

Strand 2: The Historiography of Art Nouveau (looking back on the past)

Arquitectura Modernista: What Was/Is It?

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The publication of Oriol Bohigas' *Arquitectura Modernista* in 1968 marked a key moment in the historiography of Catalan "Modernisme"¹. Here for the first time was a monographic study of the architecture of the turn of the century period along with extensive, indeed seductive, photographic documentation by Leopold Pomés, a detailed chronology of the period setting the architecture in both local and international context, and a biographical section which served as a preliminary catalog of the known works of modernista architects and their dates of execution. That this monograph launched a spate of serious research into the relatively unknown architects of the *modernista* era can be seen in the second, totally revised, edition of the book (1973), now retitled *Reseña y Catálogo de la Arquitectura Modernista*, as well as in the third (1983) where the list of *modernista* practitioners grew exponentially from 44 to 80 to 175 thanks to a flurry of archival inventories and individual monographs spurred on by Bohigas' example.² It was the beginning of a sustained and rigorous investigation of the subject that continues unabated to this day.

Arquitectura Modernista provided a needed focus on a broad range of Catalan architectural practice and production. It was written, the author explained, to counter the tendency, in a time of burgeoning international interest in the history of the modern movement and its sources, to think of

¹Oriol BOHIGAS, *Arquitectura Modernista*, Barcelona, Lumen, 1968

²Oriol BOHIGAS, *Reseña y Catálogo de la Arquitectura Modernista*, Barcelona, Lumen, 1973; Second edition, with *ampliación y revisión del apéndice biográfico y la lista de obras* by Antoni Gonzalez and Raquel Lacuesta, Barcelona, Lumen, 2 vols., 1983.

modernisme as simply a Catalan version of *l'Art Nouveau*, best represented by Antoni Gaudí, whose work, in the growing bibliography on the subject, was seen as that of an isolated genius, emerging from the barren periphery that was Spain or Catalonia. Perhaps we might see a further, more local, motive in the so-called “cultural resistance” to the suppression of Catalan culture under the Franco regime, a resistance in which Bohigas had taken part since as early as the late 1940s, with his architectural essays and critical studies in *Destino* and *Serra d'Or* where the Catalan, occasionally with veiled political references, was insistently inserted. Now, in the late 1960s, eight years after the *fets del Palau* and two years beyond the *Caputxinada* of 1966, he could be more overt in linking the *modernista* movement to the “struggle for a distinctive [Catalan] personality... the concrete effort to re-discover a collective spirit and a culture,” seeking a new architectonic language along with the revival of the lost Catalan tongue, leading to a Modernisme that was an “undertaking of national transcendence...rooted in the social and political ideals of the moment..”³ It was this correspondence that gave to this architecture its vitality and popularity, distinguishing it from architectural culture elsewhere on the peninsula, and giving it greater urgency, longevity, and regional geographical extension than that of the foreign movements that were to some extent parallel to it.

Bohigas' text bears the title “Definition”, but definition proved elusive. The terms “movement” and “style” are used interchangeably, yet we seek in vain some basic formal or technological similarities which might serve to characterize the style as he (or Pomés) presents it, or some specific goals or ideology by which to characterize the movement. In addition, as a way of addressing Gaudí's bibliographic protagonism, we are given a polemical opposition between Gaudí the “expressionist” and Lluís Domènech i Montaner, the “rationalist” establishing two stylistic currents that would later develop into a lineage extending from Gaudí to Jujol and from Domènech to Masó. Disrupting the concept of a “collective spirit and culture”, this dichotomy

³O. BOHIGAS, *Arquitectura...* p. 225

nevertheless allowed him to see Gaudí as “the brilliant culmination of stone architecture” while Domènech is elevated to the stature of “one of the most intense pioneers of modern architecture.”⁴ Subsequent studies have made clear, and I’m certain that we can all agree, that it is precisely the simultaneous occurrence in varying proportions of expressive form and creatively advanced structural solutions that marks the best and most vital architecture of this period, so to discuss the works in terms of one or the other would seem counter-productive. However, it did suit Bohigas’ mission at the time and we might here recall that only three years before the publication of *Arquitectura Modernista*, the author had spearheaded the international campaign to halt construction on the Sagrada Família temple.

In the revised edition, Bohigas inserted a chapter on the uses of the term *Modernisme*. After puzzling references to the turn of the century religious heresy and the *Modernista* school in Hispano-American letters at the turn of the century, he discussed the usage in Catalan literature and culture, with reference to the findings of Joan-Lluís Marfany, published the same year, developing a narrative in which the modernista architects, after the turn of the century, heroically took up a debased and embattled term, flaunting it as a sign both of acquiescence to and disdain for a Catalan bourgeoisie which was both the social milieu and the client base for their architectural practice.⁵ Dodging, in effect, a definition, for Bohigas, architectural *Modernisme* becomes at once a style, a movement and a taste.

Here it is useful to consider Marfany’s findings that *modernisme* was first used in Catalan culture by the progressive thinkers, artists and literati associated with the publication *L’Avenç* (1884-1893) who proudly and aggressively proclaimed themselves *modernistes* to emphasize their passion for the new and the modern, and to underline their revolutionary break with past artistic

⁴O. BOHIGAS, *Reseña...*, pp. 139-204.

⁵O. BOHIGAS, *Reseña...*, p.79-88.

tradition.⁶ In the 1890s the term was understood to stand for an uncompromising acceptance of all that was *modern* in confrontation with a Catalan bourgeois society that was characterized as living too firmly entrenched in the past. It was in this sense, of modernity and novelty, that Santiago Rusiñol took the name *Festes Modernistes* for the annual gatherings of the artistic vanguard at the Cau Ferrat in Sitges from 1892 to 1899 – a period in which the term *modernista* came increasingly to designate the bohemian avant garde centered about Rusiñol and the Quatre Gats beer hall run by Pere Romeu in Barcelona from 1897-1903. Adopting a confrontational demeanor and attire, these artists continued to scandalize a religiously staid and tradition-oriented bourgeoisie. After the turn of the century the term enjoyed a certain vogue, serving as a catch-all for a broad range of new artistic tendencies, often quite contradictory in essence, more often than not imported from abroad. Soon thereafter its connotations become more diffuse and frivolous and it is rejected by even those who had called themselves *modernistas*.

Although it would seem reasonable to see the feverish activity in the building arts during the 1880s and 90s in the newly urbanized Eixample, and the relative stylistic freedom from academic classicism fostered by the newly established Barcelona School of Architecture under the directorship of Elias Rogent, with *modernisme* in the other arts and letters of the period, the fact is that this was not the case. Mention of architecture in general, or of specific buildings in particular is virtually absent from the pages of *L'Avenç*, as it is too from later *Modernista* publications. Even in publications devoted to architecture, only one significant use of the term can be found prior to 1900. In an article of 1895, a young Barcelona architect, Luís Callén, speaks of the “new tendencies” of the “so called *modernista* school” which have so far affected primarily those arts other than architecture.⁷ Given the special conditions of this “noble art” and its

⁶Joan-Lluís MARFANY: “Sobre el significat del terme ‘modernisme’”, *Recerques: Història, Economia, Cultura*, 2, p. 73-91.

⁷Luís Callén: “El modernismo y la arquitectura”, *La Revista de la Asociación de Arquitectos de Cataluña*,

propensity for “true ideals” he finds it unsurprising that these as yet tentative tendencies have not found easy harbor there. Clearly following Viollet-le-Duc, he notes that in architecture it would be the new materials, iron and concrete, that would inevitably lead to an architectural *modernismo*, but first there must be a progressive will among architects – a *modernista* vision, as yet lacking among his contemporaries.

A survey of the major cultural and artistic magazines published in Barcelona from 1880-1910 reveals that even after the turn of the century the association of the term *modernisme* with architectural commentary is unexpectedly infrequent. Given the lengthy roster of *modernista* architects and buildings listed in Bohigas’ catalogs alone, this low incidence is especially surprising, and must lead us to question some of the basic assumptions that underly our association of the term with turn of the century architecture.

Many of the received notions of present-day studies of *Modernisme* in relation to architecture have come to us, by way of Bohigas, from the pioneering works of J.F. Ràfols, and Alexandre Cirici Pellicer, both of whom linked those architects active in the resurgence of the building arts in Barcelona during the latter decades of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th with the literary and artistic movements of the same period. Ràfols, who came to professional maturity just as *noucentisme* began to dominate artistic discourse, seems only reluctantly to have associated architecture with the *Modernista* phenomenon in Barcelona. In his 1929 book on Gaudí, he described *Modernisme* less than enthusiastically as a foreign (mainly Belgian and French) tendency toward the plastic and the symbolic which had invaded the architectural field “like a poison”⁸, and in his seminal 1943 study, *El arte modernista en*

III, 15 junio 1895, p. 65-66.

⁸J. F. RÀFOLS, *Gaudí*, Barcelona, Canosa, 1929, p. 98.

Barcelona, he devoted only two and a half pages – of a total 123– to architecture.⁹ In 1949 he included an expanded section on architecture in the larger *Modernismo y Modernistas*, constructing an important interpretive analogy linking naturalist *modernista* poetry and painting with the lyrical floralism and enthusiasm for naturalistic decoration which informed the architectural works of such Barcelona architects as Gaudí, Puig i Cadafalch, Sagnier, Domènech y Montaner, and Gallissà.¹⁰

Greater prominence was given to architecture by Cirici Pellicer in his impressively researched monograph of two years later, *El Arte Modernista Catalán*., but in his desire to define *modernismo* in general as “a movement of great unity”, he encountered no small difficulty given the stylistic diversity that he found between and within the various arts.¹¹ In the “Definitions” section of his “Panorama de la Arquitectura” Cirici defines architectural *Modernismo* in a somewhat backhanded way by citing critical judgements by Lluís María Vidal (1900) and José Domènech y Estapà (1911). This produces a series of formal characteristics (excessive ornamentation, hyper-realistic motifs from nature, inclined door and window jambs, asymmetry, disproportionately large consoles and pediments, etc.) which Cirici then carries into his further study of the architecture under such sub-headings as “Ruskinian Architecture”, “Gaudianism”, “Neo-Medievalism”, “Cyclopean Architecture” and “Lyricism”, undermining de facto the concept of a unified movement. The content of the Vidal and Domènech texts will be considered in a moment, but suffice it here to say that while both tell us a great deal about the speakers’ taste in architectural design, Vidal does not use the term *modernismo* with regard to architecture, and Domènech’s use of the term was a very special and belated case. Cirici’s assumption in

⁹J. F. Ràfols, *El Arte Modernista en Barcelona*, Barcelona, Librería Dalmau, 1943.

¹⁰J. F. Ràfols, *Modernismo y Modernistas*, Barcelona, Ediciones Destino, 1949.

¹¹Alexandre Cirici-Pellicer, *El Arte Modernista Catalán*, Barcelona, Aymá, 1951, p. 75-78.

extending the term generally to architecture of the period seems to have been that chronological coincidence indicated a common artistic ideology based upon retrospective interpretive analogies of a formalist nature.

Understandably, the literature on *arquitectura modernista* since the ground-breaking work of Ràfols and Cirici (both of them rather heroically produced in the difficult early decades of the Franco regime), including the work of Bohigas with which I began, has included a sizeable amount of verbiage devoted to the difficulties of defining the term. Rather than inquiring further into that difficulty, however, the tendency has been to maintain the assumption from which the pioneers depart, namely the mistaken idea that the term *modernista* was generally used by the Catalan architects themselves to refer to their own production and that of their contemporaries.

Modernismo or *modernisme* enters the architectural lexicon around 1900 as simply the Castilian or Catalan translation of the French *Art Nouveau* or the German *Jugendstil*— an equivalence obviously chosen to retain the novel and youthful designations of the foreign stylistic labels, relating them also to the original significance of *Modernisme* with regard to Catalan arts and letters. The modish currency of the term coincides with the vogue for such imported or imitated styles in the decorative arts among the Catalan bourgeoisie, especially following the Paris International Exposition of 1900. For example, the architectural trade magazine *Arquitectura y Construcción*, published Guimard’s Castel Berenger in 1899 and his Métro entrances in 1904 as representative of the “escuela modernista”¹² In a precocious article in the Catalanista daily *La Renaixensa* in 1898, Josep Pijoan, still an architecture student, decried the wave of “artistic individualism – what is commonly called *modernisme* “ – stimulated by the quest for a new form

¹²“Informaciones,” *Arquitectura y Construcción*, abril 1899, p.147; and Felix NAVARRO: “El arte en el hierro, III: la herrería artística modernista”, *Arquitectura y Construcción*, octubre 1904, p.306-308.



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of art: “*L’Art Nouveau* as the French call it.”¹³

¹³Josep PIJOAN: “l’Individualisme artístich”, *La Renaixensa*, 7 desembre, 1898, p.7101.

The term was understood in Barcelona primarily to apply to decoration and furnishings in the Art Nouveau style; only very occasionally was it applied to architecture per se, and then, as might be expected, to those works displaying the fluid, linear extrusions characteristic of the style. In 1900, the architect Geroni Granell, “his imagination nurtured by ...foreign works of various schools” and a “fervent partisan of the new architectural forms” in vogue elsewhere became in the pages of *Arquitectura y Construcción* the ideal representative of *modernismo* in Barcelona.¹⁴

Soon after its initial introduction as a stylistic classification with reference to new forms in architecture and the decorative arts however, we begin to find responsible critics voicing caution in using the term, sometimes suggesting alternative terminology: In *La Veu de Catalunya*, we find a preference, for example, in a 1902 review of a furniture exhibition, for the term *modern-estil*, to distinguish it from “that ornamental *modernisme* so lacking in grace and charm, so filled with those commonplace whiplashes and confused lines which have led to the discredit of the style”¹⁵ Just as *modernisme* in other artistic spheres had come to stand for eccentricity and exaggeration, so too in architectural references it was understood to represent certain excesses. By 1902 we can read of “*modernismo*, a word which has been so much abused in recent times to justify certain exaggerated tendencies [in architecture] often at odds with truth and good taste” and a review of developments in architecture the following year laments the general state of affairs wherein “with the excuse of *modernismo*, the illogical triumphed and bad taste reigned, producing “exaggerations which ran counter to all esthetic law.”¹⁶

One of the most striking results of such a focussed study of the word *modernisme* in this

¹⁴“Casa de alquiler en la calle Mallorca, no.261”, *Arquitectura y Construcción*, mayo 1900, p.152

¹⁵“Decorats y mobles d’art”, *La Veu de Catalunya*, 19 juliol 1902, p. 2.

¹⁶Manuel RODRÍGUEZ CODOLÁ: “La construcción moderna en Barcelona”, *Hojas Selectas*, II, 1903, p. 1038.

period is the almost total absence of the term with reference to any of those Barcelona architects whom we have come almost automatically to consider as such. Virtually all turn-of-the-century writers seem to have considered the label inapplicable to the work of Bohigas’ “first generation *Modernistes*”– Domènech i Montaner, Puig i Cadafalch, Gallissà, Font i Gumà, or Gaudí. In reviews of their work the term was simply not used, and at time their activity was pointedly contrasted with the exotic and exaggerated *modernismes* of others.

In 1901, Puig i Cadafalch wrote of “a new intent, calling itself *Modernisme*” that had appeared on the architectural stage; but whereas “*modernista* renovation has rapidly transformed decoration, introducing many new themes previously unknown or disdained, stylizing every natural being and arranging them in new ways...it still has not been successful in entering the sacred precincts of architecture.”¹⁷ The following year Puig took issue with the aptness of the term with reference to the work of Horta, Olbrich, Van de Velde, Hoffmann, and other European architects commonly so called, finding them lacking in the total commitment to modernity that the name would imply. Observing that beneath their decoratively novel surfaces these contemporaries continued to employ structures inherited from the traditions of their specific regions, he declared: “New things have indeed come about in the field of decoration, but the *modernista* building has yet to be built”.¹⁸ Such deference to regional tradition was a quality to which Puig was quite sympathetic; it was the implication of the label (taken in the original sense of truly modern) that he saw as misleading. In discussing the contributions of his mentor Domènech i Montaner, Puig finds it necessary first to eliminate the *modernista* misnomer before he can compare European movements with the new Catalan school of architecture under Domènech’s leadership. It is clear that he would in no sense refer to Domènech’s architecture as *modernista* nor, we can safely infer,

¹⁷Josep PUIG I CADAVALCH, *Historia general del arte*, vol. II, Barcelona, Montaner y Simón, 1901, p. 324.

¹⁸J. PUIG I CADAVALCH: “Luís Doménech y Montaner”, *Hispania*, II, diciembre 1902, p. 543

did he adopt the name for his own architectural production.

In fact, about the same time, the architect-critic Bonaventura Pollés drew an ironic contrast between the esoteric *modernismes* of the artists who gathered at the Quatre Gats beer hall, installed in the Casa Martí designed by Puig i Cadafalch in 1896, and the “architectural character of the edifice itself.”¹⁹ This character is detailed in another review of the building—a modernized amalgam of Catalan Gothic sources— by Bonaventura Bassegoda in the Catalanista daily *La Renaixensa* which he ends with the euphoric phrase, “We Catalanistas can congratulate ourselves on seeing here our artistic ideals written out in stone”.²⁰ Bassegoda had concisely summarized those ideals previously, writing “We can produce truly national works by turning our eyes to the past where we will find the source of all artistic inspiration...the idea of the *Patria* should accompany all inspiration in art; otherwise uniformity and exoticism will set the tone for our beloved city”.²¹

Elsewhere I have detailed the rise, in the 1890s, of the collective project of the group of young Catalan architects who referred to themselves as “*la nova escola catalana*”.²² These men, affiliated in varying degrees with the Lliga de Catalunya and the Unió Catalanista, were dedicated to the task of creating a modern Catalan architecture based on the study of traditions of regional construction. United in their belief that architecture was both a mirror and a preserver of a

¹⁹Bonaventura POLLÉS: “Arquitectura Española Contemporánea”, *Arquitectura y Construcción*, V, 8 marzo 1901, p. 76.

²⁰Bonaventura BASSEGODA: “Notas artísticas”, *La Renaixensa*, 27 juny 1897, p. 1132.

²¹B. BASSEGODA: “La arquitectura a Barcelona”, *La Renaixensa*, 16 febrer 1896, p. 1031.

²²Judith ROHRER: “Puig i Cadafalch: the early work”, in J.ROHRER and Ignasi de SOLÀ MORALES (eds.): *J. Puig i Cadafalch: la arquitectura entre la casa y la ciudad* (exhibition catalogue, Centro Cultural de la Fundación Caja de Pensiones, Barcelona, 1989-90), Barcelona, Caja de Pensiones, 1989, p. 14-35.

people's history, indeed a collective art, they sought to revive in their own work the image of a lost synthesis of art and craft that had flourished in medieval times. Taking as their guide Domènech i Montaner's exhortation to seek a national style that could regionally inflect an architecture responding to modern conditions, the "new school" comprised Puig, Bassegoda, Gallissà, Font i Gumà, and others, along with their mentor Domènech. Suffice it here to say that given their project "in politics and art" to "link the golden age of Catalunya with modern times" these young men were understandably antipathetic to "a modernisme which... meant disdain for the past and the home-grown".²³

²³B. BASSEGODA: "La pintura simbolista en la passada exposició", *La Renaixensa*, 2 agost 1896, p. 4618-22.

The battle lines were drawn between *Modernistes* and “*antiquats*”, between the local and the exotic, between familiar traditions and the esoteric. The goals of the tradition-scoffing, cosmopolitan painters and writers were very much at odds with those of the contemporary architects who began their contributions to the nascent Catalan culture by proudly looking backward to the glorious moments of the regional/national past. Bolstered by the anti-*modernista* stance of Bishop Torras i Bages, the *nova escola* held together until 1903/04 when the death of Gallissà and the very public split between Puig and Domènech marked the end of this collective quest—a quest that had already begun to unravel with the entry of the Lliga Regionalista into the realm of electoral politics at the turn of the century. Primed to search for architectural representation, the Catalanista press turned in these years to the figure of Antoni Gaudí, with his Sagrada Família temple symbolically indexing the Lliga’s ascendancy: the new cathedral for a new Catalonia.²⁴

As one result of the *nova escola* project with its insistence on a national Catalan style, architecture was increasingly judged on the basis of its regional appropriateness. Critiques of the work of this group tended to call them to task for the “northern” quality of the Gothic forms employed, particularly in such works as Puig i Cadafalch’s Casa Amatller or the monumental “Casa de les Punxes”. Among the complaints enumerated by Lluís Maria Vidal in the speech of 1900 so crucial to Cirici’s definition of *Modernismo*, is a rising tide of “baroquism” particularly inappropriate to Catalunya where more sober forms were historically the norm. And while he sees Catalan medieval styles as essential for understanding the “characteristic taste” of the nation, he criticizes the desire of modern day architects to include too much Gothic ornamentation on every revival facade and to use forms that were lacking in local tradition—very possibly an allusion to Puig’s *oeuvre*.²⁵

It is only in 1910 that a significant association between *Modernista* architecture as we

²⁴J. ROHRER: “Una visió apropiada: el temple de la Sagrada Família de Gaudí i la política arquitectònica de la Lliga Regionalista”, in Juan José LAHUERTA (Ed.): *Gaudí el seu temps*, (Institut d’Humanitats Estudis), Barcelona, Barcanova, 1999, p. 193-212.

²⁵Lluís Ma. VIDAL: “Discurs del Senyor President”, *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Catalunya*, X, febrer 1900, p. 32-48. Vidal does not use the term *modernista* to refer to the architecture he decries, though he does use it to refer to “ultra radical” tendencies in recent Catalan painting.

know it and the term itself can be found. In that year of heightened journalistic interest in the work of Antoni Gaudí, occasioned by the Paris exhibition of drawings and models of his work, the young architect and admirer of Gaudí, Salvador Sellés, published an article in *Arquitectura y Construcción*, entitled “*Modernismo and Truth in Art*” wherein he links Gaudí’s work to that of the European avant garde under the banner of *true modernismo*, not to be confused with the “multitude of aberrations [that] have been produced in the name of *modernismo*”.²⁶

Praising their artistic masterpieces “without recourse to any of the classical styles” he designates as *true modernistas* Otto Wagner and Olbrich in Austria, Gaudí in Spain, Horta in Belgium, Cuypers in Holland, D’Aronco in Italy, Otto Rieth and Hoffman in Germany, and even Tiffany in North American ceramic production. The traditional qualities which Puig had perceived in the work of these men was no longer at issue.

It is with reference to this article and to the exalted press coverage of the Gaudí exhibition, as well as, most probably, to Joan Rubiói Bellver’s writings and lectures to the Asociación de Arquitectos de Barcelona, in these years, on Gaudinian mechanical and structural theory, that we can find a context for the 1911 lecture, “*Modernismo Arquitectónico*”, delivered by the architect Domènech i Estapà to the conservative Academia Real de Ciencias y Artes de Barcelona.²⁷ As has been mentioned, this refutation of architectural *modernismo* represented for Cirici Pellicer a sort of counter-manifesto, revealing in its point by point rebuttal “the general principles (*directrices*) that the *Modernistas* defended in the architectural terrain”.²⁸

²⁶Salvador SELLÉS BARÓ: “El modernismo y la verdad en el arte”, *Arquitectura y Construcción*, enero 1910, p. 2-3. The article argues for a truly modern approach to architecture as opposed to the copy of classical styles, a possible allusion to *noucentista* predilections.

²⁷José DOMÈNECH Y ESTAPÁ: “Modernismo arquitectónico”, *Memorias de la Real Academia de Ciencias y Artes de Barcelona*, X, marzo 1912, p. 3-21. The speech was delivered on June 22, 1911, and subsequently also published in *Arquitectura y Construcción*, XVI, mayo, 1912, p. 130-144.

²⁸ A. CIRICI PELLICER, *El Arte Modernista*, p. 77-78

But it is mistaken to read this diatribe as a critical overview of the state of the art in his day. Instead we find Domènech voicing a number of complaints that were especially applicable at that time to the work of Gaudí and his followers: a lack of respect for standard geometries and symmetrical massing, the use of tree trunk like columns of irregular diameter, a plethora of animals seemingly cast from nature turning facades into natural history museums, irregularly shaped openings and unbalanced fenestration patterns, a preference for parabolic arches and catenary vaults at the expense of the more serviceable round arch with vertical supports, the use of concealed iron reinforcement to achieve expressive effects in stone, and the use of rational mechanical diagrams to justify bizarre structural solutions. The commemorative lampposts for the Balma centennial celebration in Vich, inspired by Gaudí and executed by the architects Jujol and Canaleta in 1910, are directly condemned by Domènech, and the Sagrada Família, Güell Park, and the recently completed Casa Milà would fit neatly into the general profile outlined in the denunciation. Furthermore, Domènech adds a belated twist to the meaning of the term *Modernismo*, a twist which may have distracted Bohigas in his attempt at definition: characterizing the challenge to age-old standards of architectural propriety and structural calculus as a sort of heretical practice, he says “I use the term ‘architectural *modernismo*’ for the characteristics to which I refer because they have many points in common with those of the so-called religious *Modernismo* which had to be severely condemned recently by our current Pope, Pius X.”²⁹ Given the earlier Gaudinista claim of *verdadero modernismo*, Domènech’s response manipulates a coincidence in terminology—seemingly emphasized here for the first time—and drives it home with numerous anti-*modernista* quotes by Torras y Bages, framing a critique which would have been especially offensive to the religious sentiments of Gaudí and many of his followers.

The publication of Domènech y Estapà’s speech in *Arquitectura y Construcción* was the probable inspiration for yet another article in the same periodical the following year by Lluís Muncunill, whose own work at the Masia Freixa in Terrassa, for example, clearly answered to the characteristics of the condemned *modernismo arquitectónico*.³⁰ The essay can easily be read as a

²⁹J. DOMÈNECH Y ESTAPÀ: “Modernismo arquitectónico”, (*Arquitectura y Construcción*) p. 131.

³⁰Lluís MUNCUNILL: “Arquitectura moderna”, *Arquitectura y Construcción*, XVII, noviembre

rejoinder to Domènech, though the author does not mention the spurious term. In it, Muncunill mocks the “concerns held by some that the architect should only use straight lines and planar surfaces, only occasionally circular ones, and only exceptionally and in rare cases, other curved ones.” He also elaborates a clever defense of the use of concealed iron reinforcement (likening it to the concealed human skeleton), a key element of the academician’s denunciation of *modernista*-Gaudinista heretical prevarication.

Oriol Bohigas and subsequent students of the subject tell us that the years 1888-1914 constitute the “high” phase of the *Modernista* style in Catalan architecture. But from the foregoing discussion it can be seen that only in the waning years of that period did the name come to be applied to any of the architects that are now collected under that term. Even then it would seem to refer almost exclusively to Gaudinian architecture, with the usage evincing a self-conscious awareness that this connotation, whether pro or con, deviates from the common usage of the word. Shortly after the publication of Bohigas’ book I had the opportunity to converse with an octogenarian César Martinell. He expressed to me his total bafflement at the use of the term *modernista* with regard to the architects collected in the study, and most especially with regard to his own work. “*Modernisme*, for us” he told me, “meant sinuous curves and ladies with long, flowing hair that took on a life of its own.”

Today, of course, in “Rutas del Modernisme” or in scholarly research groups, or in conferences on the *Art Nouveau*, we tend to use the term conveniently and capaciously to refer to much of the architecture produced in Barcelona and throughout Catalonia from, say 1880 to at least 1910.

Even Domènech i Estapà is so catalogued! In the cultural resistance of the Franco years, there was an impetus to counter cultural oblivion with the vision of a unified and vigorous Catalan culture, and to demarcate a period of collective transformation. Much as the *nova escola* architects had turned to an idealized medieval past, the resistant architects and historians of more recent times raveled together the widely divergent strands of the frayed *fi de segle* urban fabric, creating something that could image a possible future. I know full well that it would be futile, even foolish, to suggest now that we abandon the term altogether. Architectural *Modernisme* has become an industry unto itself and a point of vast cultural pride. Nevertheless, I would suggest that by

employing such blanket terms while neglecting historic specificity we tend to obscure or trivialize profound stylistic and ideological differences. And we tend, too, to lose track of significant histories that don't fit neatly under the blanket. Lluís Callén designed one of the most significant buildings in Barcelona in 1904, and yet it is almost impossible to find any trace of it or of him today. As historians we at least need to be conscious of the sources and the limitations of our labels.