ILDEFONS CERDÀ'S SCALPEL: A LEFEBVRIAN PERSPECTIVE ON NINETEENTH-CENTURY URBAN PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

Employing his methodological scalpel, Ildefons Cerdà cut into the urban fabric and created just as many problems as he solved. Today, the legacy of the piecemeal approach to urban life advocated by Cerdà persists in its instrumentalist and inadequate focus on the built environments of cities without paying enough attention to the complex relationship between social, cultural, and political factors out of which the city is produced. A Lefebvrian reading of Cerdà's urban theories (in his *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades*, *Teoría de la viabilidad urbana*, and *Teoría general de la urbanización*) highlights the methodological and philosophical premises that may have prevented the Catalan planner's socialist-utopian dreams from being realized.

> The scalpel had permitted anatomists to study the circulation of the blood: that knowledge, applied to the circulation of movement in streets, suggested that streets worked like arteries and veins.
>
> RICHARD SENNETT, *The Craftsman* (2008)

> Introducing the scalpel into the most intimate and recondite areas of the social and urban organism, one discovers the original cause alive and in action, the fecund seed of the grave illness that corrodes the entrails of humanity.[1]
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> ILDEFONS CERDÀ, *Teoría general de la urbanización* (1867)

Whether the Sword of Damocles or Occam's Razor —real, metaphorical, or figurative— the sharp edge of a blade has always captivated the popular imagination. So it is, too, with Ildefons Cerdà's scalpel, in its creator's eyes the perfect tool for dissecting the urban fabric. The utopian-socialist Cerdà (1815-1876) was one of the most influential urban planners of modern Spain —if not Western Europe as a whole during the nineteenth-century—, famous for his 1859 redesign and expansion of Barcelona beyond its medieval walls[2] in accordance with the rational city-planning made popular by Baron Georges Haussmann (1809-1891) in Paris. Cerdà employed his scalpel —by which I mean to refer to his method— with the precision of an urban surgeon, probing the furthest areas of what he conceived as the "social and urban organism" (epigraph). While this accomplishment was clearly pathbreaking, an approach grounded in the work of one of the most prolific urban theorists and philosophers of the twentieth-century —self-proclaimed Marxist geographer Henri

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Lefebvre (see Elden "Politics", also *Understanding*)— yields a more nuanced account of Cerdà's legacy. Lefebvre's writings on the modern city, culled from his numerous works, suggest that the Catalan planner's approach belied an irreconcilable distance —that between the complexity of his object and the simplistic nature of his method. In striving for a systematic and totalizing view of the city, Cerdà paradoxically reduced it to a mere material structure; in touting mobility as the key motor force of the city's creation, he nonetheless rendered the urban a static planar surface.

This essay thus interrogates "Ildefons Cerdà's Scalpel" (as expressed in his works *Teoría de la construcción de las ciudades, Teoría de la viabilidad urbana,* and *Teoría general de la urbanización*) in order to assess its methodological and philosophical assumptions.[3] Throughout, this exploration is grounded in Lefebvre's treatment of modern city-planning as a nineteenth-century bourgeois science, one that chronically reduced the complexity of city life to a flattened spatial plane.[4] Appropriately, the first section of this essay presents an overview of the Cerdà plan, the second section reads the planner's method from a Lefebvrian perspective, and the third section highlights the Catalan's understanding of movement. Thus, throughout, rather than present a novel interpretation of either Barcelona itself or of how Cerdà's plan was carried out, I will interrogate the Catalan's way of thinking the city. In the end, although Cerdà was undoubtedly a well-intentioned visionary, he nevertheless —like other planners of the nineteenth century— promoted an abstract and geometrical approach that did not sufficiently acknowledge the complexity of the urban.

1. Ildefons Cerdà's Barcelona and the Nascence of Modern Urban Planning

Certainly worthy of the attention it has received since 1859, Cerdà's redesign of Barcelona was in many respects cutting-edge. Works emphasizing the city's twentieth-century urban evolution find it necessary to pay tribute to the planner's work, even if only in passing (Degen, Marshall, McNeill, Resina, Rowe, Vázquez Montalbán). Similarly, scholars have recently praised Cerdà's design for being "profoundly liberal in providing decent housing for all social classes" (Miles and Miles *Consuming Cities* 79), thereby reflecting the planner's socialist ideas (Marshall 7, Resina's *Barcelona's Vocation* 21). A critical anthology of the Catalan planner's work (edited by Arturo Soria y Puig) provides a number of examples where Cerdà's concern for the people living in cities of the time goes far beyond that of his contemporaries. Significantly, one of his earlier works was a study titled *Monografía estadística de la clase obrera de Barcelona en 1856*, and he bemoaned that in Paris and Lyon families had been "unsympathetically kicked out" from their residences without having any comfortable housing lined up (*Teoría de la viabilidad* §1181, reprinted in Soria 362). During the eighteenth century, Barcelona's role as a commercial and manufacturing town increased significantly (T. Hall 127) and there can be no doubt that the urban suffering related to poverty and issues of hygiene in the industrial capital of Catalunya was comparable to that of other industrialized cities of the nineteenth century.[5] An awareness of the suffering faced by Barcelona's urban poor led Cerdà to become a staunch defender of the rights of tenants to "independence, health, and comfort" (*Teoría de la construcción* §195, reprinted in Soria 416)—he lamented that an urban population might be "condemned, not to live, but rather to die slowly on account of the destructive action of illnesses due to the lack of space, to the lack of light and to the effects of humidity, all combined with the deprivation of breathable air" (*ibid.* §520, reprinted in Soria 417).

What is certain is that Cerdà's intentions were nothing but heroic. Notably, as the Spanish novelist and critic Manuel Vázquez Montalbán writes, Cerdà derived little or no wealth himself from the implementation of his plan: "Of modest background, he dedicated his entire personal fortune to researching the Cerdà plan and putting it into practice and he died as poor as the rats beneath the city" (74). Moreover, it is simplistic to believe that the planner alone bears the responsibility for urban changes that are implemented at such a large scale and thus necessarily call for some sort of wider support and consensus. It is undoubtedly true in the case of Cerdà, just as in that of modern urban planners more generally, that all too often the designer's plan is substantially reconstituted as it is subsequently implemented by state bureaucracies (P. Hall 3).[6] Nevertheless, from a Lefebvrian perspective it seems unconvincing that Cerdà's plan was adequately conceived to confront the deep inequalities that continue to structure urban life even today. Although driven by good intentions, Cerdà made use of a purportedly neutral visual practice that urban critic Richard Sennett has attributed to modern urban planners more generally, a "visual technology of power [that] alienated them, too, from their own work"; Sennett continues, saying that "The very practice of neutrality permits [a] divorce between intention and act" (*Conscience* 61). Cerdà did not see that his insistence on the seemingly neutral visual vocabulary of the built environment was soon lost in an abstraction that ended by contradicting his socialist-utopian intention.

The Catalan's plan itself was a testament to the large-scale geometrical vision of nineteenth-century planners, covering "nine square kilometers in area with 550 blocks around Barcelona, largely toward the hills and to the northeast" and making "little or no reference to the old city" (Rowe 11). True to the gridded rationality that characterized planning of the time, in his plan "the streets were laid out with an overwhelmingly monotonous fidelity to plain geometry. They [were] all straight, perpendicular to each other and form[ed] exactly equidimensional residential blocks" (Goldston 78). This geometrical vision was in part mobilized to support the circulation of people and goods through the modern city. Cerdà's novel creation of the "xamfrà", or truncated corner, for example, was a testament to his understanding of the priority of the

mobile nature of urban life. In Joan Ramon Resina's words, "The xamfrà is the palpable sign of Cerdà's subordination of living space to movement" (*Barcelona's Vocation* 22). Nevertheless, the question remains whether the artistically-rendered abstract geometrical image of the city trumps the concern he expressed for Barcelona's working classes, as evidenced through his *Statistical Monograph* of 1856. However well-thought-out the plan may have been according to the prevailing logic of his day, the Catalan's support of the working class was not sustainable in the plan's implementation. The "New Barcelona" of the nineteenth century that he helped to envision was soon occupied by the bourgeoisie (Vázquez Montalbán 76). Robert Goldston puts it well, "the entire district is removed from the sight, smell and sound of the factories from which its wealth was drawn. Businessmen living in the Ensanche had no need to be aware of the hideous slums growing up in other parts of the city" (78). Reminding us of the frequent distance between a plan's conception and implementation, Vázquez Montalbán points out that in the long run, the result has been "an Eixample which has turned out to be as far from Cerdà's dreams as it is from the malevolent schemes of the speculators" (76).

Still, there is reason to go beyond the issues related to the implementation of Cerdà's plan to consider his method of thinking the city in more depth. Critics have suggested that Cerdà's urban improvements were, like Haussmann's, directed above all else to control the population,[7] and it is difficult to deny that this may have been one of his plan's logical consequences. For example, just as in Paris, Barcelona's newly constructed wide avenues facilitated the march of a modern police force. Resina's purposely ambiguous characterization of Cerdà ("As a rationalist, he believed in a universal sociality governed by technology. Today we would call him a globalizer", *Barcelona's Vocation* 23) intimates that the planner himself might have been able to stake out a stronger position on working class problems. Such a stronger position would have been less content with merely addressing the spatial problems of the built environment and more ready to take on the full complexity of problems of a social nature. Moreover, Cerdà's approach was, as were other large-scale nineteenth-century plans, conceived on a level that was too abstract. Vázquez Montalbán's brief treatment of Cerdà in *Barcelonas* notes: "Cerdà was familiar with the urban philosophy of his time. Most of it derived from the bourgeoisie's neo-classicism or from the utopian socialists. The challenge was to harmonize production and accommodation, city and country, under the new discipline which the provision of public services imposed"; "as a public functionary trained in and living in Madrid he was liable to adopt an abstract perspective" (*Barcelona's Vocation* 74, 64).

What arguably buttressed Cerdà's characteristically abstract geometrical approach to complex yet concrete social problems was his use of the metaphor of the city as an organism. His most influential and well known work is undoubtedly his *Teoría general de la urbanización*, in which he shows that he was highly aware of the metaphor of the city as a body that provided the central methodological conceit for his urban projects. In this monumental two-volume work, he sets out to explore "the complex and heterogeneous nature of the organism of our cities at present" (I, 13), taking on the role of not merely surgeon but diagnostician as well. The urban planner, he writes, should first be able to distinguish sick areas of the city from those that are healthy. Only then can he proceed with "a true anatomical dissection of [cities] and of each of their constituent parts" (I, 12). Recourse to this organic metaphor was hardly unique to Cerdà alone—as Françoise Choay points out in her useful work *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, the application of biological metaphors to city life was absolutely foundational in the nascence of modern city planning, generally speaking (27). Moreover, the powerful metaphor of the city as a body was far from being a nineteenth-century invention (Sennett, *Craftsman* 204). To wit: the seventeenth century had seen the discovery of the circulation of blood (commonly attributed to the Englishman William Harvey), and to a certain degree the subsequent large-scale urban renovations of the nineteenth-century (by Haussmann, Cerdà, and others) did little more than map this discovery onto existing cities through the rational, geometrical, and even algebraic redesign of urban spaces.[8] Baron Haussmann, for one, thus famously conceived of Paris as a vast circulatory and even respiratory system —his innovative wide avenues were at once the arteries of the city and its ventilation tracts (Choay 18)— and Cerdà saw Barcelona in much the same way. If, as David Harvey notes, Haussmann "bludgeoned the city [of Paris] into modernity" (*Paris* 3), the Catalan planner used the sharp edge of his scalpel for the same purpose, making geometrical incisions into the city's flesh.

However much he pointed to the "complex and heterogeneous" nature of the city as an organism, Cerdà nonetheless persisted in conceiving the problems of cities in purely geometrical, spatial terms.[9] The organic metaphor effectively distracted from an instrumentalist approach to urban life that equated the city with its built environment alone. The Catalan planner's curious reification of the city was far from being a mere idiosyncrasy. Instead, it resonated with more deeply-rooted visual practices of the nineteenth century. As Resina notes, "Historically, the eye has been the privileged organ for the perception and conceptualization of the city in Western experience. Vision furthers abstract apprehension and, aided by spatial techniques ranging from cartography to blueprints, facilitates the illusion of total appropriation" ("From Rose of Fire" 76). Nineteenth-century urban planners appealed to this privileged ocular tradition and subsequently rendered the city an abstraction. Cerdà's spatial vision suggested that the physical infrastructure of the city itself was to blame for urban problems. The idea was that if the planner was to change the city's built environment, the problems of urban life would disappear —a position he shared with Haussmann and later with high-modernist designers of the early twentieth century such as Le Corbusier. In fact, Cerdà goes so far as to state directly that "the cause of urban problems lies neither with civilization nor sociability"—he elaborates in this way: "We categorically deny that civilization, herself a product of the innate sociability of humankind, the reason for

our progress and betterment and a genuine expression of our destiny over the earth, might ever be our enemy or consequently cause us the least bit of harm or physical, moral or intellectual injury" (*Teoría de la viabilidad* 3-8, reprinted in Soria 71). Having thus ruled out society and civilization, Cerdà allowed himself to focus purely on the material aspects of cities alone. His innovations thus represent a triumph of the line, a geometrical approach broadly representative of nineteenth-century planning practices that turned city space, in Lefebvre's view, into an assemblage of parts. Cerdà —like others of his day who were attracted to the novelty of the new bourgeois science of city-planning— saw in the mere transformation of physical space a shortcut to a the goal of completely revolutionizing society —one more step toward realizing what he called "human perfectibility" (*Teoría general* I, 47, reprinted in Soria 74).

It is quite strange that —as a planner who explicitly put so much stock in the interrelationship of both theoretical and practical matters (thus distinguishing himself from other European planners who paid even less attention to the theory of their practice)—[10] Cerdà should put his faith in such a curious reification of reality. Here is the first of two significant and interlocked contradictions that inform Cerdà's thought and that simultaneously point to the wider problems of nineteenth-century urban planning practices —that is, while one face of the Catalan's work outlines a totalizing approach to reality, the other seeks to carve it up. He dispensed with the term city in favor of the urban, saw interdisciplinarity as being key to understanding such a complex organism, and was driven by a utopian thinking that posited the eradication of problems. Yet to accomplish this —and quite in accordance with the fragmentary approach of nineteenth-century bourgeois science critiqued by Lefebvre— he partitioned the city into manageable pieces (sick and healthy spaces), used the streets to link monuments instead of people, negated the very interdisciplinary connections he advocated through an exclusive focus on the built environment at the expense of more complex social and cultural factors, and overall sought to assemble the totality piecemeal through stitching together parts whose sum amounted to less than the whole from which he had started. Cerdà, like other planners of his day, methodologically substituted for the living processes of urban realities the characteristics of a static object. In doing so, he did little to counteract the fragmentary conception of knowledge that Henri Lefebvre posits as the basis of modern nineteenth-century urbanism.

2. The Fragmentary Science of Nineteenth-Century City-Dissection

At the core of Lefebvre's critical urban theory is a critique of the way in which the rise of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a fragmentary approach to social life, broadly speaking. The effects of this shift could be seen not only in the class character and alienation present in urban realities, the critic argued (*The Right to the City*, *Critique of Everyday Life*), but also in a newly fragmented formulation of disciplinary knowledge: "During the course of the nineteenth century, the sciences of social reality are constituted against philosophy which strives to grasp the global (by enclosing a real totality into a rational systematization). These sciences fragment reality in order to analyze it, each having their method or methods, their sector or domain" (*Right* 94). Lefebvre noted that "Planning as ideology formulates all the problems of society into questions of space and transposes all that comes from history and consciousness into spatial terms. It is an ideology which immediately divides up" (*Right* 99). In his capacity as a "physician of space", the planner formulated complex social problems through the flattened syntax of a purely spatial logic; he isolated the diseased parts of the city from the otherwise healthy ones, and sought to cure the urban malaise through the deft manipulations of his scalpel. Instead of realizing a fundamentally unitary "approach which transcends divisions" in order to grasp the whole (Lefebvre, *Right* 95), planning ideology —in appealing to a wide number of disciplinary projections of the city as a thing— remained stuck in a closed paradigm that valued system and thus fragmented knowledge over interconnection and complexity.

Although Cerdà's theory sought to envision the city as a totality, from a Lefebvrian perspective it nevertheless focused on the material city at the expense of less material forms of social relation, which he patently ignored. Cerdà quite clearly declares his own intentions to realize a systematic approach to the urban, criticizing Haussmann's reforms as being unsystematic. He alleges it is the lack of a clear system ["la falta de sistema"] that has led to the inequitable character of the reforms implemented in France (*Teoría de la viabilidad* §1183, reprinted in Soria 361). And yet, even though Cerdà takes the reforms carried out in Paris under Napoleon III to task for their inequality, his method does not significantly differ from Haussmann's in the sense that he, too, has ignored the complexity of the problems of city life in his drive to author a systematic science of urbanization. Whereas he faults previous attempts at city-planning in France and Spain for being an unsystematic "means chosen at random" (*Teoría de la viabilidad* §1199, reprinted in Soria 362), he has paid just as little attention to the complexity of urban life as seen in his emphasis on the material environment of the city. In refusing to treat the city as an evolving and complex product that was more than merely material, Cerdà and other nineteenth-century urban planners helped to create and institutionalize city-planning as a bourgeois science grounded in fragmented views of the urban, a science which was later much more clearly subject to the instrumentalist plans of capital accumulation.

Key to the planner's method was, as one critic notes, a scientific perspective whereby he "saw planning as a technique to be used for finding functionally optimal solutions, based on the scientific analysis of collected data" (T. Hall 135). Although the captivating metaphor at the heart of Cerdà's approach suggested that the city was a complex organism, his method encouraged him

to view it from a distance as a simple unity. He believed that throughout what he called "this *maremagnum* of people, of things, of all class of interests, of one thousand diverse elements" there was one fundamental operating principle (*Teoría general* I, 29; reprinted in Soria 80, original emphasis). The idea was that the city planner, if he were to proceed with caution —armed with systematic and rational methods— could discover this principle and use it to influence both the physical structure of the city and the social relations it contained at once. Cerdà ultimately took this principle to involve the spatial organization of the city, against and beyond more complex approaches to the city's social, economic and cultural aspects. This methodological premise is recapitulated in Cerdà's careful choice of the word *urbanización* (which he arguably coined) and his rejection of the term city (*ciudad*). These lexical considerations were in fact, for Cerdà, a way of emphasizing the material constructions of the city.[11]

Lefebvre sought to account for the complexity that had been left out of fragmentary nineteenth-century approaches to the city by returning to the key problem of the lexicon which had also so troubled Cerdà, this time distinguishing at once both "the planned city" from "the practiced city" and their rough equivalents "the city" and "the urban". Whereas Cerdà had coined the term *urbanización* to correspond to the priority he gave to the physical infrastructure of the city, primarily its buildings and roads, Lefebvre opposes the term "urban" to the city in just the opposite sense[12] —that is, as part of an attempt to go beyond the built environment alone on the way to reasserting those aspects of city-life not taken into account by the instrumentalist perspective of planning ideology.[13] Whereas Lefebvre declares stridently that "We can also assume that the complexity of the urban phenomenon is not that of an 'object'" (*Urban Revolution* 56), Cerdà's impassioned systematic view of the city as an "object" and a "thing" can be seen in the attention he gives to problems of traffic and circulation above all else —a trait importantly shared by his French counterpart Haussmann. Through the incisions made by the planner paving the way for new or expanded roads, Cerdà believed he was reaching the essence of the totality of urban life, and instead became mired in his own instrumentalist view of the city. Lefebvre writes of such an understanding that: "We know that this fragmentary (specialized) knowledge tends toward the global and that, in spite of its claims, it produces only partial practices, which also claim globality (for example, urban studies of highways and traffic)" (*Urban Revolution* 60). Cerdà's passion for a systematic approach allowed his prioritization of highways and traffic in Barcelona in particular to overshadow the larger issue of social relations. Resina remarks that "the principle behind [Cerdà's] uniformly advancing blocks was the priority accorded to circulation" (*Barcelona's Vocation* 21). Like Haussmann, Cerdà used the metaphor of the city as the body as a way of treating it from a distance. As it did for Haussmann, this distant view entailed seeing the city as not only a circulatory but also a respiratory system: "it is known that streets should not be seen solely from the standpoint of circulation and that for their populations they are truly ventilation paths through which the respiration of all inhabitants is fed" (*Teoría de la construcción* §73, reprinted in Soria 104).

Cerdà's approach to interdisciplinary thinking is also suspect from a Lefebvrian perspective. Arturo Soria y Puig signals that "the need to appeal to multiple branches of knowledge" (64) was a key aspect of the his method, and in the 1855 work *Ensanche de la ciudad de Barcelona*, the planner explicitly pointed to the need to unite hygienic, statistical, and economic analyses (§61, reprinted in Soria 65). Nevertheless, as Lefebvre argues, a cursory attempt at interdisciplinarity may often amount to little more than the grouping together of different objects, a reifying discourse that functions to hide the fact that the city is still being treated as a thing and not as a process. From this perspective, the Catalan planner's articulation of the "five bases of urbanization", a list that also included legal, economic, administrative, and political realms, does little to counteract the fundamentally geometrical or algebraic form of his approach. At issue is an obfuscation discussed directly by Lefebvre in *The Urban Revolution*, where the French philosopher cautions against assuming "that our understanding of the urban phenomenon, or urban space, could consist in a collection of objects —economy, sociology, history, demography, psychology, or earth sciences, such as geology"; "The concept of a scientific object, although convenient and easy, is deliberately simplistic and may conceal another intention: a strategy of fragmentation designed to promote a unitary and synthetic, and therefore authoritarian, model" (57).[14]

As it arose in the nineteenth century, urban planning did not clarify a fundamental operating principle of the city so much as hide the interested nature of city construction under a purportedly objective rhetorical façade. As Lefebvre writes, "Urbanism is therefore subject to radical critique. It masks a situation. It conceals operations. It blocks a view of the horizon, a path to urban knowledge and practice. It accompanies the decline of the spontaneous city and the historical urban core. It implies the intervention of power more than that of understanding" (*Urban Revolution* 160). One of the situations masked by urbanism is the shift to a distinctly bourgeois premise that obfuscates the deployment of systematic power relations beneath the thin veneer of modern individualism. Cerdà's work notably takes this individualism, not as the product of a certain evolution of social relations (as does Lefebvre, see also Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*), but as an inherently natural force:

> Individualization is natural tendency in the human being, who never wants to confuse either himself or his things with others. And this tendency that from a certain point of view and in a certain sense was able to be neutralized during the extended period in which the State absorbed the individual, appeared at full-strength from the moment in which, tired of the abjection in which he had been mired, was able to hear and joined in with the voice that, deep in his consciousness, said to him: go forward, and be the first on the path toward human perfection. (*Teoría general* I, 577; reprinted in Soria 75)

As Soria's own commentary on this passage makes clear (75), he believes this individualism to be the very starting point of society and not, as Lefebvre would argue, the product of a particular set of social relations. Understood in relation to what this quotation reveals about his social philosophy, Cerdà's piecemeal approach to the city did little more than recapitulate his fragmentary understanding of human relations. Entranced by his own abstract and geometrical formulation of the city, he was unable to see the cohesion and interconnection of the urban fabric just as he could not see social relationships in terms of a variegated totality. For the Catalan planner, the city thus became a mere spatial container for people instead of an expression of more complex relations, providing a specific example of Lefebvre's more general critique of urbanism ("Therefore, the urban considered as a field is not simply an empty space filled with objects", *Urban Revolution* 40).[15] This idea of the city as a container is consistently invoked throughout the second volume of the *Teoría general*, which contains massive sections labeled as "Continente [Container]" (II, 9), the "Contenido [Content]" (II, 249) and the "Funcionamiento [Function]" or relation between the Container and Content (II, 509). The "urbe material [material urb]" is considered throughout as a container or "campo de acción [field of action]" (II, 678), demonstrating the very philosophical schism denounced by the French philosopher.

Ildefons Cerdà's scalpel —his incisions, transpositions, and methodological premise— permitted a new kind of explicit thinking about city space, but in so doing institutionalized it as an expression of the fragmentary bourgeois conception of knowledge. As Lefebvre writes, "Without the progressive and regressive movements (in time and space) of analysis, without the multiple divisions and fragmentations, it would be impossible to conceive of a science of the urban phenomenon. But such fragments do not constitute knowledge" (*Urban Revolution* 49). For the twentieth-century French urban philosopher, "The problem remains: How can we make the transition from fragmentary knowledge to complete understanding? How can we define this need for *totality*?" (*Urban Revolution* 56). The static model of space touted throughout Cerdà's works prevented an assessment of the urban as totality at the same time that he struggled to reach just such an understanding. His simplistic surgical approach to complex realities —in fact a criticism of his work made by Josep Puig i Cadafalch, one of the noted Catalan architects to follow Cerdà's generation (Hughes 283-84)— constitutes one aspect of the key contradiction at the core of his planning enterprise. The methodological aspect of this contradiction encouraged him to see the city as an object. As the next section will explore, the philosophical side of this contradiction is similarly problematic from a Lefebvrian perspective on the relationship between movement and stasis.

3. The Reality of Movement: Stasis and Philosophical Contradiction

Cerdà's *Teoría general* is strikingly ambivalent on the subject of movement. One of the most compelling aspects of the work, when seen from a contemporary context in which scholars are increasingly turning to ideas of mobility[16] is the Catalan urbanist's effort to frame his entire study in terms of movement: "All that we have to say is particularly relevant to collective life, and we do not find collective life in the calm consecration of domestic space, but rather in the movement and agitation of the street" (680). This assertion in particular resonates with contemporary attempts to combat the reifying tradition of dehumanizing urbanism —even if we simultaneously encounter this problematic tradition today also as part of his legacy.[17] Delving further into the philosophy that subtends Cerdà's urban method reveals a more substantive contrast between his pervasive static vision of the city and the cursory nod he gives to mobility and process.

The Catalan planner's emphasis on movement is undoubtedly present in his theory at a fundamental level, ostensibly constituting the very essence of his approach to urbanization. The urbanization of a society, Cerdà maintains, must be understood "in relation to the means of locomotion that [in] each of these [periods] the human being has managed to harness" (*Teoría general* I, 681). He puts forth the novel idea that each successive incarnation of the material form of the city is rooted in the innovation of a particular form of locomotion —there is thus the pedestrian city, the equestrian city, the city constructed by dragging, by wheeled transport and ultimately even by the train (his discussion moves from *locomoción pedestre* to *locomoción ecuestre* to *locomoción rastrera* to *locomoción rodada* (*ordinaria* and later *perfeccionada*). Simultaneously, however, Cerdà makes the philosophical error critiqued by Lefebvre's recalibrated Bergsonism, seeing movement as something added to immobility.[18] For example, in his discussion of the relationship between the residence and the street in his *Teoría general*, Cerdà makes clear that he envisions movement as a translation in space between two static points ("the transition between the residence and the roadway" 630, reprinted in Soria 194). This runs counter to Bergson's insistence in *Matter and Memory* that movement expresses not merely a change of location in the supposedly static field of space (for the philosopher a mistaken notion inherited from Kant) but rather a qualitative change. Cerdà's static ontology is an expression of what Bergson termed "intellect" and what Lefebvre later denounced as "analytical thought" in that it ignores the reality of movement given priority by both philosophers. The Catalan planner prefers to approach stasis as the basis of reality instead of an intellectual concept abstracted from a moving reality. It is thus that movement appears in his work as an exceptional moment of or an *addition* to the notion of stasis. This is immobility as the basis for mobility, and not, as Bergson and Lefebvre would have it, the other way around.

Cerdà harnesses the power of movement as an exceptional moment of immobility throughout his texts as a way of systematically propelling the city planner, the city itself and the whole of society into modernity. In his *Teoría de la viabilidad urbana* (1861), he goes so far as to suggest that the continuity of motion is the first law of the roadways ("la primera ley de la 'vialidad'... es la continuidad del movimiento" §811; reprinted in Soria 202). Pointing out that the need for proper circulation was not one felt by primitive civilizations (ibid. 202), Soria's text discursively supports the idea that Cerdà is a true visionary on the cusp of a uniquely modern approach to urban space. Invoking Lefebvre's comments on the bourgeois science of city-planning, however, reveals the extent to which the numerous geometrical figures for urban intersections and city blocks that illustrate his urban treatises supported the peculiar nineteenth-century understanding of the city as a material entity in the simple sense. For all his charts, graphs, and measurements, the Catalan planner was far from creating, as Lefebvre puts it so well, "an urban reality for 'users' and not [merely] for capitalist speculators, builders and technicians" (*Right* 168). In his work on *viabilidad* (roadways, traffic patterns, and so on) Cerdà believed he was tapping into the very essence of the problem of the city. The matter of traffic was intimately tied-in to questions of the physical design of cities —which, for him as for other nineteenth-century planners, constituted the urban problem *par excellence*. Cerdà's approach assumed that to restructure the material space of the city was purportedly to grapple with the very *essence* of urban life and not merely with the built environment as a manifestation of that essence.

Cerdà's treatment of the train in particular is a testament to his curious position regarding movement. As Soria relates (74), the planner was greatly impacted by the sight of a train pulling into the station at Nîmes in 1844, full of passengers. This experience figures into his somewhat wild assertion that the mere arrival of the train would fundamentally change humanity, bringing greater peace and justice to the relations between people of vastly different circumstances. He writes that the locomotive "will not only put the peoples of a given land in contact with one another, but moreover will establish evangelical fraternity among all nations and every State of the world" (*Teoría general* I, 181, reprinted in Soria 64). A similar view informs his thoughts on the city. Rather than see material urban forms as a static deposit left behind by shifting social, economic, and cultural processes, he mistakenly attributed to the city's physical environment in itself the power to reshape social, economic, and cultural processes for the benefit of all (even when this contradicted his own formulation of the evolutionary shift in urban form as tied to innovations in locomotion).

Cerdà, like other nineteenth-century planners, saw the city as a static canvas ripe for experimentation—a view that has persisted in contemporary twenty-first century approaches that, after more than a hundred years must still assert the fundamental movement and variegated unity of urban processes. Anti-urbanists are in essence still fighting the same fight against this notion of the city as a canvas as during the mid nineteenth century when the fragmentary bourgeois science was first systematically performing its urban dissections.[19] All the while, however, the "pseudoscience"[20] of urbanism has remained largely content with the illusion of its fragmentary conception of knowledge, reducing the complexity of the urban experience to a geometrical logic that begs for purely spatial resolution. Lefebvre's work as a whole must be read as a response to the spatialized approach implemented by Cerdà and other nineteenth-century planners who replaced life with geometry. In *Introduction to Modernity* (1962), the French philosopher employed a living metaphor for the city that was meant to challenge the static surgical paradigm that proved so fruitful to nineteenth-century urban planners in their abstract reconfigurations of city-life. He thus manages to move from the static snapshot of the city as cadaver toward a deeper understanding of its mobile character:

> A living creature has slowly secreted a structure; take this living creature in isolation, separate it from the form it has given itself according to the law of its species, and you are left with something soft, slimy and shapeless; what can it possibly have in common with this delicate structure, its ridges, its grooves, its symmetries, its every detail revealing smaller, more delicate details as you examine it more closely? But it is precisely this link, between the animal and its shell, that one must try to understand... This community has shaped its shell, building and rebuilding it, modifying it again and again according to its needs. ("Notes on the New Town (April 1960)" 116)[21]

There is in this Lefebvrian appropriation of the organic metaphor, perhaps, a faint echo of Cerdà's own scheme of the relation between innovations in locomotion and transportation and the shaping of city-space. Nonetheless, whereas Cerdà's recognition of the importance of movement contradicted the static character of his surgical method, Lefebvre's dialectical understanding of this evolving relationship "between the animal and its shell", consistently figured into not merely his metaphors but also his mode of making sense of the city. Lefebvre, unlike Cerdà, approached urban reality as an inherently complex and decidedly extra-spatial realm, couching his ideas in a wider critique of alienation (*Critique* vols. 1-3) and ultimately refusing to treat the city as a reification of relations of social, economic and cultural processes. Lefebvre's ambitious philosophical project —whether in *The Production of Space*, *Critique of Everyday Life* (vols. 1-3 and what Lefebvre considered to be its 4th volume, *Rhythmanalysis*) or *The Urban Revolution*— was an unmitigated attack on a highly adaptive and resilient capitalistic system of relations that had survived throughout the twentieth century, as his famous dictum holds, "by producing space, by occupying a space" (*Survival* 21).

Lefebvre's method was also highly reflexive, comprising both a self-conscious epistemology and a process-ontology. As seen in his relatively late formulation of the task of the so-called "rhythmanalyst",[22] his critique of knowledge pointed beyond the planar spatiality of the nineteenth-century planning ideology to an accounting of urban realities that was not merely visual: "[The

rhythmanalyst] thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality"; "Without omitting the spatial and places, of course, he makes himself more sensitive to times than to spaces" (*Rhythmanalysis* 21, 22). It is, as the title of what is, perhaps, Lefebvre's most well-known English translation contends, *The Production of Space* (1974, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith 1991), and not space itself as a physical reality, that matters. His explicit reconciliation of material and immaterial realities spoke to a new generation of cultural geographers, perhaps most notably David Harvey whose Lefebvrian inheritance is concisely encapsulated in his statement that "Materialty, representation and imagination are not separate worlds" (*Justice* 322). Going beyond a simple ontology of being rooted in the discrete boundaries of the "thing", Lefebvre's is an ontology of becoming that addresses contradiction head-on.

Whereas there may be both positive and negative aspects of Cerdà's city planning, perhaps its most problematic feature from today's perspective is its explicit attempt to elide contradiction through a systematic approach. With this in mind, contemporary urban critic Manuel Delgado Ruiz mentions the famed Catalan city-planner by name (30, n. 14) in his most recent work *La ciudad mentirosa: Fraude y miseria del 'modelo Barcelona'* (2007), where he also comments on present-day Barcelona's unfortunate urban inheritance: "In the end, Barcelona is perhaps the latest great experimentation with that conception of the city that was initiated toward the end of the eighteenth century and that seems devoted to normalizing and codifying the range of human realities that constitute every urban concentration" (17, my translation). While Lefebvre's reconfigured Bergsonism explicitly accounts for contradiction, for the Catalan and perhaps for nineteenth-century planners more generally, the notion of contradiction was left unaddressed. It is this direct assessment of the contradictory nature of urban life that is the greatest benefit of Lefebvre's urban philosophy. After all, it is not merely mobility that has led to the current formation of the physical and social infrastructures of cities, of the geography of urban space, but contradiction—contradiction between the high towers of planning and life on the streets, orders from above and mandates from below, contradiction between the city as a livable space and an image, and ultimately (as Lefebvre highlights) the contradiction between the nineteenth-century city as both use-value and exchange-value.

Lacking a more nuanced vision of the reproduction of urban realities, Cerdà acted out the role of the surgeon, rolling up his sleeves and —with scalpel in hand— diving in to cut, irrigate, evacuate, resect, cauterize, and stitch back together again; all in the pursuit of assembling from the ruins a city more systematically unified than ever before. As this essay has argued, there can ultimately be no compromise between Cerdà's emphasis on mobility and his synchronic method, between the complexity of the city and its reduction to a purely spatial plane. Looking backward, one must ask whether or not Cerdà managed to create (as Lefebvre advocates) "an urban reality for 'users' and not [merely] for capitalist speculators, builders and technicians" (*Right* 168). Yet,

although it may be tempting to hold Cerdà singularly responsible for Barcelona's urban evolution, this too, is an inappropriate response. In accordance with the sophisticated view of cities shared by Lefebvre, Harvey, Delgado Ruiz, and others, this essay's sustained look into "Ildefons Cerdà's Scalpel" has above all else emphasized the disconnect between a complex object and a simplistic approach. Ultimately, Cerdà's approach to the nineteenth-century city is evocative of a wider trend in abstract urban thinking that continues even today. As such, it shows how much further we have to go if we are to see cities not merely as static built environments that facilitate the movement of traffic or capital, but rather as complex problems that enfold and obscure larger issues of social equality.

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NOTES

[1] All English translations of Cerdà's works, either from the original or as reprinted in Soria's critical anthology, are my own.

[2] The plan for Barcelona's expansion, known commonly as the *Eixample*, began with the demolition of the city's old medieval walls —a project that reportedly took twelve years (Aibar and Bijker 3).

[3] Although superbly detailed accounts of post-Cerdà Barcelona can be found in a Special Section of the *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* edited by Brad Epps (Volume 6, 2002, "Barcelona and the Projection of Catalonia"), it is Cerdà's original theoretical vision of the urban itself that speaks to the inadequacy of nineteenth-century approaches to the city.

[4] A superb and concise intellectual biography of Lefebvre and his work appears as chapter four of Andy Merrifield's *Metromarxism* titled "Henri Lefebvre: The Urban Revolution". Lefebvre's works —including *Critique of Everyday Life* (vol. 1, 1947; vol. 2, 1961; vol. 3, 1981), *Introduction to Modernity* (1962), *The Right to the City* (1968), *The Urban Revolution* (1970), *The Production of Space* (1974), and the posthumously-published *Rhythmanalysis* (1992)— have been widely translated and have influenced a new generation of scholars investigating the urban phenomenon across cultural studies, geography and the humanities.

[5] Consider the classic work on urban poverty written by Danish journalist Jacob A. Riis titled *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). As a photojournalist, Riis documented the overcrowding, lack of ventilation and adequate light, poverty, and disease that defined the New York City slums. More recently, Peter Hall has used the phrase "The City of Dreadful Night" to refer to the late nineteenth-century slums not only of New York but also of London, Paris and Berlin (the title of chapter two of his book).

[6] In *Cities of Tomorrow*, scholar Peter Hall makes the case that many early planners envisioned not merely an alternative built environment, but an alternative society (3). Although Hall in great measure restricts his discussion to Anglo-American contexts (he freely admits that his book "deals all too shortly with other important planning traditions, in France, in Spain and Latin America, in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, in China" 6), and although he is largely interested in planning figures from the 1880s onward, his insight is still quite relevant also to Cerdà.

[7] Malcolm Miles writes: "His [Cerdà's] plan seems progressive today but it is important to realize that his intention was to provide improved living conditions as a way to produce better citizens and lesson the prospect of unrest" (88); see also Epps, "Modern Spaces".

[8] In Soria's introduction to Cerdà (23-24), he quotes the assertion by Manuel Angelón in his biography of 1880 that the Catalan planner was "un hombre algebraico [an algebraic man]" —on account of his mathematical disposition. (*Biografía de D. Ildefonso Cerdà*, in *Boletín del Ateneo barcelonés*, Barcelona, abril-junio de 1880).

[9] The organic metaphor has also resonated with urban thinkers such as Jane Jacobs and Manuel Delgado Ruiz as well as novelists Luis Martín-Santos and Belén Gopegui, although in each case going beyond a purely material understanding of the city toward a more complex understanding of the lived spaces of the city. See Fraser "Narrating", "Madrid, Neoplasmic City", and "On Mental"; also "The 'Kind of Problem Cities Pose,'" "Manuel Delgado's Urban Anthropology", "Toward a Philosophy", *Encounters*).

[10] Thomas Hall makes this point in his *Planning Europe's Capital Cities*: "There was thus a continual interaction between the evolution of the Barcelona plan on the one hand, and the building of a body of theory on the other. The theory was used to justify the plan, and the plan to elucidate the theory" (135).

[11] Choay states that Cerdà arguably "coined the word *urbanización*" (7), arguing that the word first appeared in Cerdà's 1867 work *Teoría general de la urbanización* [*A General Theory of Urbanization*] (although Soria traces the term back to the period of 1860-61, 23). In his *Teoría general*, Cerdà defines *urbanización* on page 30, and on page 31 *urbanizar*, *urbanizador*. The word *ciudad*, he explains in his *Teoría general de la urbanización*, comes from the Latin *civitas*, which —although it had during a time been indistinctly applied both to the people living in the city and to the city's buildings— nevertheless came to designate purely moral qualities, no longer referring to the material reality of the city at all (Soria 81; reprinted from Cerdà 485-86).

[12] Note Lefebvre's remark in *The Right to the City* regarding the "double morphology [of the city] (practico-sensible or material, on the one hand, social on the other)" (112).

[13] The same explicitly Lefebvrian distinction between the city as a material fact and the urban as the irreducible and immaterial aspect of city life is evident in the work of Manuel Delgado Ruiz; see Fraser "Manuel Delgado's Urban Anthropology".

[14] The quotation continues: "An object is isolating, even if conceived as a system of relations and even if those relations are connected to other systems. It is the intentionality of the system that is dissimulated beneath the apparently "objective" nature of the scientific object. The sought-for-system constitutes its object by constituting itself. The constituted object then legitimizes the system. What is disturbing about this is that the system under consideration may purport to be a *practice*" (57, original emphasis).

[15] Lefebvre's precursor Henri Bergson also dismissed the idea of space as a mere container in *Time and Free Will* ch. 2, *Matter and Memory* 307-09 and *Creative Evolution* 157). See also Fraser "Toward a Philosophy".

[16] The journal *Mobilities* (established in 2006, Routledge) is one of the most recent examples of this trend.

[17] Lefebvre's emphasis "lived space" over "conceived space" (*Production*) resonates with the work of both Manuel Delgado Ruiz and Jane Jacobs. Significantly, Jacobs underscored the spontaneous character of interactions on the streets and sidewalks of the city as the heart of the urban experience (*Death and Life...* chapters 2-4). More recently, urban critic and anthropologist Manuel Delgado Ruiz has consistently also emphasized the shifting character and anonymity of the city-streets in his recalibrated defense of a collective public life (*Sociedades movedizas*, *El animal público*).

[18] Lefebvre's work owes a great deal to Bergson's critique of traditional philosophy, even if the former never consciously acknowledged the influence of the latter.

Bergson's most succinct formulation of this appears in a speech delivered in Madrid's Ateneo in 1916, where he stated that "There is nothing immobile in the world... movement is a more simple thing than immobility, for we can produce one single movement, but if we remain immobile, that means we produce at least two movements. Immobility is, then the composite, and movement the simple" ("The Human Soul"). Lefebvre implicitly sides with his predecessor by consistently rebuking what he alternately calls "analytical thought" in calling attention to the primacy of temporality (*Rhythmanalysis*), pointing to the need for more complex methodological tools in approaching city life (*Critique* vols. 2 & 3) and elaborating on a complex process of spatial production that reconciles physical, mental, and social geographies ("spatial representations, representations of space and spatial practices", *Production* 33; also Harvey, *Justice* 219). See Fraser, "Toward a Philosophy", *Encounters*.

[19] Jane Jacobs's mid-twentieth-century critique of planner Ebenezer Howard (who in her view "conceived of good planning as a series of static acts" 19) applies just as well to Cerdà. Notably, Bergson (Chevalier 74), Lefebvre (*Urban Revolution* 53-55; *Rhythmanalysis*, 20) and Jacobs (*Death and Life* 428-48) all advocated interdisciplinarity in an attempt to return from piece-meal approaches to social life to the vision of a differentiated and complex but nevertheless intimately-connected and constantly changing social whole.

[20] This is Jacobs's term: "The pseudoscience of city planning and its companion, the art of city design, have not yet broken with the specious comfort of wishes, familiar superstitions, oversimplifications, and symbols, and have not yet embarked upon the adventure of probing the real world" (13).

[21] Consider Bergson's own formulation of this same problem in *Creative Evolution* 367-68.

[22] As noted in *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre borrowed the term itself from Gaston Bachelard, who in turn had lifted it from Portuguese writer Lucio Alberto Pinheiro (xiii, 9).

EL *DIETARI* DE PERE GIMFERRER. ESTRATÈGIES FICCIONALS EN L'ESCRIPTURA AUTOBIOGRÀFICA

ELOI GRASSET

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Pere Gimferrer's *Dietari* exploring the relation between fictional and autobiographical genres. It shows how the writer subverts generic stratification by defining the characteristics of autobiographical writing. Distinguishing two types of text in the *Dietari*, "associative", which corresponds to the expectations of the genre, and "dissociative", through which the author challenges established conventions, this analysis focuses on the latter and explains in detail the fictional changes that take place. Finally, this reading proposes Gimferrer's *Dietari* as a literary space that should be used to question the very notion of the genre of autobiography.

En aquest article, ens acostarem a les relacions que manté la ficció amb el gènere autobiogràfic. Són relacions inestables i complexes, sens dubte, com ho són totes les relacions de frontera. Un exemple d'aquesta dificultat que troba la crítica per determinar la relació que mantenen la ficció i la no-ficció és el fet que l'autobiografia ha estat presentada per alguns teòrics com un gènere oposat a la ficció (Lejeune 14), mentre que per alguns altres no és més que una altra possibilitat que troba l'escriptura ficcional per resoldre's (De Man 920).

Un dels escassos indicis que a priori ens haurien de servir per arribar a distingir el règim narratiu de la ficció del de l'escriptura autobiogràfica, dins de la qual podem incloure el *Dietari* de Pere Gimferrer, és la igualtat d'identitat que s'estableix entre l'autor, el narrador i el personatge. L'associació d'aquestes tres instàncies es troba a l'origen del "pacte autobiogràfic" tal i com l'ha definit Lejeune (16), que és el pacte que s'estableix entre el l'escriptor i el lector sobre la veracitat dels esdeveniments que s'expliquen. En el *Dietari* de Gimferrer, hi trobem cert esperit transgressor davant del que suposa aquesta hipòtesi i això es manifesta a través de la posada en dubte d'aquest pacte, en el sentit que s'introdueixen en el text certes estratègies pròpies de la ficció.

En el *Dietari* de Gimferrer podem distingir dos grans models de textos. D'una banda, els textos que podem anomenar "associatius", que acompleixen la igualtat autor / narrador / personatge i que, una vegada admesa la "hipòtesi d'autenticitat" que reclama tot text autobiogràfic, no ens posen cap problema respecte a la seva factualitat. Parlarem de factualitat per referir-nos a la no-ficció seguint la terminologia de G. Genette (*Fiction* 141). Aquest model "associatiu" correspon perfectament a allò que esperaríem trobar en un *Dietari*, és a dir, Gimferrer existeix en una realitat i al mateix temps assumeix la veracitat de certs esdeveniments explicats que hem d'entendre dins la xarxa de relacions que manté l'escriptor amb el seu temps. Aquests esdeveniments seran signes