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Honourable Businessmen: Respectability and ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism’ in Spain, 1840–1880

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Abstract

Revolution can lead to the complete political and social reconfiguration of a society. Such readjustment is often especially significant amongst the society’s elites, as when ancient aristocrats had to converge with a newly emerging bourgeoisie. This article argues that over the course of the nineteenth century there was a steady process of negotiation that saw the evolution of a new form of elite, one defined by a new characteristic: respectability. This change saw successful businessmen, particularly magnates or tycoons, climbing to the top of the social ladder, as the culmination of a process that began in the eighteenth century. To illustrate this thesis, I discuss the case of Spain. I draw upon the lives of a large and diverse range of great Spanish bankers, industrialists, and businessmen. Traditionally, historiography has studied such men individually and from an economic history perspective. Here, a global, cultural approach is adopted. The chronology of the events described is not straightforward. Although the men studied are not all from a single birth cohort or even the same generation, I consider that they lived through the same social processes. The years between 1840 and 1880 were a period of intense industrial and business development in Spain during which modern economic practices were introduced. For the purposes of this article, I first situate the concept of respectability within the Spanish historiographical context, before analysing the discursive strategies that Spanish business magnates used to turn themselves into legitimate members of the county’s new social elite. Finally, I study the three main symbolic tools that they employed to demonstrate their respectability and prove their status.

I

Today, successful business tycoons fill the pages of broadsheets, tabloids, and film scripts. In some cases, their lives are used to depict the myth of the self-made man, to demonstrate the rewards of success earned through hard work and perseverance. In others, they represent a lifestyle based on luxury, licence, and corruption. These representations are, however, not entirely new. In the

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nineteenth century, when businessmen were first able to rise into the elite ranks of society, we find them being depicted in very similar ways in novels, dramas, and newspapers; the stories showing that these men, and their lifestyles could be admired and criticized in equal measure. Historiography has, in general, also failed to move beyond this dichotomous view. From an economic perspective, business tycoons were accused of losing the entrepreneurial drive and dynamic impetus that helped them to bring about the industrial revolution. As they rose into the elite, some of their critics argued, they became much less productive, a drain on resources, thereby hindering their countries' economic progress. Other critics saw their fusion with the elite as preventing them from accomplishing a bourgeois revolution; despite being given that chance, they had chosen to turn their backs on the middle classes from which they had come in order to perpetuate and enjoy the privileges of the elite.

This process was, as I will try to show, rather more complicated than the dichotomous views presented above. As David Cannadine wrote, 'the human past needs to be approached, understood, explained, and written not just in terms of competing individuals and the survival of the fittest'.¹ Historical interpretations must go beyond the binary, Manichean division of the world to formulate a 'more complex, dynamic, and ultimately more compelling understanding'.² I therefore argue that there was a continuous process of negotiation across the nineteenth century as a new elite took shape, defined by a novel element: respectability. As well as generating a complete political reconfiguration of European society, political revolutions also brought about wide-ranging social change from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. One such change saw the lives of the new elite being regulated by respectability rather than by aristocratic honour. This change helped to propel businessmen into the social elite, the culmination of a process that had begun in the eighteenth century.

To follow the social integration of the business class into the elite, I have selected a large and diverse range of Spain's great bankers, industrialists, and entrepreneurs. They are drawn from a variety of birth cohorts, and social and cultural backgrounds. They all lived through the same historical period, however, and experienced the same conditions as they made their fortunes and rose through the social ranks to take their place amongst the elite. Thus, all of them had to legitimize their new position amongst the high society. Between the 1840s and 1880s, Spain's industries and businesses experienced rapid development as modern economic practices were introduced. Across the nineteenth century, Spain experienced a series of civil wars, known as the Carlist Wars, with the reactionary forces on one side and the liberal government on the other. The first of these started in 1833 and lasted for seven years. It provided many businessmen with the opportunity to enrich themselves, primarily either by providing the Liberal army with supplies or by lending money to the Liberal state. When the war ended in 1840, many businessmen, such as the mine trader and ironmonger José Antonio Ybarra, the

¹ David Cannadine, *The undivided past: history beyond our differences* (London, 2013), p. 263.

² *Ibid.*

imported products trader Mateo de Murga, or the food and cotton trader Josep Safont, converted their relatively modest enterprises into partnerships and began to diversify their investments. In addition, the peace saw the beginning of a period of industrial consolidation in regions such as Catalonia, generating a form of commercial fever which produced industrial companies of significant size and capital.³ At the same time, the conditions encouraged a wave of financial speculation out of which grew a fledgling, and therefore precarious, system of banks and credit companies. José Salamanca built his fortune and Manuel Girona successfully consolidated his, by these means. All these men joined both industrial and financial partnership during this period of economic growth.⁴ The endpoint of the social process – and the scope of this article – coincided with a trend change. By the 1880s, globalization had reached Spain for the first time and by 1883, the country had entered ‘a three-decade trend of divergence’.⁵ Also, many of the capitalist pioneers died in the 1880s, leaving their heirs and successors to manage the transition to the large modern businesses and banks that grew out of oligopolistic mergers in the late nineteenth century. The younger generation had by then become fully integrated into the ranks of the elite, thanks to the efforts of their parents.

This article focuses on the social processes that led to the capitalist pioneers – who made their fortunes by founding new enterprises or greatly improving those they had inherited while a new, liberal, capitalist world was being constructed – becoming legitimate members of a new social elite. Society was being reconfigured and as the magnates founded their new dynasties, based on the wealth generated by their businesses, they had to fight for social recognition, and did so by forcing a redefinition of who might be considered a member of the elite. I wish to argue that, regardless of their social or geographic origins, education, or economic starting positions, they deployed the same narratives and strategies to reach the hegemony within the elite and force a redefinition of its socio-cultural contours. This was true, even in regions such as Catalonia where, in the late nineteenth century, middle-class codes of respectability and social prestige differed from those held in other parts of Spain. From the 1890s onward, the Catalan bourgeoisie worked hard to distinguish themselves from their peers in Madrid by adopting alternative political and aesthetic forms.⁶ Catalanian regionalist elites displayed groundbreaking *art-nouveau* and art collections in their residences to show their preference for modernity in contrast to the centralist elites in Madrid, who increasingly favoured the nationalist Neo-Moorish style.⁷ This political and

³ Pablo Martín and Francisco Comín, *Los rasgos históricos de las empresas en España* (Madrid, 1996).

⁴ Leandro Prados de la Escosura, *Spanish economic growth, 1850–2015* (London, 2017).

⁵ Albert Carreras and Xavier Tafunell, *Between empire and globalization: an economic history of modern Spain* (London, 2021), p. 103.

⁶ Angel Smith, *The origins of Catalan nationalism, 1770–1898* (New York, NY, 2014), pp. 176 and 203–5; Xosé Núñez and Eric Storm, eds., *Regionalism and modern Europe: identity construction and movements from 1890 to the present* (London, 2018).

⁷ Jaume Vicens Vives and Monserrat Llorens, *Industrials i polítics (segle XIX)* (Barcelona, 1958); Antoni Jutglar, *Història crítica de la burgesia a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1972).

cultural struggle, however, was led by the sons of the capitalist pioneers, who were already integrated into the elite. In the mid-nineteenth century, both Madrid and Barcelona bourgeoisie were integrated into a general process focused on legitimizing their position as part of the elites.

Here, I consider these capitalist pioneers, these magnates or tycoons, from a new perspective, analysing the cultural strategies they took to ensure that their wealth and pre-eminent social position were recognized. Traditionally, historiography has studied such men as individuals, and from an economic, entrepreneurial history perspective.⁸ I would argue that we must consider their actions more globally and offer socio-cultural interpretations of their contribution to the reconfiguration of society in Spain. First, I examine the concept of respectability within the Spanish historiographical context, and argue that those strata of society who were deemed 'respectable' were able to negotiate and redefine boundaries of what, or who, was considered to be 'elite'; allowing the tycoons to rise to the very pinnacle of the social pyramid. I then analyse the discursive strategies that my sample of Spanish magnates used to embed themselves within the new social elite. Finally, I consider three of the main ways they demonstrated their respectability in order to justify their status in the post-revolutionary world.

II

Historiographical debate on the issues outlined above has been greatly influenced by the work of Arno J. Mayer. In his study on the persistence of the *ancien régime* in Europe until 1914, Mayer emphasized 'the congenital inability of the *grandees* of business and the professions to fuse into a cohesive estate or class', which meant that this group was not strong enough to oppose the aristocracy and replace them as the ruling class.⁹ He dismissed the capitalist classes, considering that they 'lacked a coherent and firm social and cultural footing', yet 'never stopped doubting their own social legitimacy'.¹⁰ Mayer's view was obvious: the aristocracy were much stronger than the new industrial and financial bourgeoisie, and maintained their political and social leadership by selectively co-opting certain members of the business classes into their ranks, a logical consequence of the 'singularly impressionable and flaccid' character of the bourgeoisie and the latter's tendency towards 'sycophancy'.¹¹ Thus, 'the fusion of the two strata remained manifestly asymmetrical: the aristocratization of the obeisant bourgeoisie was far more pervasive than the bourgeoisification of the imperious nobility'.¹² This fact meant that the successful businessmen 'imitated the tone-setting nobility's accent, carriage, demeanour, etiquette, dress, and lifestyle...to overcome the stigma of their

⁸ Mercedes Fernández-Paradas and Carlos Larrinaga, eds., *Business history in Spain (19th and 20th centuries)* (Bern, 2021); Elvira Lindoso-Tato, 'Las élites del capital: los comerciantes-banqueros en España, c. 1840–1874', *Historia Contemporánea*, 68 (2022), pp. 11–48.

⁹ Arno J. Mayer, *The persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (London, 1981), pp. 84–5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 79 and 86.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

humble social origins and dishonourable economic callings'.¹³ By the end of the nineteenth century, their offspring – who had been educated alongside and were socializing with the nobility – had shed any remaining bourgeois traits and become fully integrated into the highest social circles.

Mayer's thesis had an enormous historiographical impact and generated deep, intense debates, particularly in the United Kingdom where studies linked progressive businessmen's aristocratization to the decline of British economic strength at the turn of the century.¹⁴ These *fin-de-siècle* 'gentlemen capitalists', it was argued, had a less competitive mentality than their parents and were poor managers, failing to reinvest the profits they made into their companies. The generations succeeding the capitalist pioneers were content with the income generated by their companies instead of striving to create new wealth. Some turned away from business to take up politics, a profession, or stock market speculation, directing their resources to non-productive forms of social prestige, which symbolized that they belonged to the gentry, such as luxury, travel, art, fashion, and, in particular, the acquisition of land.¹⁵ Thus, as Eric Hobsbawm stated, 'a good deal of the late-nineteenth-century bourgeoisie consisted of a "leisure class" for which 'spending became at least as important as earning'.¹⁶ Immersed in a deep crisis in 'its identifying ideology and allegiance', the bourgeoisie was now 'withdrawing from its historic destiny'.¹⁷ Consequently, 'their aim increasingly was to crown business success by joining the class of the nobility, at least via their sons and daughters, and, if not, at least by an aristocratic lifestyle'.¹⁸ However, Hobsbawm advised, these aristocratic values were assimilated into a 'moral system designed for a bourgeois society' where they were increasingly tested by 'a profligate and expensive style of life that required above all money'.¹⁹

In Spain, discussions also revolved around the impact that emerging groups had on the country's social, economic, and business development. The ideas of Mayer and Hobsbawm reaffirmed the theories that many Spanish historians held regarding the impact of what became known as 'the liberal revolution'; namely, the triple revolution of liberalism, industrialization, and embourgeoisment that Spain experienced at the same time as the rest of Europe in the nineteenth century. In the 1970s and 1980s, a new paradigm arose out of modernization theory, which interpreted Spain's nineteenth-century history as the result of the country's failure to experience – or delay in experiencing – this triple revolution. The bourgeoisie were at the centre of this debate, seen as having curbed their initial inclination to revolt against the privileged elites of Spain's *ancien régime* and instead entering into a pact with them, thus

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86–7.

¹⁴ Perry Anderson, 'The figures of descent', *New Left Review*, 161 (1987), pp. 20–77.

¹⁵ Martin J. Daunton, "'Gentlemanly capitalism" and British industry, 1820–1914', *Past & Present*, 122 (1989), pp. 119–58; Howard L. Malchow, *Gentlemen capitalists: the social and political world of the Victorian businessman* (London, 1991).

¹⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of empire, 1875–1914* (New York, NY, 1989), p. 169.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 186 and 188.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

curbing the democratic excesses of the revolution. The bourgeoisie's reluctance to challenge the old elites, and their willingness to embrace aristocratization, was seen as a betrayal by the general populace.²⁰ As in the British case, the alliance between the capitalist class and the aristocracy also had economic consequences. As they were absorbed into the elite, the gentlemen capitalists lost their business drive.²¹ They were therefore a crucial factor in the failure of the modernization and economic development of Spain.

Several scholars have robustly criticized this interpretation of events for its reductionist and teleological views.²² Nevertheless, the discussions focused on the economic and political aspects of the debate; changes in socio-cultural structures were only ever secondary to the analyses. Although Jesus Cruz stressed that 'in reality, before the big changes of the era, both [the nobility and the bourgeoisie] were already united by a community of interests'.²³ According to Cruz, the novel result brought about by the changes was the creation of a 'society of notables' in Weberian terms; that is, someone with high social estimation and a powerful economic position, who could act as a part-time leader of a political organization because of their influence in the community.²⁴ This society, Cruz said, was 'characterized by the survival of traditional structures and habits that only economic change could transform'; a framework of social relations that 'favoured reproduction over renewal and replacement over substitution'.²⁵ In that sense, as Jorge Luengo has observed,²⁶ the strategies of the elites created a society where kinship and friendship supported the political system and defined the limits of the 'notables', transcending a class identity defined by economic matters.²⁷ Culturally, this manifested itself in a fusion of values, cultural patterns, and lifestyles, evidenced, for example, by aristocratic home libraries and assembly rooms.²⁸ An elite social strata thus emerged, membership of which was no longer determined solely by blood lines and 'old' wealth.

The principal concept to consider when trying to understand the complex processes that were unfolding is, I would argue, that of 'respectability'. The

²⁰ Miguel Artola, *La burguesía revolucionaria, 1808-1874* (Madrid, 1973); Josep Fontana, *Cambio económico y actitudes políticas en la España del siglo XIX* (Barcelona, 1975); Alberto Gil Novales, *Del anti-guano al nuevo régimen* (Caracas, 1986).

²¹ Gabriel Tortella, 'La iniciativa empresarial, factor de fracaso en la España contemporánea', *Cuadernos de Estudios Empresariales*, 4 (1994), pp. 333-48.

²² Isabel Burdiel, 'Myths of failure, myths of success: new perspectives on nineteenth-century Spanish Liberalism', *Journal of Modern History*, 70 (1998), pp. 892-912; Jesús Millán and María Cruz Romeo, 'Was the liberal revolution important to modern Spain? Political cultures and citizenship in Spanish history', *Social History*, 29 (2004), pp. 284-300.

²³ Jesús Cruz, *Gentlemen, bourgeois, and revolutionaries: political change and cultural persistence among the Spanish dominant groups, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 272.

²⁴ Max Weber, *Economy and society* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), p. 435.

²⁵ Cruz, *Gentlemen, bourgeois*, p. 273.

²⁶ Jorge Luengo, 'Las élites liberales: una sociedad conyugal', *Historia Social*, 86 (2016), pp. 91-108.

²⁷ Juan Pro, 'Las élites de la España liberal: clases y redes en la definición del espacio social (1808-1931)', *Historia Social*, 21 (1995), pp. 47-69.

²⁸ Jesús A. Martínez, 'La cultura nobiliaria: sociabilidad cultural y lecturas de la nobleza en la España del siglo XIX', *Historia Contemporánea*, 13/14 (1996), p. 270.

latter can be used to study the way in which the social elites imposed a value system on society that allowed them to perpetuate their cultural hegemony. Respectability established 'the sharpest of all lines of social division, between those who were and those who were not respectable; a sharper line by far than that of between rich and poor',²⁹ and formed a central element of the nineteenth-century redefinition of the elite classes in Spain. As Woodruff D. Smith put it, respectability was 'a basic constituent of "class" as a constructed category',³⁰ mainly because 'nineteenth-century social classes were defined by their members partly in terms of ascribed respectability'. Respectability was therefore a 'constituent element' of modernization, 'a broad-ranging construct which connected and gave meaning to a wide array of practices, ideas, social structures, discursive conventions, and commodities'.³¹ This thesis arose out of Pierre Bourdieu's theories of 'social fields' and the symbolic struggle for domination between the groups making up the elite. Contrary to the traditional concept of class, which was largely based on individuals' economic standing, Bourdieu proposed that the classes should be defined in relational terms. He saw each class as a multi-dimensional social space, formed by individuals 'who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests'.³² This social complexity, he argued, generated different factions within the ruling class, each struggling to impose their definition of the social world, epistemological order, and principles of hierarchy on the others and on society more generally. They were, in Bourdieu's terms, all trying 'to impose the legitimacy of their domination through their own symbolic production'.³³

In the struggle between the factions, symbolic capital was more important than economic capital, insofar as these forms of distinction, having been acquired, were recognized as legitimate by other members of the peer group; the emerging elites were thus fighting for hegemony, for social dominance in its most Gramscian terms. Each group tried to assert their position as social leaders by trying to reconfigure public sensibilities, by defining new limits on what was socially possible, legitimate, and acceptable. Respectability was the foundation on which new attitudes and norms of behaviour were built. By defining what was 'respectable', each of the competing groups laid out a social framework that could be accepted or rejected by the members of other elite groups. In this way, as Antonio Gramsci said, 'when one succeeds in introducing a new morality in conformity with a new conception of the world, one finishes by introducing the conception as well'.³⁴ Thus, those from the

²⁹ Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (London, 1979), p. 281. For an interesting critic, see Peter Bailey, "'Will the real Bill Banks please stand up?'" Towards a role analysis of mid-Victorian working-class respectability', *Journal of Social History*, 12 (1979), pp. 336-53.

³⁰ Woodruff D. Smith, *Respectability as moral map and public discourse in the nineteenth century* (New York, NY, and London, 2018), p. viii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³² Pierre Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris, 2001), pp. 296-7.

³³ Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979), p. 80.

³⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selected writings, 1916-1935* (New York, NY, 2000), p. 192.

capitalist classes were able to negotiate with and grant concessions to the ancient aristocratic elites, gaining their approbation, through their intellectual and moral leadership.

In early modern Spain, 'honour' was the main element that defined social pre-eminence and held the hierarchical social structure together. The eighteenth century marked a significant shift in the definition of a man's 'honour'; it was no longer rooted in his bloodline and heritage, but based on his individual reputation. According to the social discourse of the Enlightenment, honour was increasingly understood 'as a reward for outstanding personal actions, merits, and services' and not merely as something to be inherited from one's family.³⁵ More importantly, honour became intermingled with the concept of honesty that had emerged as one of the defining characteristics of a 'good man'.³⁶ This changing sense of virtue generated a new strata within the social hierarchy during the nineteenth century defined now by respectability. Of course, this modern concept was created out of certain cultural elements of the ancient nobility; of their value system, social practices, and traditional symbolic attributes. However, to study this continuity alone is to neglect a much more complex, diverse, historical reality. Respectability also arose from bourgeois ideas of acceptable behaviour, and the nobility would eventually come to adopt these. Bourgeois culture was strongly associated with modernity, and slowly asserted itself until it became the hegemonic norm.³⁷ The elite embraced the bourgeois system of values and beliefs, their rules of behaviour, paths of socialization, and symbolic organization, and adopted lifestyles based on consumption and comfort. In this way, the new social order was shaped 'by ideals drawn from a mix of aristocratic traditions and new bourgeois norms'.³⁸

III

One of the pressing tasks the men of the new bourgeoisie had in the new order was to justify their pre-eminent position; they had to legitimize their rapid social ascent from simple bankers or merchants 'in trade', to the select ranks of elite. To this end, they developed a forceful discourse around what was then called the 'aristocracy of labour' or the 'aristocracy of money'. The use of the former term, it should be clear, was far removed from the meaning applied in Marxist texts to describe those strata within the working classes that acted as a stabilizing, moderating force in the class struggle.³⁹ Despite

³⁵ Pablo Ortega del Cerro, 'Del honor a la honradez: un recorrido por el cambio de valores sociales en la España de los siglos XVIII y XIX', *Cuadernos de la Ilustración y Romanticismo*, 24 (2018), pp. 612–13.

³⁶ Mónica Bolufer, 'Hombres de bien: modelos de masculinidad y expectativas femeninas, entre la ficción y la realidad', *Cuadernos de la Ilustración y Romanticismo*, 15 (2007), pp. 7–31.

³⁷ Jerrold Seigel, *Modernity and bourgeois life: society, politics, and culture in England, France, and Germany since 1750* (Cambridge, 2012).

³⁸ Jesús Cruz, *The rise of middle-class culture in nineteenth-century Spain* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2011), p. 221.

³⁹ Robert Gray, *The aristocracy of labour in nineteenth-century Britain, c. 1850–1900* (London, 1981).

comments at the time, the capitalist classes referred to themselves as ‘labour aristocracy’ in order to bolster the idea that their social pre-eminence arose from the work they did. They were thus using the term ‘aristocracy’ in its etymological meaning: ‘government by the best’. Its use also implied a radical change in the way the social elite conceived their role.

The view that work had merit was not entirely new. Since the Enlightenment, theorists and political philosophers had tried to extol the virtues of manual work because of its value to the public interest.⁴⁰ These intellectual arguments were soon followed by a political one. In 1783, the Spanish king declared that those practising occupations that ‘did not degrade the family or the person’ were ‘honest and honourable’.⁴¹ This opened up the path to respectability and, eventually, to upward social mobility into the elite. From the 1830s onward, however, liberalism added further new layers to the definition of work.⁴² As in other European countries, Spanish liberals sought to regulate society through politics.⁴³ Deeply influenced by French *doctrinaire* liberalism, they used the so-called ‘discourse of capacity’ to legitimize modern, representative government;⁴⁴ meritocracy was to be the new guarantee of freedom, progress, and rationality.

Admittedly, ‘capacity’ encompassed a broad and diverse range of social characteristics and there were intense debates on which of these would secure a man’s place in the social elite. As politician Patricio de la Escosura has said, for conservatives, ‘capacity is the wealth condensed in property taxes’.⁴⁵ For their part, progressives understood capacity as ‘the social position that presumes men are interested in the preservation of the social order’.⁴⁶ This involvement in society was measured in several ways, but economic matters always carried considerable weight. Liberals made a sharp distinction between the fortunes made by the respectable middle classes who, as Pedro Monares has stressed, made their fortunes ‘by work, diligence, and perseverance’⁴⁷ and those inherited by aristocrats which they saw as having no benefit for society and discouraging any form of progress. This criticism of the nobility led to the concept of the elite being questioned. In the 1840s, politician Joaquín

⁴⁰ Antonio Morales, ‘Actividades económicas y honor estamental en el siglo XVIII’, *Hispania*, 167 (1987), pp. 951–76.

⁴¹ *Real Cédula de S. M. y señores del Consejo* (Madrid, 1783). For its professionalization process, see David San Narciso, ‘Merchants to businessmen: the professionalization of entrepreneurs in nineteenth-century Spain’, in Raquel Sánchez and David Martínez-Vilches, eds., *Respectable professions: the origins of the liberal professions in nineteenth-century Spain* (Bern, 2022), pp. 365–91.

⁴² Pamela M. Pilbeam, *The middle classes in Europe, 1789–1914: France, Germany, Italy, and Russia* (London, 1990); Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the middle class: the political representation of class in Britain, c. 1790–1840* (Cambridge, 1995); Sarah Maza, *The myth of the French bourgeoisie: an essay on the social imaginary, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁴³ María Sierra, María Antonia Peña, and Rafael Zurita, *Elegidos y elegibles: la representación parlamentaria en la cultura del liberalismo* (Madrid, 2010), pp. 325–50.

⁴⁴ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (Paris, 1985); Alan S. Kahan, *Liberalism in nineteenth-century Europe: the political culture of limited suffrage* (London, 2003), pp. 153–71.

⁴⁵ Diario de Sesiones del Congreso (DSC), legislature 1851–2, no. 45, 28 July 1851, p. 1300.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ DSC, legislature 1854–6, no. 304, 1 Feb. 1856, p. 10470.

Francisco Pacheco considered this issue. Before the nineteenth century, he argued, the elite's distinction 'did not come from wealth but land ownership'.⁴⁸ Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, the aristocrats' feudal privileges had been abolished, destabilizing their ownership of land and property. Accordingly, it was necessary to create a new aristocracy more in touch with modern society. A huge fortune may not have previously been the mark of an aristocrat, but over time a large fortune had come to create and ensure 'immense distinction'; it had become 'an aristocratic element'.⁴⁹ Almost forty years later, the economist Joaquín María Sanromá echoed Pacheco's ideas. In his inaugural speech at the First National Trade Conference (1881), he stated that 'those times are long gone when commercial activity, if not viewed as a blot (on a man's character), was at least regarded unfavourably and considered in the worst light'; 'the nineteenth century [had] succeeded in enhancing businessmen's dignity as they deserved'. He went on to argue that national reputations were no longer based on 'the power of the sword's brilliance and impressive conquests'. National greatness in modern society now lay 'in morality, credit, ships, desks, warehouses, and railways' and was based on 'respect, consideration, and a kind of idolatry [directed] towards those men who wear with honour, profit, and pride, the noblest title of "sons of labour"'.⁵⁰

From the mid-nineteenth century on, those whose work had made them wealthy were seen as so respectable that they could be absorbed into the aristocracy. As the leading nineteenth-century herald, Francisco Piferrer wrote, 'virtue and personal merit [now] constitute the real nobility'.⁵¹ It was no longer enough for born aristocrats 'to boast titles, banners, and coats of arms'; they also had to be 'at once humble and honourable, courageous, just, pious, beneficent, unselfish, generous, solicitous, appreciative, and protective of merit and virtue'. If they did not live up to this ideal, aristocrats 'should cease to hold their titles'.⁵² 'A real nobleman', Piferrer argued, 'must be a paragon and genuine model of all virtues',⁵³ in such a social model, businessmen would figure prominently. As a consequence of the new discourse, which saw individual reputation as the basis of a man's place in the elite, there was a proliferation of noble titles in the nineteenth century, many of them conferred on wealthy merchants and bankers. In 1908, another herald, Francisco Fernández de Bethencourt, criticized 'the veritable turmoil' in the Spanish nobility.⁵⁴ He complained bitterly about the new aristocrats who came from the 'classes recently enriched and greedy for honours' whose only distinction 'was more than a few million of *reales* in the bank'.⁵⁵ He did acknowledge, however, that the aristocracy's position had radically changed

⁴⁸ Francisco Pacheco, *Lecciones de derecho político constitucional* (Madrid, 1845), p. 171.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Actas del Congreso Nacional Mercantil* (Madrid, 1882), pp. 27–8.

⁵¹ Francisco Piferrer, *Tratado de heráldica y blasón* (Madrid, 1853), p. 4.

⁵² Francisco Piferrer, *Armorial español* (Madrid, 1866), p. 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Anuario de la nobleza de España*, 1 (1908), pp. 7–8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

by the beginning of the twentieth century. Money and work were already recognized as legitimate characteristics of the social elite.

References to the men of the new elite tended to be all in the same vein, repeating the same tropes again and again. Businessmen's obituaries and death notices provide us with a retrospective view of how their contemporaries were keen to emphasize certain of the deceased's characteristics. These tended to take four forms: work, patriotism, charity, and modernity. Foremost of these was the myth of the self-made man. The social reformer and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, synthesized the features making up this 'peculiar type of manhood'. In his opinion, such men were characterized by individualism, self-improvement, self-learning, and 'a worthy character'. Always depicted as growing up in adverse conditions, they 'have learned from themselves the best uses to which life can be put in this world'. Thus, they were free, independent men who had 'hew(n) out for themselves a way to success'. They were 'the architects of their own good fortunes', indebted to no one but themselves. 'From the depths of poverty such as these have often come', Douglass wrote, 'they have ascended high; they have built their own ladder'. In such struggles, he found 'genuine heroism', 'something of sublimity and glory'; the men's success and superhuman efforts 'entitled them to a certain measure of respect'.⁵⁶

This semi-mythical construction of businessmen was first designed to conflate their fortune and social status with ideals of hard work, perseverance, and intelligence. The origins of these heroic figures were always humble: 'poverty was the inevitable beginning of the story of all labour heroes'.⁵⁷ The degree of truth in a man's biography concerning the status of his family was of little importance. For example, newspapers claimed that the banker and stock speculator José Salamanca came 'from a modest family' although his father was a doctor and he had studied Law.⁵⁸ For his part, despite his family's American fortune and his studies in commerce, the merchant, shipowner, slave trader, and banker Antonio López was said to have been born into 'an impoverished but honourable family'.⁵⁹ As well as the origins of the 'self-made' men, journalists made much of the lowly jobs they had previously held. For example, the tobacco importer, slave trader, and shipowner Juan Manuel Manzanedo was said to have 'worked as an honourable milliner', and the trader and industrialist Juan Güell was described as having had 'the modest position of shop assistant'.⁶⁰ The men's hard work and perseverance were emphasized above all. The phrase encountered most often in the newspaper columns was, undoubtedly, that the men 'owed their considerable fortune solely to their own work'.⁶¹ As the merchant, stock market and real estate speculator Miguel Sainz Indo wrote, 'my fortune is not the product of gambling, favour, or flattery, but

⁵⁶ This quote and the next in Frederick Douglass, *Self-made men* (Carlisle, 1874), pp. 6–8.

⁵⁷ *El Globo*, 19 Jan. 1883.

⁵⁸ *La Unión*, 22 Jan. 1883.

⁵⁹ *La Época*, 18 Jan. 1883.

⁶⁰ Quotes respectively in *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 22 Aug. 1882; *Boletín de Comercio*, 26 Nov. 1872.

⁶¹ *Boletín de Comercio*, 26 Nov. 1872.

legitimate work', before continuing, 'I owe nothing to anyone; everything that distinguishes me belongs to me alone.'⁶² The exaltation of work and personal merit can be somewhat overblown. When Juan Güell was awarded the honour of Illustrious Catalan by Barcelona's City Council, José de Argullol noted that Güell's working life had been like that of a soldier, 'who achieved brilliant victories with constancy and courage, without noise and display'.⁶³ In his opinion, Güell 'was thoroughly horrified by laziness and idleness'.⁶⁴ He also 'firmly believed that work of any kind and condition always honoured a man' if promotion was based on 'the recognition of merit'.⁶⁵

As the business tycoons accumulated wealth, they also had to build up their 'social capital until they acquired respectability'.⁶⁶ To do this, as one progressive newspaper stated, they had 'to use their legitimately obtained wealth splendidly and beneficially'.⁶⁷ Through their example, they had demonstrated that work 'was no longer the object of the petty contempt of other ages'.⁶⁸ The modern spirit, it was pointed out, showed 'that hard work was the path to greatness and the basis of a brilliant, splendid, well-deserved, and respectable social position'.⁶⁹ Honours, such as aristocratic titles, would follow although 'concessions gave more authority to the nobility than brilliance to those who already (had) the splendour of the merit'.⁷⁰ That is precisely why 'the aristocracy of money was both as legitimate as any other and more positive than any other aristocracy'.⁷¹

Secondly, as well as focusing on their own particular gains, however, businessmen had to have an eye on the collective interest, which in the nineteenth century meant thinking how to protect the good of the nation. Patriotism and selflessness were repeatedly highlighted in newspaper columns and reports. Several researchers have shown how nationalism was used both by the old elites to secure their status,⁷² and also by the new elites to achieve wealth and power. The new upper middle class used national legitimacy – the political principle that underpinned modern liberal states – to mobilize their 'imagined community', to defend their interest, and legitimize their presence in the ruling elite. Symbolic nationalism was pivotal to their acceptance. Allegiance could be to the nation, or to regions with their own separate identities. Until the 1880s, elites in Catalonia and the Basque Country adhered to a 'dual patriotism'; they identified with both the nation and their region

⁶² *La Época*, 11 May 1869.

⁶³ José de Argullol, *Biografía del Excmo. Sr. D. Juan Güell* (Barcelona, 1881), p. 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *El Globo*, 19 Jan. 1883.

⁶⁷ *Crónica de Cataluña*, 18 Jan. 1883.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *El Imparcial*, 18 Jan. 1883.

⁷¹ *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 22 Aug. 1882.

⁷² Anthony Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations* (London, 1986); Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and nationalism: theory and comparison* (London, 1991).

simultaneously, each identity reinforcing the other.⁷³ Catalan and Basque tycoons helped to build up their nation by developing their home region and used the national prestige they earned to consolidate their position within the elite of that region. In this way, for example, Antonio López 'had not for a single day failed to do anything for the nation's interest, which he loved with the enthusiasm of an adoring son'.⁷⁴ Juan Güell was said to have 'worked for thirty years without a single day off, and he used his wealth to promote the prosperity of his home region'.⁷⁵

Business magnates also sought to enhance the position of their country, and themselves, by participating in politics. Although not professional politicians, they were able to put their knowledge at the nation's service. For example, in his first speech in the Senate, the banker Manuel Girona stated that he did not 'understand political matters', nor was he 'a politician'; he was just 'a businessman who knows a little about numbers by manipulating them'.⁷⁶ He had become involved in politics so he could use his expertise 'to propose remedies; the question is whether they are acceptable to the government'.⁷⁷ The magnates sought to appear in the public eye as independent figures, above politics, pursuing the interests of the population. As the banker and moneylender Juan Manuel de Urquijo wrote in the 1880s, 'we do not do politics'.⁷⁸ Although the Urquijo family always remained 'on the government's side in all matters of order and good government',⁷⁹ men of business felt their economic expertise qualified them to intervene in economic matters, especially as they had, at least rhetorically, the nation's wealth in mind.

Thirdly, businessmen should be both charitable and philanthropic. In these matters, liberalism gave a prominent place to women, whose role as mothers, educators, and custodians of social order was seen as justifying their participation in these public institutions.⁸⁰ This confluence of the public and private spheres also had implications for men's roles, however. The family was the foundation on which liberal politicians built their political and social projects. They perceived public space as an extension of the family, in which they, as men, had all the privileges and duties that patriarchy assigned to them in the private sphere.⁸¹ One duty that they had to be seen to demonstrate both in private and in public was benevolence. Business tycoons were always

⁷³ Josep María Fradera, 'El proyecto liberal catalán y los imperativos del doble patriotismo', *Ayer*, 35 (1999), pp. 87–100; Coro Rubio, 'La construcción de la identidad vasca (siglo XIX)', *Historia Contemporánea*, 18 (1999), pp. 405–16.

⁷⁴ *La Época*, 18 Jan. 1883.

⁷⁵ *Boletín de Comercio*, 5 Dec. 1872.

⁷⁶ DSC, legislature 1877, no. 50, 3 July 1877, pp. 736–7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Onésimo Díaz Hernández, *Los marqueses de Urquijo: el apogeo de una saga poderosa y los inicios del Banco Urquijo* (Pamplona, 1998), p. 109.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Mónica Burguera, *Las damas del liberalismo respetable: los imaginarios sociales del feminismo liberal en España, 1834–1850* (Madrid, 2012).

⁸¹ John Tosh, *A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT, 2007), pp. 136–40.

portrayed in the press as munificent, philanthropic, and charitable. As the society columnist Ramón de Navarrete wrote, 'great fortunes are the great misadventure of providence' and thus, it should be every successful businessman's 'mission...to aid the helpless...; to remedy calamities; to wipe away the tears of the widow and the orphan'.⁸² Certainly, magnates founded schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and cultural spaces. They also contributed to the management of such institutions, being careful to undertake all the functions that publicly demonstrated their commitment to the relief of social ills, and often taking pains to ensure that their actions were in the public eye. For example, when, on 24 April 1878, there was a maritime tragedy, the Ybarra family rushed to offer financial help to the families of the deceased, spurred on by the fact that their fortune was based on a shipping company alongside industrial businesses. The Ybarra brothers agreed that a charitable gesture was appropriate, but argued over the amount to be donated, and the way it should be done. The eldest brother argued for a discreet approach, as he did 'not like to show off'.⁸³ His brothers thought differently, however, believing that 'in such cases, one must distinguish oneself'.⁸⁴

Fourthly, and finally, gentlemen businessmen took particular pains to make sure that their charitable acts generated publicity and social prestige in their home towns as this helped to consolidate their power and social position. Certainly, the towns where they were well known often formed the core of their political and economic networks. Thus, for example, the trader, tannery manufacturer, and banker Josep Xifré erected the hospital in his home town of Arenys de Mar; José María Ybarra constructed the San Fernando Beggar's Asylum in Seville; and Juan Manuel Manzanedo built both the San Juan Bautista School and the Santa María de Puerto hospital in Santoña. The businessmen also distributed funds beyond the charitable sphere. Often, if a magnate served as mayor of a town, he would invest large sums of money in the modernization of the urban area, thus contributing to the common good. As a result, these men are often remembered, and their praises sung, for undertaking projects such as water purification, lighting installation, transport services, and other improvements. For example, José Campo brought drinking water to Valencia, installed the town's gas supply, and planned improvements to the roads and the port.⁸⁵ Similarly, Antonio López bought all the shares of the company that was building the Rabia and Zapedo bridges, so that the citizens of Comillas would not have to pay any tolls for crossing the latter.⁸⁶ Eventually the magnates' contributions to progress and modernity cemented their place in the elite, as their work demonstrated that although they were esteemed figures, they sought the public good.

⁸² *La Época*, 9 Apr. 1869.

⁸³ Pablo Díaz Morlán, *Los Ybarra: una dinastía de empresarios, 1801-2001* (Madrid, 2002), p. 226.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Francisco Almela, *El marqués de Campo: capdavanter de la burguesia valenciana, 1814-1889* (Valencia, 1989).

⁸⁶ Martín Rodrigo, *Los marqueses de Comillas, 1817-1925: Antonio y Claudio López* (Madrid, 2000), p. 62.

IV

In order to be seen as respectable gentlemen and legitimate members of the country's elite classes, Spain's business magnates had been seen to act in ways that met public standards of respectability. As Pierre Bourdieu stated, initially economically powerful men from the bourgeoisie confused their accumulation of wealth with their 'symbolic capital', their standing in society. They acquired 'a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability that were easily converted into political positions', which turned them into public figures.⁸⁷ However, as a newspaper from 1880 noted, 'anyone can become wealthy because money is available to everyone' but 'acquiring it does not always mean one knows how to be elegant'.⁸⁸ The most difficult thing was 'not to earn money but to know how to spend it splendidly'.⁸⁹ It was only when a man had learned this lesson that he would be seen as sufficiently respectable to be considered a member of the social elite.

The first and most visible signs of the magnates' spending power were their houses. By building or acquiring grand residences, wealthy businessmen and bankers sought to demonstrate that they were of sufficient status to enter the ranks of the elite. At first, they built sumptuous houses alongside the mansions and palaces of the ancient aristocracy, which formed the symbolic centre of many of Spain's cities, or took advantage of an aristocrat faced with bankruptcy to buy his home outright. Sometimes they would confiscate a building if an aristocrat had defaulted on the repayment of a loan or loans he had taken out in order to pay for the upkeep of his family seat.⁹⁰ Acquisition of an aristocrat's property was the most direct way in which men of the business classes could appropriate the symbolic legitimacy of the old elite. Such material investments acquired even greater symbolic importance because of the meaning attached to one's family home at the time. A man's house conveyed more than just the family's material worth, it also represented its owner's social reach and influence. The new liberal society of the nineteenth century was certainly built on networks whose nodes were constructed from a mixture of family connections and political and economic loyalties. The head of the Ybarras clan, for example, owned a mansion in Seville known simply as 'the Big House', but the building represented more than his home, it also stood as a symbol of his entire kinship network.⁹¹ Such symbolism had particular relevance for those businessmen who merged their family and business lives, installing

⁸⁷ Bourdieu, *La distinction*, p. 331.

⁸⁸ *Día de Moda*, 27 Sept. 1880.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Rafael Mata, 'Ruina nobiliaria y enriquecimiento burgués: nuevos datos sobre la quiebra de la Casa de Osuna', *Revista internacional de sociología*, 1 (1987), pp. 149–78; Rosa Congost, 'La familia Safont, el comte de Santa Coloma i la revolució liberal', *Recerques*, 22 (1989), pp. 83–92; Ángel Bahamonde, 'La crisis de la antigua nobleza y los prestamistas madrileños (1856–1870)', in VV.AA., *Estudios históricos* (Madrid, 1990), II, pp. 363–82; Juan Antonio Carmona, 'El comportamiento económico de la nobleza española en el siglo XIX: la Casa de Alcañices, 1790–1910' (D.Phil. thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1991).

⁹¹ María Sierra, 'La Casa Ybarra: política de honor y política de interés', *Historia Social*, 36 (2000), p. 10.

the headquarters and even the offices of their enterprises in their homes. In such cases, the impressive properties in which magnates had invested symbolized not their family's status but that of their business too.

The upper middle classes did not gain elite status simply by trying to emulate the aristocrats. They were not satisfied with the acquisition of antique properties with gilded public rooms, but set out to furnish their new homes in a manner that would show off their modern and respectable tastes. As the grain trader, banker, and landowner Ignacio Girona said to his son Manuel in 1852, after buying the count of Santa Coloma's mansion, 'we have to make the house look like that of a banker because it is necessary to display opulence, especially to foreigners'.⁹² There are many other examples of this attitude. In Barcelona, Antonio López bought a plot of land from the duke of Medinaceli in 1859. This lay very near to the square where Girona's sumptuous residence sat. The building and decorating costs that López then incurred, including a small fortune spent on iron and glass objects imported from abroad, doubled the price he had paid for the land.⁹³ Eleven years later, he bought another luxurious mansion on the Rambla, the city's main avenue, from the marquises of Moja. He retained the building's eighteenth-century iconography in part but, as the new owner, he also used the space to symbolize his claim to elite status by giving the house 'a stern and tasteful appearance'.⁹⁴ With this aim in mind, López replaced 'some of the old, deteriorated paintings with allegorical ones depicting modern advances in navigation, land locomotion by steam, photography, and electricity'.⁹⁵ These included murals depicting the gods Poseidon and Boreas, the breezy nymph Chloris, and Electra, allusions to the shipping company, A. López y Cía, from which he had made his fortune.

The same processes were at work in Madrid. In 1857, Josep Xifré bought a plot next to the Paseo del Prado from the duke of Medinaceli and hired the French architect Émile Boeswillwald, closely associated with Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, to build an ambitious new house in the neo-Mudejar style. The ostentatious mansion, inspired by the Alhambra Palace, was a heterogeneous mix of Orientalist taste, French and English furniture, and objects representing the prevailing concept of comfort. These included a coffee machine, a copper chocolate maker, an English ironing board, and a prototype recording machine.⁹⁶ Another magnate, Juan Manuel Manzanedo, bought the Goyeneche Palace from the dukes of Villahermosa in 1874 and immediately proceeded to refurbish it, including adding an impressive ballroom. He covered all the ceilings and walls in the house with powerful iconography, emphasizing his social position and drawing attention to how he had made his fortune as a tobacco importer, slave trader, and shipowner, as well as being the first man to offer maritime insurance. The palace's main staircase alone is a blend of artwork

⁹² Lluïsa Pla, *Los Girona: la gran burguesía catalana del siglo XIX* (Lleida, 2017), p. 251.

⁹³ Rodrigo, *Los marqueses*, p. 63.

⁹⁴ *La Il·lustració Catalana*, 30 Jan. 1883.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Marc Previ, 'El llinatge dels Xifré i la seva contribució social i cultural, 1777–1920' (Master's thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 2012), pp. 100–1.

symbolizing trade and the maritime world, Manzanedo's recently acquired coats of arms, and some imposing portraits.

An even more symbolic development than that represented by the businessmen's acquisition of grand houses was the relocation of the elite to bourgeois areas of Spain's cities. Urban development began in Madrid and Barcelona in the 1850s, following the plans laid out by Castro and Cerdá, respectively. Spatial structure was imposed on the cities; and neighbourhoods began to be distinguished by the social classes who lived there, and their preferred architecture.⁹⁷ As Leigh Mercer has recently explained, a culture of exhibition, or display, played a crucial role in defining urban middle-class areas, giving each of them a distinctive, recognizable character.⁹⁸ In Madrid, for example, the *bourgeoisie* favoured grand houses in the French Second Empire style with its characteristic mansards.⁹⁹ The owners of such houses then furnished them with all the objects of comfort, hygiene, and privacy required by bourgeois culture.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the cityscape itself was used to demonstrate that the magnates were no longer upstart newcomers but worthy of acceptance as members of the elite. José Salamanca, who promoted Madrid's expansion, was the first to build his palatial mansion in the East Ensanche, today's Barrio de Salamanca, in its suburbs as part of the expansion. The house surpassed all others in its levels of luxury and opulence. It had been designed by Narciso Pascual Colomer, Spain's most prestigious architect who had also overseen the construction of the country's new parliament building in the capital and the renovation of the Royal Palace.¹⁰¹

Many other tycoons followed Salamanca in building a house in the East Ensanche, this new area of Madrid. In 1859, a newly married José de Murga was looking for a new house 'that would include all that was required to live comfortably' as well as demonstrating his social status.¹⁰² First, he tried to buy a mansion opposite Salamanca's residence, but it was not until 1868 that he acquired a plot nearby and built what is now known as the Linares Palace. Another magnate, Manuel Calderón, constructed his residence practically next door to Salamanca's. He then sold it, in 1864, to the food wholesaler, financier, and businessman José Campo when he moved from Valencia to Madrid in order to improve his economic and political position. Campo paid Calderón eight million *reales* for the building, and then spent a great deal more on the luxury decorative objects with which he filled it, creating a residence that managed to fuse 'everything necessary for perfect comfort with

⁹⁷ Clementina Díez de Baldeón, *Arquitectura y clases sociales en el Madrid del siglo XIX* (Madrid, 1986).

⁹⁸ Leigh Mercer, *Urbanism and urbanity: the Spanish bourgeois novel and contemporary customs, 1845-1925* (Lewisburg, PA, 2013).

⁹⁹ Pedro Navascués, 'Influencia francesa en la arquitectura madrileña del siglo XIX: la etapa isabelina', *Archivo Español de Arte*, 55 (1982), pp. 59-68.

¹⁰⁰ Cruz, *The rise*, pp. 52-90.

¹⁰¹ Pedro Navascués, *Un palacio romántico: Madrid, 1843-1858* (Madrid, 1983), pp. 57-61.

¹⁰² Mercedes Hurtado de Saracho, 'Los Murga, un estudio del comportamiento social, económico y político de una familia burguesa en el siglo XIX' (D.Phil. thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2001), I, p. 437.

refined luxury; to harmonize the severity of good taste with the extravagance of wealth'.¹⁰³ From then on, the East Ensanche grew exponentially. In 1866, Miguel Sainz Indo built a mansion there in the fashionable French style, surrounding it with a large English garden. Around 1880, the banker José Anglada also relocated to the East Ensanche. He erected a sumptuous, eclectic residence with all modern conveniences from a billiard room and gymnasium to an air-cooling system.¹⁰⁴ Its architecture incorporated Greco-Latin ornamental motifs alongside an imposing Moorish courtyard which was roofed over in iron and glass as a symbol of progress. In all, the house cost Anglada more than sixteen million *reales*; 25,000 of which were spent on the courtyard alone.

As the new respectable elite congregated in the East Ensanche, this extension to the city became increasingly desirable as a place to stay, and as a result many businessmen, politicians, and liberal professionals moved to live there. More importantly, the old aristocratic families followed them; leaving their ancient grand residences in the city centre to move to newer homes that encapsulated the values of modernity, comfort, and respectability. This meant that the spaces symbolizing power, the topography of the elite, were shifting, but the migration also demonstrated that the old aristocracy were increasingly adopting upper-middle-class patterns and styles of life. For example, when the duke of Uceda built a mansion opposite that of José Salamanca in 1864, there was intense criticism of the project. This stemmed from debates around nationalism, it being thought that the elite were becoming too cosmopolitan, too French. The critics poured scorn on the duke's use of French stone blocks rather than Spanish ones and said that the house should be decorated with mansards. As one very indignant newspaper reporter stressed, 'both elements are, unfortunately, a sign of distinction and an obligatory feature of our illustrious patricians' palaces'.¹⁰⁵ The architectural forms and decorative flourishes adopted by the duke of Uceda were, however, simply imitations of those imported by José Salamanca to satisfy his bourgeois tastes. The duke of Bailén also moved to the East Ensanche in the 1860s and constructed a grand house similar to those of Salamanca and the duke of Uceda. The residence was described as 'a complete French palace in the Louis XV chateau style' that stood out as 'one of the most sumptuous and comfortable dwellings'.¹⁰⁶ To meet with the increasing standards demanded by the hygienic movement, all the rooms in the new mansion 'were spacious and airy, including the servants' quarters', and, furthermore, all had 'pipes that distributed hot and cold water from the kitchens'.¹⁰⁷ From the 1870s onwards, increasing numbers of aristocrats, including the marquis of Villamejor, the marquis of Mudela, and the dukes of Arión moved to the East Ensanche, ensuring its social caché.

¹⁰³ *El Imparcial*, 27 Feb. 1878.

¹⁰⁴ *El Globo*, 21 July 1880.

¹⁰⁵ *La Arquitectura Española*, 10 June 1866.

¹⁰⁶ *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 10 Apr. 1870; *La Época*, 24 July 1868.

¹⁰⁷ *La Época*, 9 Apr. 1869.

The same dynamic is visible in the second homes and country estates built by the business magnates on the outskirts of the cities. For example, in 1833, Josep Xifré acquired the medieval Milans Tower, set in about 10 hectares of land near Barcelona. He had romantic plans to rebuild the tower. With this in mind, when the Gralla Palace in Barcelona was threatened with demolition as the city expanded, he bought its façade, hoping that it might lend him and his plans some historic legitimacy.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, these did not come to fruition, but the grounds became renowned for their exotic trees and plants. Xifré brought these, and the knowledge of how to successfully acclimatize them to their new surroundings, from Latin America, where he had made his fortune.¹⁰⁹ The Girona family were also able to build a house and a big garden at their 9-hectare estate in Sant Vicenç de Sarrià.¹¹⁰ When, in 1866, Antonio López purchased the 229-hectare Mogada Stable estate on the outskirts of Barcelona, he endowed it with all sorts of comforts and luxuries, including an artificial lake.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, in Madrid, as wealthy businessmen bought up properties previously owned by aristocrats, the refurbishment of second residences also took place. José Salamanca bought the Vista Alegre estate from Queen Isabel II in 1859, for example. This included a sumptuous eighteenth-century residence, and all its assets, including an enormous tract of land.¹¹² Not satisfied with just buying the residence, Salamanca refurbished its façade and interiors, thus investing it, and himself, with even greater status. In 1870, José Campo did something similar with Viñuela Castle and forest, another former royal possession. As the new owner, Campo retained the castle's eclectic medieval appearance but ensured that inside it had 'all the distinguishing comfort and luxury of the nineteenth century', managing to combine 'French luxury with the infinite comfort of the English at-home style'.¹¹³

As well as buying main residences that symbolized their wealth and social status, the magnates also bought, or built, equally prestigious properties as second homes, often in their birthplace. The businessmen's home towns also came to be associated with their power and prestige, and this was sometimes reflected in the aristocratic titles that the businessmen, or their descendants, received. For example, Juan Manuel Manzanedo, who was born in Santoña and built an imposing house there in 1864, was given the title duke of Santoña in 1875. In 1865, Antonio López acquired Ocejo House in Comillas, a village not far from Santoña, and renovated it completely.¹¹⁴ Sixteen years later, however, after being made marquis of Comillas, he built the imposing Sobrellano Palace, which dominated the village, underscoring his increasingly eminent position. Estanislao Urquijo bought Lamuza Palace in Llodio in the north of Spain. He converted this eighteenth-century mansion into a modern bourgeois

¹⁰⁸ Previ, 'El llinatge', pp. 51–5.

¹⁰⁹ José María Ramón de San Pedro, *Banqueros románticos catalanes: cuatro biografías* (Madrid, 2017), p. 139.

¹¹⁰ Pla, *Los Girona*, pp. 257–61.

¹¹¹ Rodrigo, *Los marqueses*, p. 64.

¹¹² Navascués, *Un palacio*, pp. 79–85.

¹¹³ *Día de Moda*, 27 Sept. 1880.

¹¹⁴ Rodrigo, *Los marqueses*, pp. 68–9.

summer residence, enlarging it and completely refurbishing its interior to include every available amenity, including a billiard room, striking iron and glass work, and ‘modern Jennice and Geminis toilets patented in London’.¹¹⁵

In their quest for social legitimacy, the tycoons made much of the hundreds of objects with which they decorated their mansions. There was some use of fakes, and the men had to deal with some harsh criticism for using art as a tool for self-promotion, designed to augment their own prestige, but also for failing to support the development of the arts in Spain. As one newspaper put it in 1855, ‘our modern aristocracy of the Stock Exchange, with very few exceptions, hardly devotes any spare of the three percent interest in art objects’.¹¹⁶ The reality, though, was far removed from this rather bleak picture. The magnates actually invested impressive amounts in paintings, sculptures, books, and antiques. Material objects had intrinsic symbolic capital as contemporaries imbued them with meaning cultural significance.¹¹⁷ The businessmen put their collections together quite differently from the nobility, however. The latter had acquired their collections over many years and generations, anchoring their position in history. The magnates’ intentions were radically different, however. Spanish businessmen, like those in Victorian England, followed the rules of modern collecting,¹¹⁸ where, to quote Óscar Vázquez, ‘a collection’s value – in the widest sense of the worth, significance, importance, use, and facility of exchange – was...measured partly by the collector’s identity, rather than solely by that of the objects it contained’.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the dissemination of images and written descriptions of the contents of the collections brought them to the attention of a wider public, and gave them a specific identity, closely associating them with the collector himself.

There were many varied examples of magnates converting economic investments into symbolic ones. Gaspar Remisa was one of the first to appreciate that art had the potential to enhance his social position.¹²⁰ In the 1840s, Remisa owned more than 400 paintings.¹²¹ He realized that he could gain public recognition by offering ‘a private museum open to the public’ in his mansion.¹²² José Salamanca created what was probably the most extensive and choicest art collection by buying pieces from nobles in need of cash, such as the marquis of Altamira, the marquis of Iriarte, and the countess of Chinchón, taking advice on what to purchase from noted artists such as José Madrazo and Valentín Carderera. We can gain an idea of the capital involved from the proceeds of the auctions that Salamanca and his heir were forced to hold to bolster

¹¹⁵ Gorka Pérez de la Peña, *El Palacio de Lamuza: un ejemplo excepcional de residencia burguesa, 1876–1939* (Vitoria, 2009), p. 50.

¹¹⁶ *La España*, 1 Feb. 1855.

¹¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art* (Paris, 1998).

¹¹⁸ Dianne Macleod, *Art and the Victorian middle class: money and the making of cultural identity* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹¹⁹ Oscar Vázquez, *Inventing the art collection: patrons, markets, and the state in nineteenth-century Spain* (University Park, PA, 2010), p. 14.

¹²⁰ Pedro J. Martínez, *El coleccionismo de pintura en Madrid durante el siglo XIX* (Madrid, 2018).

¹²¹ Pascual Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico estadístico histórico de España* (Madrid, 1847), X, p. 862.

¹²² *El Espectador*, 20 Aug. 1846.

their own finances. In 1867, they sold 233 pieces from their collection for more than 1,200,000 francs.¹²³ In 1875, they sold a further 118 works, including 4 paintings by Goya, 2 by El Greco, 10 by Murillo, and 10 by Velázquez.¹²⁴ As well as art, Salamanca also amassed a colossal collection of Greek and Roman antiquities through the numerous archaeological excavations he supported in Italy. In 1874, he sold more than 3,500 pieces to the Spanish government, laying the foundation for what is now Spain's National Archaeological Museum. Likewise, following the advice of Pascual Gayangos – a noted scholar – he assembled an imposing library of first editions. He thus obtained 'the largest, oddest, and most important collection of books on chivalry... comprising all those Cervantes cited (as being on the shelves) in Don Quixote's library'.¹²⁵ Josep Xifré was an interesting collector, noted for the novelty and diversity of his acquisitions. Fascinated by the East, he bought hundreds of Chinese, Japanese, and Arab objects, even financing expeditions to obtain some of these pieces. However, he also had a remarkable interest in pre-Columbian art. As noted above, Xifré had made most of his fortune in Latin America, and making the most of his connections with the continent, he commissioned his agents 'to acquire some curiosities of the land'.¹²⁶ His purpose was 'to display them at the museum he was building'¹²⁷ in his mansion, and with more than 100 pieces, he succeeded in bringing together one of the first and most extensive collections of the genre.

The magnates were as active as patrons as they were as collectors. Miguel Sainz Indo, for example, responded to stinging criticism of his fortune by stating that he practised 'a completely legitimate, respectable, and honourable profession' and contributed to society 'by his protection of miserable but praiseworthy artists'.¹²⁸ It is well known that José Campo supported artists such as Salvador Martínez Cubelles, Rafael Monleón, and the brothers Juan Antonio and José Benlliure.¹²⁹ He also sponsored Mariano Benlliure, one of the leading sculptors of the Spanish nineteenth century, providing him with a monthly pension so that he could train in Rome. The results and the benefits of such patronage were numerous, both for the donors and the recipients; the funds allowed the artists to rise to national and international prominence, while the magnates were able to present themselves as guardians of the arts. In 1859, the artists receiving patronage from José Salamanca held a dinner in his honour; as one newspaper ironically remarked, 'what admiration the youth profess for the people of money!'.¹³⁰ The artists involved included the writers Ramón Rodríguez Correa, Luis Rivera, and Carlos Frontaura, the

¹²³ *Catalogue des tableaux anciens composant la galerie du marquis de Salamanca* (Paris, 1867).

¹²⁴ *Collection Salamanca: tableaux anciens* (Paris, 1875).

¹²⁵ *Revista de Bellas Artes*, 7 Apr. 1867.

¹²⁶ Previ, 'El llinatge', p. 109.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *La Iberia*, 6 Oct. 1868.

¹²⁹ Borja Franco, 'El marqués de Campo y sus estrategias de promoción social en el Madrid de finales del siglo XIX: una visión artística', *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, 26 (2014), pp. 69–82.

¹³⁰ *La Iberia*, 18 Jan. 1859.

musician Francisco Barbieri, and the painter Cosme Algarra. At the dinner, Salamanca ‘was full of that gaiety which suits capitalists so well’, smoking ‘a cheap cigar and drinking a popular liqueur’, although he was heard to ask, ‘Why are there portraits of artists and poets wherever I go, whether in a tavern or the most aristocratic salon?’, before complaining bitterly that ‘no one erects statues to bankers’.¹³¹ He advised his protégées that ‘the wretched ambition for money should never mix with their artistic dreams’¹³² and, in return for the dinner, he pledged to continue supporting them. There are many more examples of the willingness to offer patronage. Josep Xifré financed Mariano Cubí, who introduced phrenology to Spain, throughout his life.¹³³ For his part, José Campo supported ‘a scientific excursion’ to the Panama Canal works in 1886 by providing the use of one of his ships.¹³⁴ On board were a reporter and an illustrator who prepared daily bulletins for publication, so the expedition received enormous press coverage.¹³⁵

A third mainstay of upper-middle-class respectability was sociability. Just as they adopted aristocratic homes and collecting practices, so the magnates took up aristocratic activities and social norms. One form of social activity that they pursued above all others was the holding of parties. The aristocracy were renowned for holding such events, offering informal social interaction in a privileged setting to selected, socially acceptable guests.¹³⁶ The new, wealthy bourgeoisie emulated the nobles by filling their salons with their peers for sumptuous parties. The social boundaries between new and old elites seem to have blurred on such occasions. In 1858, José Salamanca inaugurated his imposing new mansion by throwing a party. Of course, his fellow magnates and politicians attended, but noteworthy and renowned aristocrats such as the duke of Medinaceli, the count of Fuenrubia, the count of Villamediana, and the marquis of Vallehermoso were also present.¹³⁷ One progressive newspaper offered the satirical criticism that, ‘all the enlightenment, all the eminences of the time, all that Spain has of intelligence, of virtue, of patriotism, had come together to eat and drink...if Salamanca’s mansion had collapsed during the event, our country would have been reduced to a state of complete savagery’.¹³⁸ Six years later, José Campos hosted another luxurious party for more than 1,500 people. Everyone wanted to attend so, according to a newspaper feature, ‘invitations were priced like the shares of a major enterprise or a lucrative railway’.¹³⁹ The same report went on to note that the attendees included ‘social and parliamentary luminaries; those noted for their beauty

¹³¹ *La España*, 18 Jan. 1859.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Ramón de San Pedro, *Banqueros románticos*, pp. 62–4.

¹³⁴ *La Correspondencia de España*, 6 May 1886.

¹³⁵ *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 8 June 1886.

¹³⁶ Cristina del Prado, *El todo Madrid: la corte, la nobleza y sus espacios de sociabilidad en el siglo XIX* (Madrid, 2012), pp. 31–61.

¹³⁷ *La España*, 17 Dec. 1858.

¹³⁸ *El Clamor Público*, 23 Dec. 1858.

¹³⁹ *La Época*, 27 Feb. 1864.

and talent; the representatives of high banking and commerce; all the aristocracies, in a word'.

However, the business magnates did not merely imitate the aristocrats' parties and social events. They also added to these occasions by introducing innovations that demonstrated advances in technology, and thus underlining their own contributions to this progress. José Campo was well known, for example, for illuminating the outside of his mansion with electric lights at his parties. In 1876, at an occasion marking Alfonso XII's marriage, he used nearly 5,000 light bulbs. 'A big heart-shaped emblem with the couple's initials intertwined and topped by a marquis' heraldic crown' was placed on the façade of his residence, with 'two oval medallions with the couple's initials highlighted like rubies on diamonds' on either side.¹⁴⁰ Symbols alluding to the arts and navigation completed the glowing illuminations, making it clear to all that the host owed his wealth and social status to electricity companies, shipping, and trade.

As well as adopting aristocratic forms of entertainment, the upper middle class managed to create their own distinctive social events. They founded, built, or managed a whole plethora of formal institutions where members of the bourgeoisie could meet and socialize. Significantly, these social spaces were not confined to those in upper-middle-class circles; they also attracted members of the old aristocracy. As members of such institutions all met as equals, distinguished not by birth but by respectability, they helped to negotiate and redefine the boundaries of the new elite. The range of social institutions was remarkably wide, and their origins very diverse. Clubs and societies for the pursuit of cultural, scientific, and literary matters, along the lines of the Athenaeum Club in London, were followed by clubs for professional men such as merchants, financiers, or business proprietors, or for those pursuing particular kinds of leisure activity. Madrid's Veloz Club, for example, provided a meeting place for those with an interest in velocipedes – an early form of bicycle. Casinos were prominent amongst the institutions promoting social interaction. Modelled on British gentlemen's clubs,¹⁴¹ these privately run establishments allowed men of high status to meet socially, and thus helped to alter the social profile of the elite,¹⁴² as well as turning a profit.¹⁴³ Opera houses also offered tycoons an opportunity to reinforce their social status. Barcelona's Liceu and Madrid's Royal Theatre, for example, were both erected as modern cathedrals of civilization, and the possession of a box in either one became a prominent mark of social distinction.¹⁴⁴ Its salons and parties helped to delineate the new social elite where those with ancient, prestigious aristocratic titles mixed with *nouveau riche* businessmen.

¹⁴⁰ *La Iberia*, 24 Jan. 1878.

¹⁴¹ Amy Milne-Smith, *London clubland: a cultural history of gender and class in late Victorian Britain* (London, 2011).

¹⁴² María Zozaya, *Identidades en juego: formas de representación social del poder de la élite en un espacio de sociabilidad masculino, 1836–1936* (Madrid, 2016).

¹⁴³ Leandro Losada, 'Sociabilidad, distinción y alta sociedad en Buenos Aires: los clubes sociales de la élite porteña (1880–1930)', *Desarrollo Económico*, 45 (2006), pp. 547–72.

¹⁴⁴ Gary W. McDonogh, *Good families of Barcelona: a social history of power in the industrial era* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), pp. 185–200.

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In 1895, Benito Pérez Galdós published his fourth and final novel telling the story of the Torquemada family. The books recount how, over the course of the nineteenth century, a small neighbourhood loan shark became an elitist, modern financier. The moral tone of the story changes slightly as the pages are turned and the years pass. At the start, Francisco Torquemada embodies the ideal of a respectable, hard-working, and honest self-made man. His investments in 'houses, lands, government securities, loans, borrowed money' make him 'richer than he thought he was'.¹⁴⁵ Having made his money he has 'to become a gentleman and present himself to the world, no longer as a parasitic money lender, but as an eminent man of high standing'.¹⁴⁶ To this end, he employs all the social and material strategies characteristic of a successful magnate and goes on to found an economic dynasty. Francisco buys a sumptuous seventeenth-century residence from the ruined duke of Gravelinas and, in the 1860s, restores it 'on the Parisian model', transforming it 'into a grand respectable mansion'.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the characters of the novel follow 'the path of the century': 'the historic [aristocratic] families' real estate [being] passed to members of the emerging aristocracy whose titles were lost in the obscurity of a shop or the loan sharks' sheets'.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Francisco installs 'an art gallery' to provide his mansion 'with the grandeur and artistic importance that it did not have before',¹⁴⁹ although he was also explicit about seeing 'the paintings as social and economic shares'.¹⁵⁰ The pinnacle of his social ascent comes when he is made marquis of San Eloy, but by this point, this once intrepid capitalist pioneer is portrayed as having gradually degenerated into an unadventurous, corrupt man who has been absorbed into the aristocratic elite.

Fin-de-siècle writers were thus able to encapsulate the ambiguous perceptions that nineteenth-century society had of successful businessmen. Historians, too, have viewed magnates from this perspective, seeing their social ascent culminating in their integration into the elite, their aristocratization, but considering that they betrayed their origins by taking on the privileges, customs, habits, and lifestyles of the nobility. As I have tried to argue, however, the views of the early twentieth century should not determine our twenty-first-century analysis. In order for the descendants of original business pioneers to be accepted as a natural part of the country's elite, their forebears had to ensure that the family had a legitimate claim to their new pre-eminent economic and social position. Far from simply imitating or submitting to the aristocracy, the capitalist pioneers forced a redefinition of who, or what, constituted the elite. They did this by using the concept of respectability. After all, as Woodruff D. Smith said, this was 'a broad-ranging construct...formed through a convergence of several more or less separate and pre-existing

¹⁴⁵ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Torquemada en la cruz* (Madrid, 1893), p. 54.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Torquemada y San Pedro* (Madrid, 1895), p. 44.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

cultural patterns' that included one in which 'social status was constructed around the concept of gentility, another which encompassed sensuality within a framework of aesthetically and morally delimited luxury, and a third which defined virtue in material terms'.¹⁵¹ As a new, hybrid, cultural element, respectability was used to negotiate and redefine who were to be considered the elite in society, both in Spain and elsewhere. Respectability absorbed the ancient underlying principles of social classification – such as honour – and remoulded them, over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, into the notion of 'modern selfhood'.¹⁵² From then on, being, or not being, respectable defined who belonged to the social elite.

Business magnates embody the spirit of nineteenth-century liberalism. They created a public discourse that saw them accepted as a new elite, a new aristocracy, generating the myth of the self-made man whose worth was based on his work, patriotism, charity, and modernity. The magnates themselves were part of the discourse, demonstrating their claims to their new, respectable status by building or buying residences or art collections, and hosting lavish social events; three tools long deployed by the aristocracy to affirm their elite identity. The upper middle classes did not merely imitate these older practices, however, but appropriated and adapted them in order to make themselves respectable. The thesis presented above is not without its contradictions and limitations, the historical reality is much too rich and complex to be reduced to a simple dichotomy of elite and non-elite, respectable or non-respectable. Instead, the process of forging the new elite was an exceptionally plastic and porous one; one in which, as I have tried to demonstrate, 'gentlemen capitalists' played a crucial role.

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¹⁵¹ Smith, *Respectability*, p. 3.

¹⁵² Dror Wahrman, *The making of the modern self: identity and culture in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, CT, 2006); Ortega del Cerro, 'Del honor'.

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