

Tourism, simulacra and architectural reconstruction: selling an idealised past

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1. Introduction

This chapter explores architectural reconstruction in the context of the formation of nation-states in Europe during the 19th century and contributes to the field by suggesting two points. First, it links the nationalist interest in architectural reconstruction with the emergence of a leisure industry increasingly interested in displaying architectural heritage in a spectacular way to create experiences for tourists. The role of tourism in architectural reconstruction has been acknowledged as a 20th century phenomenon and linked particularly to the consumer society of post-industrial economies. However, the chapter contributes to understanding the historical roots of this process and, in line with authors such as Lasansky (2004), suggests that since the end of the 19th century local elites advocated architectural reconstruction as a means of creating tourist destinations. The construction of the nation-state was led by the bourgeoisie and so it makes sense to assume that this class was also interested in promoting tourism to generate competitiveness and capital accumulation. The selling of places was based on an idealised past formulated by nationalist elites. In other words, the chapter shows how in the efforts to establish a national past nationalist historians suggested several reconstructions that were actually implemented as a means of attracting tourists.

Second, and in relation to the representation of history suggested by nationalist elites, the chapter shows that reconstructions implemented the methodology of restoration developed by Viollet-le-Duc and suggests why this procedure should be regarded as simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994). Reconstructions were based on ideal models of medieval

architecture and such models came to supplant the reality of buildings. Buildings became copies of an idealised past that probably never existed. In addition, with these types of reconstructions it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the original traces from the added materials, the real from the fiction, which is precisely one of the main characteristics of hyper-real objects.

The chapter explores the case of the Gothic Quarter in Barcelona, which was re-created as a medieval space at the beginning of the twentieth century (Cocola-Gant, 2011, 2014a and 2014b; Ganau-Casas, 2008; García-Fuentes, 2015). Significantly, its name is also a modern creation as the space was traditionally known as the cathedral neighbourhood. Although the area is the most ancient part of the city, it was markedly reinvented between the 1900s and 1960s, a transformation which altered the shape of circa 30 buildings. This ‘medievalisation’ transformed a degraded neighbourhood into the most picturesque part of the city and it provided the space for an historic atmosphere that it did not previously have. In this context, the chapter explains how the idea of recreating the Gothic Quarter had nationalist origins but that reconstructions actually took place as a way of promoting Barcelona as a tourist destination. The works were mostly undertaken in the context of the international exhibition which took place in Barcelona in 1929. In addition, the chapter explores how the idea of a medieval Catalan house developed by nationalist historians was used as a model to reconstruct several buildings. Architects took the ideal model as an historical fact and via reconstructions this model became the new reality. The idea replaces the object and the result can be interpreted as a hyper-real Gothic area.

2. Architectural heritage: national symbols and tourist resources

The social interest in architectural heritage has been linked, first, to the construction of identities (national and local) and, second, to place promotion policies aimed at creating ‘tourism imaginaries’ (Graburn and Gravari-Barbas, 2016). In general, literature on architectural heritage notes two phases in heritage policies since the French revolution: an early period in which nationalism began to re-edit its own history. This period marked the beginning of heritage restoration (Díaz and Champion, 1996; Poulot, 2006). Second, the monumental past has been used as an instrument of place promotion in a more recent phase within the context of tourism expansion (Alsayyad, 2001; Cocola-

Gant, 2012; Rowan and Baram, 2004). In both phases, this social interest for architectural heritage has entailed the reconstruction of historic buildings.

In Europe, the modern origin of architecture reconstruction is linked to the creation of nation-states after the French revolution and the need to display the roots of the nation via an idealised past. The new appreciation of the Middle Ages as a glorious era entailed the study of every cultural form produced in that epoch and the aspiration of re-establishing them in the present time. In this context, architecture reconstruction is an example of the ‘invention of traditions’ aimed at exhibiting the continuity of an idealised history, even though ‘insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of invented traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 2). In France, historians such as Guizot determined what periods should be included as glorious epochs in the history of the nation while the architect Viollet-le-Duc reconstructed the most representative buildings of those periods, namely the Gothic cathedral (Poulot, 2006; Theis, 1986). Ironically, those buildings had been destroyed during the Revolution as symbols of the ancien regime but through a change in their meaning they became a metaphor for the foundation of the nation. As Herzfeld states, “the choice of pasts is negotiated in a shifting present” (1991, p. 257).

The literature usually links reconstructions related to tourism as characteristics of more contemporary periods. The use of heritage to create experiences for tourists where the history of a site can be altered and, moreover, recreated into something completely false has normally been depicted as a particular phenomenon of the consumer society (Alsayyad, 2001; Jameson, 2004). Some researchers argue that it is a postmodern singularity, a consequent feature of the society of spectacle, of which its most notable paradigm would be theme parks (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990; Cocola-Gant, 2017). An early example of this can be seen in North America in the reconstruction of the colonial city of Williamsburg in the 1920s. John D. Rockefeller Jr. established the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and reconstructed 88 buildings from the 18th century to create what is considered to be one of the first theme parks in history (Brown and Chappel 2004).

With these two uses of architectural heritage in mind, I want to stress two points. First, in the history of modern urban planning architectural reconstruction is usually linked to

the initial phase, that is, it is depicted as a phenomenon linked to Romanticism, Viollet-le-Duc, and the desire of nationalist movements to represent traces of a glorious past. As stated, the role of tourism in architectural reconstruction has typically been acknowledged in recent times (see for example Zaban, 2017). However, in line with Lasansky's (2004) findings, I will provide evidence to suggest that the role of tourism in architectural reconstruction has a long tradition in European urban planning. Local authorities have forged links with tourism entrepreneurs to promote urban centres since the end of the nineteenth century. Second, and in relation to this, these two phases do not contradict themselves. The use of heritage both to reinforce national or local identities and to create a tourist destination can take place simultaneously. The formation of the nation state was a liberal project led by the bourgeoisie, that is to say, it was led by a class with great interest in developing tourist sites as a way to achieve economic growth. The relationship between nationalism and tourism can also be seen in the fact that the architectural heritage promoted by the tourism industry is actually an idealised past formulated by nationalist historians. In the formation of the nation-state, the formulation of a glorious era involved creative proposals to recreate historic buildings. In many cases, however, such proposals were implemented in the context of the construction of tourist destinations.

For instance, Lasansky (2004) shows how in fascist Italy architectural reconstruction was promoted by local elites aimed at attracting tourism. However, the way in which such reconstructions took place in many cases had been formulated in previous decades, particularly after Italian unification. An earlier example can be seen in the case of the reconstruction of the Grand Place in Brussels, which started in 1883 (Smets, 1995). The Gothic style was taken as a national symbol. But at the same time, local business people were interested in the restoration of the Place to increase the touristic appeal of Brussels. The mayor, Charles Buls, was involved in the creation of the *Bruxelles Attractions* society in 1887, which continuously advocated for the acceleration of the restoration of the Place. Buls and *Bruxelles Attractions* also encouraged the organisation of the 1897 International Exhibition in Brussels and it was in the context of the preparation for the event in which the restoration works were intensified.

In conclusion, I want to stress, first, that in the context of the creation of the liberal nation-state, the construction of national identities and the selling of the place may take

place at the same time. Second, that architectural reconstruction has been a central tool in both scenarios, that is, for creating an idealised past that has been increasingly consumed in an era of mass tourism. I want to further develop my argument by suggesting why architectural reconstruction needs to be seen as a form of simulacra.

3. Reconstruction and simulacra

In modern Europe, the roots of architectural reconstruction are linked to the methodology developed by Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) in the stylistic restorations of Gothic buildings in France (Bressani, 2014; Leniaud, 1994). This methodology influenced the practice of architectural restoration in Europe until the first half of the 20th century. The first thing to note is that for Viollet-le-Duc restoration was understood as ‘completion’. In the context of a post-revolutionary France in which medieval buildings were partially destroyed, restoration meant adding the missing parts of the building according to its original style. In this regard, his work involved creative recreations and should be interpreted as reconstructions.

This interpretation of restoration as completion has its roots in what in Italy is called *ripristino*, that is, the reestablishment of the original (pristine) shape of the building. During the rediscovery of classic architecture in the 18th century, proposals for the *ripristino* of classic ruins was a common practice among archaeologists and architects. The *ripristino* of classic ruins was in fact a central activity for architects who made the *Grand Tour*. Following the rules of classic orders, architects had to suggest how the original shape of the building would have been. This was possible because it was assumed that classic orders were absolute and invariable. A Doric temple, for instance, always had to have the same elements. This practice of *ripristino* is at the origin of Viollet-le-Duc’s methodology and, in this sense, it is here where reconstructions should be regarded as simulacra. Viollet-le-Duc completed the *Grand Tour* in 1836-1837 and one of the projects he did in Italy was the complete restoration of the antique theatre of Taormina, Sicily (Bressani, 2014).

Viollet-le-Duc’s research on the history of French architecture was an attempt to prove the rules of the Gothic style, which was assumed to work as an order (Viollet-le-Duc, 1967). It was presupposed that the Gothic style had a rational constructive logic based on

the repetition of similar elements and solutions. For Viollet-le-Duc, the Gothic style was an invariable system. He stated that in the 13th century the Gothic style “arrived at its most great perfection, even to be seen as an art subject to fixed rules, an order, using this word in its true sense” (Viollet-le-Duc, 1984, p. 93). If this was the case, by knowing the rules of such an invariable system the architect was able to complete the building. Those rules formed an ideal model and buildings were altered according to the model rather than to the traces conserved. In this sense, the “generation of models of a real without origin or reality” is the way in which Baudrillard defines hyper-reality (1994, p 1). The ideal model becomes the new reality and, for this reason, the architect was able to know the pristine shape even if there were not enough traces to prove how that shape had been. Though based on an apparent logic system, reconstructions were ideal and imagined. Reconstructions led to hyper-real buildings, to simulations of real buildings.

The example of the ideal cathedral suggested by Viollet-le-Duc is evidence of this. He suggested how an ideal Gothic cathedral should have been. Based on conserved buildings such as the cathedrals of Amiens and Reims, he imagined the elements that a Gothic cathedral should have. Viollet-le-Duc took his imagined ideal cathedral as a model to be used for the restoration of other cathedrals, including Notre Dame in Paris. For instance, the spire in Notre Dame had been knocked down and although Viollet-le-Duc was aware of the original shape due to conserved drawings of the structure, he reconstructed the spire based on his ideal model rather than on the drawings (Leniaud, 1994). In this regard, the model of the ideal cathedral is taken as the original, even if such original never existed. The representation (a subjective abstraction) comes to supplant the real object. For Baudrillard (1994), a characteristic of simulacra is that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the real from the fiction, which is precisely the case in Viollet-le-Duc’s methodology.

In addition, re-establishing a pristine shape involved the removal of elements that were alien to the original style. As the ‘great perfection’ of the Gothic style was formulated in the 13th century, the practice of Viollet-le-Duc included the demolition of later works that altered the pristine shape of medieval buildings. The restoration concealed the ‘natural’ evolution of historic buildings, that is, their intrinsic heterogeneity caused by different modifications across centuries. The new idealised shape of restored buildings need to be

linked with the efforts made by nationalist elites in determining which periods should be considered appropriate for the history of the nation and which should not.

As stated, this procedure dominated the practice of architectural reconstruction in Europe until the first half of the 20th century. Regardless of whether of the reason for the reconstruction was related to the creation of identities or linked to the promotion of tourism imaginaries (Graburn and Gravari-Barbas, 2016), architects were informed by Viollet-le-Duc's methodology. This was also the case of the reconstruction of the Maison du Roi in the Grand Place of Brussels led by Charles Buls, who stated that the *Dictionnaire* of Viollet-le-Duc was his bible (Smets, 1995). I turn now to explore how this procedure was applied in Barcelona.

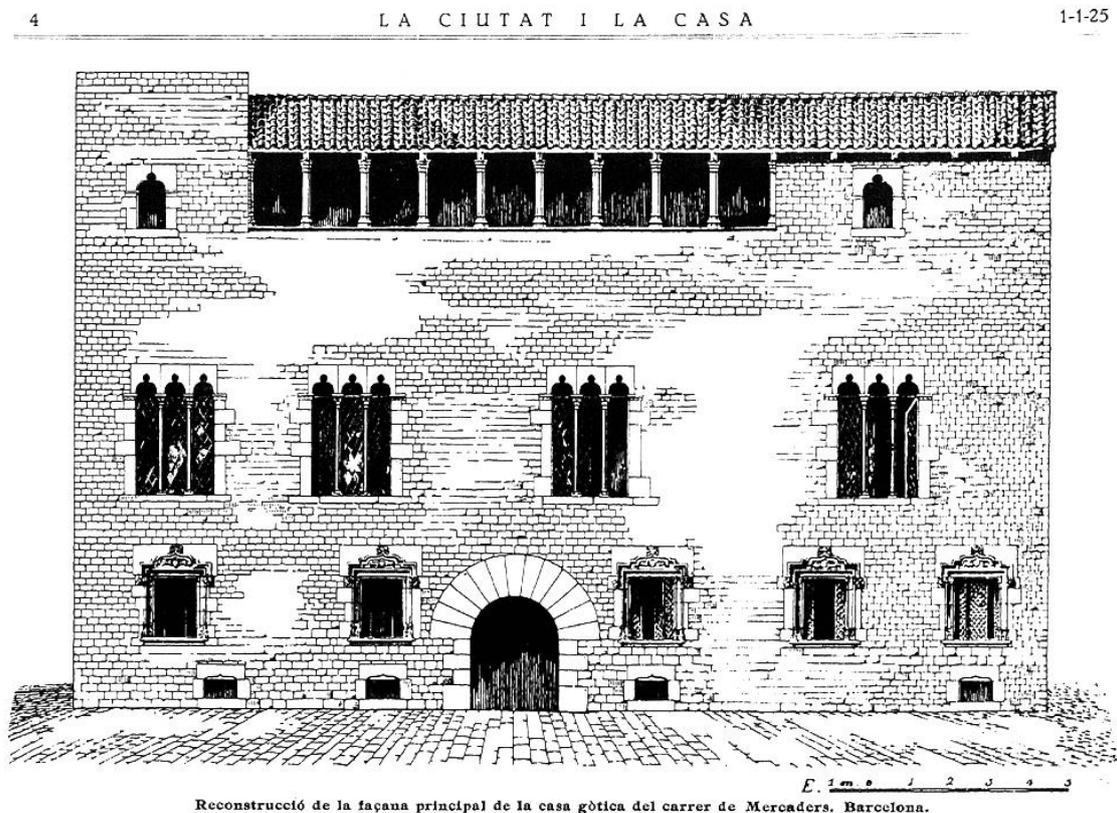
4. The Catalan house

In the context of the liberal revolutions of the 19th century, Catalan nationalism took from France the idea of using architectural heritage as a way of representing a nation in the making. In Catalonia, the nationalist movement established the origin of the nation in the Middle Age. Considered particularly important were the XIII and XIV centuries as during this period Catalonia was a commercial force in the Mediterranean. This interest in a glorious era marked the origin of a cultural movement aimed at investigating the heritage of such period, including the restoration of historic buildings. As in France with Viollet-le-Duc, the writing of the history of national architecture was to confirm the existence of the French nation. In Catalonia, this task was conducted particularly by the architect, historian and politician Puig i Cadafalch (Mallart, 2016). The important point to consider is that the reconstructions made in the Gothic Quarter during the 20th century were based on a model of medieval architecture effectively defined by him.

Puig i Cadafalch is the author of the seminar book *L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya* (Romanesque Architecture in Catalonia), that was published in three volumes between 1909 and 1918. Based on this work, he presented a paper in 1908 called *La Casa Catalana* (The Catalan House) (Puig i Cadafalch, 1913). According to Puig i Cadafalch, the most representative 'synthesis' of Catalan nationality was the medieval urban house. It was "the architectural trace that best reflects the Catalan way of life" (Puig i Cadafalch, 1913, p. 1041). He refers to a type of urban house that can be seen in various regions

influenced by Catalan power during the Middle Ages, such as Naples, Valencia, Aragon, and the old county of Roussillon (currently Perpignan). The façade of this type of house is dominated by a large semi-circular arched portal on the ground floor; so-called ‘coronelles’ windows on the noble floor; and the top floor is finished with a portico and a tower at an angle (Figure 1). This type of house was also mentioned by Viollet-le-Duc in his *Dictionnaire*. He described it as “Aragonese style” and provided the example of the Palace of the Deputation in Perpignan (Viollet-le-Duc, 1967, p. 261).

Figure 1: Ideal model of a Catalan House. Drawing by Jeroni Martorell for the restoration of Padellàs House, 1924. Source: Cocola-Gant, 2014.



Reconstrucció de la façana principal de la casa gòtica del carrer de Mercaders, Barcelona.

Puig i Cadafalch recognised that only some traces of this house remained in Barcelona and that in order to see examples of the Catalan house one should go to other places (Puig i Cadafalch, 1913). The important point is that despite the lack of examples that existed in Barcelona at the beginning of the 20th century, several buildings were reconstructed according to this model to such an extent that nowadays it is the most common type of medieval building in the historic centre. In order to understand this process, I turn now to analyse the work of the architect Jeroni Martorell.

Puig i Cadafalch's student at the School of Architecture in Barcelona, Jeroni Martorell was director of the Cataloguing and Conservation Monuments Service of the regional Catalan government from 1915 to 1951. Following the opening of a 'Haussmann style' avenue in the historic centre of Barcelona, in which entire medieval traces disappeared between 1908 and 1913 (the current via Laietana), a debate emerged about how to preserve and restore architectural heritage. In this regard, Martorell studied several houses in the historic centre of Barcelona and, following his analysis of Puig i Cadafalch, stated that such houses belonged to a "well-defined type" that could be characterised by both repetition and permanence (Martorell, 1924, p. 6). According to Martorell, the restoration of such houses was an easy task because they followed a typology that never changes (Martorell, 1925). In other words, Martorell was following Viollet-le-Duc's methodology in which the abstraction of an ideal Catalan house was taken as a model used to restore them. The idea replaced the object.

Martorell is recognised for introducing in Spain the theory of restoration developed in Italy by Boito and Giovannoni. If Viollet-le-Duc reconstructed buildings following an ideal type that probably never existed, Boito and Giovannoni took the view that reconstruction should only be allowed in cases in which material traces of a building provided evidence of how the building actually was. But when applied, this theory did not differ much from the work of Viollet-le-Duc and, in fact, Boito 'invented' several medieval buildings in Italy (Zucconi, 1997). First, this theory implied that restoration was understood as the reconstruction or completion of a building. Second, a model or typology in which to base the reconstruction was still needed. Conserved traces may suggest the original style of the building but in order to complete it architects need to know the 'order' to which it belongs. The Catalan house was used as an invariable model that always had the same parts and so architects were able to complete buildings by adding the parts that were missing.

This type of reconstruction was first proposed by Martorell in 1924 in the case of the so-called Casa Padellàs (Figure 1). The house was built in the 16th century and, according to Martorell, "it is the best example we know from the typology of houses that I referred" (Martorell, 1925). The house was at risk of collapse and he proposed to restore it. The house did not conserve any of the 'coronelles' windows nor the angled tower. It had a semi-circular arched portal and part of a portico. For Martorell (1925),

those elements indicated that the house belonged to the ‘order’ or typology that never changes, as he put it. For this reason, he stated that “the missing parts can be reconstructed with archaeological criteria” (Martorell, 1924, p. 6). Following this rationale, he proposed to complete the building with the elements that theoretically were missing, particularly the coronelles windows and a tower. In this regard, figure 1 is Martorell’s proposal for the completion of the house.

This kind of reconstruction is based on a historiographical hypothesis. It is an idea about the past that replaces the object. Simply, the representation becomes the object. In this sense, it is an example of simulacra which corrects the building by adding the parts that theoretically were missing and, at the same time, by eliminating all the elements that did not correspond with the model. The understanding of these reconstructions as simulacra is better understood if we pay attention to other proposals presented by Martorell. As reconstruction follows the model of the Catalan house, ironically all of his proposals were notably similar. Martorell suggested how to restore more than ten houses in Barcelona. All of those houses had a medieval origin, and for Martorell this origin was enough to suggest that they should be reconstructed according to the ideal typology (for more examples see Cocola-Gant, 2014a). The serial repetition of a model is in fact a characteristic of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994).

Although Martorell’s proposals put forward between 1915 and 1925 were not undertaken, he received the commission to restore the Canonical house in 1927. This house is situated behind the cathedral. Of medieval origin, it had been enlarged and modified several times, meaning that the architect did not know what its primitive design would have been. However, Martorell stated that “the house belongs to a well-known type of medieval building. Changes over the centuries have distorted it but it is easy to restore it. I propose a restoration project to return the house to its primitive design” (Martorell, 1926, p. 13). Following the idea of the Catalan house, Martorell reconstructed the three façades of the building, in particular by adding the elements that theoretically were missing (figures 2 and 3). The work was completed with both historic building materials stored by the city council and with new materials which imitated medieval designs. As a result, the house became in effect a hyper-real Gothic collage, but at present it is still one of the most picturesque monuments in the city.

Figure 2: Canonical house as it was in 1927. Drawing by Jeroni Martorell. Source: Cocola-Gant, 2014.

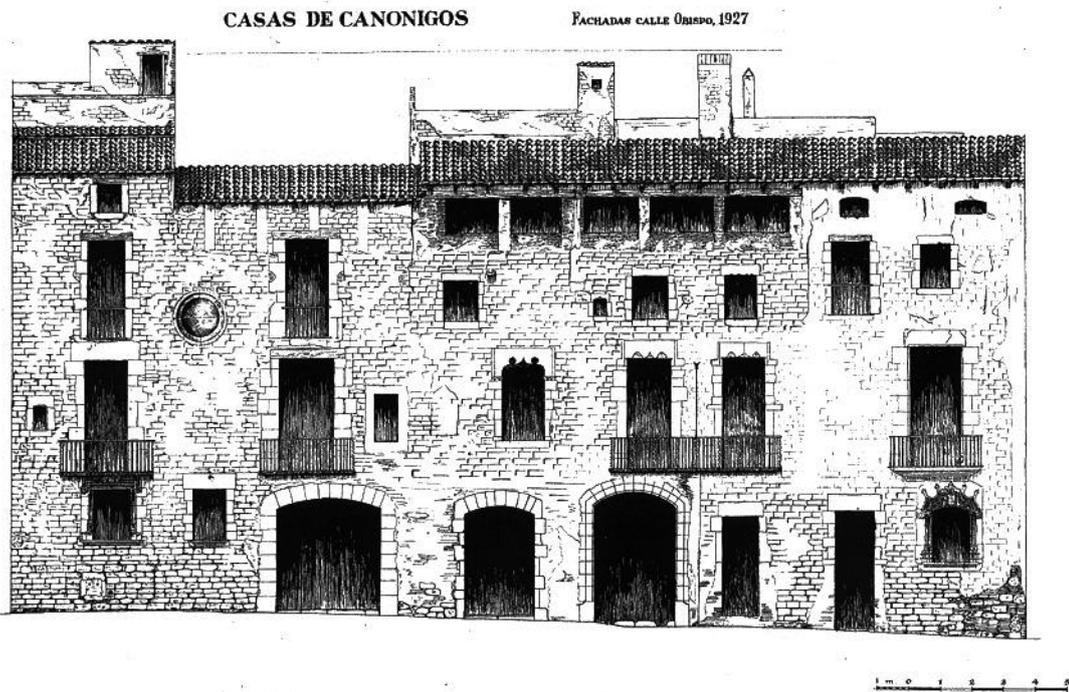
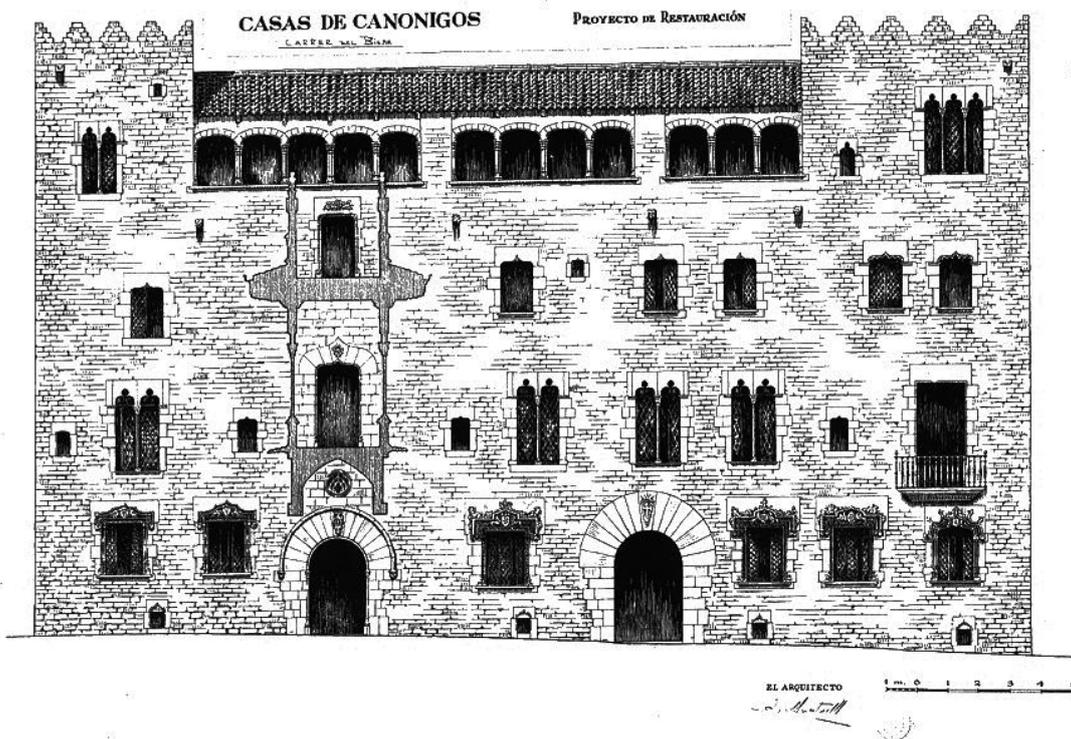


Figure 3: Plans for the restoration of the Canonical house, By Jeroni Martorell. Source: Cocola-Gant, 2014.



5. Selling an idealised past

I have shown how different proposals to restore medieval buildings were based on an idealised Catalan house. I have also mentioned that the debate regarding what to do with architectural heritage in the historic centre of Barcelona resulted from criticism of the opening of an avenue that demolished a large number of historic buildings. Between 1900 and 1920 such a debate reflected the will of Catalan nationalism to restore what were seen as the traces of a glorious era. However, none of these projects were undertaken before 1927, that is to say, at a time in which Barcelona was embellishing the city in preparation to host the International Exhibition of 1929. In other words, the preparation of the city to receive more than a million international visitors was the main justification for starting the reconstructions that had been discussed over the previous two decades.

The idea of re-creating the historic centre had a nationalist origin but it was undertaken decades later as a means of promoting the city. This reflects the links between nationalism and tourism as authors have suggested (Storm, 2011). In Barcelona, Catalan nationalism became increasingly important during the final decades of the nineteenth century and nationalists would govern the City Council after 1901. But at the same time, Catalan nationalism was by then a bourgeois movement formed by liberal politicians, industrialists and business people. Since they ruled the city they also sought to promote Barcelona as a tourist destination. In 1908 the Tourist Attraction Society was founded. Several figures of the nationalist movement were integrated into this society, including Puig i Cadafalch himself. It is for this reason that nationalism and tourism formed two sides of the same coin. The idealised past was taken as a resource for tourism promotion.

Since the beginning of the 20th century the instrumental use of the past as a means of making picturesque spaces for visitors was at the centre of the idea to reconstruct what today is called the Gothic Quarter. During the demolition that made way for the current via Laietana the City Council selected historic building materials, which were put into storage. Façades and even entire buildings were stored stone-by-stone. In the debate regarding what to do with those historic materials a local politician suggested putting them around the cathedral and so “making a truthful Gothic Quarter” (Rucabado, 1911,

p. 310). This was the first time that the expression ‘Gothic Quarter’ was used. However, it is interesting to see what Jeroni Martorell thought about the idea: “the works would be an investment with high interest; tourists would have good motives to come to Barcelona to spend their money” (Martorell, 1911, p. 307).

The promotion of Barcelona as a tourist destination is not a recent trend. From the beginning of the twentieth century both tourism and trade fairs identified a new flow of capital that would move Barcelona along if they were properly promoted. This was the focal aspiration of the Tourist Attraction Society (Cocola-Gant and Palou i Rubio, 2015). Interestingly, the relationship between architectural heritage and tourist promotion was explicit. In 1908, the banker and hospitality entrepreneur Gonzalo Arnús published *Barcelona Cosmopolita* – a book about ‘the convenience of attracting international tourism into Barcelona’ (Arnús, 1908, p. 5). The book highlighted that Barcelona did not have a recognised international image, and suggested that the production of such an image was a central goal for local authorities. Among other measures that should be undertaken, Arnús concluded that the “ancient Barcelona, whose archaeological value is higher than people believe, does not contain much loveliness, but it would enjoy great fame if its monuments were better known and portrayed” (Arnús, 1908, p. 15). Therefore, the reconstruction of the architectural heritage that nationalist historians suggested was seen by the tourist industry as a necessary instrument for developing Barcelona into a tourist destination. The emergent hospitality industry constantly demanded local authorities to restore historic buildings. For instance, in a report about tourism development in Catalonia written in 1932, the author pointed out that “in spite of the importance of our heritage, it is an illusion to base our tourism in this resource. The majority of our monuments do not contain or we did not still give them the spectacular character that tourism requires” (cited in Vidal Casellas, 2006, p. 217).

The opportunity to restore the architectural heritage in the historic centre of Barcelona came with the organisation of the International Exhibition in 1929. The idea to host the event emerged in 1905 by the same politicians and business people who three years later would create the Tourist Attraction Society. In 1915, the Tourist Attraction Society declared that “what remains of an exhibition is more interesting than the exhibition itself” [and an example may be] “to restore our historic and artistic monuments in order

to exhibit them to future visitors” (Barcelona Atracci3n, 1915, p. 11). After two decades discussing the possibility of reconstructing the neighbourhood around the cathedral, the urban renovation done in preparation for the Exhibition included the works that changed the area into the current Gothic Quarter. The neighbourhood’s past represented the most glorious national period but its reconstruction was only possible when such past was used as an instrument of city promotion. In this context, works started in 1927, including the restoration of the Canonical house by Martorell.

Works around the cathedral involved the restoration of circa 30 buildings, this being the reason why the refurbishments lasted until the 1960s. Architects involved in the works, particularly Adolf Florensa, were Puig i Cadafalch’s students at the Barcelona School of Architecture. They were trained during a period when Catalan nationalism was rewriting the architectural history of the nation and in which medieval styles were considered symbols of a glorious era. Furthermore, they were trained following the principles of the *Dictionnaire* of Viollet-le-Duc, particularly his method of completing buildings based on an ideal type. In this context, the model of the Catalan house was taken for granted and the majority of reconstructions involved completing parts that theoretically were missing (see Cocola-Gant, 2014a). As in Martorell’s proposals, the results of the reconstruction are rather similar. It is for this reason that although Puig i Cadafalch noted that in Barcelona there were no examples of the Catalan house, nowadays it is the most repeated typology across the city centre.

The result is a hyper-real Gothic environment in which buildings were reconstructed following an idealised past that probably never existed. For instance, nowadays one can see in the neighbourhood a large number of coronelles windows —the most important element of the ‘original’ model— but 85 of such windows were created between 1927 and the late 1960s. Another example of reconstruction as simulacra is the restoration of the Royal Palace, which was completely transformed between 1927 and 1955. Two modern residential houses joined to the building were torn down and substituted with an ideal ‘Catalan house’ built with new materials. Historic doors, stairs and a coffered ceiling were re-located from other buildings, while 14 medieval windows were invented. Following the reconstruction, the Royal Palace was declared an ‘historic monument’ by the state in 1962.

The idealised past was finally reconstructed as a tourist product. Currently the area is a must-see attraction as it has been since the 1940s. In 1950, the architect who led the works stated: “as a result of this quantity of monuments gathered in a space so sparse, we possess an atmosphere with a formidable historic density, which absorbs visitors and produces an unforgettable impression. For this reason, a visit to the Gothic Quarter is essential for every tourist” (Florensa, 1950, p. 629).

6. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have shown how reconstructions in the historic centre of Barcelona reflected the links between nationalism and tourism promotion as well as how such reconstructions led to hyper-real objects based on ideal models. In this concluding paragraph, I suggest to connect this selling of an idealised past to notions of authenticity in tourism. Authenticity, as Wang suggests, should be separated into two different issues: that of tourist experiences and that of toured objects (Wang, 1999, p. 351). The first is related to MacCannell’s tourist who seeks authenticity in other places. Authenticity, as MacCannell declared, refers to an authentic experience (MacCannell, 1976, p. 30). The second one (objective authenticity) is the authenticity of the original. It refers to the historical materials and shapes and to the recognition of the toured object as authentic. The selling of the idealised past is an example of the tensions between these two forms of authenticity. In Barcelona, the area that I examined is a must-see attraction and nowadays it provides tourists with authentic experiences. But tourists consume a representation of history rather than authentic historical objects. As Wang suggests, “even though the tourists themselves think they have gained authentic experiences, this can, however, still be judged as inauthentic, if the toured objects are in fact false, contrived, or part of what MacCannell calls staged authenticity” (1999, p. 351). I agree with Cohen (1995) that tourists accept the lack of originals and that they are not concerned with authenticity as long as they enjoy their experiences. However, in the case of Barcelona the area is presented as a medieval space and so tourists are not aware that they are visiting hyper-real objects. They do not have the opportunity to realise the apparent lack of original buildings simply because the area is presented as an authentic historical object. Furthermore, they are not aware of what type of area they are visiting because, as stated, in these sorts of reconstructions it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the original from the copy. I suggest that this lack of information which the

tourist has may also be the case in several other European centres that experienced idealised completions of buildings based on abstract models. Further research should disclose the way in which this process takes place.

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