovated areas, such as Passeig de Gràcia (199). In this way, even when many current politicians recall the Plan Cerdà as a landmark for urban reform in Barcelona, the Eixample transformation became one of the first steps in the history of Barcelona's urban displacement of populations.[44] The location of the apartment is not anecdotal in the play; during the first act, Mujer, one of the tenants and a French teacher, is talking with Él about her son, who is an architect.[45] She mentions that her son is a specialist in chamfered corners, which are the distinctive characteristic of several buildings pertaining to the Eixample and the Plan Cerdà. The chamfered corners are also representative of all urban space in Barcelona; this very unique feature allows one to recognize and distinguish the metropolis from other cities, and panoramic images of the chamfered corners' buildings are often featured in postcards. The location of *Barcelona MDS* and its direct mentions to the Plan Cerdà clarify the play is problematizing not only the characters' personal struggles, but also the commodification and urban planning of Barcelona, both in the present and the past city.

Similarly to the materials analyzed in chapter two, *Barcelona, MDS* presents a dichotomy between interior and exterior Barcelona. Interior Barcelona is the space where the theatrical action occurs i.e., Ella and Él's apartment. A more metaphorical interpretation would be that in

[44] Janet Sanz, Barcelona's Deputy Major since 2011, has mentioned that the urban concept of the "superilles" is "reviving … [Cerdà's spirit] of urban transformation to bring the Eixample into the 21st century" (Wray).
[45] It is common for cultural materials to add architects in their plots when problematizing the prostitution of urban space. For instance, the protagonist of "Marc Mystery", the graphic short story that I examine in chapter two, is also an architect.

interior Barcelona reside not only the old couple and their tenants, but also their memories of the past and current city, in addition to family secrets. Mònica Güell indicates that *Barcelona, MDS* focuses on "lo que no se ve, lo invisible, desde la perspectiva de los de abajo" (106). Continuing this idea, interior Barcelona also showcases the real metropolis, characterized by the sadness, suffering, and hatred felt by the characters, behind the branded, global image of Barcelona created for tourist consumption. Interior Barcelona is a stagnant space where the characters are lost: there is no evolution and no possible exit, and therefore, it could also be considered a non-place following Marc Augé's terminology. Non-places are usually means of transport or short-term places, such as airports, hotel chains, supermarkets, or rentals like the rooms the tenants inhabit in *Barcelona, MDS*. Spaces characterized by solitude, isolation, and a lack of relational development and futureless considerations can also be considered non-places (Augé 87). When the old couple asks the tenants to vacate their rooms so Él can spend the last months of his life alone with Ella, the situation is not resolved, as none of them assures them that they will leave by the deadline.

Él has cancer and will die soon, but at the end of the play, he drifts off to sleep remembering a 1939 speech by fascist general Juan Bautista Sánchez, who announced the capture of Barcelona by the Nationalist forces on the radio, emphasizing the population's enthusiastic reception of the military. The end of *Barcelona, MDS* represents another unresolved conflict inside interior Barcelona; the spectator does not know if Él is just sleeping or if he died while remembering this traumatic event that deeply affected both him and the city. Él's open ending is representative of interior Barcelona as a stagnant non-place. He is so deeply absorbed by his hurtful memories, which eradicate the possibility of constructing a sense of purpose and future, that living or dying are not significantly different states for the character. The last scene is

also crucial because character and city are connected through disease: Él, ill with cancer, goes to sleep remembering a historical event that signifies the beginning of the Franco dictatorship. The fascist forces entering the metropolis can be understood as a cancer for Barcelona: in fact, after the war Franco punished Barcelona for having been an anarchist and activist headquarters, intentionally neglecting the restoration of the city's urban spaces during decades. Moreover, cancer also relates the sick man with the current city, which is vulnerable to the cancer of neoliberalism and its savage capitalistic tourism practices. It must be noted that the metaphorical association of sick characters with a sick Barcelona is a recurrent technique used by several authors. For instance, this connection appears in the graphic short story "Marc Mystery" (2011), through the mentally ill architect, and in the movie *Biutiful* (2010), with its character Uxbal, who also develops cancer.[46]

Interior Barcelona stands in contrast to exterior Barcelona, which is the metropolis outside of the old couple's apartment. For the foreign visitor, exterior Barcelona might be a glamourized version of the metropolis. However, through the characters' conversations exterior Barcelona is characterized by continuous noise, economic crisis, gentrification, urban speculation, and the obsession with maintaining the Barcelona brand. In *Barcelona, MDS* the characters refer multiple times to the overwhelming power of the tourism industry and how the presence of tourist has distorted space in exterior Barcelona. During the first act, Mujer mentions that "si yo fuera la Sagrada Familia … me pondría a gritar viendo todo lo que hay a mi alrededor" (14). She later refers to the effects of gentrification and urban speculation when she mentions that she moved to the Raval neighborhood "hasta que aparecieron de nuevo los especuladores y los corredores de *footing*" (20). In act 3, Extranjera complains: "antes nos

[46] In *Biutiful,* Uxbal acts as a representative of "real Barcelona", which stands in contrast to "tourist Barcelona". One of the scenes clearly connects the character's sickness and the city through a panoramic view, which moves from the Sagrada Familia and the Agbar Tower to the hospital where Uxbal is undergoing chemoteraphy treatment.

conocíamos todos en el barrio, pero ahora ni siquiera conocemos a los vecinos" (42). In act 2, Ella mentions the city's obsession with attracting global recognition and tourist consumption: "¿Ha oído el alboroto de esta tarde? Cuando no es el año Gaudí, es el año Dalí, o de quien sea" (26). As can be seen in these examples, the characters' struggles are deeply intertwined with their worries about the metropolis's urban spaces and how the use of these spaces is administered. Tourism has directly affected their lives. Mujer moved out of the Raval due to urban speculation developing in the area, Extranjera feels isolated because her neighbors are short-term visitors, and Ella, and old woman who desires to spend time with her dying husband, protests the nonstop noise created by the promotion of the city. Even when the city is not truthfully responsible for all of their personal suffering and sadness, Barcelona is made responsible for their hardships. (Pujol 104; Prieto Nadal 186). Cunillé relates the city to the characters' adversities through conversations where their feelings appear to be joined to a reference or a memory of the past or present metropolis. The union between sadness and the city is clear with Ella and Él's daughter, who was struck and killed by a bus in Passeig de Gràcia, an area in downtown Barcelona that is too painful for Él to visit.

Just as the current organization of the city is connected with, and even made responsible for, the characters' mental state, there is also interdependence between interior Barcelona and exterior Barcelona. Regarding this dichotomy, Pujol mentions that there is a clear demarcation between "a physical map, where the city's periodic mutations take center stage; and an emotional map … where the characters' stories construct a very different narrative of stasis and despair" (96-97). Pujol's differentiation between physical and affective maps establishes an explicit delimitation that overlooks the fluidity of the play. Instead of dividing the city cartographically, Cunillé recognizes the complex association between inhabitants, their emotions, and the different

areas of the metropolis. Spatially there is a differentiation between interior Barcelona, where the action of the play develops, and the exterior of the city, a space dedicated to the maintenance of the internationally recognized façade of the metropolis. However, exterior Barcelona manages to enter the apartment continuously, dictating the characters' memories and lives. This fluidity between interior and exterior city is apparent in the fact that interior Barcelona, i.e. the characters' conversations in the apartment, introduces the reader to exterior Barcelona. Even when none of the scenes are located in the urban spaces of the city, the mentions of tourism, gentrification, urban speculation, and the Barcelona brand create an imaginary of the exterior metropolis that the spectator can identify instantly.

Although exterior Barcelona definitely determines the characters' lives, they do not relate to the metropolis, as they believe the city has been transformed into a brand, centered on attracting foreign investment and visitors. In this way, the apartment's interior, where the characters and their emotions reside, represent the real city, while exterior Barcelona is an inauthentic facade of the metropolis, sanitized and prepared for visitors. In fact, a significant part of the characters' sadness derives from their current inability to identify with Barcelona. Their feelings of displacement, intense sadness, and constant reminiscing of past times connect the characters' experience with that of exiles. As Edward Said explains, exile is "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (77). Said explains that feelings of isolation and solitude are usually part of exile: "[exile is] solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation" (81). Although the characters in *Barcelona, MDS* are still living in their homeland, they are disconnected from the city they live in, isolated in their apartment. This spatial alienation shatters their identity and contributes to their state of crisis and immobility. Unable to

recognize themselves in the current urban spaces and stuck in a futureless existence, the characters are in a "discontinuous state of being" (81), alike exiles.

By having the spectator concentrate on the characters' experiences recalled inside the apartment instead of situating the play's action in exterior Barcelona, Cunillé chooses to direct her attention to the B-side of the metropolis and positions herself in favor of interior Barcelona. Similarly to other cultural products such as *Biutiful,* the play exposes the depressed living conditions of characters that are hurting due to the effects of the prostitution of urban space. The commodification of the city has isolated them in a noisy neighborhood mostly empty of long-term neighbors, who have been forced to move to less attractive areas. The process of downgrading the city into a brand has affected them to the point of feeling exiled while still living in their homeland. Through the universality of the characters' names —Él, Ella, Mujer, Extranjera— *Barcelona, MDS* symbolizes the totality of the lower working-class, long-term residents most affected by the current urban transformations. The names' generality also allows readers to feel represented in the play, as they probably have been exposed to similar situations in Barcelona, especially in tourist areas such as the Eixample.[47]

The memories of past and present Barcelona that constitute the focus of the play are mentioned in the characters' conversations, and refer back to crucial historical events for the city during the twentieth century: the Spanish Civil War, the Franco dictatorship, and the burning of the Liceu opera house (1994). Él's memories of the Spanish Civil War open and close *Barcelona, MDS*: the text starts with him mentioning that he continues to dream about the war, and it ends with him going to sleep, or dying, while thinking about the moment the Nationalist

[47] *Barcelona, MDS* portrays a dire reality which is still developing in Eixample to this day. The Dreta de l'Eixample neighborhood association recently denounced the privatization of nineteenth century modernist buildings, which are being transformed into luxury properties that promote gentrification. The president of the association explained that "los vecinos que quedamos somos unos resistentes, porque entre el turismo y las oficinas, llevamos unas décadas de expulsión constante" (Recacha).

forces entered Barcelona. The Civil War memories are traumatic and terrifying for him: "dejé de creer en Dios en la guerra, mientras oía explotar las bombas" (11). This conflict was a time of vulnerability for him and the city, which returns in the form of memories in another vulnerable time for both. Él will likely die of cancer and Barcelona is experiencing the harmful consequences of a metaphorical cancer, that of the prostitution of urban space. In this way, *Barcelona, MDS* foresees the death of the city as it is currently planned and branded internationally. The bombing of Barcelona during the war also represents a moment of urban trauma that comes back during a different type of urban trauma, caused by the uncontrollable growth of the tourism industry. The placement of the Civil War memories (specifically the taking of Barcelona) at the beginning and ending of the play points to the existence of a long history of urban reform, displacement, and trauma in the city, an idea also present in the piece through its references to the Plan Cerdà.

The 1994 burning of the Liceu and the experiences Él lived at the opera house are mentioned throughout the play. In the end, Él confesses a dark secret: he was responsible for the burning of the Liceu. He has the power of pyrokinesis, i.e., the ability to set objects on fire through mental control. When confronted about his actions, he explains that he did it because "cada día que pasaba oía decir a más gente que ojalá se quemara para construir uno nuevo y más grande" (85). His reasoning behind the burning of the opera house is related to the consumption of the city, the expansion of the Barcelona brand and the local government's fixation on keeping the city in the global spotlight. This was part of the urban planning strategy that was already developing during the nineties. His pyrokinesis is also connected to the current pyromaniac fantasies of Ella's son, a character called Médico, who imagines setting emblematic landmarks of Barcelona on fire. I argue that these mentions to fire, which appear associated with space,

represent the continuous cycle of renovation and destruction that the city has suffered during centuries to continue attracting international attention.

Whereas the references to the Spanish Civil War and the burning of the Liceu are specific, the allusions to the Franco dictatorship are less explicit, but they still haunt the apartment's atmosphere like a ghostly presence. This is especially noticeable in the diary that Ella keeps in a locked drawer of the apartment. This diary, which she has written since she was young, and therefore during the dictatorship, details her secret incestuous relationship with her father. According to Ella the relationship was consensual (80), however she was a minor when it happened, and by legal standards it would be considered statutory rape. Her father's rape is still causing her pain, as shown by her struggles to tell her brother (Médico) that he is, in fact, her son. The father's rape represents the violence perpetrated to the population throughout the dictatorship, and Ella's diary, kept out of sight, but still in the apartment, symbolizes the haunting character of this historical period. The father executing sexual violence on his daughter also relates to the control and use of female bodies during the dictatorship. As Karine Bergès explains: "los ideólogos del régimen… redujeron [a la mujer] a un maternalismo biológico y al estatuto de cuerpo reproductor de la nación" ("La nacionalización del cuerpo femenino"). To preserve the patriarchal order, women's bodies were violently reduced to their reproductive and educative roles, which they would use to engender and educate the perfect citizen of the fascist state. Through Ella's journal, the painful memories of her abuse occupy a space in the apartment, not only mentally but also physically. The pain and suffering caused by Ella's secret relationship continue to haunt her just as the historical period where the memories happened, the dictatorship, still permeates Barcelona, Catalonia, and Spain at large.

As mentioned by Jo Labanyi "the whole modern Spanish culture … can be read as one big ghost story" (1). Labanyi explains that whole areas of culture created by the defenders of the legitimate government of the Second Spanish Republic, the losers of the Civil War, were systematically eradicated during the war and the Franco dictatorship. Only at the end of the nineties and especially during the first decade of the 2000s did Spanish society start to attempt to recover Republican cultural productions and memory. *By d*eveloping a play around Él's traumatic memories about the war and Ella's distressing recollections of the dictatorship, *Barcelona, MDS* is participating in the memory boom of the 2000s.[48] Labanyi comments that the "shadowy figures of history's losers" have… returned, almost as ghosts of the past, in many contemporary cultural Spanish materials that demand reparation for the eliminated Republican legacy (8). As a matter of fact, movies such as *El espinazo del diablo* and *Biutiful* (set in Barcelona) include the topic of historical memory through the supernatural genre, representing Republican memory with actual ghosts in their plots. The ghostly nature of historical memory in Spain is reproduced in the *Barcelona, MDS* characters' memories about the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship, which still haunt them and produce suffering, even when the historical circumstances, their personal lives, and the city they inhabit have changed. It is important to point out that Cunillé is participating in the memory boom through the subcategory of urban postmemory; she is approaching historical memory by attending to the historical development of Barcelona, and by comparing the past urban organization of the metropolis to the current one. The haunting character of historical memory in the play is also reproduced in the representation of Barcelona's urban spaces. Although the recognizable landmarks of the city are off stage, they still act as ghostly presences inside the apartment, even if not physically present.

[48] It must be noted that during act 4 Ella asks Médico to read her diary, and she indicates that no one has read it before (Cunillé 65); her current willingness to reveal her abuse story is also connected to the *memory boom*.

In *Barcelona, MDS*, the negative feelings caused by the memories of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship are intertwined with the negative emotions produced by the current urban planning of the city. As Pujol explains:

> Even if enemy forces evolve into different entities (military, as in 1923 and 1939, or ravenous triumphant capitalism, as today), they still deliver the same results; aporia and confusion that floats and reverberates for centuries, like ghosts that cannot be exorcized. (107)

Although the current social, political and economic circumstances are far removed from the historical context of the Spanish Civil War or the Franco dictatorship, Él and Ella are experiencing similar feelings of sorrow, fear, and isolation to the ones they felt during these historical times. Their suffering is due to personal circumstances but is also explained through the power of "ravenous triumphant capitalism" in Barcelona, as Pujol indicates (107). Capitalism and globalization are criticized in *Barcelona, MDS*, for example, through the remarks of Mujer, who indicates that continuous urban transformations will turn Barcelona into "una ciudad intercambiable con cualquier otra ciudad occidental, acomodada y autosatisfecha" (15). Instead of providing financial assistance to long-term residents such as Él and Ella, a couple forced to rent out several rooms in their apartment in order to face their economic hardships, the local government focused its resources to the growth of the tourism industry. Since the spaces of the city are dedicated to foreign visitors, the characters feel rejected and isolated - emotions that affectively tie together the different historical times intertwined in the conversations in *Barcelona, MDS*. Moreover, as an exercise of urban postmemory, *Barcelona, MDS* utilizes affective and nostalgic devices to stimulate an emotional reaction in the spectator. The deep feelings of frustration expressed by the characters connect with the cultural material's recipients,

encouraging them to protest the current urban planning as a community, and reclaim the citizen-centered perspective that is missing in the metropolis.

It is important to mention that the memories of the past city are not all negative. The thirty-five years (1959-1994) that Él worked as a janitor at the Liceu opera house, which is also the space where Él and Ella met, are remembered joyously, in particular through the anecdote where Él met soprano singer Maria Callas, one of the most influential soprano singers of the twentieth century. The old man's nostalgia for those times is also obvious in another one of his secrets: he enjoys dressing up as a woman. Particularly, Él likes to wear similar dresses to the ones entertainers would wear during their Liceu performances. For Él, cross-dressing is a nostalgic mechanism that allows him to revisit the best years of his life. Apart from this, he also explains that: "cuando te disfrazas, es como si fueras otro, el disfraz es como si te diera algo que no eres" (52). His desire to become another person is a response to his overall physical, mental, and economic state of crisis, and the alienation that he experiences in the city, which make him feel exiled in his own homeland. When Él acts as a woman, he is able to disguise his true broken identity, an idea that relates to Judith Butler's consideration of gender as a performance. As Butler explains, "gender reality is performative which means … that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (527). Él's gender performance is also connected to the performance of a marketed Barcelona: the local government has constructed a façade of the city that is not real, but that is continuously sustained with the international branding of the metropolis. Dressing up as a woman also offers him a way to escape his dire reality: he is dying of cancer, living in an apartment with severe economic troubles and trapped in a city that rejects him. Cross dressing is interpreted positively throughout the play and will appear again at the end, when Ella expresses her plan to dress up as a man so as to receive Él's full pension once he dies.

The nineties are then a significant time in the story, and are not remembered negatively; even when Él kept his pyrokinesis secret for years, the burning of the opera house is portrayed not as an accident but more as a conscious decision and a test to assess the magnitude of his powers. This focus on an event that happened during the nineties is important because of the 1992 Olympic Games, which were crucial for Barcelona's later urban developments. As Resina indicates, "the 1992 Olympic Games … were Barcelona's coming of age as a world city" (215); the massive sporting event spurred the restoration of the city's outskirts, historical center, and port area. It also improved public spaces to boost their impact, visibility, and capacity to host cultural events, an urban strategy that allowed for the recapitalization of the land and, at the same time, satisfied the demands of important grassroots residents' movements (Balibrea 211). The Olympic transformation is generally seen as a satisfactory urban process both by residents and local government as it "attempted to reconcile private interests and long-term public demands" (Illas 2). However, this event opened the way for a new economic dependency on foreign investment that would in the long term contribute to the development of what I term the prostitution of urban space.

Cunillé reflects on the urban transformation brought on by the Olympic Games in a positive light through Médico's commentaries in act four. This character mentions that during the games he perceived colors in the city for the first time. When Ella asks him if he still notices colors in the current Barcelona, he responds that now he sees the metropolis "en blanco y negro" (59). The consideration of the nineties as a decade when the city was colorful and the comparison with the current state of the metropolis, which Médico defines as black and white, indicate the play's dissatisfaction with the urban organization of the metropolis during the 2000s, as it was published in 2007. It is worth recalling that during the new millennium Barcelona's city

hall continued to develop its dependency on foreign investment and the tourism industry, which accentuated more dramatic transformations such as the Fòrum Universal de les Cultures, a project widely disapproved of amongst long-term residents. The reference to a black-and-white Barcelona relates to the isolation and sadness of the characters, and the residents they represent, as they cannot longer relate to the urban transformations occurring outside the apartment.[49]

Another important element of the play are the recurrent pyromaniac tendencies of the characters. The fire references focus mostly on the burning of the Liceu opera house, for which Él is responsible. As already mentioned, he burned the building down because residents desired to build a bigger and newer building. From its inauguration in 1847, the Liceu served as a meeting point for the upper classes and the growing Catalan bourgeoisie (Allwood 25-26). For this reason, throughout the twentieth century it maintained a reputation for favoring privileged social groups. Allwood indicates that this continued even after the end of the Francoist dictatorship: "for several years after Franco's passing, it seems that the Liceu was (perhaps unfairly) associated with the privileged Francoist, Spanish-speaking elite" (133). Up until the fire of 1994, when it became a public entity, the opera house was funded by private organizations. During the nineties, the Ajuntament de Barcelona created a marketing campaign for the opera house with the slogan "el Liceu de tots". This campaign was designed to "increase public investment beyond the financial dimension" (Allwood 158-159), but it also alluded to the opening of the building to the totality of the residents: the Liceu was not just for the upper class and privileged anymore. At the same time, this campaign supported the new tourist-focused economy and the overall cultural reinforcement destined to attract visitors and long-term

[49] In the short story "El enigma de su voz", Isabel Franc reflects on the urban transformation created by the Olympic Games in the neighborhood of Poblenou a similar way, mentioning that "los Juegos Olímpicos devolvieron el color al barrio … lo que antaño fuera un nido de barracas, frente a un mar gris y aislado por las vías del tren, se convirtió en una zona privilegiada" (73).

residents alike, that Barcelona implemented before and after the Olympic games, under the leadership of mayor Maragall.

In this way, powerful parties and institutions interpreted the 1994 burning of the Liceu as an opportunity to remodel a building that could attract further investment and international attention to the city. This is evident in the benefactors that funded the renovation, as Pujol explains:

> Whereas approximately 40 families financed the original construction, now the donors are political institutions and public companies led by the usual suspects –La Caixa and Telefónica followed by a long list of corporate sponsors, national and international, whose logos are ubiquitously displayed on the premises (110).

With the renovation led by these international sponsors, the Liceu tripled in size, and 70% of the building was completely new (Alwood 117). Moreover, the opera house's program intentionally moved away from traditional performances to support productions with increased experimentation to "suit the adventurous tastes of post-Olympic barcelonins" (159), and I might add, to suit foreign visitors. The connection between the 1994 burning of the Liceu and the current city is reinforced through the character Médico, Ella's son, who indicates that all the city's landmarks should be burned. He specifically mentions burning the Liceu again, but he also desires to set fire to the Palau de la Música, the Museu d'Art Contemporari de Barcelona (MACBA), the Sagrada Familia and Plaça Catalunya, all spaces where tourists congregate. The references to burning down the city's touristic landmarks are a violent response of the character to the feelings of sadness, isolation and alienation that the urban organization of the city, produces. Nevertheless, Médico quickly acknowledges that destroying the city landmarks with fire is not a good strategy for citizens to recover urban spaces: "pronto levantarían otro [Liceu]

tan idéntico al segundo que hiciera olvidar incluso el primero“ (61). The continual renovation of the city cannot be stopped by a citizens' rebellion started by fire, in fact, as was the case with the 1994 burning of the Liceu, the accident became a pretext to continue transforming Barcelona.

The characters' physical solitude and isolation affects their psyche and disrupts their sense of identity. Their dissociation from the space they inhabit, interior Barcelona, but also from exterior Barcelona, makes them experiencing similar feelings to those of exiled individuals and exacerbates their identitary dissociation. Their lack of development and hope for the future also hinders their ability to create a sense of self. All of them hold enormous secrets, some of them kept undisclosed for years, which contribute to the feeling of not knowing who they are: Ella did not tell Médico that she is his biological mother, Él hides his cross-dressing from the world, and until the last act, he also hides his affair with Extranjera, who is pregnant by him. Interior Barcelona is a non-space, and inhabiting this non-space where everything is stagnant, the characters' identity has also become stagnant, lost in their secrets, silences, and spatial displacement. The loss of identity relates back to Barcelona, since the city, just as the characters, also lost her identity. In the first act the character Mujer mentions there will be a final urban transformation in the future through which Barcelona will turn into "una ciudad intercambiable con cualquier otra capital occidental, acomodada y autosatisfecha" (15). The branding of the city will be responsible for the metropolis' complete loss of identity due to the uncontrollable growth of the tourism industry; this can be visualized through the multiple groups of tourists posing in front of the Sagrada Familia, that according to Mujer, would make the cathedral scream if it could see them (14).

The disintegration of the city's identity due to its ever-changing urban layout connects Barcelona to its inhabitants, which are suffering a similar identity problem. This connection is

reminiscent of Elizabeth Grosz, who explored the association between the body and the city in her work: "the city is … the place where the body is representationally reexplored, transformed, contested, reinscribed. In turn, the body (as cultural product) transforms, reinscribes the urban landscape according to its changing" (249). Cunillé explores this idea by connecting her characters' emotions and state of being to the current and past metropolis, illustrating that a model of urban planning that changes the distribution of the city completely, directed outwards for economic gain, can provoke a loss of identify both in long-term residents, who feel excluded from the spaces of the city, and in the metropolis itself.

*Barcelona MDS* is an exercise of urban postmemory, in which critical historical moments for past Barcelona such the Spanish Civil War, the Franco dictatorship, and the burning of the Liceu are remembered in the context of the current city. The characters' emotions about these past events are similar to their feelings about the current urban planning, which has been focused since the 2000s on developing an economy and a city based around tourism. The play compares the isolation, fear, and sadness that the characters experience in the present to the feelings they felt during the dictatorship, or the bombing of Barcelona during the Civil War. However, *Barcelona, MDS* also criticizes it through a group of characters that are haunted by the overwhelming presence of tourists, economic crisis, and the processes of gentrification and commodification in the city. All of these elements appear continuously in their conversations in interior Barcelona, a supposedly safe space where inhabitants are nevertheless disturbed by their memories and exterior Barcelona, the city that displaces them, waiting outside the door. More broadly, Cunillé's very direct references to historical memory convert *Barcelona, MDS* into an artifact of historical memory recovery, and in this way, it can be interpreted as a material participating in the memory boom of the 2000s. The memories recovered by Cunillé can no

longer be kept hidden in the shadows; in fact, in her play the city's haunting ghosts are placed in the foreground. The play accomplishes its aim of recovering past memories developed in the city and showcases a similar approach to memory to the one developed by the current local government in Barcelona. As I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Colau's government has reshaped several urban spaces to honor the memories of the defeated during the Civil War, demonstrating that urban spaces can act as a vessel for historical memory, and also for political goals.

### 3.3. Vulnerability in Resistance in "La ofrenda": Criticizing the Feminization of Space and Gender Violence

"La ofrenda" is a short story by Teresa Solana published in *Barcelona negra* (2013), a collection of fourteen *noir* stories about the city, each of them situated in a different neighborhood. As the volume's editors indicate in the introduction, the short stories are meant to force the reader "a reparar en el lado oscuro de Barcelona, ése que nunca descubrirá en las guías turísticas de la ciudad" (López and Ospina 17). In this way, the book already foretells a recurrent element of "La ofrenda" and other cultural materials examined in this dissertation: the existence of a secret, overlooked Barcelona, which would be in contradiction with the branded, tourist city known globally.

Indeed, this is one of the elements of the short story, which focuses on a nameless forensic doctor who loses his mind after he performs an autopsy on his work colleague Eugènia Grau, who committed suicide. Grau, one of his secretaries, was in love with the doctor for many years. However, he never thought of her romantically because he considered her to be extremely ugly. After she kills herself and he has to examine her body during an autopsy, the man goes insane due to the perfection of her bodily organs. Before dying Grau makes sure that the doctor will be performing her autopsy. She writes an email asking him to do the necropsy, and prepares

herself for the close contact she will share with the doctor. The night she dies, she wears perfume, make up, puts her hair up with a blue ribbon and prepares a white dress to be buried in, next to her body. The white dress and the blue lace indicate that the autopsy, for her, signifies her wedding with the pathologist; as the narrator indicates "se había adornado con los atributos de una novia" (137). During this medical procedure, she finally gains his complete attention, which she desired during years. Through her death, she becomes visible to him, to the point that he loses his mind trying to find corpses that reproduce her interior beauty. Even though it is doubtful that Grau knew about the perfection of her body organs before dying, the narrative portrays her suicide as a form of vengeance. She does not only gain his attention but awakens his madness, responding to years of ignorance and mistreatment by the doctor. The romantic plot is intertwined with memories about the Barcelona of the past, which focus on the 1909 Setmana Tràgica, a week of violent confrontations between the Spanish army and anarchists, socialists and republicans that occurred mostly in Barcelona, but also in other parts of Catalonia.

Spatially the short story explores Graus's neighborhood, Sant Antoni, which is also situated in the Eixample, the district portrayed in *Barcelona, MDS*. Sant Antoni has been traditionally considered a working-class neighborhood, with a population of 32.000 inhabitants and its market, funded in 1882, as the hub of the area. Recently higher-income residents, such as short-term visitors and foreigners working in digital technologies, became interested in the neighborhood. This started a social transformation in Sant Antoni that resulted in higher rental prices and the opening of new businesses, such as co-working spaces and modern coffee shops and restaurants, to satisfy the younger crowd that can afford to live in the neighborhood. In 2016, Sant Antoni registered a 1.98 in the Índice de Riesgo de Gentrificación (IRG, Gentrification Risk

Index), which doubles the average of other neighborhoods in the city (Riera).[50] In "La ofrenda" Solana comments on the current state of the neighborhood but also explores Sant Antoni's past, describing the neighborhood during the Setmana Tràgica. She recounts it as a dire scenario, where the city was filled with black smoke from multiple fires, in an imaginary that is reminiscent of an inferno. In the last scene of the story Solana reuses the inferno image, and in this way connects the story with the past Barcelona, when the doctor is found in the morgue, in the dark, surrounded by open bodies, organs and corpses, looking for Grau's internal beauty in other cadavers. I argue that Solana relates the past city to the current city through a shared state of vulnerability. This vulnerability is also linked to the feminine body in the last scene, as the doctor is holding a women's heart in his hand, further connecting women and city.

Since "La ofrenda" is a *noir* short story and it strongly focuses on the female body and its connection with space, it can be considered an example of *femicrime*. In fact, many of Solana's works are part of the movement. As I mentioned in chapter two, *femicrime* is the feminine approach to crime fiction in which women separate from the femme fatale archetype and frequently appear in the plots as protagonists, taking the role of detectives and criminals. Moreover, in femicrime "the female body functions as a critical tool of resistance to pinpoint the ineffectiveness of the legal system's response to gender violence" (Aramburu 6). Aramburu also indicates that this critique of gender violence is also often linked to an evaluation of gender dynamics in space (157; 183; 186).

In the next pages I analyze Solana's critique of the prostitution of urban space, focusing on four elements. Firstly, I examine the division of Grau's body and Barcelona in an exterior and interior dichotomy. In the short story Grau's body is divided between an unpleasant external

[50] According to Riera, who formulated the Gentrification Risk Index, the IRG "nace de la relación entre el incremento de precios de compra de vivienda y el alquiler puesto en relación con el incremento de la renta familiar y al porcentaje óptimo de la renta dedicado a vivienda que estipula el Banco de España".

image and her beautiful internal organs. This is also reproduced in Barcelona, which the author separates between an external façade that includes beaches and museums, and an internal space experienced by neighbors in Sant Antoni. Secondly, I focus on the vulnerability to the male gaze that relates women and city. Before her suicide, Grau endured the doctor's ignorance due to her ugly appearance. The male gaze controls females such as Grau through continual judgment and analysis, and it has also been a central element in the organization of cities since the nineteenth century. In this way, patriarchy and the male gaze contribute to women's social and spatial vulnerability. Finally, I analyze the remembrance of the Setmana Tràgica and its imaginary. Solana recalls a moment of vulnerability for the city and its inhabitants describing the fires that occurred during the Setmana Tràgica; a similar imagery reappears at the end of the story, during a scene at the morgue, connecting past and present city. In this last section I also comment on the connection between vulnerability and resistance in the Setmana Tràgica and in Grau's suicide, utilizing Judith Butler's ideas on vulnerability and its agentic potential.

The female body takes center stage since the beginning in *"*La ofrenda", which begins with the arrival of Grau's body to the hospital where she used to work. To the doctor that will perform her autopsy, who was also her coworker, indicates that Grau was "increíblemente fea" (136). In fact, he avoided her whenever possible because "el cuerpo contrahecho de su compañera y sus facciones poco atractivas lo ponían nervioso" (127). Her grotesque external image, detailed explicitly with descriptions such as "piernas demasiado cortas", "extraordinariamente peluda", and "piel grasosa" (127), is in contradiction with her body's internal beauty. Once the doctor performs an autopsy on her, he discovers her organs possess harmonious and sublime properties. While examining her brain, the narrator indicates that "era uno de los cerebros más perfectos que había visto nunca" (138). Once he uncovers the rest of her organs he also focuses on theirs colors and smells, indicating that "sus entrañas irradiaban una

luminosidad hipnótica, y el olor que desprendían no era en absoluto desagradable" (138). In examining her body, he believes he has found "el gran secreto, el modelo primigenio, la perfección absoluta" (138), so much so that on several occasions the pathologist needs to hold his breath. Her internal perfection, which directly opposes her external appearance, is powerful enough to paralyze him.

The division of Grau's body between exterior and internal appearance is similar to Solana's description of the city, which is also divided into two contradictory descriptions. Sant Antoni, Grau's neighborhood, is described as "uno de los [barrios] más poblados de Barcelona y [que] acogía a buena parte de los inmigrantes que llegaban a la ciudad" (132). The narrator describes that the immigrant presence is evident in the streets "en las bandadas de pañuelos con que las mujeres árabes se tapaban el cabello" (132). Apart from being an immigrant-friendly area, the neighborhood is also a working-class district, where neighbors of lower socioeconomic status reside, as can be seen in the next paragraph:

> En las calles ajetreadas y babélicas del barrio de Eugènia se mezclaban, como siempre lo habían hecho, la esperanza y la rabia, las personas honestas y los sinvergüenzas, los vecinos de toda la vida y los forasteros. En sus edificios, portales y aceras convivían resignadamente las prostitutas y sus chulos, los confidentes y los policías de paisano, las abuelas de misa diaria y los niños que jugaban en la calle. El tráfico era intenso y el humo de los coches lo apestaba todo (132).

The narrative portrays Sant Antoni as a lower-income neighborhood where immigrants, policemen, prostitutes, and local population cohabitate. Through Solana's depiction, the reader imagines dark, crowded streets that are severely polluted due to exhaust. Taking into account the plot develops in current Barcelona, the absence of tourists in the previous description is surprising, especially in a neighborhood where residents have complained about rampant

gentrification. In 2017 the neighbor's platform "Fem Sant Antoni" indicated their concern about the proliferation of bars, forty-six in only three blocks, which hamper the neighbor's capability to walk around the neighborhood (Fem Sant Antoni qtd. in Cebollada et al. 189-190). However, later in the narrative the author explains that there are no foreign visitors in Sant Antoni because they "preferirían ir a la playa o aprovechar el aire acondicionado de los museos" (132). This clarification creates a separation between an external touristic Barcelona, which is comfortable and attractive for the foreign visitor, and an internal city, formed by Sant Antoni's "calles ajetreadas y babélicas" (132), with their immigrant presence, and visibly decayed by the effects of the 2008 economic crisis and the prostitution of urban space. Solana specifically portrays these last two elements when the narrator indicates that Grau's building does not have a doorwoman because it is too expensive to have one: "tener portera es caro, y aquél era un barrio modesto por más que los precios de los pisos se hubieran disparado" (132). Here the author indicates the effects of both the economic crisis and property speculation in lower-income neighborhoods. It must be noted that this representation of the city is quite similar to the real situation of many neighborhoods in Barcelona. Tourism is a decisive factor in the metropolis' upsurge in rents, which have dramatically increased, by 116%, since 2001 (Macedo). And as Miguel Díez Muñoz indicates, "los barrios con un precio por plaza turística elevada tienden a estar rodeados de vecinos que en promedio tienen un precio elevado y viceversa" (35). In this way, Solana creates a dichotomy between exterior and interior Barcelona that is similar to the division of Grau's body.

The exterior/interior dichotomy is one of the elements that relates women and city, and the first component of the writer's critique of the prostitution of urban space. Focusing her short story on the relationship between woman and metropolis, Solana highlights the sexualization and feminization of space, which is always present in cases of the prostitution of urban space.

However, this connection is not only built on an exterior/interior dichotomy: women and the city also share a history of vulnerability due to patriarchy. Women's vulnerability against patriarchal pressure is represented in "La ofrenda" through the doctor's interactions with and commentaries towards Grau, which are all negative due to her physical appearance. The doctor treats her "como a un mueble" (130); Grau is considered less than human, a lifeless object, because she does not meet societal expectations of beauty and idealized femininity. The centrality of beauty is again highlighted when the doctor reflects on Grau's life while he visits her apartment, looking for an explanation for her suicide:

> Con un físico tan poco agraciado como el que le había tocado en suerte a aquella chica, no era difícil imaginar una vida solitaria, una depresión crónica, un no sentirse parte de un mundo donde la belleza y los atributos de la juventud parecían dominar las reglas del juego… [Grau] Debía de haberse rendido (133).

At first glance, he considers Grau's suicide a desperate act to bring an end to a life of sadness, depression and isolation because of her ugliness.[51] Although in the end the story uncovers the agency behind her actions, Grau kills herself due to the doctor's ignorance and insensitivity, as she was in love with him and never obtained his attention. Her situation represents women's vulnerability when confronting conventional beauty standards, which are meant to satisfy the male gaze. The pressure and analysis of female bodies, continually endorsed through the media, causes feelings of body dissatisfaction, such that weight concerns and dieting are normative elements in the experience of women in Western cultures (Rodin et al. 269). The chronic objectification that women suffer has many negative consequences, for example, through eating and mental disorders. Women's anxiety about their looks can also affect basic activities such as

[51] Upon inspection of her apartment, however, the pathologist learns that Grau is a cultured woman with a rich interior life. He founds "centenares de libros" in her flat, and discovers that she was reading *Phaedrus* by Plato, a dialogue about beauty, before killing herself (134).

sharing opinions, going to work or exercising, undertakings in which they have to showcase their bodies (Etcoff et al. 38). It is evident, then, that normative beauty standards make women mentally and physically vulnerable. In the case of Grau, the constant reminder that she does not satisfy the requirements of the male gaze due to her ugliness, and therefore she cannot attract the doctor, is the basis of her vulnerability.

Just as women, throughout history metropolises have been vulnerable to the control of the male gaze. The flâneur, the theoretical explorer who had the liberty to stroll the newly formed capitalist city in the nineteenth century, is essentially masculine. During this time period, women were obligated to stay in the domestic realm while the public sphere in the metropolis was dedicated to men. Although females can now stroll through the city freely, it must be noted that contemporary global cities are largely still organized by male architects, urban planners, and housing and urban development representatives.[52] Both beauty standards and the male domination of architecture and urbanism contribute to women's social vulnerability. Some urban elements such as inadequate lighting in city streets put women pedestrians in danger while walking alone at night. The gentrification and commodification of the city can also endanger bodies, especially the female body, as explained by Jana Leo in *Violación Nueva York* (2017). In this book the author reflects on her rape that happened in Harlem, New York, in a building where security measures were lacking. Leo explains that "la violación es una de las operaciones más perversas del acoso inmobiliario…se usa como instrumento para que los vecinos se vayan de sus casas para que los edificios queden libres y se puedan constuir edificios nuevos" (134). This author indicates that neoliberal urban development infringes violence on the body as a manner to continue commodifying metropolises like New York. Taking into account that rape victims are

[52] It is the same dynamic in academia, where books and journals in urban studies present mostly male (white) authors (Johnston-Zimmerman).

overwhelmingly female (85), Leo connects the female body and the spatial body of the city through its shared vulnerability. The male-designed city makes women vulnerable in the streets, but the metropolis is also negatively affected by the tourist gaze, which derives from the male gaze (Urry 138), and by the depredatory tactics of real state developers and urban speculators. In many cases these tactics are allowed and even encouraged by local and national governments, promoting commodification and further developing the prostitution of urban space.

In "La ofrenda" this is represented through Grau and Barcelona, both vulnerable to the objectification of the male gaze. In fact, the short story highlights the pressure and control that patriarchy exercises on women by emphasizing the beauty and culture of Grau's apartment. Her flat, where she lived alone, is a domestic space, traditionally considered feminine, extremely well decorated and filled with knowledge: "El piso era luminoso y… cuidadosamente ordenado… Eugènia tenía buen gusto… Había alfombras en el suelo y plantas junto a las ventanas, y también libros. Centenares de libros" (134). Here "La ofrenda" emphasizes the freedom that marginalized subjectivities can experience away from the male gaze's control. Society's patriarchal pressure harms the female body and the spatial body of the city, which are in both cases affected by the messages broadcast in the media, demanding that women look a certain way and selling the city as a vacation spot. Grau's body is wounded quite literally through her suicide, whereas the processes of gentrification and commodification of space abuse Barcelona's spatial body and its long-term residents.

Vulnerability is also a crucial element in "La ofrenda"'s exercise of postmemory, as the author revives a vulnerable moment of the past city. During the doctor's visit to Grau's apartment, Solana revisits Barcelona's past and describes the circumstances in Sant Antoni, the neighborhood where Grau and her family resided, at the beginning of the twentieth century:

> A finales del mes de mayo de 1909, los tatarabuelos de Eugènia se habían trasladado allí con hijos, trastos y deudas con la esperanza de acceder a unas comodidades imposibles de encontrar en los pisos lóbregos y diminutos de Ciutat Vella. Poco imaginaban que las calles de su nuevo barrio muy pronto se convertirían en uno de los escenarios de la Setmana Tràgica y que el humo de los incendios ennegrecería el cielo de su vida recién estrenada (131).

Although the reference is brief, it is important to analyze the author's immersion in the metropolis's past. The Setmana Tràgica was a week of combat that took place in the streets of Barcelona in 1909 after the Spanish government of Antonio Maura recruited hundreds of Catalans to fight in a war in colonial Morocco. Troops were needed to combat the rebellious Rif tribes that were hindering Spain's effort to establish sovereignty over northern Morocco. The colonial enterprise was ostracized by working-class Catalans, since as mentioned by Aránzazu Ascunce Arenas, "there was an option to pay one's way off the list" (66). Politicians and businessmen were able to pay for their children to avoid conscription, and for this reason, "el servei militar al Marroc prenia la forma d'un càstig social contra el sectors més desvalguts socialment i econòmicament" (Martínez Fiol 15-16).

While this unfair situation started the conflict, the Setmana Tràgica was also influenced by the social, economic, and cultural tensions of the 1898 Spanish colonial crisis, and the enlargement of Barcelona's urban area and diversification of the city's population (Martínez Fiol 9).[53] Around the turn of the twentieth century the metropolis started to shift from an industrial economic base to one with a growing service sector. The right wing, Catalanist and monarchic

[53] In 1898 the United States declared war on Spain after the internal explosion of a US ship in Havana harbor, participating from that moment on in the Cuban War of independence (1895-1898). After losing the war, Spain was forced to declare Cuba's independence and hand Puerto Rico and the Philippines to the United States, which were the last colonies Spain still had in America.

political party of la Lliga Regionalista (1898-1901) initiated this new approach, which later on was supported by Solidaritat Catalana (1906-1909), a coalition of right and left wing parties united by their support for Catalan nationalism. For these political parties, building a strong Catalan nation was directly related to the development of a perfect, exemplary city. In a strategy of remodeling that was similar to the one developed during the 2000s, at the beginning of the twentieth century la Lliga Regionalista and Solidaritat Catalana tried to brand Barcelona as a modernist city to appeal for the bourgeoisie, the surging middle-class and intellectuals. To become that city, some of the districts such as Ciutat Vella had to be completely sanitized and remodeled (34); this sanitation included the remodeling of infrastructure and buildings but also applied to residents.[54] This cleansing of the population included low-income workers, prostitutes, and criminals that at the time resided in Ciutat Vella. It is important to note that a century later the same neighborhood would experience another process of population displacement, this time evicting or relocating long-term residents to satisfy the foreign visitor's consumption habits.

The plans to tear down their homes infuriated the lower classes, and attracted workers to socialism and anarchism, political movements that grew steadily in Barcelona throughout the twentieth century and offered a contrary perspective to the conservative, middle-class perspective of La Lliga Regionalista. During the Setmana Tràgica all of these political, urban and social tensions erupted in a week where infuriated working-class citizens rioted, constructed barracks around the city, burned churches and parochial schools, and attacked trains and other means of transportation. Most of the attacks focused on churches and convents, as many workers believed the church supported the interests of businessmen, and the dynastic political class (84-

[54] As mentioned by Joan Maragall, a Catalan poet, journalist and one of the principal intellectuals of the moment, Barcelona needed to "depurar la masa, expulsar gente mala, inutilizarla para el mal, vigilarla, impedir también propagandas criminales" (Maragall quoted in Martínez Fiol 40-41).

85). In the end, the conflict did not end the war in Morocco.[55] The Setmana Tràgica was not considered successful even by the left-wing parties and anarchists, because it did not manage to create significant political and cultural changes in society.

Solana recalls a moment that was vulnerable for the city and its inhabitants, as there were more than one hundred casualties, four hundred wounded, and two thousand arrested during the Setmana Tràgica. Additionally, the spatial body of the city was also wounded, since twenty-one churches and thirty convents were burned down during the conflict (Martínez Fiol 127). I argue that the past hurt suffered by the city is related to the wounding of Grau's body, and the grotesque scenery, with various dismembered bodies, that appears at the end of the story. The riots can also be understood as an act of resistance against the unfair treatment of the unprivileged sectors of the population. Here it is important to consider Judith Butler's assertion that vulnerability constitutes an intrinsic part of resistance: "[W]ithout being able to think about vulnerability, we cannot think about resistance, and ... by thinking about resistance, we are already under way, dismantling the resistance to vulnerability in order precisely to resist" (27). This author understands that public mobilizations against any form of power expose those who protest to possible harm (12); they hence become vulnerable. However, it is also through this deliberate exposure to power that any mobilization can be empowering and promote change (24). This connection between vulnerability and resistance can be related to the conflict of the Setmana Tràgica but it is also relevant to understanding Grau's suicide, as is clarified in the ending of "La ofrenda".

The imaginary of the Setmana Tràgica and the vulnerability that it created in the residents' body and the city's spatial body reappears at the end of the story. Returning to the plot

[55] While it caused Prime Minister Maura to resign, there were no other political changes resulting from the violence, and in fact, the military and the police increased repression after the incidents (Ascunce Arenas 66).

of the story, months after examining Grau's body during an autopsy, the forensic doctor is in a poor physical state. Physically, he is no longer attractive: he does not eat or sleep much, he has purple circles under his eyes, and his hair has become grey, almost white (Solana 139). His external appearance replicates now Grau's exterior ugliness. Mentally, he is obsessed with Grau's body: he has unsuccessfully been trying to find a corpse that reproduces Grau's internal perfection. For this reason "trabajaba incluso más horas que antes" and "asistía en silencio a todas las autopsias" (139-40).

One night the doctor finds himself alone at the morgue with several bodies. Solana explains that "hacía días que no paraban de llegar cuerpos … las neveras del sótano estaban abarrotadas de cadáveres" (140). The abundance of bodies, which is not explained in the short story and is unusual for the hospital, is the first element that connects the ending to the Setmana Tràgica, as the conflict resulted in more than a hundred casualties. Being unaccompanied, the doctor takes advantage of the many corpses at his disposal and opens them up, still looking for Grau's internal perfection. However, he does not perform well-ordered, traditional autopsies. When he is found at the morgue the next morning by the chief medical examiner the doctor is in the dark, surrounded by blood, organs and dead bodies which he has eviscerated. Solana portrays this grim scenario with the following description:

> Había cadáveres por todas partes… Había intestinos esparcidos por todos los rincones, a la manera de unas macabras serpentinas decorando una lúgubre fiesta donde los invitados eran cuerpos desmembrados y cabezas separadas de sus troncos. El hedor era insoportable, como si el mismo infierno hubiera abierto sus puertas de par en par (141).

Here the author replicates the infernal imagery she utilized during her description of the Setmana Tràgica, to depict the morgue. Whereas the conflict's description included a dark obscure Barcelona immersed in fires and black smoke covering the air, the dark morgue, the

dismembered corpses and the bodies' smell is also reminiscent of hell. Another element that connects the past city to the current city in the story is the recurrent presence of corpses, especially the female corpse, with Grau's body. Solana's focus on the cadavers is important because, apart from the many casualties that occurred during the Setmana Tràgica, attackers vandalized graves of clergy members, parading corpses through the streets and even dancing with nuns' corpses in downtown Barcelona (Ascunce Arenas 66; Cols). In fact, as can be seen in **Image 1**, several pictures that depicted the conflict focused on the presence of nuns' corpses in the streets instead of the fires, as this was one of the most macabre acts that occurred throughout the week.

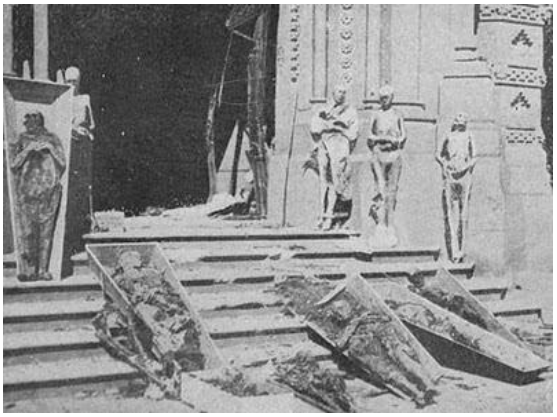

**Image 3.1**. Desecration of nuns' graves during the Setmana Tràgica

Solana recalls a time of vulnerability and resistance of the past city and connects it not only to the current city, but also to the bodies of those who live in the city, especially to the feminine body. However, it must be noted that the author focuses on portraying not the live body, but the dead female body. This element, which in the story is connected to the spatial body of the city, stands as a symbol of the ongoing urban crisis developing in Barcelona. During the last scene, there are several dead bodies surrounding the man and there is blood everywhere; this is unusual because as the narrator highlights "los muertos no sangran" (142). At this point the

narrative focuses on one particular body that the chief medical examiner recognizes: it is a beautiful pediatric nurse who worked in the hospital. The narrator indicates that prior to her death "era difícil no fijarse en aquella chica esbelta y bien proporcionada, en sus ojos claros y alegres" (142). This particularly attractive woman is the body that is bleeding, as she was alive not long ago. Naked and tied up to a table with adhesive tape and with a cotton ball covering her mouth, the pediatric nurse's body is desecrated and is missing some organs; one of them is the woman's heart, which the doctor is holding: "le pareció que aquello que el hombre sostenía entre las manos se movía rítmicamente ... Era el corazón de la chica" (142). The doctor, desperate to find the beauty of Grau's inner body, killed the most beautiful nurse in the hospital to examine her insides. He failed in his endeavor, as the narrator indicates that "había vuelto a fracasar… sabía que jamás volvería a contemplar aquella exquisita aura de proporciones armoniosas," (142-143). Similarly to Grau's suicide, the femicide committed by the doctor is another representation of women's bodily vulnerability under patriarchal society. At the same time women's vulnerability is connected to the vulnerability of the past city, through the recreation of the Setmana Tràgica imaginary in the last scene. However, this also relates to the current city, affected by the prostitution of space that operates under the same male gaze that harmed Grau and the pediatric nurse in the short story. The connection between women, specifically the female body, and the city and its historical circumstances is reminiscent of Grosz, as she affirms that "the body... is not distinct, does not have an existence separate from the city, for they are mutually defining" (248). The female body and the spatial body of the city are interconnected and share the same vulnerability under the control of patriarchy and the male gaze.

Whereas the vulnerability of women and the city is an essential element of the short story, it is important to remember Butler's considerations on this condition: "[V]ulnerability can be an incipient and enduring moment of resistance" (25). Building on these ideas, it is worth

reexamining Grau's suicide in the short story. The secretary committed suicide due to the doctor's ignorance and neglect of her while she was alive. However, her suicide can be interpreted as somewhat agentic: the woman achieves her aim after dying, and her corporeal presence becomes visible for the forensic doctor. She gains his complete attention during and after the autopsy, and shares extremely close physical contact with him during her body's examination. Dressed as a bride, wearing her best perfume and makeup, in her mind the necropsy signifies her wedding with the doctor. In fact, the pathologist supports this idea when, at the end of the procedure, still impressed by her inner beauty, he kisses her on the lips (139). Even when the vulnerability of the feminine body is evident, as Grau died only to attract a man's attention, the doctor ultimately loses his mind due to her internal perfection. Metaphorically, Grau's vulnerability can also be understood not only as resistance but also as revenge: the powerful, successful man who caused her to commit suicide lost his mind due to her suicide and will likely spend the rest of his life in jail. Grau's vulnerability can be interpreted as having political implications because she utilizes her body's vulnerability to execute her retaliation against the male gaze.

"La ofrenda" presents an exercise in urban postmemory focusing on the Setmana Tràgica, through which the author connects past resistances and vulnerabilities of the city to the current ones. In the short story the city and women are *bodies* that share an exterior/interior dichotomy. Furthermore, the image of the wounded and dead female body, which is repeated throughout the plot, mirrors the wounded and dead city due to an urban planning the narrative considers obsolete. Women and metropolis are also connected through a common history of vulnerability under patriarchy: both have suffered the objectification of their bodies by the male gaze. Research indicates that the media often depict unattainable standards of women's physical beauty and links them to their sexiness and worth (American Psychological Association quoted

in Szymanski et al. 10). The media also exerts a major role in the branding of cities, in the case of Barcelona, creating a global standard that the city strives to maintain so as to sustain its attractiveness. This marketing, which turns the city into a product for the foreign visitor, has proven unsustainable for many long-term residents. Solana connects women and the city with the intention of pointing out the prostitution of urban space occurring in Barcelona. Other elements in "La ofrenda", such as her references to tourism, gentrification, and the economic crisis are also incorporated into her criticism. However, the author's denunciation of the phenomenon focuses on the power of patriarchy and the male gaze, basic elements of society today and of the prostitution of urban space.

Through the pathologist's obsession on her internal beauty, Grau ultimately takes vengeance on the doctor's superficiality and fixation on external looks, which caused him to treat her "como a un mueble (130)". In this sense, Grau is a woman character who shows "empoderamiento femenino", a concept very commonly incorporated into femicrime (Losada Soler and Paszkiewicz 9). Crime fiction written by women, such as this short story, very often incorporates "variaciones en el concepto de las relaciones entre mujer y poder" (10). This is visible in Grau's development of agency through her bodily vulnerability. On another note, and in a more abstract interpretation of the ending, both Grau and Barcelona are empowered in the last scene, taking their revenge on a history of patriarchal repression. In the context of profound urban, economic, and political crisis, female crime fiction contemplates the city, with whom women share a history of submission to the male gaze, to remember that we were and still are vulnerable.

### 3.4. Conclusions

*Barcelona, MDS* and "La ofrenda" negotiate the prostitution of urban space through the lenses of urban postmemory. They reflect on Barcelona during the twentieth century,

remembering the historical events that most affected inhabitants and urban space throughout this period, i.e. the Setmana Tràgica, the Spanish Civil War, and the Franco dictatorship. The materials explore the Barcelona of the past connecting it to present Barcelona from the district of the Eixample. This particular location is important because the Eixample was the focus of the 1859 Pla Cerdà, one the first major urban transformations of Barcelona that has become an urbanistic signifier for the city. Choosing this particular neighborhood to set their stories, the authors indicate their intention to comment on the urban planning of the metropolis. This is further clarified in their problematization of tourism, gentrification, the economic crisis, and Barcelona landmarks, which are crucial elements in the daily lives of their characters.

Both of the narratives utilize dichotomies to divide Barcelona between past and present city, and exterior and interior metropolis. The exterior and interior metropolis is also reproduced in Grau's body, between external ugliness and internal beauty, in "La ofrenda". Their narratives connect the current city to the past city through affective devices, i.e., exploiting emotions. In *Barcelona, MDS* the characters' experiences in previous decades still haunt their present; their past feelings of sadness, fear, and suffering are similar to the ones they feel in the current city. "La ofrenda" focuses on the states of vulnerability and resistance, in the past city and in the present, and through them, connects women and current Barcelona. In this way, both the play and the short story present two crucial elements of urban postmemory exercises. First, the city is the central axis of the memories, and Barcelona is in itself the reason behind the reappropriation of the memories: Cunillé and Solana utilize urban postmemory to reformulate the current organization of the city that has harmed their characters. The prostitution of urban space is responsible, for example, for the old couple's economical struggles in *Barcelona, MDS*, which ultimately forces them to rent out rooms in their apartment. Their characters, then, represent the long-term residents of the metropolis, with whom the authors are sympathizing. Secondly, their

narratives present a nostalgic and affective narrative designed to stimulate an emotional reaction in the spectator or reader. They indicate how harmful the current urban organization is for the characters, and encourage the cultural material's recipients to reflect critically about the urban planning of the metropolis. It must be noted that Cunillé and Solana do not specify how the city should be restructured, or how residents should protest the prostitution of space. However, the analysis of their narrative proves that they defend the ending of the current model, which pleases the global visitor, and the establishment of a citizen-centered approach of shaping the city.

*Barcelona, MDS* and "La ofrenda" are not only exercises in urban postmemory, but also artifacts of historical memory. They both contribute to the historical recovery movement that started developing in the first decade of the 2000s in Spanish society, which attempts to recover Republican productions and memory. This is especially noticeable in Cunille's play, whose main protagonist is a victim of the 1938 bombings in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War. Although Solana also works with historical memory through the recollection of the Setmana Tràgica, she focuses on the feminization of space and tries to call attention to the connection between gender and spatial violence.

# Chapter 4

## Othering the City: the Immigrant Metropolis in *Biutiful* (2010) and *Barcelona. Los Vagabundos de la Chatarra* (2015)

### 4.1. Introduction

With almost twelve million foreign visitors in 2019, 5% more than the past year, Barcelona recorded this year the largest tourist activity of its history (Montilla). The city registered another record that same summer, albeit more gruesome, when there was a spike in violent assaults and burglaries. Robberies increased from 8,672 in 2018 to 10,883 in 2019, and so did violent deaths, from ten in 2018 to seventeen in 2019 (Burés). Many incidents targeted tourists, which represented 22% of total robbery victims (Carranco). One of these included a senior officer from South Korea, who died when she hit her head on the pavement after someone robbed her. Other foreign visitors were stabbed, for instance, while withdrawing money from an ATM, and walking alone at night (Sánchez; Oms). The situation became extremely worrisome for the local population, which ranked insecurity as the most significant problem for Barcelona in June 2019 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 11).

Half of the violent robberies occurred in the district of Ciutat Vella, which includes neighborhoods such as the Gothic quarter, the Raval and the Barceloneta (Burés). As mentioned in previous chapters, these neighborhoods are high traffic areas for tourists.[56] When sightseeing, tourists carry money, and therefore, typically violent perpetrators commit their robberies in the most visited areas or in public transportation such as the subway. Taking into account the

[56] After the celebration of the Olympic Games and during the early 2000s, Ciutat Vella became the focus of substantial urban alterations and rehabilitation plans that sanitized its neigborhoods, preparing them for foreign visitors. Some of these rehabilitation plans included the construction of public housing complexes, but they also involved the demolition of old apartment buildings to construct luxurious accommodations. Apart from generating urban speculation, these urban alterations created a social transformation as well, with some long-term residents leaving and others staying in the areas, enduring the higher prices and cohabiting with short-term visitors.

escalated growth of violent crimes alongside the tourism developments in these neighborhoods, I argue that the branding of the city as a commodity is responsible for the insecurity felt in Ciutat Vella. The global positioning campaigns created by the local government throughout decades were successful in marketing Barcelona as a global city, a business and technologically friendly metropolis that was also a fun, tourist destination. Unfortunately, the city became attractive not only for tourists and investors, but also for many criminals; this is a side effect of the prostitution of urban space that Barcelona has not been able to control.

Alongside the souvenir shops, chic boutiques, coworking spaces and tapas restaurants, in Ciutat Vella there is a high-presence of immigrant communities. Historically the area has been home to low-income, working, immigrant populations.[57] Although the link between tourism and the growth of insecurity in the district of Ciutat Vella is clear, the Catalan and Spanish media alongside conservative politicians and traditional sectors of the population, overlooked the tourist element and established a connection between the immigrant population and the higher criminality rates. Many accused immigrants, specifically the Menores Extranjeros no Acompañados (MENA), of perpetrating the crimes.[58] This is not a surprising stance: in 2019 the tourism industry represented 7,3% of Barcelona's GDP (Ortiz), and therefore, the metropolis economically depends on attracting visitors. It is easier to blame the immigrants, who do not conform to the sanitized gaze of the city prepared for tourist, than examining the many detrimental effects of the prostitution of urban space.

While it is true that some MENA are involved in criminal acts, as it is often the case with immigrants due to lack of regularization opportunities, only 15% of MENA participate in violent

[57] This explains the stark contrast that is felt when walking in areas such as la Rambla del Raval, where traditional halal meat establishments share the main square with luxurious hotels.
[58] The MENA are immigrants under the age of eighteen that arrive illegally to Spain without their parents. Many of them come from Morocco and Argelia. From 2017 to 2019, their arrival to Spain grew by 150% (Rodríguez Pecino).

robberies (Sánchez). Their illegal activity alone does not explain the higher criminality in Ciutat Vella. When the executive director of the Mossos d'Esquadra[59] at the time, Andreu Joan Martínez, was asked about the growth of criminality, he denied there was a security crisis and proceeded to talk about the manipulation of security politics by the media and politicians (Álvarez Albalá). Martínez was indirectly referring to statements such as the one delivered by Miquel Buch, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Catalan government until 2020, who related the *top manta* phenomenon,[60] an activity also executed by immigrants, to the rise of insecurity: "jo quan estic mirant la manta… és més fàcil per un furtador, doncs que em puguin furtar" (Europa Press). It is clear that this type of xenophobic discourses resonate with part of the population, in fact, racism has been a problematic issue in the city for decades. Starting in the nineties immigration from Asian and African countries became a visible phenomenon in Barcelona, which continued to grow during the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to Cristina Guisande, from 2000 to 2009, the Catalan foreign population increased from 181,590 to 1,184,192, mostly individuals coming from Latin America and Africa (53).

Whereas demographic data indicates a decrease in foreign population in 2011 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 13), in *Biutiful*, one of the materials analyzed in this chapter, Barcelona residents do not account for a perceptible reduction on the number of immigrants. For instance, in a scene with policeman Zanc and the protagonist of the movie, Uxbal, Zanc mentions, "Son tantos los [asiáticos] hijos de puta, que al final se van a quedar ellos con el jabugo y nosotros con el arroz" (01:17:26–01:17:32). It must be noted that Zanc's xenophobic language, although shocking, is actually reproduced by a large sector of the local population

[59] The Mossos d'Esquadra is the autonomous police force responsible for law enforcement in Catalonia.
[60] *Top manta* refers to the street selling of counterfeit goods such as handbags, sunglasses, or t-shirts. The products are usually displayed on a *manta* that can quickly be collected if the police arrive.

(Canelles 156).[61] The populations' racism is connected to the accelerated increase of the migratory phenomenon in the nineties, but also to the 2008 economic crisis. The recession profoundly affected Catalonia; years after it started, its effects were still ever-present.[62] The economic crisis must be taken into account because, as Raúl Diego Rivera Hernández points out, xenophobic fictions such as the criminalization of immigrants and the belief that they come to steal jobs from locals are myths that "prosperan cuando los países entran en recesiones económicas" (51). The mass media has also contributed to the outreach of these kinds of messages; since 1999 the press has oversized migration coming from non-European countries, referring to it as a "problem" or an "invasion" (Pedone 61).

The negative social perception of immigrants is also related to recent tragic events, such as the 2017 terrorist attack in La Rambla. Perpetrated by ISIS followers of Moroccan origin, the aggressors killed fourteen people and injured a hundred and thirty in this famous Barcelona street. After the incident, several Muslim centers of worship were attacked, and protests against Islamic communities erupted not only in Catalonia but also in the rest of Spain (González Ortega and Alberdi Bidaguren 299). These economic and social factors condition the racism some sectors of Catalan society feel towards immigrants. They also explain how right-wing political parties like VOX, whose leader Santiago Abascal has denounced the islamisation of Spain and considers that illegal immigrants contribute nothing to society, obtained 7% of the votes in the last 2021 Catalan election (Prieto).

[61] Noemí Canelles indicates that "el clima social en muchos barrios [de Barcelona] es de una marcada xenofobia" (156). The documentary *Si nos dejan* (2004), by Ana Torres, also portrays the xenophobic views of local Barcelona residents.

[62] In 2013 there was a general decrease in wages, an unemployment rate of 26,3 percent, and 26 percent of the Catalan population were living below the poverty line (Nel·lo 108).

The immigrant community is also vulnerable in the political ream. The two Spanish immigration laws, enacted in 1985 and 2000,[63] emphasize the control of immigrants and the differentiation between natives and foreigners, instead of focusing on coexisting and fostering social integration (Soriano-Miras 692– 703). These legislations must be understood within the European context; in fact, the European Economic Community (EEC) demanded Spain to formalize an immigration plan based on policing and security (692). With initiatives such as the FRONTEX[64] or the Schengen visa system,[65] the current European Union (EU) is open to the exchange and creation of capital while being "particularly fortified against immigrants" (Samatas 36).

This idea of a fortified Europe against immigrants is created on a weak moral foundation, as they are essential for the functioning of global cities like Barcelona. Many immigrants perform physically exhausting, low-wage jobs, which the rest of the population relies on, for instance, in the cleaning and construction industries. As Saskia Sassen mentions "many become key workers in the maintenance of the household and work places of the powerful who would have a bit of a crisis without these types of low-wage and often oppressed workers" (68). Due to being undocumented they accept undeclared employment, which jeopardizes their safety for very low compensations. Furthermore, most of their work goes unnoticed and it is often invisibilized. Immigrants are also instrumentalized for social and political causes, as it occurred with the violent robberies in Ciutat Vella. Even when there was no clear link between immigrants and the

[63] Although both are commonly known as *Ley de Extranjería*, the full name of the law enacted in 1985 is *Ley Orgánica 7/1985, de 1 de julio, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España*. The full name of the law enacted in 2000 is *Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social*.

[64] The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also know as FRONTEX, is an agency tasked with border control of the Schengen Area.

[65] The Schengen visa system allows citizens from the Schengen Area to be visa-exempt and reside in each other's countries. With this program, most individuals from North America and South America can stay in the Schengen Area without a visa for ninety days, while African and Asian citizens require a visa to enter any country.

growth of insecurity in the neighborhood, they served as a scapegoat to distract attention from the real issues affecting the city, such as the uncontainable growth of the tourism industry.

It must be noted that one of the strongest vulnerabilities of the immigrant community is concentrated in their body. Their skin color is the first element that differentiates them from the rest of the population. In fact, it is usually through the visual observation of their corporality that they subsequently become socially and politically vulnerable. Taking this into account, this chapter examines two materials that delve into the immigrants' lives in the city through the visual representation of their bodies and experiences. The movie and the graphic novel that I examine—*Biutiful* and *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra*—[66] reflect on the issues commented in this introduction, for instance, the use of immigrants as a scapegoat to conceal societal and economic problems, the manipulation of mass media, and their link with Barcelona's tourist enterprise, that despises them but also advances through their oppression.

I propose that the authors denounce the need for an urban and social transformation in the city, which includes immigrants as residents, with the same rights and responsibilities as locals. Through exploring the spaces transited by immigrants, filled with misery and suffering, and comparing them to the order and lack of conflict presented in the tourist areas, the authors comment on the commodification of space and how it contributes to the invisibilization of the collective. They also emphasize the immigrants' bodily and spatial vulnerability in Barcelona, and highlight that the prostitution of space develops through the use of their bodies. For example, *Biutiful* represents enslaved Asian immigrants creating counterfeit items that target tourists, and *Los vagabundos* portrays an illegal immigrant that participated in the construction of the subway, a basic mode of transportation in Barcelona. In this way, their labor and bodily force contribute directly to the development of the tourist enterprise of the city.

[66] From this time forward, I will refer to *Barcelona. Los Vagabundos de la Chatarra* as *Los vagabundos.*

It must be noted that the authors comment on the immigrant experience from a privileged position: Alejandro González Iñárritu, author of *Biutiful,* is a renowned Mexican filmmaker, and Jorge Carrión and Sagar, creators of *Los vagabundos* are white men, Catalan citizens. Therefore, their life conditions do not replicate the vulnerability that their works reflect. While they are utilizing a medium to represent the immigrants' struggles, both narratives are a representation of the immigrants' lives, i.e. a representation of the other, but they do not constitute a direct testimony. Here it is important to remember Gayatri Spivak, who reasoned that the subaltern cannot speak, especially so through narratives established in the context of imperialism or colonial discourse (283; 271).[67] By converting their testimony into a movie and a graphic novel, they own the immigrants' voice, i.e., they have the power to manipulate their experience and perpetuate their invisibility. Nevertheless, it is worth examining how *Biutiful* and *Los vagabundos* characterize the urban conflict in Barcelona through the experiences of immigrants, which are usually not the focus of narratives denouncing the prostitution of urban space.[68] Moreover, if the subaltern does not have a voice, it is important to analyze the actual capability of generating agency for the collective through representations created by privileged, western subjects.

### 4.2. The "Two Barcelonas" and Gore Capitalism: The Immigrant Body as a Space of Conflict in *Biutiful* [69]

[67] The term *subaltern* designates marginalized sectors of society, lower classes, and colonial populations. It was first utilized by philosopher Antonio Gramsci.

[68] Out of all the materials examined in previous chapters, only *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* (2007) by Lluïsa Cunillé contains an immigrant character.

[69] This section is based on an article that I published in *Catalan Review*, n. 32, titled "Les "dues barcelones" i el seu capitalisme gore: el cos de l'immigrant com a espai de tensió a *Biutiful* (Iñárritu, 2010)" (2018).

Picture-perfect Barcelona awakens with its beaches and luxury hotels welcoming the new day from the Mediterranean Sea's shoreline. Suddenly this peaceful image disintegrates when several bodies appear floating in the sea: they are dead Asian workers, which were thrown into the water hours earlier. Eventually the bodies return to seashore, terrorizing globalized Barcelona, its media and its population. In this shocking scene, *Biutiful* (2010) concentrates its profound critique of Barcelona's prostitution of urban space and the savage consequences that this phenomenon produces on the immigrants' bodies.

**Image 4.1.** Dead Asian workers (1:51:53-1:52:35).

In this section I examine the movie *Biutiful*, by Mexican filmmaker Iñárritu, and how it explores the figure of the subaltern in connection to urban space. The film interprets the immigrants' body as a space where the systemic inequalities of the global economy present in Barcelona are reflected. *Biutiful* showcases the detrimental bodily effects that neoliberal urban development can provoke especially in the minorities' bodies, such as mental problems, physical abuse, and deadly illnesses. In this sense, the movie's reflection is comparable to the concept of *gore capitalism*, which indicates that globalized and capitalized societies contribute to the dehumanization and mistreatment of their populations' bodies (Valencia 16). Barcelona's urban space, especially its landmarks, are portrayed as merely a façade, ideologically narrated, produced and reduced for a global audience (Illas 12; Resina 215). I propose that the director

interprets the body of the immigrant as a space of tension that violently reproduces the social injustices created by the prostitution of urban space. The movie also indicates that the triumphant and globalized representation of the city is built and nurtured through the body of the Other. Similarly to the authors analyzed in previous chapters, Iñárritu represents this urban and social conflict by dividing the metropolis in "two Barcelonas": the "tourist city" and the "marginal city". I argue that this partition is illusory and essentializes a very heterogeneous city. Nevertheless, I understand it as a resource to emphasize the social consequences of commodifiying Barcelona, a process that has harmed immigrants as much as local residents.

*Biutiful* is a psychological drama whose protagonist is Uxbal, interpreted by Javier Bardem. Uxbal supports himself by arranging work opportunities for illegal Asian and African immigrants, and by providing physic services, as he has the ability to speak to the deceased. He lives in a small, deteriorated apartment with his two children, Ana and Mateo. He is separated from his wife Marambra, who is a prostitute and has severe mental illness. Very early on, the viewer learns that Uxbal has prostate cancer. With his death nearing, he realizes that he needs someone to look after his children. Therefore he asks Ige, wife of Ekweme, one of the African immigrants that Uxbal helps, to care for Ana and Mateo when he is gone. In the end, it is not clear if Ige accepts his request or returns to Africa with his husband, who is deported. The last scene of the movie focuses on Uxbal's death. While dying, he transports himself to a snowy landscape. In this space he shares a cigarette with his father, who fled Spain during the Franco dictatorship and died shortly after, while they talk about the sea.

Although the main plot focuses on the last months of Uxbal's life, *Biutiful* also contains a strong urban critique. The film portrays the elements of conflict that Barcelona, as an international object of consumption, continually strives to conceal, such as the misery suffered

by immigrants in the city, accentuated by the economic crisis of 2008. The director focuses on this urban controversy, emphasizing how the immigrant community experiences it as a spatial war, in order to challenge the vision of commodified, glamorous Barcelona. Moreover, Iñárritu also envisions creating a social response in the viewers, who should question their active participation in the neoliberal system. Iñárritu presents few possibilities for the immigrants to escape the prostitution of urban space that oppresses and enslaves them, however, the film does provide some outlets of hope, for example, in Ana and Ige. Uxbal is optimistic that both women will keep his legacy alive once he is gone. Taking into account that Uxbal is a representative of the city throughout the movie, I propose that the protagonist's hope on these female bodies is a metaphor, which indicates the need to create an alternative manner to gaze at Barcelona. While Ana and Ige symbolize hope and survival, Uxbal, a man, signifies disease and death. I understand that Uxbal symbolizes the decaying male gaze, which has historically controlled the organization of metropolises. *Biutiful* ends with the protagonist dying, just as the current urban model should also be eliminated. The film also proposes a sense of future in the concept of immigration as a global movement, and in the Mediterranean Sea, although all these elements are problematized and cannot be analyzed only through their positive counterparts.

*Biutiful* has received significant academic attention; for instance, scholars such as Benjamin Fraser and María del Mar Azcona have commented on the film's urban critique of global, modern and capitalist Barcelona. Other researchers such as Kathleen Honora Connolly have examined the film's supernatural plot and how it links the current immigration waves with the exiles of the Spanish Civil War. While I establish a dialogue with these authors, my analysis focuses on a different interpretation, which draws from cultural, cinema and urban studies to examine the immigrant's body in connection with space. Another element that separates my

analysis from previous studies is that I investigate how the movie creates spaces of hope, relating feminine bodies with a less violent approach to the city's urban organization.

The host of the immigrant spaces or the "marginal city" in *Biutiful* is Uxbal, as the spectator has access to the plots of the rest of the characters through him. This is a format well known by Iñárritu, who used it in previous films like *Amores Perros* (2000) or *Babel* (2006) (Gutiérrez de Terán 1159). Uxbal is a versatile protagonist. It is clear that this character represents an intermediary or boundary between two worlds (Azcona 3; Connolly 558). Uxbal connects the spectator with the immigrant city, unknown Barcelona, and also provides undeclared work to African and Asian immigrants in the capitalist city. In addition, he maintains an agreement with his police friend, Zanc, which allows immigrants to work in certain areas close to the city center.

Uxbal also functions as a liaison in his ability to communicate with the dead. According to Connolly, his supernatural capabilities intensify the ethical and moral dimension of the film, as most spirits to whom Uxbal provides entry into the other side require to be exonerated (553). In fact, he is also portrayed as a ghost in various scenes, and due to his illness, he will need to be exonerated at the end of the film. As Connolly points out, Uxbal's esoteric ability creates a connection between the Republican fighters, murdered during the Spanish Civil War, and the current living conditions of immigrants (546). *Biutiful* can be interpreted then as a work of historical memory, a sample of "the horrors of exploitation and … the bulldozing of the past, whether it is grandfathers who were exiled due to political persecution, or those political and economic refugees now living in Barcelona" (559). It must be noted, however, that this aspect of the film is supplementary to the rest of the plot. For this reason, the film's approach to historical

memory may be overlooked by a viewer unfamiliar with the Spanish Civil War, and the Spanish cinematic tradition of exploring the conflict through the horror genre.[70]

With reference to this point, Uxbal's obsession with the transcendence of memory is crucial. This can be seen in the last conversation he maintains with his daughter before he dies, in which he asks her to remember him. It is also clear in the centrality his late father has in the plot, who was exiled to Mexico during the Franco dictatorship. However, the most obvious connection between the Republican fighters and the immigrants affected by Barcelona's prostitution of urban space is established through their corporeality, which is unfairly violated. During the Civil War and throughout the dictatorship, Republican sympathizers were tortured, incarcerated, and eliminated due to their political ideas. In *Biutiful*, immigrant bodies are slaved, abused, and killed solely because of their Asian or African origin, which condemns them to a life of misery in Barcelona. In both cases, their corporality is wounded for unjust and discriminatory reasons. Taking all of this into consideration, the protagonist's temporal and spatial fluidity emphasizes his connection with injured bodies that cannot achieve eternal rest, whether it is due to the Civil War or the trauma of surviving in a city as an immigrant.

Apart from acting as a boundary between the tourist and the immigrant city, and the world of the living and the dead, Uxbal is also in an intermediary position because he can be considered an immigrant, since he is a charnego (Azcona 8; Connolly 550).[71] It is clear that Uxbal is an immigrant or descendant of immigrants from southern Spain due to his limited use of Catalan. When he does speak the language, he displays a strong Spanish accent. Although the

[70] At the turn of the new millenium, the Civil War became a recurrent cinematic subject in Spain. Many movies such as *El espinazo del diablo* (2001) or *El laberinto del fauno* (2006) explored the conflict using the horror genre. As Xavier Aldana Reyes explains, "Horror's shocking and often fantastic language has the capacity to allegorize historical trauma particularly well and even to write back against the reigning social discourse" (24).

[71] *Charnego* is a term that refers to Spanish immigrants or descendants of immigrants, usually from the South of Spain, that have not adapted culturally and linguistically to Catalonia.

term *charnego* was mainly used derogatorily during the sixties, when immigration from Andalusia to Catalonia accelerated, Teresa Vilarós points out that "ghostly specters [of the charnego] ... kept and keep haunting the deterritorialized scenery of the post-industrial age " (239). In other words, the identity differences of the charnegos (or their descendants) are still present in Catalan society. Due to Uxbal's non-Catalan origin, as Connolly states, "he occupies a subaltern position" (550). Therefore, even when he does not share the same living conditions as the Asians and Africans surviving in Barcelona, his non-Catalan identity, which is also not completely Spanish, is a point of contact with immigrants. Uxbal's identity contains a similar hybridity to the one immigrants feel, and for this reason, he opposes the xenophobic views of his brother or Zanc.[72]

While I interpret that Iñárritu planned to separate Uxbal from a traditional Catalan identity, it must be noted that the director does not focus on this aspect of the character, and he is also not interested in exploring Catalan identity or the Catalan language. In fact, since these ideas are hardly explored in the film, Uxbal's charnego identity might go unnoticed by a global audience or even by a Spanish viewer. In this manner, although the movie criticizes the marketing and commodification of Barcelona for the foreign visitor, *Biutiful* follows a similar strategy simplifying the protagonist's identity to make the movie more easily consumable, especially for non-Spanish viewers. This can be interpreted as a reference to commercial products such as movies actively participating in urban tourism campaigns, or it can be related to cinematic constraints like total movie length, and time allowed to develop subplots.

The character's fluidity is crucial for my analysis, especially his identification with the immigrant community. Uxbal does not only provide work for the immigrants but he is a

[72] Abril Trigo mentions that the immigrant is always in "tierra de nadie", experiencing a "sensación de extrañamiento y disociación psicológica que hace que ... se sienta siempre en tránsito, suspendido entre dos mundos" (27).

charnego, i.e., he is partially an immigrant himself. Therefore, his body becomes subject to the savage consequences of the prostitution of urban space. This can be seen in a scene where the police beat up Uxbal, after he defends a group of immigrants that were being chased for selling counterfeit products in a tourist area. However, the most obvious bodily manifestation of Barcelona's urban neoliberalism in Uxbal's body is his violent cancer. In this way, Uxbal carries the weight of branded, global Barcelona upon his shoulder, and he receives the violence inherent to the prostitution of urban space on his body as much as the rest of the immigrants. Moreover, since Uxbal introduces the city to the viewer —he acts as a Barcelona representative—, I argue that both the character and the city suffer the consequences of the neoliberal cancer, which is an outcome of the prostitution of urban space.

Although Uxbal is an intermediary for the collective and offers to help them, he also exploits them. His function as a bridge between the "tourist city" and the "marginal city" introduces immigrants to the capitalist system that will violate their bodies. Another example of Uxbal's accountability in the immigrants' exploitation is the death of the Asian workers, which occurs after he buys them cheap heaters that operate incorrectly. Thus, while Uxbal believes he is supporting the immigrants —during the film he repeats "Yo no les exploto, les ayudo"— his participation in the neoliberal system that destroys minorities' bodies is evident. He is an ambivalent and contradictory character, who helps lost spirits find their way to eternal rest but also directs immigrants to the practices that bring them closer to violence, or even death. With this in mind, the film can also be interpreted as a critique to the viewers and their role as capitalist consumers. Whereas spectators may not feel responsible for the exploitation depicted in the movie, similarly to Uxbal, they actively participate in the system that creates it. According to Azcona, during the promotion of *Biutiful* Iñárritu repeated the slogan "todos somos Uxbal" at

various events, “to claim that we are all part and not just innocent victims of a system that is eating us up” (11). This commentary highlights the moral and ethical responsibility that Iñárritu places on the viewer for the metropolis portrayed in the film.

If Uxbal is the main character in *Biutiful*, Barcelona can be considered the co-star of the film (Fraser, “A Biutiful City” 21). The urban plot of the film divides the city in “two Barcelonas”: the city that Iñárritu represents as real, and the tourist city. Concerning this division, Benjamin Fraser indicates that it represents the “contraste histórico entre la Barcelona Antigua y el ensanche urbano diseñado por Ildefons Cerdà en el siglo XIX” (Fraser, “El cine” 269). Undeniably, the division of the city is partly inspired by the metropolis’ urban reality, but unlike Fraser, I consider that the film focuses on the urban alterations that happened in the last fifty years. As mentioned in previous chapters, the prostitution of urban space has its foundation in the 1992 Olympic Games. This event monumentalized and monetized the metropolis and created a global image of a city whose urban spaces were neglected during decades. Since the Olympic renovation was deemed successful, the local government remained open to receiving external capital and fostering the growth of the tourism industry. This established an economic model dependent on external investors and foreign capital. The contrast between tourist and marginal city in *Biutiful* represents a dramatic interpretation of these urban dynamics.

The filmmaker delimits the boundaries between tourist and marginal Barcelona with different devices, such as the color scheme of the film. Mar Inestrillas explains that many scenes in the movie were modified through blue and red filters, especially the sequences filmed in the immigrant working neighborhoods. Blue and red are complementary colors, and according to Inestrillas, they represent pessimistic moods and tragedy respectively. This saturated color combination “consigue desplazar la popular lujosa y flamante imagen turística de Barcelona” and

"radicaliza aún más los temas fundamentales de la película: la marginalidad, el fatalismo, la tragedia y la muerte" (163-164).

Apart from the movie's color scheme, Iñárritu utilizes the order of the film's scenes to create a stark contrast between tourist and marginal Barcelona. For instance, there is a sequence that starts with Uxbal talking to a man, whom he has helped communicate with his deceased son, in a narrow, dark street of the marginal city. In the next scene, the film completely transforms the landscape and showcases an attractive panoramic view of the metropolis, illuminated at night. Moreover, the director also employs camera movements to represent the "two Barcelonas". While Uxbal is undergoing chemotherapy treatment, a panoramic sequence begins, moving horizontally from the Sagrada Familia and the Agbar Tower, tourists' landmarks, to the hospital in the marginal neighborhood where Uxbal lives. In this scene, Uxbal's vulnerable body is connected with the urban space of the city, just as sick with neoliberal cancer as the character.

**Image 4.2**. Sequence where the camera travels from the Sagrada Família and the Agbar Tower to the hospital where Uxbal is undergoing chemotherapy (1:03:35-1:03:58).

The panoramic views shown in the film are opposite to the constant walking that the immigrants and Uxbal do in the streets of Barcelona. These two elements are relatable to the roles of the walker and the voyeur, proposed by Michel De Certeau. De Certeau explains that "spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities" and the walker "actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge" (98). Based on De Certeau's ideas, Iván Villarmea Álvarez explains that panoramic views and the role of the voyeur "hold a position of power ... they can rule the city from a distance, without actually experiencing it" (26). Considering this, the panoramic views in the aforementioned scenes represent the voyeur role and globalized Barcelona, moved by capital investments created thousands of kilometers away from the city. Conversely, Uxbal and the immigrants that stroll the city daily, who embody real Barcelona, perform the walker role.

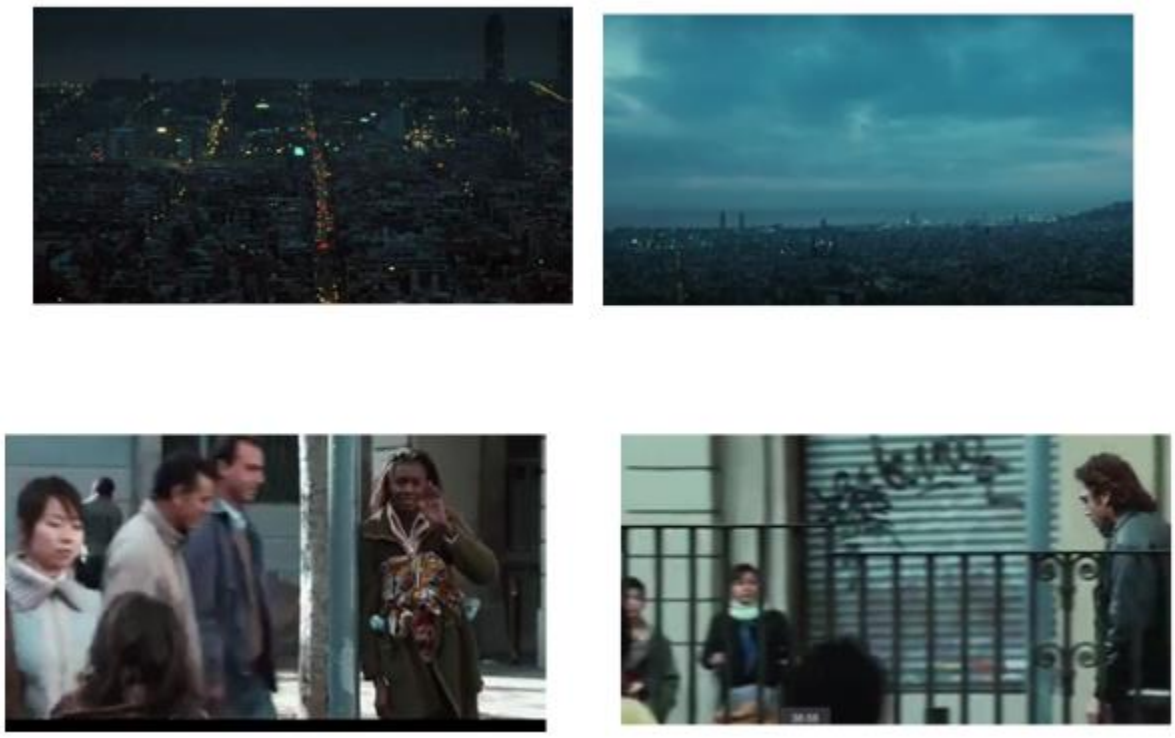

**Image 4.3.** Panoramic views of Barcelona (0:47:41-0:47:43, 1:33:36-1:33:38),

Ige and Uxbal walking in urban space (1:59:55-1:59:59, 0:39:12-0:39:15).

One of the first moments of conflict in *Biutiful* also refers to the "two Barcelonas" dichotomy, when several policemen chase a group of African immigrants led by the character Ekwene. The group is hunted down because they were showcasing their products in the center of the "tourist city", an area where the immigrants cannot sell, as it is located outside the agreement that Uxbal maintains with the police. After the chase, the police attack Ekweme and he loses consciousness. Uxbal, who participates in the conflict, is imprisoned and beaten up because he tried to defend the Africans. This sequence portrays how transferring the immigrant body from "marginal Barcelona" to "tourist Barcelona" causes violence, especially on the foreigner body. As Saskia Sassen points out, the foreign body in spaces like metropolises is characterized as a "carrier of the violation of the law and of the corresponding punishment" (2). In the case of unauthorized immigrants, their presence in any space can be deemed illegal. Their corporality disrupts governmental regulations, and it is also through their own body that they are punished, by eliminating them with expulsions and detentions. For instance, after the chase sequence, Ekweme is deported to Africa because he emphasized his illegal corporality in a tourist area. It must be noted that the immigrants in *Biutiful* carry not only the violation of the law in their bodies, but they are also carriers of illness and abuse. This is notable with Uxbal, whose corporality connects the immigrant body with the sick, cancerous body.

In regards to these types of scenes, Fraser explained that *Biutiful* might frustrate viewers, as the film does not represent the global and cinematic Barcelona to which the spectator is accustomed ("A Biutiful City" 23). Certainly, *Biutiful* Barcelona is a conflicted, violent city, powered by the corporeality of immigrants, and in general, it is difficult to consume. Instead of representing the internationally known Barcelona brand, the director creates a dark scenario, in which the spectator feels uncomfortable and saddened by the tragedy, death and abuse that the

immigrants endure. The city of Iñárritu is very different to the one presented in recent films such as *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), by Woody Allen. In this movie, Allen portrays the metropolis like a colorful showcase of emblematic works by Antoni Gaudí, art galleries, and visits to restaurants with constant background flamenco music. Allen reproduces only one of the many narratives developing currently in Barcelona, the one prepared for the tourist gaze, while Iñárritu produces a more critical approach to the city and complicates the "tourist Barcelona" representation. In reference to this, Fraser commented that "the most notable or recognizable public spaces of Barcelona, if they appear at all in the film, are portrayed only as 'sites of conflict'" ("A Biutiful City" 23). While I partially agree with this idea, the statement that tourist Barcelona does not appear much in the film, also repeated by Azcona (7), must be evaluated. The recognizable spaces of the city play a leading role in *Biutiful*. Although the film does not focus on the residents living in the tourist areas, when they appear, they are critical: Iñárritu utilizes panoramic views of landmark Barcelona to create the contrast with the "marginal city". Moreover, although several plots develop outside of the "tourist city", many of the visual devices included by Iñárritu, such as the panoramic views I have already mentioned, function as a reminder of the perpetual vigilance, pressure and weight of the prostitution of urban space on the population, especially on the immigrants' corporeality. Thus, the filmmaker requires a strong presence of the "two Barcelonas" to create the contrast that gives meaning to the film.

It is important to note that Iñárritu essentializes Barcelona by showcasing only the "tourist city" and its supposed counterpoint, the "city of the excluded". Cristina Carrasco also commented on this simplification of urban space, indicating that *Biutiful* minimizes the complexity of Barcelona's space (108). For instance, the Raval neighborhood is one of the most marginalized areas of Barcelona and one of the inspirations of the "marginal city" in *Biutiful*. At

the same time, it has become "one of the most bourgeois neighborhoods" (101). Real estate speculation transformed the identity of a historically poor, working class-neighborhood: new luxury apartments and cultural facilities have attracted the middle-class but have forced many long-term neighbors to abandon the area (Díaz and Ortiz 405). Taking into account the heterogeneity of Barcelona's urban space, dividing the city between a tourist and a marginal metropolis is unrealistic. Both immigrants and local residents cross the fluid boundaries of tourist and marginal cities on a daily basis.

Another point that should be discussed in Fraser's statement is that "tourist Barcelona" is not the only area of conflict in *Biutiful*. In the "marginal city" the Asian workers die due to the broken heaters, an Asian boss is killed by his lover, and an incident of gender violence occurs between Uxbal and his wife. Taking this into account, conflict does not concentrate in certain urban spaces but it develops in immigrant bodies. These bodies, which also act as a space, gather extreme tension as a result of maintaining the globalized city with their corporeality. In this regard, Elizabeth Grosz has studied the relationship between the body and the city. This author states that, when the body comes into contact with the city environment, "[it] is transformed ... urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body" (242). That is, the body is rewritten interacting with urban space, in the same way that the city is modified with alterations initiated by its inhabitants (248).

In the case of immigrants, their corporality is unprotected from a political, social and legal perspective. For this reason, while their bodies maintain global Barcelona, they become easy targets for the violence and abuse inherent to the neoliberal system that the city has adapted. The tension of the "Two Barcelonas" contradictory narratives concentrates on sick, beaten and enslaved bodies, represented respectively by Uxbal, the Africans, and the Asians. The system's

barbarity falls especially upon the Asians, who lose their lives in the underground factory where they are exploded. At this point, it must be noted that Uxbal decides to buy the cheap heaters that kill the Asians because he needs the rest of the money to provide for his children. It is because of the 2008 economic crisis, initiated by global neoliberal dynamics, that Uxbal needs to save money to feed his family. Therefore, even when Uxbal unwittingly initiated the unfortunate accident, the economic conditions that developed in Spain after the recession are also behind the death of the Asians.

Similarly to *La extranjera,* the documentary analyzed in chapter two, *Biutiful*'s commentary on neoliberalism and its bodily effects presents many parallels with the term "gore capitalism", which Sayak Valencia describes as "prácticas capitalistas que se sustentan en la violencia sobregirada y la crueldad especializada" (17). The body and its capacity to receive the system's violence are essential to the concept (195).[73] According to Valencia, the processes of gore capitalism "inciden sobre los cuerpos de todos aquellos que forman parte del devenir minoritario, que es en donde esta violencia explícita recae" (19). This is related to the movie because, in *Biutiful*, the immigrant body is impacted violently by the city's capitalist practices; this can be seen, for example, in Uxbal's cancer and in the death of the Asian workers.

I interpret the Asian immigrants' plot as the major representation of gore capitalism in the movie. After the accident, the Asians' boss throws the cadavers into the Mediterranean Sea, but instead of sinking, the bodies return to the tourist beaches. It is important to explore this scene in further detail because it is the only time in the film when the inhabitants reflect on their neoliberal practices, especially once the shocking images reach the media. At this point, idyllic

[73] Valencia indicates that gore capitalism develops at border areas in third-world countries, however, she also explains that the phenomenon "se observa en las sociedades primermundistas ... lo que está ocurriendo en el Tercer Mundo [es] un panorama de la suerte en la que se desenvolverá el Primer Mundo futuro, dada las lógicas globales del capitalismo" (194).

Barcelona suddenly becomes carcinogenic, *biutiful,* for once faced with the cruel reality behind the processes that fuel the prostitution of the city. These types of events usually do not come to the public's attention, as society does not question the economic dynamics that enslave and mistreat immigrants. Antonio Miguel Bañón explains that media outlets focus on immigration either to document large immigrant arrivals or to portray events that negatively involve a foreigner (90). For this reason, the difficulties that immigrants experience when settling in a new country are often made invisible for the population, with the exception of few non-commercial films or literature. The media's power also facilitates that, when the immigrant body becomes visible, it is usually in a manipulated context, far from the original (91).

*Biutiful* portrays the difficulty to escape capitalism and its violence, a commentary also mentioned by Valencia (195). At the same time, both this author and Iñárritu indicate ways to resist the system. Valencia highlights the existence of "fisuras del sistema" through critique, maladjustments, and disobedience to power structures (200). However, she explains that resistance to capitalism will only emerge when society stops legitimizing violence, especially in mass media channels, where it is naturalized and invisibilized simultaneously (197-198). I agree with Valencia's reasonings on resistance outlets that can oppose the system. Although modest, with time, these strategies might become the seed that opens the way to future economic and social systems. Returning to the film, while *Biutiful*'s main message is pessimistic, Iñárritu examines the concepts of resistance and hope in its characters. Surprisingly, some of them imagine positive future developments in their lives even when confronted with the barbarity of Barcelona's gore capitalism.[74]

[74] As mentioned in chapter two, gore capitalism and the prostitution of urban space are similar processes because they are directly related to globalization and neoliberalism. Both are also based on the consumption of bodies (a spatial body, in the case of the prostitution of urban space), and subject populations to different forms of violence.

For instance, *Biutiful* explores the ideas of hope and resistance in the female characters of Ige and Ana. Uxbal envisions Ige, partner of Ekwene, one of the African immigrants deported after the police chase, as a space for survival for his children. Whilst Uxbal is terminally ill, Ige takes the children to school, cleans the apartment and is the only hope for Uxbal: his wife is bipolar and cannot take care of the children. In fact, before dying, the protagonist asks Ige to take care of his kids. Ige plays a similar role to Ana, the protagonist's daughter. Uxbal begs Ana to remember him when he is no longer there; she is, then, a future vessel for his legacy to continue existing. These characters, although opposed in age, social roles and origin, are complementary (adult/girl, mother/daughter, immigrant/Barcelonan), and both are portrayed as spaces for the future to maintain Uxbal's memory alive.

Within a savage neoliberal system that affects even Uxbal's son,[75] these women are able to escape the city's tension and conflict. Since Uxbal acts as representative of the city, I argue that the protagonist's hope on female bodies is connected to a reflection on the city's urban model. Metaphorically, the resistance and hope located on female corporeality refers to the need to create alternative narratives to understand the city from a less violent approach. Through the characters of Ana and Ige, and the hopeful perspectives that Uxbal places on them, the movie indicates the necessity to incorporate a feminine view for the transformation of urban space in the city. It is worth mentioning that whilst Ige and Ana represent resistance and hope for the future, bedridden Uxbal signifies death and disease. I interpret this character as a symbol for the dying male gaze, which has proven to be unsatisfactory to organize Barcelona. The death of the main character is also significant in this regard, and further clarifies the film's critique to the current urban model.

[75] Marambra physically abuses him two times.

It must be noted that the hope projected unto these women contains several limitations. First, it is problematic that the concept of hope is in both cases initiated from a male body towards women, as this implies the passivity of female corporeality and a masculine tendency to control it.[76] Moreover, whereas Uxbal is optimistic about Ige and Ana's future, the film advances that their lives in the city will be difficult. During the movie, Ige considers the possibility of returning to Senegal. If she decides to leave Barcelona, Ana and Mateo will not have a secure future with Marambra, who suffers from mental problems. On the other hand, even if Ige stays, her future in the metropolis will be complicated, especially as an illegal immigrant with two children that do not belong to her.[77] Therefore, Uxbal's projections for his kids have limited possibilities of actually occurring. In a metaphorical interpretation, the gloomy future expected for Uxbal's children could be a reference to the uncertainty and pessimistic outlook that Iñárritu envisions for the city's urban development in the upcoming years.

In addition to these female spaces, the movie also proposes immigration as a global movement like an outlet of resistance to the violent capitalism of Barcelona. In regards to this idea, Uxbal's desire to be remembered by his daughter —"Acuérdate de mí, por favor" (02:07:23–02:07:27)— is represented with a ring, which Uxbal gives to Ana. This is the wedding ring that the protagonist used to propose to Marambra, and it contains a strong symbolism regarding immigration. It was his father, who immigrated to Mexico during the Franco dictatorship, who bought the ring. Marambra wore it during their marriage, and now Ana will own it, the daughter of a family marked by immigration. In a different scene also involving Ana, the camera focuses on a drawing she did, which is hanging on Uxbal's fridge. In it, the girl

[76] This is also an idea that reappears in the film when Uxbal and his brother visit a brothel. In there, the men in the audience objectify and monetarily control the female body.
[77] It is also important to consider that Uxbal imposes Ige to an unwanted motherly role by entrusting her with his children.

illustrated the trip to the Pyrenees that her family planned for her birthday; on the paper, she wrote "Pirineus is biutiful" (01:45:25–01:45:30). The use of English, the adjective *beautiful* and the reference to an area known to be a geographical border between France and Spain refer to the movement and the identity of the immigrant, who is in many occasions suspended between two worlds. In this way, it can be considered that Ana's drawing portrays immigration in positive, creative and hopeful terms.

*Biutiful* showcases several examples of the immigrants' creative capability. "Marginal Barcelona", Uxbal's neighborhood, is full of ethnic shops with signs written in foreign languages.[78] Through modifying urban space, these immigrant establishments illuminate the streets, make their presence visible, and create a sense of community and identity for the neighborhood. The constant walking of the characters also showcases their intention of creating their own narratives in urban space. Even when these strategies help immigrants feel comfortable and become resilient, similarly to female corporeality, this is not the predominant reading of immigration in the film. As I have already demonstrated, *Biutiful* presents the concept of immigration mostly in pessimistic terms, as a representation of an inescapable and miserable subalternity.

The sea is another problematic element in the movie. Regarding the sea, Fraser comments that it symbolizes "[an] escape from the spatial territorialism of advanced capitalism" ("A Biutiful City" 27). This can be seen in several scenes, in which the characters refer to the sea in their conversations as an exit. In fact, this element opens and closes the film. It is part of the dialogue that appears at the beginning and ending of the movie, between Uxbal and his father, while Uxbal is dying, or entering another reality: "aquí antes no había nada. Solo agua,

[78] Uxbal's neighborhood is formed with shots of Badalona, Santa Coloma, and the Raval. All of these spaces have marginal areas and present a higher rate of immigrant population.

salada"(03:44-03:48; 02:16:38–02:16:44). Visually Iñárritu created several references to the sea, for instance, in the constant dark blue tones of the movie, and in the images of marine animals and boats that appear in many scenes.

These references to water must be analyzed in connection with the visual absence of the Mediterranean Sea (Fraser, "A Biutiful City" 26). The only scene centered on the sea is the one with the Asian bodies reaching the coast. However, in this scene the sea is violated, not only by the corpses but also by the presence of luxury hotels and tourist attractions on shore. The Mediterranean Sea can no longer be conceived as a space of nature; this element was unable to escape the city's prostitution and its neoliberal cancer. Taking all of these into account, the sea is another hopeful space that, at the same time, presents dark and macabre connotations. While the film conceptualizes the "two Barcelonas" clearly delimited, Iñárritu's spaces of hope stand out because of their complexity. The tourist narrative of the city and Barcelona's gore capitalism does not allow for these spaces of future to flourish, and for these reasons, they are represented as utopian escapes for the characters.

In this section I have examined how *Biutiful* portrays immigrant corporality, connecting it to the current urban model in Barcelona. Unlike authors such as Fraser and Azcona, I argue that tourist Barcelona has a prominent role in the movie: it is very necessary to create a counterpoint for the marginal metropolis. The dialogue between the "two Barcelonas", with opposing discourses, values and populations, creates conflict that concentrates in the immigrant body. As a result, the immigrant corporality, upon which the city is built and commodified, is often abused. For the viewer, the introductory element to this urban conflict is Uxbal; he is the perfect entry point due to his identity, spatial, and corporeal ambivalence. Uxbal acts as a frontier in many senses, and for this reason, his body becomes trapped between the conflict of "tourist" and

"marginal" Barcelona, in the form of a cancer that ends up killing him. It is important to emphasize his illness and his role as a representative for the city, because as much as him, the city is also sick from its neoliberal practices. Although Barcelona and its historical development as a city have not yet died, *Biutiful* warns of a pessimistic future for the metropolis within its current urban approach.

I propose that the contrast between "two Barcelonas" is essentialist and illusory. It is worth recalling that, as mentioned by Joan Ramon Resina, Barcelona has been obsessed with its urban renewal since the nineteenth century (200); examples include the Universal Exhibitions of 1888 and 1929, the 1992 Olympics and the 2004 Fòrum Universal de les Cultures. All of these urban transformations pursued specific economic objectives and created disparate results. This shaped a very complex urban layout in the metropolis, and it is unrealistic to reduce it in two cities with fixed boundaries. Nevertheless, Iñárritu uses this dichotomy to emphasize the deplorable living conditions of immigrants in the city, which are usually invisible to the viewer (Bañón 90). The opening of a metropolis closed to the public forces the spectator to reflect on the visibility of marginality in global cities, compared to previous films that portrayed Barcelona from the tourist's point of view, such as *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*.[79] As Elizabeth S. Anker indicates, the focus on corporality in *Biutiful* contributes "to a distinct conception of social justice that works to correct a number of the neoliberal assumptions that ... have helped to authorize many contemporary failures of human rights" (196). In this respect, constructing a morbid city where death is present around immigrants at all times attracts the attention of the spectators, which should question the neoliberal system in which they participate.

[79] It should be remembered that Iñárritu is a Mexican filmmaker. Even when he lived in Barcelona during a year to prepare for the film, his gaze might still be considered that of a tourist, or at least that of a foreigner.

In such a tragic space, it is surprising to find approaches to freedom. Among other authors, Deleyto and López stressed that although the film is brutal, "*Biutiful* nevertheless reveals in its vibrancy, resilience and humanity. This underground universe also generates its own spaces of power" (167). It is true that *Biutiful* presents agentic attempts, for example, in the immigrant establishments that modify the marginal city, or in the characters' constant walks through urban space, which reproduce the walker role and its desire to claim and adapt spaces. Nevertheless, the director problematizes the concept of hope in the references to immigration and the Mediterranean Sea, and in the female bodies of Ige and Ana. In these elements the film concentrates future possibilities to cure the city of the prostitution of urban space, and its neoliberal cancer. Paradoxically, it does so through miserable characters, which still maintain future projections to free themselves from Barcelona's gore capitalism. In reality, their expectations are almost unfeasible. Similarly to the "two Barcelonas", their hopes are polarized between a *beautiful* utopian part, and an obscure and *biutiful* counterpoint.

### 4.3. Behind the Tourist Curtain: Protesting the Immigrants' Suffering through Graphic Journalism in *Los vagabundos* [80]

*Los vagabundos* is a graphic representation of a real journalistic investigation that Carrión and Sagar, the authors, undertook on junkyards and scrap dealers in Barcelona from 2012 to 2013. The graphic novel begins at the Barcelona port terminals, where the authors, which are part of the narrative since the start, interview a stevedore. This interview questions him about José Mestre Fernández, the general director of Tercat, the principal company operating port containers in the city up until 2010. Fernández was an important businessman who

[80] This section is based on a conference presentation that was later on published in proceeding series 19.2 of the Architecture Media Politics Society, titled *The City and Complexity – Life, Design and Commerce in the Built Environment* (2020).

managed sixty-tree businesses in the maritime and real estate sector; he also facilitated entry into the port of 186 kilos of cocaine with the support of several police officers. This drug trafficking operation serves as an introduction to an obscure metropolis, hidden behind the Barcelona obsessed with international recognition and branding. The authors dive into this underworld through conducting interviews to low-income residents, but especially illegal immigrants. These individuals explain their miserable working conditions, the hypocrisy of a system that invisibilizes them but also utilizes them, and denounce the continuous violation of their human rights.

*Los vagabundos* ends with an epilogue, which departs from the main plot and discusses a meta-reflection on the uses of graphic novels through an interview with cartoonist and journalist Joe Sacco. Sacco is the author of works such as *Palestine* (1993), a non-fiction graphic novel about his experiences in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. He is also a pioneer of the graphic journalism genre. Influenced by Art Spiegelmann's *Maus* (1980), Sacco's graphic journalism is set in reality. As a journalist, he gathers first-hand testimonies that, afterwards, will be broken down into a series of individual drawings that make up his narrative. Portraying the individuals' stories, he attempts to transcend "singular representations that limit people" and construct stereotypes. Another important characteristic of his graphic journalism, which is also reproduced in *Los vagabundos*, is that he often includes himself as a character. His participation in the plot can "encourage his majority Western audience to critique themselves and the way they approach ideas of identity… Highlighting their own prejudices" ("The Graphic Story"). In the interview reproduced in *Los vagabundos*, Carrión, Sagar and Sacco discuss how comic and journalism should be utilized together. They point to the idea that graphic journalism does not seek to entertain, but to highlight issues. As Sacco mentions, graphic journalism ensures that "los hechos

importan. La realidad importa. Las víctimas imperan. Hay que cuestionar el poder" (100). Following this idea, and deeply inspired by Sacco's work, Carrión and Sagar bring the spotlight to the local government's continuous marginalization of the immigrants and their exclusion from the image of global tourist Barcelona. The authors also strive to give the immigrant community a voice, and just as Sacco, emphasize the hypocrisy of the system: the local government that tries to eliminate immigrants utilizes their labor to construct cultural and touristic infrastructure that will attract global visitors and investments.

In this section I analyze how *Los vagabundos* criticizes the prostitution of urban space through the division of the city between a tourist and an immigrant Barcelona. I propose that the logic of this dichotomy and the fairness of the capitalist system are questioned when the authors portray that the local government tries to eliminate immigrants from the same areas they helped to construct. I also examine the inclusion of the Catalan independence movement in the graphic novel, which is represented as a smokescreen to conceal a failing urban planning and a system with decaying moral values. *Los vagabundos* is certainly an outlet to portray the immigrants' experiences. This becomes clear in the extended interviews to the collective included in the graphic novel. It is also apparent in the contents of Sacco's interview, as the interviewee and the authors comment on the importance of emphasizing the victims' perspectives. For these reasons, I propose that giving immigrants an opportunity to be heard is one of the main purposes of the authors. However, it must be noted that their voice is filtered through the authors, which hold a privileged position and do not experience the misery firsthand. As Isabel Santaolalla indicates marginalized groups' struggles often include "appeals for enhanced social and cultural visibility, but … have little control over the way their images are constructed or looked at" (156). This is important because, while the graphic novel strives to support immigrants, the animalistic

representation of the foreigners' community, often sketched with dark, featureless faces, questions the authors' real capability of characterizing their suffering correctly.

In *Los vagabundos* Barcelona is divided between a tourist and an immigrant city, a dichotomy that also appears in *Biutiful* and in several other materials analyzed in previous chapters of this dissertation.[81] Tourist Barcelona is represented in the graphic novel through the famous landmarks of the city: the beaches, the Agbar Tower, the Sagrada Familia, the Fòrum, and the market of Els Encants after its recent renovation. All of these elements constitute part of a traditional tourist itinerary and form part of the Marca Barcelona, or Barcelona Brand, which in the graphic novel is the counterpart of the immigrant city. The immigrant city is the focus of *Los vagabundos* and it is concentrated in the neighborhood of Poblenou, particularly on an occupied factory where three hundred people live, most of them illegal immigrants. *Los Vagabundos* delves into Poblenou's history, and explains that the neighborhood became an area of interest for the local government after the 1992 Olympic Games. Poblenou was an industrial neighborhood, it constituted "un eje histórico en la producción industrial barcelonesa y catalana" (Limón López and González García 254). However, with the progressive deindustrialization of the city in the last fifty years, the project *22@* developed in the area. *22@* was an urban transformation to repurpose Poblenou's industrial infrastructure, utilizing it for the development of ICT industries (López Fuentes 41).

Since Poblenou's restructuration started, the local neighborhood associations have been very active. They demanded to participate in the urban transformations, such as reassigning the uses of factories and managing industrial heritage (Limón López and González García 254). In this way, as mentioned in *Los vagabundos,* Poblenou is a space that has sutained "una tensa

[81] Similar dichotomies dividing the city between a tourist, exterior Barcelona, and a real, interior Barcelona develop in "Marc Mystery", *La extranjera, Barcelona, mapa de sombras,* and "La ofrenda".

negociación entre esos focos de resistencia y los poderes políticos y económicos" (22). During the progress of the 22@ project, Poblenou experienced several development plans, some of which were started but not finished. After the 2008 economic crisis, the already limited funding projected for the neighborhood was shared with nearby urban projects such as the renovation of Els Encants' market. As a result many buildings were completely or partially demolished; expecting to be rehabilitated, they remained empty lots during years. Some of these constructions were later occupied, such as the factory in Puigcerdà street, featured in *Los vagabundos*. In the graphic novel, the Poblenou factory has been completely transformed by its inhabitants. It has differentiated areas, such as bars, restaurants, and even a mosque: it is a city in its own right. The Puigcerdà factory is complemented by other areas where immigrants circulate, such as illegal junkyards and the market of Els Encants.

Carrión and Sagar also visit the legal junkyards of the city and the Barcelona port terminal where metal is recycled, very close to the beaches visited each year by millions of visitors. However, these other Barcelona underworlds are legal and run by Catalan and Spaniards. The reader discovers then that Catalans and Spaniards performing the same work as immigrants are in a far better position solely because of their nationality. The city hall's support of the legal scrap dealers and junkyards while the city representatives ignore the immigrants' situation on purpose is another idea the authors pinpoint. When Sagar —the cartoonist— draws the immigrant city in *Los vagabundos*, dark colors predominate, there are no tourist or barely any residents in the drawings, there is garbage everywhere, and the landmarks of the city are nowhere to be found. It is obvious that the immigrant city and the other spaces transited by immigrants are in direct contradiction with the tourist city. If the internationally-known façade of Barcelona appears in the graphic novel, buildings such as the Agbar Tower stand in the

background, local residents are walking around the area and the scenery is bathed with light and warm colors.[82]

Similarly to many of the buildings in Poblenou, which have standing façades but empty backgrounds that conceal a lot of misery, the tourist city is portrayed as a non-realistic façade. Carrión and Sagar depict what hides behind the curtain, interviewing the immigrants and representing their statements. In this way, many immigrants explain their difficult living conditions, which include being cold in the winter, and the anxiety caused by continuously living on the verge of eviction (30; 50). They denounce their bodily vulnerability mentioning cases of police brutality, such as the Cameroonian man that was shot sixteen times by the police, according to one of the immigrants (46). The miserable working conditions of the illegal junkyards are discussed when an individual explains that he received only ten euros in exchange for a tone of metal to recycle. After explaining this, he indicates "son empresarios españoles, particulares, los que hacen negocio con nuestra miseria" (53). During their journalistic investigation, Carrión and Sagar discover that many of the real estate companies that evict immigrants from occupied factories are donating funds to NGO's in Africa. This highlights the hypocrisy behind these companies and their humanitarian efforts. Portraying these testimonies the graphic novel stimulates an emotional reaction in the reader, who might reflect on the hypocrisy of western societies and their own attitude towards the immigrants they cross everyday, either in Barcelona or in other global metropolises.

Carrión and Sagar look into these companies and provide the names of the individuals causing the immigrants' distress. For instance, the graphic novel provides information on the Iglesias Baciana family, who are the owners of the occupied factory in Puigcerdà street. Jaime

[82] It must be noted that Iñárritu utilizes a similar visual technique, providing an obscure blue tone to all the scenes filmed in the "marginal city" of *Biutiful*.

Iglesias, the patriarch of the family, is a member of La Caixa, the biggest savings bank in Catalonia. In La Caixa, he is also part of a special committee that offers social benefits to evicted immigrants (73). It is important to notice that both this bank and the real estate companies forcing the immigrants' to evict their homes are actively contributing to urban projects that further develop the tourist narrative of the city, and therefore, purposely participate in the prostitution of urban space. The connection between the immigrants' mistreatment and the marketing of the city as a product to consume is demonstrated at the beginning of the graphic novel. In *Los Vagabundos*' introduction, the authors indicate that the occupation of the Puigcerdà factory could have been easily legalized. However, they explain that the local government focused their interest in fostering the growth of the tourism industry instead: "no existió nunca una voluntad real, por parte del Ayuntamiento que en los mismos años multiplicó la concesión de licencias de hoteles, de solucionar el problema" (5). Showcasing the immigrants' suffering behind the branding of Barcelona, but also signaling directly to the creators of this suffering, Carrión and Sagar criticize the mistreatment of the collective and the current urban model that supports it. In the process of becoming an appealing product for the foreign visitor's consumption, the local government in coalition with the interests' of powerful companies, such as la Caixa, rejects the immigrant community because it does not conform to the tourist gaze.

The graphic novel depicts how the city strives to become the perfect leisure destination while the immigrants' presence is progressively eliminated or moved to non-tourist locations. This is illustrated in an interview with Juan, who emigrated with his family from Murcia to Barcelona decades ago. While talking about his life's story he explains that, instead of going to school when he was young, "me iba con los gitanos del Camp de la Bota" (68). El Camp de la Bota was a shantytown near the beach and the current municipality of Sant Adrià del Besos,

active since the 1920s until 1989. During the sixties, its population grew exponentially with individuals emigrating from the South of Spain, such as Juan's family. Juan is then a representative of the great migratory waves that affected Catalonia during the forties, fifties, and sixties. Most of these individuals came from Andalucía; misery was still prevalent in this region after the post-war period, and Catalonia's strong industry sector attracted millions looking for a stable job.[83]

Juan explains that social workers offered him money to dismantle his camp, which was in the way of construction for the Fòrum Universal de les Cultures (70). As mentioned in previous chapters, whereas the Fòrum was advertised as a space for discussion of world peace, cultural diversity and sustainable development, it was actually a strategic event to renovate the east coast of Barcelona and finish the project of the 1992 Vila Olímpica (Botella 166). Juan describes that he betrayed his fellow camp companions, because in the end he accepted the money, and "después los fueron echando" (70). His interview highlights how the commodification of Barcelona involves eliminating the immigrants' bodily presence from the tourist areas of the metropolis. Seeing a scrap dealer looking for metal to recycle in containers and trashcans does not belong in the sanitized view of the city prepared for the tourist.

However, at the same time, their bodies build the tourist narrative that the metropolis continues to develop. For instance, during an interview with Williams, a Senegalese immigrant, he mentions that he participated in the construction of several subway lines, one of the basic modes of transportation in Barcelona, while he was an illegal immigrant (84). Another example can be found at the end of *Los Vagabundos,* when Sagar draws the demolition of the Puigcerdà

[83] Similarly to Uxbal in *Biutiful,* Juan can also be considered a *charnego.* While many of these immigrants and charnego descendants currently form the Catalan working-class, Juan was not able to escape the harsh living conditions and poverty that often follows immigrants in their new locations: this is clarified by his presence in the Puigcerdà factory.

factory. The destruction of the immigrant city is directly related to the prostitution of urban space; *Los vagabundos* includes several tweets by the city hall account in Twitter that explain the demolition as part of the "Plan de Usos de Ciutat Vella", which "permitirá la obertura de nuevos hoteles en la zona" (89). During the demolition, one of the speech bubbles explains that the individuals doing the work are black, and that they are wearing protective gear because particles released during the demolition process can cause lung cancer. Their supervisors, white men who are not participating in the work, do not need protection (87). These interviews emphasize the hypocrisy of the economic, social, and political systems in power at the time of the graphic novel's publication. The branding of the city makes immigrants socially and bodily vulnerable; similarly to *Biutiful*, the immigrant body receives the tension of sustaining the Barcelona Brand. This is a violent process: their legally vulnerable situation forces them to accept work such as the demolition of the Puigcerdà factory. This job is not only detrimental to their health but also to their community, as their mission is to destroy the homes of more than three hundred people to eventually construct hotels.

In another representation of systematic violence and gore capitalism, both the local government and the population disregard the immigrants' suffering. In fact, governmental officials not only ignore this, but also create further suffering by continuously evicting immigrants, moving them further away from areas of interest. Even when long-term residents of Barcelona might not be familiar with the scope of the situation, scrap dealers are present in most neighborhoods. As *Los vagabundos* indicates, "el ruido de las ruedas de sus carritos… se ha convertido en la banda sonora de esta ciudad" (5). The presence of the immigrants is then noticeable for everybody; however, society has naturalized them to the point that their suffering has become invisible.

While local residents might imagine that scrap dealers experience harsh living conditions, the immigrants' suffering develops mostly out of sight, in their clandestine communities. Neighbors presume that a person rummaging through trash containers must have a difficult life, however, they cannot envision the actual gravity of their situation. As mentioned before, mass media usually neglects information regarding the immigrants' suffering, which greatly contributes to a general lack of knowledge about their lives. For these reasons, it is easy for local residents to naturalize the immigrants' misery, especially because the neoliberal system encourages them to ignore it. This is exemplified by the cartoon version of Carrión, who during the graphic novel confesses that "solo cuando me empecé a fijar en ellos empezaron a ser visibles" (83). If society is not willing to actually look at the immigrants' anguish, their suffering becomes part of the city soundtrack, along with traffic jams, construction noises, and floods of tourists.

*Los Vagabundos* exemplifies how the prostitution of urban space exploits and invisibilizes immigrants at the same time with the renovation of Els Encants market. The novel dedicates several pages to Fermín Vázquez, the architect responsible for the restoration of the market, who also collaborated in the design of the Agbar Tower. Els Encants is a Barcelona flea market with seven hundred and fifty years of history. The market is famous for the public auctions of antiques and deceased's belongings; mostly Moroccan immigrants currently operate this practice, which dates back to the fourteenth century.[84] Vázquez's illustrations appear in *Los vagabundos* to portray the official discourse of the market restoration project. The renovation of Els Encants included the construction of a commercial plaza with different levels, covered by a

[84] Els Encants have moved to different locations throughout its history, according to Marcos Pérez, the urban transformations developing in Barcelona have forced its itinerary nature ("La historia viva"). In 2006 the market was approved to move to its current and permanent location, near the National Catalan theater, at the Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes.

mirrored golden dome that shelters commercial activity from adverse weather conditions. In this way, during one of Vázquez's appearances he explains that the renovation allows the market to directly communicate with several landmarks situated in the area, such as the National Catalan Theater, the Sagrada Familia, and the Agbar Tower (60). Vázquez portrays the market's renovation as the solution for a "historia de precariedad", as it provides a final location for the market (25). Therefore, one of the main renovation's purposes is to align the market to the attractiveness of these other global tourist destinations in Barcelona.

**Image 4.4.** Fermín Vazquez's illustration, located on the top right of the page, comments on the renovation of the market (p. 94-95).

In a video posted in Fermín Vázquez's website, several vendors from Els Encants give their opinion on the renovation. They mostly provide positive feedback, mentioning the attractiveness of the dome, which appeals to new visitors and offers shelter, and praise the new market's public equipment, such as restaurants and bathrooms in good working conditions (Alins Produccions). However, in *Los vagabundos* one of the interviewees explains that the renovation jeopardizes the public auctions: "con el traslado lo van a matar... Será todo cubierto, como en jaulas" (59). The restoration project conceals the auctions, administrated by immigrants, to the

lower floor of the market, which is then hidden even more under the golden dome. Before this structural modification the auctions were located at street level.

In another page, Vázquez's illustration reappears to ensure that the dome of Els Encants does not conceal activities developing in the market, but acts as a mirror that casts the market to the city, and introduces the city to the market (95). It is worth examining this reference to the mirror in connection to the construction of the Barcelona Brand, as many times mirrors reflect an attractive external image that may not conform to the internal state of a person or object. Vázquez's commentaries represent the official discourse of the local government, who financed the renovation project and was interested in portraying a specific image of the market to future visitors. Taking into consideration the several tourist destinations that surround the area, the market's dome mirrors the image of global Barcelona, i.e. the façade of the metropolis prepared for global consumption.

Depicting these commentaries and the objective of associating the market with structures like the Sagrada Familia and the Agbar tower, the authors showcase the city hall's aim of turning a traditionally non-tourist, lower-income space, into another destination for the foreign visitor to enjoy. This implies eliminating the immigrants' presence, as it has been the case with other locations turned into tourist areas like the Fòrum. At the same time, the graphic novel highlights the inconsistencies inherent in this enterprise. The renovation of Els Encants conceals the activities developed by immigrants in a lower floor, under a modern dome, hiding their corporality from street level Barcelona. However, the project does not completely eliminate their presence. Since they run the public auctions, which are the market's greatest attraction, they cannot be removed. While the local government tries to disguise the presence of the immigrant community, they are basic for the market's functioning, and therefore, basic to attracting new

visitors to the modern outside appearance of the market. This example illustrates the extreme vulnerability of immigrants in global metropolises; even when essential for the city's economic development, they still become the target of continuous discrimination and invisibilization.

The very contradictory cities developing in Barcelona are brought together in the ending of the graphic novel. Before Sacco's epilogue, *Los vagabundos* documents the demolition of the Puigcerdà factory. In a series of panels the authors combine real tweets from the local government's Twitter account with illustrations of the recycling metal process developed at the port terminal. Some of these tweets indicate the reasons for the demolition of the Puigcerdà factory: the city hall will build new hotels and develop a commercial expansion in the area. Other tweets indicate that the evicted immigrants were offered temporary homes. One of the last images of *Los vagabundos* is a panoramic view of Barcelona from the Mediterranean Sea. Although some landmarks of the city are recognizable in the distance, such as the Agbar Tower and the Hotel W Barcelona, this is not the typical tourist landscape found in postcards. In the center of the illustration stands an enormous boat carrying iron beams into the port area. In fact, the boat is the only element that is prominent in the image: it is painted dark red and white, and it becomes the focal point of the image because the rest of the landscape shares a delicate blue undertone. One of the real tweets from the city government that accompanies this image indicates that all beaches in Barcelona are in a good state to swim.

I understand that the panoramic view and the authentic tweets incorporated to the panels convey two different cities colliding. The tweets, which focus on insubstantial topics such as the weather or the annual festival of la Mercè, highlight how the government sponsors the tourist image of the city through social media. The light character of the messages clashes with the aggressiveness of the recycling process, characterized in the panels by fire, smoke, and dark

colors. In the graphic novel's last illustration, the boat transporting beams to the harbor counteracts the tourist Barcelona narrative and signifies the industrial side of the metropolis, in which immigrants are often exploited. The authentic elements superimposed over the illustrations also connect *Los vagabundos* to the real world, and clarify Carrión and Sagar's objective of creating a critical social commentary on the state of the city through their graphic representation.



**Image 4.5**. Illustrations of the metal recycling process that include screenshots of real tweets from the local government's Twitter account (p.91-93).

While the social and bodily vulnerability of the immigrant community is made clear in several occasions in the graphic novel, I argue that *Los vagabundos* portrays instances of agency. First of all, the Puigcerdà factory is never presented as a factory but as a city in itself. In several panels, *Los vagabundos* illustrate how the immigrants transformed this space into different areas with plenty of shelter, food, religious and entertainment options. In the walls of the factory, there is graffiti supporting the immigrants ("No soy un animal, somos personas", p. 37) and also a portrait of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, a Muslim mystic that symbolizes non-violence. The graphic novel illustrates the remarkable reorganization of the factory, but it also emphasizes the misery of the collective, for instance, using dark colors to portray the spaces, and depicting the piles of trash on the floor and open fires that provide them heat. *Los vagabundos* includes the Puigcerdà

factory to showcase that immigrants develop strategies to confront society's neglect and abuse. In spaces like this, immigrants from different countries, social and religious backgrounds not only satisfy their essential needs, but they also feel safe and become stronger as a collective, even if united through their misery and suffering.

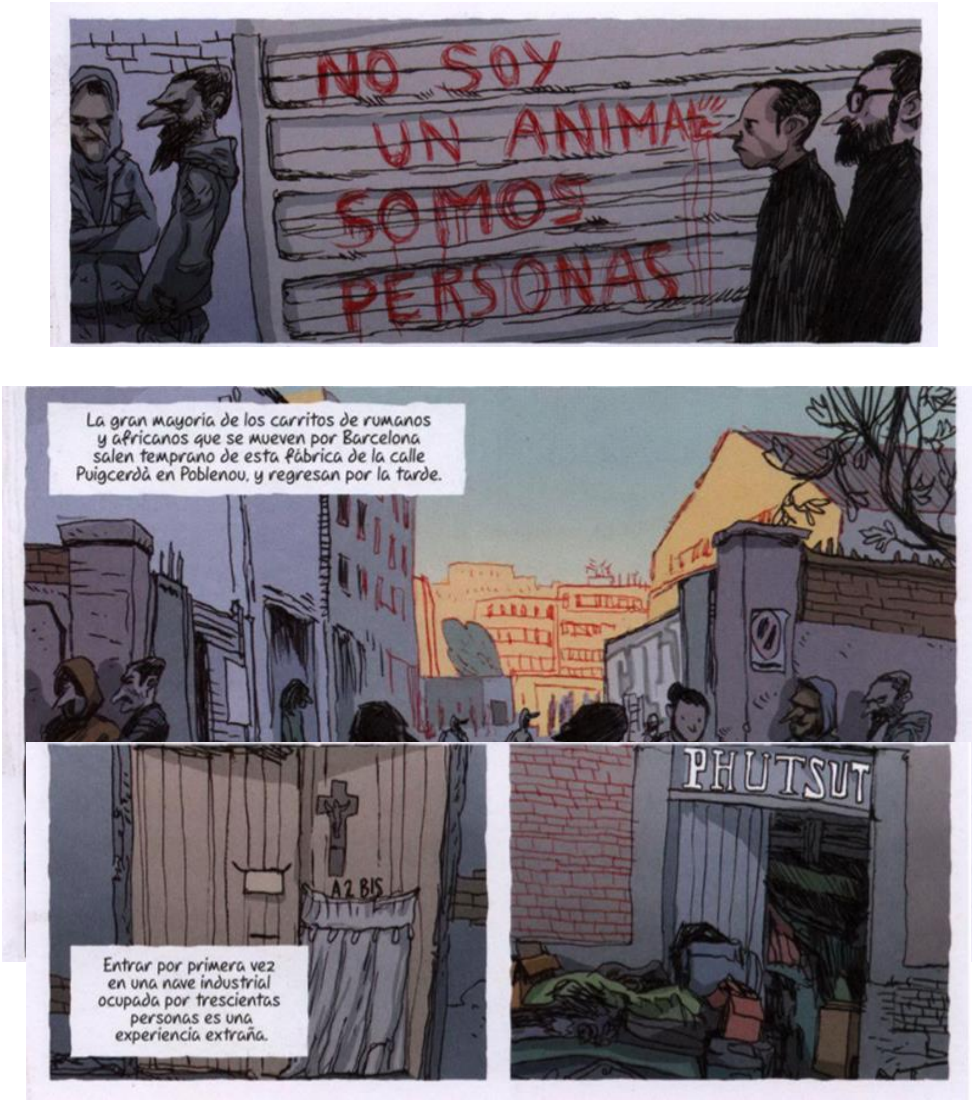


**Image 4.6**. Panels that depict the "immigrant city" in *Los vagabundos* (p.37)

I interpret the Puigcerdà factory as an epicenter of an emerging community, an idea reiterated by one of the immigrants, Kheraba, who presents himself as the leader of the movement. He mentions he intends to consolidate "una cooperativa integral África-Catalunya.

Queremos formalizar el proyecto" (49). Similarly to the immigrant establishments and Uxbal's walks in *Biutiful*, these examples demonstrate that, even when their lives are marked by poverty and suffering, immigrants become agentic in the global, contemporary city that rejects them. It must be noted that all of their strategies to develop agency involve transforming urban spaces. As Puneet Dhaliwal mentions in relation to the 15M movement, occupying space can play a role in the transformation of social relations, "which can contribute to the broader contestation of the existing order" (253). The modification of space is then crucial when developing resistance in marginalized communities, whose lack of economic or political means forces them to utilize public space to make their presence felt.

Although politically *Los vagabundos* focuses on condemning the local government's approach to the organization of space and how it contributes to the suffering of immigrants, some panels also criticize the Catalan independence movement. *Los vagabundos* begins with an illustration of a demonstration in favor of independence. Hundreds of individuals are depicted walking in the street, waving Catalan flags in the air and holding banners in front of the Arc de Triomf monument. Although the demonstrators are colored, and so are the flags and trees surrounding the scenery, they are tainted with a blue tone that removes vibrancy from the original colors. The only elements illuminated with bright red and yellow are the Arc de Triomf monument, and the enormous Catalan flag that hangs under it. The contrast between the vivid red and yellow and the dull colors creates a focal point on the monument and the flag, which are also located in the middle of the illustration. At the bottom of the page, in black and white, there is a scrap dealer passing through the space with his trolley. Due to the illustration's color combination, the black and white scrap dealer becomes barely unnoticeable. In fact, the demonstrators are all turning their backs at him, as if he did not exist. With this technique, *Los*

*vagabundos* highlights the invisibility and vulnerability of the immigrant population, and indicate the residents' attention is focused elsewhere, specifically, on the independence movement and the urban development of the city.

This image directs the readers' attention to the Arc de Triomf, which was erected for the 1888 Universal Exposition. I understand the monument as a symbol for the urban development of the city, especially for the global marketing of Barcelona, as the Universal Exposition was the first massive event that the metropolis hosted. It is also important to analyze the authors' decision to start a graphic novel about the mistreatment of immigrants with a commentary on Catalan independence. Politically, at the time of the graphic novel's publication Xavier Trias was mayor of Barcelona and Artur Mas was President of the Catalan Government, both of them members of political party Convergència i Unió (CiU). During their presidencies, they supported the independent movement, which gained momentum especially after 2010. Taking all of this into account, I argue that this illustration represents the governments' manipulation of the residents' attention. Just as *Los vagabundos* deceives the readers to ignore the scrap dealer at the bottom of the page, the local government redirects the residents' attention, from the immigrants' misery to the independence movement and the beautiful sights of the Barcelona brand.

**Image 4.7.** Illustration of a demonstration in favor of Catalonia's independence (p. 6-7).

In other panels there are political campaign posters for CiU, featuring Artur Mas. For instance, in pages 54-55 a commercial banner showcases Mas surrounded by Catalan flags and his supporters. With his arms raised in the air, the president maintains a triumphant pose, almost reminiscent of a hero or a messiah responsible for guiding the population to independence. Behind the banner, situated in the background, is the Agbar Tower. Similarly to the previous illustration, the Agbar Tower and the commercial banner are the focal point of the image, painted with strong bright colors while the rest of the elements are tainted with a blue tonality. Following my interpretation of the previous image, the commercial nature of the banner highlights the governments' intention to market the independence movement to the population. The placement of the Agbar Tower behind the poster indicates, once again, that the movement is being exploited to disguise the commodification of the city.

**Image 4.8.** Panel that includes a commercial banner with Artur Mas, and the Agbar Tower in the background (p. 54-55).

Apart from these elements this illustration portrays the authors riding their bikes. In a speech bubble, Carrión mentions that "en una ciudad hay de todo, pasas del lujo a la indigencia sin una solución de continuidad" (55). His commentary reflects on their visits to the illegal junkyards, which are just a few blocks away from the working class neighborhood where they are depicted with the bikes. The stark contrast between luxury and poverty in Barcelona is not natural; in fact, it is related to the prostitution of urban space. In the process of reorganizing the city to sell it to the global market, gentrification and commodification processes occurred, which intensified inequalities between residents living in the same area. The consequences of these phenomena were exacerbated by the 2008 economic crisis; several of the interviewees mention they were in a decent economic situation until the recession hit and they lost their jobs. In this illustration then several elements collide. The Agbar Tower represents tourist Barcelona, which is concealed behind the commercial banner of Catalonia's independence. These elements, made extremely visible for the population, are connected to the immigrants' despair through Carrión's commentaries. Although there are no immigrants in the image, their misery is just a few blocks away, concealed behind the attention to the Catalan movement and Barcelona's urban development. I understand that both this drawing and the one where a scrap dealer walks in the back of an independence demonstration suggest that independence claims are being utilized as a smokescreen to distract the Catalan population from internal issues, such as the much needed regularization of the illegal junkyards where scrap dealers work, and the prostitution of space.

While *Los vagabundos* brings to light the harsh living conditions of the immigrant community, the authors' world vision continuously comes through the graphic novel. Sagar and Carrión appear in several panels researching on illegal junkyards, interviewing immigrants, and commenting on the misery of the collective. Moreover, since the graphic novel is formed by

illustrations of real events and interviews, it must be taken into account that there are several opportunities to manipulate the original subjects and their testimonies. In this sense, I argue that *Los vagabundos* is then a representation, not a direct testimony, even if the authors' stress their intention of representing reality through graphic journalism. More specifically, *Los vagabundos* is a representation of an underprivileged populace created by privileged individuals, as Sagar and Carrión are both Catalan, and they have secure jobs and roofs over their heads.

As mentioned by several race theory scholars, minorities are best qualified to write about their own experiences, as they will comprehend and represent subtleties, nuances, and contexts that others may miss (Harris qtd. in Moeller and Becnel 8-9). Moreover, as it is the case with other artistic fields, historically white, male authors have created the vast majority of graphic novels.[85] This representational debate becomes even more crucial when analyzing the type of depiction that the authors of *Los vagabundos* create of the immigrants. As can be seen in the first illustrations of page 49, which represent Kheraba, his face is disfigured, crossed repeatedly by broad black lines, which darken his forehead, cheeks and chin. In the next panel of the same page, Kheraba's face is even more deformed. His mouth and cheekbones have merged with his neck and shoulders, and the only recognizable elements that still remain are his eyes, his nose and his forehead. Similar representations to this one, faces created with dark lines, barely any recognizable features and almost animalistic in nature, are used throughout the graphic novel with immigrants. The difference between the representation of immigrants and the rest of the population is evident in page 80, where Carrión is illustrated talking with an anonymous immigrant. While Carrión's face has distinctive features, such as small eyes and a prominent nose that create an identifiable face, the immigrant's face is once again covered with black lines.

[85] According to Laura Hudson "bringing in a wider range of voices is simply a way of correcting a fundamental creative imbalance, one that permeates the mainly white, male world of mainstream comics" ("It's Time to Get Real").


**Image 4.9.** These illustrations exemplify the disfiguration of immigrants in contrast with Carrión's distinctive features (p. 49; 80).

I interpret the disfiguration of the immigrants' faces as a strategy to signal their invisibility, and the continual concealment suffered by the collective. It is also a representation of the manner society interacts with the immigrant community. *Los Vagabundos* portrays individuals with no faces or stories to tell because local residents barely take time to return their gaze, as the graphic novel illustrated in the independence's demonstration illustration.

As mentioned by Violet Harris, "writers do not necessarily intend to evoke negative, racialized readings of texts, but some readers can interpret them as such" (150). The reactions that disfiguring the immigrants' faces may provoke on the readers of *Los vagabundos* questions if the authors are effectively signaling the mistreatment of the collective, which they indicate as the main purpose of the graphic novel (83). It is problematic that a graphic novel that aims to defend the immigrant community characterizes the collective disfigured in comparison to well-represented Spanish and Catalan citizens. Symbolically, I argue that this contrast in representation is a visual depiction of the local residents' natural integration in society, and of their ability to be seen politically and socially in comparison with the invisibility of the immigrants. While this technique is figuratively strong, I interpret it as counterproductive; by deforming the immigrants' faces *Los vagabundos* perpetuates the vulnerability of the collective.

**4.4. Conclusions**

In this chapter I have demonstrated that *Biutiful* and *Los vagabundos* function as an outlet for the immigrant community to share their often-ignored experience in Barcelona. In these materials immigrants become visible only when it is of interest for the economic, social and political systems, and they remain powerless throughout the whole process. For instance, they are useful and visible when creating counterfeit products for tourists, or constructing public

transportation such as the metro. However, if their bodies are located in tourist areas while they are not working to survive in the neoliberal city, their corporality converts into a problem. I understand that this is because the immigrant community conveys narratives of suffering that do not conform to the sanitized view of the city. This can be seen in the police chase scene in *Biutiful*, which started because a group of immigrants showcased their products in downtown Barcelona. The criminalization of the MENA during the summer 2019 violent robberies in Ciutat Vella is another example.

I propose that both *Biutiful* and *Los vagabundos* criticize the hypocrisy of society; as much as Uxbal in *Biutiful*, everyone participating in the capitalist system is responsible for the misery depicted in these materials. Politically, the economic dynamics seen in the film are attributable to the government of Barcelona Mayor Jordi Hereu, who was in office from 2006 to 2011. *Los vagabundos* was published in 2015 while Mayor Xavier Trias was in office, however, the graphic novel does not only signal the local government as responsible for the suffering depicted, but also powerful institutions such as La Caixa. Both Hereu and Trias continued with Pasqual Maragall's legacy of internationalizing Barcelona. In this sense, I propose that the economic and social context illustrated in *Los vagabundos* is just the evolution of what Iñárritu depicted in *Biutiful*, or the natural progression of two governments prioritizing the growth of the tourism industry and neglecting the immigrant community.

It is important to note that while *Biutiful* and *Los vagabundos* denounce the prostitution of urban space, they do so from different perspectives. *Los vagabundos* criticizes the phenomenon focusing on the exploitation of immigrants and the exploitation of the city. It must be considered that the graphic novel was advertised as graphic journalism documenting the city of *Ciutat morta*. *Ciutat morta* was a 2015 documentary that denounced a case of police brutality

and called for the viewers to question and protest the tourist narrative of the city. I understand this commercial strategy as a clear intention to connect their immigrants' defense to a larger critique of the prostitution of urban space. *Biutiful* contains a similar urban message: if the city does not change its narrative soon, she will likely die due to the neoliberal cancer. The movie also draws a connection between the male gaze, represented by Uxbal, and the necessity to create a new vision for the metropolis. Locating hope on female immigrants' bodies such as Ana and Ige, the movie indicates that the future urban planning requires the development of an alternative gaze. I interpret the alternative urban planning as an urban model that will embrace minorities, help them avoid poverty and the unnecessary suffering that currently immigrants experience in global cities such as Barcelona.

Regarding questions of (in)visibility, Frantz Fanon explains that there is a relationship between invisibility and powerlessness: the colonizer is made visible while the colonized are usually deemed inhuman, and their claims considerate illegitimate (Villegas 147). In the case of the immigrant community, as I have demonstrated, becoming visible does not equate to gaining power, especially in the neoliberal city. While privileged subjects have strategies to escape the darker side of Barcelona, as long as modern metropolises continue to prey on their bodies, immigrants will only be able to become visible for the duration of a movie, or the time that it takes to read a graphic novel. This suggests the existence of an endemic invisibility to the collective that is inseparable from the functioning of the economic neoliberal system.

## Conclusions

In this dissertation I have developed my approach to examining the processes of controlling, modifying and the marketing of urban space, which present cities like gendered and consumable products, with the term *prostitution of urban space*. My research has focused on the city of Barcelona, which I have argued is a paradigmatic case of this phenomenon. Through analyzing cultural materials such as films, literature, theater, and graphic novels created during the twenty-first century, I have presented how authors and activists negotiate with the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona.

Through close readings of the cultural materials examined in previous chapters, I discovered that many authors represent the tension that the prostitution of urban space creates dichotomizing the city between a "tourist" and a "real" metropolis. For instance, in *La extranjera* (2015) Miguel Ángel Blanca identifies "interior", or "real" Barcelona with the Raval neighborhood. He understands "interior" Barcelona as the metropolis for long-term residents, where urban space satisfies their needs. In contrast, for Blanca "tourist" Barcelona is a simulated metropolis for tourists. He compares this metropolis with the film *Matrix*, this façade of Barcelona is an invented commodity to create profit from visitors. Blanca dramatizes this division and clarifies that the current urban planning is obsolete with the fictional homicide of a female tourist, in Bogatell beach, one of the most famous tourist landmarks of the city, by a Barcelona resident. *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* (2004) presents a similar dichotomy. In this play, "interior" Barcelona is the flat where theatrical action occurs. "Interior" Barcelona symbolizes the real metropolis, which Lluïsa Cunillé, the playwright, represents full of sadness and suffering due to the pressure of maintaining branded Barcelona. The city becomes responsible for all the characters' hardships; the harshest demonstration of this is Él's daughter,

who was killed by a bus in Pàsseig de Gràcia, the center of the tourist city. The counterpoint for "interior" Barcelona is "exterior" Barcelona, characterized by the characters' conversations as a space with continuous noise, gentrification and urban speculation. With this division and the despair shown by the characters, Cunillé reveals that an urban planning completely directed towards economic gain creates an identity crisis both in the city and in its residents, who cannot associate with space anymore and become exiles in their own hometown.

These are just two examples of this dichotomy, however, it must be noted that the separation between a "tourist" and a "real" Barcelona appears in all the materials analyzed in this dissertation. Although authors conceptualize "interior" and "exterior" Barcelona differently, the fundamental principle is similar: there is a Barcelona lived in by inhabitants and a projected city narrated for visitors. "Interior" Barcelona and its long-term residents usually suffer the consequences of commodifying "exterior" Barcelona, in the form of economic, mental and physical suffering. This division is relatable to De Certeau's differentiation between place and space. This author explains that in place "the law of order rules… it implies an indication of stability", while space "takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and variables… the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" (117). In the case of Barcelona, the order that organizes place and brings stability is comparable to the tourist narrative organized by the local government. The most touristic areas in the city are curated spaces, with little conflict, to facilitate a quick spatial consumption for the consumer. For this reason, lower-income inhabitants such as immigrants, homeless or working-class local residents are obliged to move, usually through the use of urban harassment techniques, to other less visited districts of the metropolis. Conversely, space relates to "interior" Barcelona, with spatial dynamics constantly changed by individuals that actually experience the metropolis, as it

is, unaltered by the tourist gaze. The "real" and "tourist" Barcelona dichotomy is the most common technique that authors utilize to portray the local residents' dissociation with space, and their alienation in tourist areas. As a neighbor of the Gothic quarter put it in 2016: "Lo están convirtiendo todo en apartamentos, echando a los vecinos de siempre para traer a gente de dinero" (Benvenuty, "Los vecinos del Raval"). In the neighborhoods where the sanitized view for the tourist is strong, long-term residents interpret new urban modifications as strategies to expel them. The struggles, suffering and hatred that neighbors experience —byproducts of the prostitution of urban space— also constitute "interior" Barcelona.

Dividing the city between an "exterior" and "interior" Barcelona is a powerful technique to represent how commodification alienates long-term residents from specific areas of the metropolis; however, it is important to remember that it is not a faithful representation of the actual city. Therefore, this dissertation does not defend that urban space in Barcelona is organized through this "exterior" and "interior" dichotomy. This is also the case with other binaries used by the authors, such as "real" and "unreal" Barcelona, and "tourist" and "marginal" city. Artists divide and categorize space in their creations in an attempt to simplify a very complicated phenomenon, which is difficult to classify due to its nuances. For instance, in many cases long-term residents identify tourists as the highest evil and consider themselves victims. In reality, the local government and its collaboration with foreign investors and speculators is to blame for the uncontrollable growth of tourism. Similarly, while long-term residents have definitely suffered the major economic, physical and mental consequences of the prostitution of urban space, it must be noted that many have participated in the phenomenon, for example, renting rooms in their apartments in platforms such as Airbnb. The 1,6 million inhabitants living in Barcelona cross the boundaries of the supposed interior and exterior city continuously, and so

do visitors, especially those that get lost after visiting tourist landmarks, or those that are interested in discovering what is labeled as a more "authentic" version of the city. Although any visitor or long-term resident can perceive areas where tourist activity is high, because of urban transformations that have occurred in the last twenty years, urban space in Barcelona is deeply heterogeneous. Interior and exterior Barcelona might be separated by just one block or building, and the clear limitations between spaces that authors present in their works are fictitious. Similarly to the prostitution of urban space, which is metaphorical in nature, "tourist" and "real" Barcelona is a dichotomy that symbolically illustrates the spatial conflict developing in the city; authors overly exaggerate it to stimulate a reflection or a social response on the viewer or reader.

I have also proposed that the prostitution of urban space is a phenomenon that links bodies and space. Metaphorically, prostituting a city involves selling its body, which has been sexualized through marketing to a foreign visitor that rapidly consumes it. Body and city are not only connected figuratively: the commodification of space and neoliberal urban transformations affect the inhabitants' corporality. As mentioned by Elizabeth Grosz "the city is an active force in constituting bodies, and always leaves its traces on the subject's corporeality (250-251). In this way, bodies can develop forms of vulnerability, or even be physically harmed from the economic undertakings that a city develops, especially in already vulnerable subjects such as minorities.[86] In its weakest form, transforming a city into a commodity causes insomnia, noise complaints, and higher levels of irritability in the population of the most affected areas. In 2019, the number of noise complaints in Barcelona increased by 25% in relation to the previous year. In addition, the 2019 Anuario de Contaminación de Barcelona (Annual Pollution Barcelona Report) concluded that 57% of local residents in the city are exposed to a noise level that surpasses the

[86] The socioeconmic conditions of a metropolis can also create pathogenic vulnerabilities in its inhabitats. As Mackenzie et al. indicate, pathogenic vulnerabilities develop when individuals' vulnerabilities are exacerbated due to sociopolitical oppression or injustice (9).

limit established by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Mercader). Evictions, which are on the rise due to higher apartment prices in gentrified neighborhoods, are the most acute representation of the relation between body and urban space. They can not only cause mental problems, but also physical standoffs with the police, and tragically, also suicides (González; Pérez and Pérez).

The cultural materials that I analyzed acknowledge this connection and link the characters' body with the city, usually through negative connotations. The violent consequences that the prostitution of urban space provokes on bodies were represented in the form of mental or physical illness. For instance, "Marc Mystery" (2011) features an architect confined in a psychiatric unit, who lost his mind just as the urban planning of the city lost its way. In *Barcelona, mapa de sombras*, the main character dreams about the capture of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War while dying of cancer. It is important to note that the violence caused by the prostitution of urban space is often anonymous. Although it is clear that the local government in addition to real estate and financial companies foster the city's commodification, top executives of these corporations and political parties do not personally perpetrate the violence that occurs during evictions, protests, and urban harassment cases. Here it is worth recalling the term *systematic violence*, which Slavoj Žižek defined as "the violence inherent in a system ... the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence" (9). While no longer attributable to certain individuals, the very palpable and physical violence created by the prostitution of urban space exists, and has become endemic to the neoliberal system developing in global cities like Barcelona.

The vulnerability of the body under late capitalism is made especially obvious in the materials that focus on immigration. *Biutiful* (2010) and *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la*

*chatarra* (2015) clarify that the immigrant body is responsible for constructing the tourist city, and supporting the Barcelona brand develops forms of conflict on their corporality. The violence of the phenomenon can be seen through the dead Asian workers and Uxbal's cancer in *Biutiful*, and the suffering described by immigrants in the interviews of *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra.* It is worth recalling that the prostitution of urban space is related to processes such as gore capitalism, which indicates that the population's body is the greatest victim of capitalism. Sayak Valencia explains that capitalism transforms minorities' bodies into products, which are ultimately destroyed (15). Other authors such as Silvia Federici and Jana Leo present a similar approach to Valencia and specify that the feminine body is the most abused by the current neoliberal economic, social and urban dynamics (Federici 282; Leo 140).

Many materials explored the connection between female body and the metropolis as part of their critique to the prostitution of urban space. I have argued that women and the city are connected through the consumption of their bodies both by the male gaze and the tourist gaze. As I demonstrated, this association dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the development of the first modern metropolises that were organized for and by men. At that time, women were supposed to remain in the domestic realm and only men were able to experience urban space freely. As Elizabeth Wilson explains "there is fear of the city as a realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual license, and the rigid control of women in cities has been felt necessary to avert this danger" (157). Although women's space is no longer restricted to the privacy of the home and females have the same access to public space as men, the male gaze continues to organize the city, as most architects and urban planners continue to be male. In the same manner, the female body is still a target of consumption in street commercial banners and shop windows.

The connection between the female body and the city is clear in "Marc Mystery". In this short graphic story the Sagrada Familia temple is sketched as a naked woman that directly mirrors Lucille, the real woman in the plot that is naked in Marc's office. Both of these female bodies are eroticized, waiting to be consumed by Marc, who is an architect and also the representative of the male gaze. "La ofrenda" (2013) also links woman and city, although Teresa Solana connects them through their shared vulnerability. Grau becomes vulnerable due to the forensic pathologist that ignores her. The doctor, who represents the male gaze, neglects her due to her exterior ugliness, which does not adhere to global beauty standards. This is what ultimately drives her to end her life, in a last attempt to obtain his attention. Just like Grau, throughout their history metropolises have been vulnerable to the male gaze that has organized and controlled who was able to utilize public space, and under which specific conditions. In the end of "La ofrenda", women and city are connected when the Setmana Tràgica imaginary is replicated in the morgue, where the forensic doctor has just mutilated the prettiest nurse in the hospital; in fact, he is holding her beating heart in his hand.

These two examples showcase the authors' commenting on the sexualization and feminization of the metropolis. These narratives turn Barcelona into a feminine entity, looked upon by a character that represents the male gaze and that pressures the female characters and the city to conform to a narrative of erotization. In this way, the authors denounce the current manner of looking and organizing the metropolis. Although they do not specify how the city must be gazed at, they defend an alternative urban organization, which does not depend on the male gaze. While "Marc Mystery" and "La ofrenda" directly refer to the feminization and sexualization of space, it is important to mention that not all the materials analyzed in this dissertation comment on these processes. For instance, *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* and

*Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra* focus on criticizing the commodification of the metropolis, but they do not transform the city into a feminine entity. Although some authors do not explore this connection, they still criticize the commodification of space and the central role of the local government and foreign financial companies in converting the city into a product to consume, and therefore, they still denounce the prostitution of urban space.

Paradoxically, many of the materials analyzed in this dissertation use the male gaze to express their urban critique. It is important to consider that, according to Laura Mulvey and Susan Sontag, mediums such as film and photography enact the male gaze (Mulvey 62; Sontag 10). Therefore, it can be considered that the male gaze marks any material created through these mediums. In the case of literature, a similar situation arises because it is a medium historically employed by male authors. [87] Apart from the prevalent patriarchal influence in these mediums, some authors permeate their masculine perspective in their representation of women. For instance, *La extranjera* showcases women as products in diverse scenes, and it even portrays a femicide. A similar situation occurs with "Marc Mystery", where the objectification of Barcelona is criticized through the objectification of a real woman, Lucille, both under the control of the ever-vigilant Marc's gaze.

It is worth exploring that these authors raise their concerns about the prostitution of urban space while utilizing the male gaze. Similarly to gore capitalism and its ties to phallogocentrism (Valencia 199), the prostitution of space is based on patriarchal modes of production and exploitation, and this phenomenon cannot be overturned unless it is from an alternative gaze disassociated from the masculine perspective. In the case of film and literature created by women, it is important to examine their work as an attempt to empower themselves and as a

[87] There have always been women writers. During Spain's Golden Age authors such as María de Zayas created notable literary work, however, many of her creations were excluded from canonical literary traditions due to misogyny.

reappropriation of creative space. As mentioned by Hélène Cixous, only by slowly overtaking the spaces of iteration created by men, i.e., producing literature about and for women, can this historical tradition of masculine experience be rewritten (875).

My research aspires to demonstrate that there are clear gender dynamics operating in urban space, and that the masculine gaze that organized the first metropolises of the nineteenth century continues to be present in cities' design and urbanism. Some of the materials examined in this dissertation indicate that applying a feminine gaze to the organization of space, the creation of a feminist geography, is the solution to this problem. According to the feminist and gender activists that I examined, a feminist geography can include measures such as naming more streets after women, installing lights in dark streets that are intimidating at night, and actively creating campaigns against misogynistic attitudes in public space. Although thought provoking, I understand this idea as an unrealistic and utopian resolution to the prostitution of urban space. It must be noted that politically, Ada Colau, from the leftist political organization Barcelona en Comú, represented for a brief period of time this alternative manner to gaze at and organize the city. When she took office in 2015, she became the first female mayor of Barcelona. She publicly supported the gendering of politics, which according to her, represents an alternative political view that allows for more bottom-up cooperative ways of leading the city. (Gessen). Her past participation as an anti-eviction protester in the movement Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) also distinguished her from traditional politicians.[88] During their political campaigns and speeches, Colau's government promised to prioritize long-term residents' needs in new spatial developments, develop a strong feminist agenda, decrease the power of urban speculators, and create a bottom-up political approach (Colau 194-195). Many

[88] Moreover, her political party stemmed from Podemos, a leftist organization that originated during the 15M movement.

long-term residents took their word; as mentioned by Blanca, filmmaker of *La extranjera,* Colau symbolized political change for many of Barcelona inhabitants (Campo Creativo Cero - información- 1:07-1:20). She represented not only a new political approach to the metropolis, but also a clear opportunity to confront the prostitution of urban space. Colau's political statements were promising, and once she became mayor, she restricted the influence of the tourism industry with policies such as the Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamientos Turísticos (PEUAT), or the fines issued against vacation rental marketplace applications Airbnb and Homeway. Her government also developed the "superilles", which offered long-term residents more public space to enjoy, transit, and socialize in areas previously dedicated to traffic.

However, after six years in office, many residents are disenchanted about the limited impact of her political actions. Although she proposed the first thoughtful attempts to control commodification in the city, in 2019 Barcelona was still the sixth most visited city in Europe; in fact, it received a record number of visitors this same year (Clayton-Lea; Montilla). This indicates that the city government continues to make an effort to position the city internationally. It is true that Colau's government greatly promoted social housing; they also purchased empty flats from the banking sector, and then offered them to families at risk of social exclusion (Delgado, "El nuevo municipalismo" 8). At the same time, while she was in office the metropolis hosted international congresses such as the Smart City Expo World Congress, which favorably contributed to branding the city as a technologically-friendly space. The Mobile World Congress, an event repudiated by the social movements that Colau participated in before getting to office, is still celebrated every year.

Manuel Delgado labeled the severe contradictions between rhetorical discourse and actual political action in Colau's government "nuevo municipalismo". According to this author,

the "nuevo municipalismo" consists of using "cánticos de paz y amor a la humanidad" while participating heavily in the "lógicas del capitalismo avanzado" (12-13). I agree with Delgado's observations; although their campaign promises signaled otherwise, it is obvious that the local government still actively participates in the commodification of the city. They do so under a slightly different branding narrative, which emphasizes the high culture and moral values of the metropolis, prioritizing modern, feminist and liberal perspectives. This also includes promoting cultural tourism, which rhetorically signifies a healthier, sustainable version of sightseeing, if compared with traditional tourism.

While a traditional tourist might be interested in rapidly consuming the metropolis visiting the most touristic landmarks, cultural tourists are also concerned about the political, social and economic environment that surrounds them. Recently the local Barcelona government published an action plan focused on fostering cultural tourism in the following years. This includes the development of a bill of rights for visitors, in which foreigners have to ensure that they will practice responsible and civic tourism while in Barcelona ("Barcelona impulsa un pla d'acció"). While the local government attempts to separate cultural tourism from mainstream tourism, as it contributes to their narrative of a moral, environmentally friendly Barcelona, I argue that this type of tourist is also consuming a sanitized gaze of the city. Delgado explains that metropolises are often commodified to turn them into culturally interesting locations ("El centro histórico" 1).[89] Moreover, the historical narrative that they purchase through tours, books or the Internet is also short and manipulated to facilitate its consumption.

[89] This was the case with the Gothic quarter in Barcelona, which was transformed at the beginning of the twentieth century to highlight its antiquity and gothic characteristics. The area was rebuild between 1927 and 1970 "como una especie de decorado", which was later on completed with an architectural and cultural narrative to consume, not only for foreigners, but also for long-term residents (Cócola qtd. in Delgado, "El centro histórico" 6).

Taking all of this into account, I argue that Colau's political actions to overturn the power of the tourism industry have not been enough to stop the prostitution of urban space. Her attempts to control commodification in the metropolis have been rhetorically influential, but have not been successful at redistributing the uses of urban space in the city. This is especially so because during her term Barcelona continued to position itself internationally, an enterprise that was extremely fruitful. For instance, the city registered exponential growth in international arrivals by cruise ships and air in 2017 (López Fuentes 57). In general, Colau's time in office demonstrates that applying a feminine gaze to urbanism is not a sufficiently effective strategy to overturn the prostitution of urban space. This is especially so if capitalism, a system also based on the patriarchal regime, continues to dictate the socioeconomic dynamics of the metropolis.

Although with different mechanisms, I propose that all works examined in my dissertation aspire to create an emotional response on the spectator or reader about urban space in Barcelona. Upon watching or reading, the material's recipients must question the validity of the current urban planning. This is the case with "Marc Mystery": Corominas and Martín Pardo denounce the prostitution of urban space and clearly want the reader to consider Barcelona's commodification, however, the story does not contain a clear call for action. Other works, such as *Barcelona, mapa de sombras* or *Biutiful*, criticize the current urban planning but also denounce other crucial issues for the city, such as the need to recover historical memory or the hypocrisy of the neoliberal system, especially when dealing with immigrants' suffering. Similarly, Cunillé and Iñárritu do not incite the recipients to protest but want long-term residents to reflect on the issues they condemn.

In the case of other materials like *La extranjera* or *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra*, the authors' intent exceeds contemplating on the matter and includes a call to action.

Both materials are based in reality, as they are a documentary and a graphic journalist story, and in this way, connect more profoundly with the real environment and situation that recipients are experiencing. *La extranjera* mobilizes the spectator through aggressive montages, created with images, sounds and music that transcend entertainment, and expose the necessity to change current spatial circumstances. This is especially clear in the fictional killing of the tourist by a Barcelona resident. This gruesome plot of *La extranjera* does not entertain, it metaphorically indicates that long-term residents have the ability to end the current model of the city, which has turned Barcelona into an *extranjera*, through action. *Los vagabundos* creates a meta-reflection on graphic journalism through its epilogue, which contains an interview with Joe Sacco. During the interview, Sacco, Carrión and Sagar comment that graphic journalism's purpose is not to entertain, but to signal a problem. The active participation of the authors in the narrative and the connection between the graphic novel and the activist documentary *Ciutat Morta* (2013), used to commercialize the material, indicate the authors' intent to mobilize the recipients.

Whilst Blanca and Sagar and Carrión aspire to create a response in the reader or spectator, probably in the form of protests similar to those that emerged during the 15M movement, the authors do not specify how those reactions should develop into reforming the city's urban planning. In general terms, the materials indicate that transforming urban space will require a strong social movement and political representation. They envision gazing at the city from a citizen-friendly perspective. They foresee a metropolis whose economy does not depend on the tourism industry and foreign investment and speculation: although tourism is still part of the economy, in the new Barcelona, it will be regulated. More importantly, instead of utilizing economic resources to brand the metropolis, funds should meet the long-term residents' needs, with further public spaces, social housing and lower rent prices.

Altogether, whether the authors intend to create social and political action or just a general reflection on the matter, I consider all the materials forms of artivism, i.e., the combination of art with an explicit social content that pushes social, environmental and political agendas (The Olbios team). I argue that the artivism examined in this dissertation must be analyzed in conjunction with the protests by Barcelona neighbors' associations, as part of the same activist grassroots urban movement. According to Manuel Castells, urban social movements can question the political, social and economic organization of society through the reconsideration of urban space (378). Socially and artistically, the urban social movement developing in Barcelona desires to inspire long-term residents to reflect, question, and even fight the tourist narrative that is devastating their neighborhoods. They all demand their Lefebvrian "right to the city", which stresses the right of citizens to participate in the transformation of city spaces. I agree with David Harvey's assertion that the right to the city is also a human right, since cities cannot be separated from inhabitants' societal ties, lifestyles, aesthetic and technological values (23).

In March of 2019, the prostitution of space in Barcelona reached a turning point when the phenomenon was unexpectedly decelerated due to the emergence of the COVID-19 epidemic. After Italy, Spain was the most affected country in Europe by the virus: as of March 14th 2020, there were 6,251 cases and 193 deaths (Jones). During this same month, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez declared a state of emergency and tackled the health crisis with a strict confinement, which mandated individuals to stay home, except for buying groceries, shortly walking the dog, or going to the pharmacy or the hospital. After a year of full and partial lockdowns, mask mandates, working remotely and reduced schedules for retail businesses, bars and restaurants, in June 2021 the country gradually opened up again. However, international travel dropped

significantly during the pandemic. Some countries with emerging COVID variants, such as Brazil and the United Kingdom, were banned from entering Spain, while others like the United States discouraged travelling due to Spain's high number of cases. Consequently, Barcelona's economy was greatly hit. Most business trips and conventions were cancelled and the hotel and restaurant industry registered minimal gains during 2020: out of 434 hotels in Barcelona, only fifty remained open for short periods of time. In this apocalyptic scenario reminiscent of the 2008 economic crisis, more than 150,000 jobs reliant on the tourism industry were lost in the city (Balletbò).

The effects of the pandemic were especially visible in the most commodified areas, such as La Rambla. The two hundred souvenir shops in this tourist area closed down during 2020, fifty of them indefinitely (Benvenuty, "Las tiendas de souvenirs"). In an unprecedented turn of events, some sectors of the population who condemned tourism reconsidered their position after contemplating the empty streets and closing businesses. As politician Andreu Mas-Collell explained: "ahora sabemos qué pasaría si eliminámaramos el turismo de repente. Sería un desastre económico" ("Barcelona, de turismofobia a promoción"). In a letter sent to *El periódico,* long-term resident Pau Folch explained the hypocrisy of what in the last few years has been termed "tourism-phobia":

> En ciudades como Barcelona, la que yo vivo, esta tendencia al odio hacia el turista ha ido creciendo cada vez más en los últimos años, pero claro, ahora que no hay turismo nos quejamos de que no hay trabajo … Ahora nos damos cuenta de que esos turistas que inundaban Las Ramblas … eran los que mantenían a nuestras familias y los que nos daban trabajo.

Conversely, residents have also expressed their satisfaction while walking through previous tourist areas, such as the port and the beaches, without tourist crowds around them. In a different approach, some citizens contemplate the health crisis as an opportunity to reinvent the model of the city. The sellers in la Rambla, for example, indicate that it is unthinkable to reject tourism, as it is currently the only economic salvation for commerce in downtown Barcelona. However, they also indicate that "la crisis es una oportunidad para reformular el modelo turístico". Similarly, Fermín Villar, president of the neighbors and sellers' association Els Amics de la Rambla, commented that "la nueva realidad ha demostrado la necesidad de transformar el turismo… Barcelona debería recuperar el turismo sin olvidar a los barceloneses" (Garrido). Therefore, some sector of the population envisioned the COVID-19 crisis as a perfect scenario to reformulate the city from a clean slate. As already stated, for a lot of hopeful residents Colau represented this opportunity for change in 2015, however, her political change has been mostly rhetorical. Therefore, I argue that so far the sanitary emergency of COVID-19 has been the only element actually capable of stopping the prostitution of urban space in Barcelona.

As 2021 advanced, the continuation of preventive measures against the disease and the arrival of vaccines helped to lower the expansion and the gravity of confirmed cases globally. Consequently, Barcelona welcomed its first post-pandemic tourists in summer of 2021; in fact, during this summer 1,9 million foreigners visited the metropolis, which represents half the visitors that it received in 2019, before the pandemic started. In comparison to 2020, this was an increase of 184% (Garfella). COVID-19 offered a drastic opportunity for the Barcelona government to reformulate their economy and their dependence on external image building. Instead of developing strategies to create wealth for and through long-term residents, most resources have been focused on returning to normalcy, which implies recovering the tourism

industry, and continuing to foster urban speculation, evictions and gentrification processes in the most commodified neighborhoods. When Blanca, the filmmaker of *La extranjera*, was asked about the COVID-19 crisis and tourism in Barcelona, he mentioned that "tenemos la posibilidad de repensarlo todo ahora... o podemos hacer que llegue la vacuna y que todo el mundo vuelva a entrar en Barcelona a lo loco" (Campo Creativo Cero -información- 13:11-13:24). As the summer of 2021 comes to an end and the hotel and hospitality industry expectantly prepare for the winter season, Blanca's pessimistic perspective on opening the city "a lo loco" have become true.

Similarly to the prostitution of urban space, the COVID-19 epidemic came about as a brutal reminder of our mental and bodily vulnerability, especially when the functioning of the neoliberal global system is a stake. The cultural materials examined in this dissertation highlight the bodily and mental connection between urban space and its residents, and the detrimental effects that neoliberal urban transformations can have on both. While I consider these artistic creations part of a larger urban social movement, it is difficult to pinpoint how effective this movement has been for the moment. After twenty years of massive urban transformations, I propose that the materials examined in this dissertation, alongside many others, have fruitfully increased awareness on the issues of tourism and gentrification in most districts of the city. In fact, even when I do not consider Colau's measures extremely successful, her victory and her legislations showcase that the citizens' concerns about the prostitution of urban space have been powerful enough to reach the political level. Before the COVID-19 crisis, it was common to witness neighbors protesting against tourism, even on a daily basis, marching through the streets of highly visited areas such as la Barceloneta. In a 2017 governmental survey, long-term residents expressed that tourism was the biggest issue in Barcelona, before unemployment and

access to housing. That same year, the anti-tourist organization Arran vandalized tour buses full of foreign visitors, slashing tires and spray painting slogans criticizing mass tourism (18-19 Millán Sánchez). Cultural materials with a clear urban critique such as *Biutiful* or *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra* have been highly consumed by the public, and throughout the last years, the city celebrated several roundtables about commodification and tourism, which were also very successful in attendance.

Most foreign visitors visiting Barcelona are aware of the urban problem and the long-term residents' unconformity with the growth of the tourism industry. Graffiti on walls, buildings, and on the city's pavement encouraging tourists to go home and banners protesting urban speculation can be found in most streets in downtown Barcelona. Moreover, the hate against tourists is widely commented on international outlets and travel websites. I argue then that the social urban movement formed by activists, authors, and neighbors has been successful in developing a high level of awareness on the urban problematic developing in Barcelona, both locally and globally. However, the urban revolution envisioned by some of the authors examined in this dissertation, such as Blanca or Sagar and Carrión, is still unthinkable in Barcelona, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic kept the urban issues dormant for almost two years. As long as late capitalism continues to survive, transform, and regulate the organization of cities, the prostitution of urban space will continue to unstoppably brand cities worldwide.

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