

Jaume Cabré's *La teranyina*: From Novel to Film

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The 100th anniversary of the *Setmana Tràgica* has led to the appearance of several important books: the re-issue of Joan Connelly Ullman's classic *La Setmana Tràgica*, Antoni Dalmau's *Set dies de fúria*, and Dolors Marín's *La Setmana Tràgica*. Newspaper articles, such as those published in *Avui* by Ignasi Aragay, have examined the background of the events of July 26 – August 1, 1909, and their aftermath; and the novels *Barcelona tràgica* by Andreu Martín and *De humanidad y polilla* by Julián Granado have covered some of the same ground. Twenty-five years earlier Jaume Cabré too wrote about the *Setmana Tràgica*, and this is an appropriate moment for revisiting his 1984 novel *La teranyina*, which won the *Premi Sant Jordi*, and its 1990 cinematic adaptation. My essay initially focuses on narrative strategies and power plays in the novel and then studies the screen version of the original text.¹

La teranyina exemplifies not only Cabré's trademark themes and techniques but also his notable consistency of vision. His central concern remains the use and abuse of power, how it is exercised, by whom, and to what ends, and he has explored relations of power in a number of different time periods and geographical settings. Major historical events are the backdrop against which his characters act out their individual dramas. Favourite narrative techniques and rhetorical devices include the use of contrasts and oppositions, anachronisms, a variety of linguistic registers, irony, and metonymy. In terms of structure, Cabré frequently makes use of a technique found in much mystery fiction: that of awakening readers' interest by showing the consequences of an action before presenting the action itself.

Novels often include in small print on their copyright page a one- or two-sentence disclaimer to the effect that characters and events are fictitious and any similarity to real persons, living or dead,

¹ In addition, the novel was serialized on *Catalunya Ràdio* in 1987-1988.

events, or locales is coincidental and not intended by the author. The disclaimer for *La teranyina* is given much greater prominence and standing by its position on a separate page and its length: thirteen lines. In this prefatory paragraph, *l'autor* declares that he has opted for “la llicència tòpica” of changing some names and minor details in order to avoid complications in writing about “els fets” (“facts”, “events”) that the press labelled “L’afer de Vapor Rigau” or “La maledicció dels Rigau,” knowledge of which has never been complete because those involved have systematically misrepresented what happened so as to escape punishment.² “Avui el lector té la possibilitat de refer el camí treballós que van confegir ments tortuoses i, si s’hi avé, pot arribar a desentrellar responsabilitats abans que no li ho anunciïn els mateixos fets” (33). *L'autor* thus calls attention to the use of a hoary literary device (“la llicència tòpica”) and then proceeds to turn it on its head and employ it to underscore the veracity, not the fictionality, of a narrative which recounts “fets.”³ His exposé of what really happened will allow readers to assign responsibility, something he authorizes, even urges, them to do. This prefatory manoeuvre, with its insistence on reading and interpreting, on shedding light on crimes long unpunished and as yet unspecified, casts us in the role of investigative reporters, of truth seekers, and shapes our reaction to the pages that follow.

The thirty-nine numbered chapters of *La teranyina* are framed by an account of the execution by firing squad of an unnamed individual in mid-August in the castle of Montjuïc, four days after the man’s transfer to Barcelona.

The section that opens the frame introduces the image of a web and reiterates *l'autor*’s reference to the desire of those entangled

² This *autor*, it should be noted, is a textual phenomenon, a figure within the text, as distinct from Cabré. For a discussion of the author as a real person in contrast to a textual figure, see chapter 1 of Kerr (1992) and of Rabinowitz (1987).

³ Cabré’s narrative ploy can be considered an example of what Kerr, in a different context, describes as lying in order to tell the truth (see chapter 3 of *Reclaiming the Author*).

in “aquell afer malastruc de Vapor Rigau” to cast over events “el silenci profund de la mort” (36, 221).⁴ The section that closes the frame picks up where this first section ends and repeats the sentence “A un quart de sis tocat una llengua roja llepava el mar per llevant” (36 & 221). Once we have read the novel, we are able to supply the name of the condemned man: Mercader. His execution calls to mind the 13 October death by firing squad of Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia in the castle of Montjuïc four days after a military tribunal condemned him (Ullman, 1968: 298). References to Barcelona’s indifference to the tragedy taking place (“La ciutat, als peus de la muntanya, dormia indiferent” and “La ciutat, indiferent a la tragèdia que es covava al castell de Montjuïc, badallava . . . com si no passés res” [36, 221]) intimate that Mercader and by extension Ferrer are innocent.

The *teranyina* image will be reinforced in the novel by allusions to looms, shuttles, skeins, and the spinning and weaving of cloth, allusions which are appropriate in a novel that revolves around a textile mill.⁵ Cirlot states that “the symbolism of the spider’s web is identical with that of fabric” (51), and as a symbol the spider has three meanings which are derived from its creative power (exemplified in its weaving of its web), its aggressiveness, and its web as a spiral net converging towards a central point. “Spiders, in their ceaseless weaving and killing —building and destroying — symbolize the ceaseless alternation of forces. . . . Even death itself merely winds up the thread of an old life in order to spin a new one” (304). Cirlot adds that the Parcae, who control human life and destiny, are spinners (305), and the idea of fatality, as we shall see, hovers over Cabré’s novel.

Historically, the unpopular war in Morocco and the decision of Antonio Maura’s government to recall reservists to active duty were the main impulse behind the general strike that began in the industrial cities of Catalunya on 26 July 1909 and assumed a markedly anti-

⁴ Page references are in brackets and refer to the Proa edition of 2000 of *La teranyina*.

⁵ The Castilian translation, *telaraña*, which incorporates *tela*, *telar*, and *araña*, highlights the spinning/weaving motif.

clerical character in Barcelona with the burning of churches, convents, and schools run by the clergy. The setting for *La teranyina* is an important centre of textile production, the city of Terrassa, which appears in the novel under the name of Feixes, where tensions between workers and mill owners intensify during the Spring of 1909. Struggles for power play out on the family level and between differing political, economic, and social groups. The structural organization of the novel emphasizes the contrasts between owners and workers, those who hold power and those subject to it, rich and poor, cynics and idealists. Characters can be divided into two groups. On the one hand are the members of the Rigau family — Julià, Mercè, their nephew by marriage Enric Turmeda — and their associates or rivals. On the other are Mercader and Misèries, both of whom labour in the Rigau mill.

Chapter 1 begins with the wake for Francesc, older brother of Mercè and Julià and founder of the Rigau textile empire. Julià now assumes direction of the mill and insists on manufacturing cloth for soldiers' uniforms, arguing that this will produce substantial economic benefits and if the Rigau mill does not fill the order their rivals will. The fact that his decision will be extremely unpopular is of no importance to him. If workers protest, the response should be "Mà forta i que es fotin" (81). Julià's authority will be disputed by his sister Mercè. Cabrè has created a number of strong female characters, the most notable of whom is Elisenda of *Les veus del Pamano*, and Mercè is a worthy antecedent. She is inordinately proud of being a Rigau, considers herself "la més Rigau de tots els Rigau" (75), and is determined to protect "la rigauïtat de can Rigau" (75).

Furious with Julià for having failed to marry and produce offspring, Mercè's only hope for continuing the Rigau line lies with Enric's daughter Adela, if only Mercè can wrest control of the girl from her father and find a suitable husband for her so that she can bear "Rigauets" (77). Mercè also plots to gain control of the mill, reasoning that as she has for years run the Rigau household she is fully qualified to manage the mill as well. As for Enric, Mercè considers her nephew an upstart and a dangerous interloper. He, in turn, thinks of Mercè as a scorpion and schemes to gain control of the family empire by using the information he has gathered about Julià's shady dealings in the

Philippines. Lined up against the Rigaus are the workers, the most important of whom are Mercader and Tonet Misèries. According to those who *tallen el bacallà*, Misèries is an idiot and a demagogue who exhorts his companions to organize. He sees clearly that the impending war with Morocco is not a matter of national interest but rather of the economic interests of the Marquès de Comillas, Eusebi Güell, and their ilk, a war that will be fought by working-class men unable to pay the exemption fee that enables the wealthy to escape military service (see Ullman, 1968: 24-26). Mercader, naïve and not overly bright, greatly admires not only Misèries's ideas but also his ability to express them.

Throughout the novel Cabré uses the technique of juxtaposing contrasting characters, ways of thinking and acting, and scenes. In chapter 3, for example, a weighty and consequential discussion among members of the mill's board of directors alternates with Mercè's utterly trivial conversation with her friend Madroneta. Chapter 7 is set in a brothel presided over by the ironically named Cànida; chapter 8 focuses on the virginal Mercè, whose name too is ironic in that she is without grace or mercy. Whereas the first woman smells of magnolia blossoms, the odour of mothballs lingers about the second. In chapter 14, the disrobing of Mercader and the prostitute Tineta is sexually provocative and a prelude to their lovemaking; in chapter 15 elderly Julià removes his clothes mechanically and crawls into bed, alone.

The chapters of the novel alternate between the two camps, with more pages devoted to the powerful than to those without power.⁶ Chapter 9 highlights the differences between the two groups and shifts back and forth between the *Casino dels Amos* — spacious, well appointed, with large windows — and Xicoi's bar, which is grimy and dark. A detail encapsulates ideological differences: Misèries sets down on a table in the bar a copy of Antoni Rovira i Virgili's republican-oriented *El Poble Català*; in the casino a mill owner puts down a copy of *La Veu de Catalunya*, widely read by business people. As we would expect, the papers' treatment of the embarkation of troops for Morocco differs markedly, as do the conversations in

⁶ In the first eight chapters, for example, 27 pages are devoted to the Rigau camp and 10 to their workers.

casino and bar. The first are filled with references to the defence of the fatherland and duty, the second with Misèries's information about *Solidaritat Obrera's* call for a general strike which, according to the industrialists, will come to nothing. Cabré interweaves the two conversations, cutting from one to another even within the same sentence, and a question asked in the bar ("Què diuen a Barcelona?") is answered in the *casino*: "Diuen que no els amoïna gaire" (82). In similar fashion, chapter 12 provides contrasting news reports of events.

Calls for a general strike are juxtaposed with quotations from the press that exalt the glorious name of Spain and the age-old patriotism of its soldiers. The rhetoric of a paragraph in Castilian expresses disdain for the provocateurs who are stirring up the masses:

No somos ajenos a las muestras de desconcierto de la turbamulta [...] empujada por los agentes provocadores de siempre [...]. Aunque nuestra posición es de sobras conocida, no por ello podemos quedarnos callados ante el intento de destrozarnos nuestra comunidad que los elementos anarquistas y el bajo populacho ... (95)

Events are, in the main, recounted in chronological order, but there are some instances of anachrony in the form of analepses and prolepses. In chapter 9, Mercader briefly recalls his brother Ramon's departure for Morocco the previous Sunday; the next chapter moves back to the actual moment of departure and the scene at the train station where Mercader, his grieving mother and Ramon's sweetheart take leave of the young man. This chapter dramatizes and personalizes the emotional impact of the call-up of reservists. News of a fire at the Rigau mill is communicated in chapter 16; chapter 17 then backtracks to an account of Mercader's setting of the fire. News of his subsequent escape from custody is revealed in the minutes of a meeting of the mill's board of directors (chapter 20); chapter 21 then offers two analepses. The chapter begins with Mercader still in custody; he then recalls how days earlier he was given instructions about setting the fire; the narrative then returns to the Civil Guard barracks where he is being held and recounts his escape. These breaks in linearity serve to increase suspense. Cabré also creates suspense by postponing clarifications and explanations. Mother Ofèlia, for example, tells Enric

something that shakes him (“La monja llavors, li va dir allò” [180]) but it is not until a dozen pages later that the “allò” is explained: Adela wants to become a nun.

Cabré also uses simultaneity for purposes of irony. Enric thinks about how he can blackmail Julià at the very moment when Julià erroneously reflects that he has everything under control: “Tenia les espatlles ben guardades. . . . I s’adormia amb el son dels justos cansats mentre a Barcelona es congriava una tempesta d’aldarulls” (109). Instances of foreshadowing underscore the characters’ lack of awareness of what awaits them and their inability to control events. Shortly before he is murdered, Enric smugly thinks that Julià is now in his hands: “es va sentir satisfet de la vida. Com si aquesta no perillés. Com si l’amenaça de feia poc no es pogués tornar a repetir” (191). Mercader, embarrassed by the disguise he has been told to wear for his first mission, muses that he would be more pained to have any of his friends see him than to be arrested: “O això ho creia ell. Segurament perquè no s’imaginava la que li cauria al damunt” (55). What lies in store for him during his detention is a series of brutal beatings.

Cabré is known for employing multiple linguistic registers to distinguish among socio-ideological groups and demonstrate that language is saturated with ideology.⁷ Minutes of the meetings of the mill’s board of directors provide one of the best examples of this. The board secretary employs stilted wording and “officialese,” servilely repeats the phrase “el senyor Rigau, don Julià,” inserts “sic” after some of Enric’s words (*ajupir-se, gentussa* [136, 137]), and resorts to euphemisms to avoid recording how heated the meetings are. As Julià sees events spiral out of control, his language becomes increasingly coarse. He responds to Mercè’s “Ets un carallot” with “Putà” (170) and thinks of Enric as “aquell cul d’olla” (175). Mercè’s talk about good Christians, like her, as opposed to riff-raff (168), reveals her religious and class prejudices, as does her obsession with “la rigauitat de can Rigau” (75).

⁷ For more theoretical information on the “languages” of heteroglossia, see Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291.

Similarly, the rhetoric of the nun who informs Adela of her father's murder reflects the speaker's mindset — and the fact that Enric has given generously to the Carmelites. According to the nun, those responsible for Enric's death are “la gent sense entranyes que crema esglésies i mata la gent santa. El teu pare, Adela, bonica, l'han mort, ton pare, un màrtir de la santa religió, perquè no estava d'acord amb aquests homes salvatges que aniran de cap a l'infern” (217). Adela may swallow this version of events and motives, but readers know better. Cabré also points out the contrast between characters' private thoughts and public words. Enric thinks of Mercè as “la molt puta” and immediately addresses her, hypocritically, as “estimada tieta” (193). And Cabré uses Castilian, as opposed to Catalan, for the words of the officer in charge of the firing squad that executes Mercader, the Civil Guards who interrogate and beat him, the letter from the Ministry of Defense announcing the death of Ramon, and some newspaper and broadcast versions of events. The linguistic choice makes clear where and with whom ultimate authority lies.⁸

As the novel progresses, power plays and intrigues, stratagems and traps multiply like mushrooms. Julià schemes to retain control of the mill while Enric plots to replace him, as does Mercè. Bloodshed increases and in a crescendo of violence the mill manager is shot and several people are killed by Mercader. Poor Mercader is duped repeatedly and persuaded to carry out assignments that supposedly will benefit the workers' cause. He is deceived into believing that he is killing Enric when in fact his victim is the man he most admires: Misèries. Misèries, in turn, is tricked into believing that Mercader needs his help and therefore showing up for the night-time meeting where Mercader will mistake him for Enric. Enraged by the way he has been used, Mercader proceeds to kill Enric and his servant Soler. It is not until chapter 38 that we learn that the master schemer who has skillfully manipulated Mercader and provoked violence for his own ends is the industrialist Arcadi Costa, who now will wangle a place on

⁸ The inclusion of what purport to be documents, of course, enhances the novel's verisimilitude.

the Rigau board.⁹ During the course of the novel Cabré associates objects or physical features with certain characters: Mercader smokes a pipe, Julià uses a cane, Mercè wears an emerald, Enric parts his glossy black hair in the middle and Costa has a large nose, a mane of white hair, and a paunch. The last chapter ends with Adela's vision of a pot-bellied, big-nosed, silver-haired man who is about to enter Enric's house and offer his condolences. Costa also attended the wake for Francesc in the novel's first chapter, but on that earlier occasion he appeared to be merely a bit player.¹⁰

La teranyina begins and ends with the sound of church bells: "Les campanades de l'Arxiprestal de Feixes feien dong i després dung fatigosament" (37) and "les campanes de l'Arxiprestal començaren a fer dung i després dong, amb la indiferència de l'ofici ben après" (219). The Church has not lost power nor have the industrialists as a class; nor have the workers gained anything. Aragay ended his 1 August 2009 article with the conclusion that "Les conseqüències polítiques de la Setmana Tràgica no seran ni la República ni la revolució, sinó un modest canvi de govern." The changes in Feixes are equally modest. The web spun by Costa has trapped one fly (Mercader) and led to the death of another (Misèries), but the plump spider at its centre is free to continue spinning cloth and plots.

Cinematic adaptations of literary works provoke strong feelings and raise the question of whether adaptation is synonymous with betrayal and inevitably produces a lesser work of art. All but the most doctrinaire surely would answer "No." Joy Gould Boyum reminds us that since an adaptation is an interpretation, a reading of another text, fidelity to the letter of the original should not be a requirement (1985: 70-71), and Patricia Santoro stresses that "The cinematic adaptation, like life itself, cannot duplicate a previous text. It may approximate it, or vary it, or interpret it, or extrapolate ideas and feelings from it"

⁹ In chapter I Julià thinks of Costa as "aquest fura" and "un corb desprietat" (39). By the novel's end we realize how appropriate those characterizations were.

¹⁰ Adela also figures in the other two texts that constitute Cabré's Feixes cycle: *Fra Junoy o l'agonia dels sons* and "Luvowski o la desraó." Julià and Mercè Rigau appear briefly in *Fra Junoy*.

(1996: 9).¹¹ The process of converting a novel into a film is likely to entail various changes, such as making explicit what may have been implicit in the original (or vice versa), fleshing out characters or rendering them more schematic, adding or deleting characters and scenes, transposing incidents, and shifting emphases. In the following pages I propose to explore differences, as well as similarities, between the 1984 novel *La teranyina* and the 1990 motion picture.

Various factors, such as spatial and temporal distance and the resultant changes in mentality, can complicate the act of reading a previous text. A case in point is Samuel Goldwyn's *Wuthering Heights*, a twentieth-century Hollywood version of nineteenth-century England (Bluestone, 1966: 112).¹² Distance is not, however, a factor in the case of the adaptation of *La teranyina*. Only six years separate the novel's publication from the film's release, and both are set in the city of Feixes during the *Setmana Tràgica* of 1909. Cabré, Jaume Fuster, Vicenç Villatoro, and Antoni Verdaguer, who directed the film, collaborated on the screenplay.¹³ All are Catalan and familiar with the events that form the historical background for novel and film alike; and since Verdaguer was born in Terrassa (Feixes) and Cabré moved there in 1978, the two have first-hand knowledge of the geographical setting. The first script dated from February 1985 but Verdaguer was unable to obtain funding for the film until after the commercial success of his *L'escot* (1987), based on Maria Jaén's *Amorrada al piló*. The 1985 script was then revised and Cabré reviewed the dialogues to ensure consistency of tone as Torreiro (15/03/1990) outlines in his article. Two young Catalan actors, Sergi

¹¹ Similarly, Pere Gimferrer poses the questions "qué gana, qué pierde acaso, en qué se transforma un relato literario al pasar a ser una historia puesta en imágenes" (1985: 49), questions which imply that each work needs to be examined on its own terms.

¹² Goldwyn insisted on a "happy ending" for the film and added a final sequence in which the spirits of Heathcliff and Cathy walk side by side, holding hands and obviously in love. The psychological and spiritual gap between Goldwyn and Emily Brontë was evidently enormous.

¹³ The four again collaborated on the script for *Havanera* (1994), also directed by Verdaguer. Cabré, Fuster, and Villatoro also formed part of the Ofèlia Dracs literary collective, which was active in the 1980s.

Mateu and Ramon Madaula, played Turmeda and Mercader, while two well-known Spanish actors, Fernando Guillén and Amparo Soler Leal, took the roles of Julià and Mercè Rigau. Also important in the film, more so than in the novel, were Arcadi Costa (Jordi Dauder), the notary Cases (Alfred Luchetti) and the prostitute Tineta (Montse Guallar).

Verdaguer observed that if the film had closely followed the novel it would have lasted four rather than two hours (Castillón: 31/10/1990), and therefore much material had to be eliminated. Cabré too acknowledged the need to condense and synthesize when adapting a novel to the screen and expressed his satisfaction with the film version of *La teranyina*: “s’han de potenciar alguns personatges per fer entenedora la història i s’ha de treure importància a altres personatges o aspectes, però en conjunt estic molt content dels resultats” (Salvà: 31/10/1990). The adaptation has fewer characters and some are portrayed differently than in the novel; a number of scenes have been cut and, at its end, the film introduces some sixteen minutes of completely new material.

The screen version expands the back story for Julià and develops his military history and his dishonesty while stationed in the Philippines, where he rose to the rank of colonel, a title used in the film. It identifies his erstwhile partner in crime as Fulgencio Aranda, who in 1909 is with the Service Corps and issues the contract for the Rigau mill to weave cloth for military uniforms.¹⁴ The cinematic Julià comes across as more authoritarian, intolerant of others’ opinions, and unsympathetic toward his workers. The only thing that concerns him is what is good for business. The film devotes increased attention to the antagonisms and rivalries among the industrialists in Feixes. Julià’s hard-nosed attitude and refusal to compromise earn him the dislike of his fellows, and they resent his claim that anyone who is opposed to the war in Morocco and unwilling to defend Spain’s

¹⁴ In the novel, Julià casually remarks that he has spoken about the contract with “una coneixença d’Intendència” (49) but he does not mention the man’s name or the fact the two are more than just acquaintances. The film underlines corruption on multiple levels.

honour is a traitor. Ironically, graffiti on the walls of the Rigau mill later label Julià a *traïdor* and *assassí*.

His sister Mercè, preoccupied with the family name, social niceties, and *el què diran*, fears Julià will ruin the mill and so plots to gain control. The cinema's capacity to communicate without words is apparent in close-ups of her thin lips, which suggest repression, and her high-necked collars, which show us how buttoned up Mercè is, literally and figuratively. Although she certainly is not a suffragette, she affirms that women are as capable as men. When Costa offers to buy her shares in the mill, he declares that running it "no és feina per a una dona," to which she tartly replies "No sap del que podem ser capaces les dones, senyor Costa." By the end of the film she and Julià are openly at war with one another, and she intends to blackmail him into resigning his position at the mill. Their continuing cohabitation in the same house will be a daily torment for both.

Mercader, of particular interest to Verdaguer, gains prominence and heroic stature in the film, which opens with his mission to pick up weapons in Barcelona (chapter 2 of the novel) and closes with his execution. Moreover, his face fills the screen while the final credits roll. His admiration for Misèries is as great in the film as in the novel, but he is now more politically savvy and his dedication to *la causa del poble* is stressed. His devotion to his mother and brother distinguishes him from the Rigaus and their lack of familial feeling. Whereas in the novel he was tricked into killing Misèries, in the film others commit the murder and thus Mercader is not incriminated. It is his discovery of the extent to which he has been used plus the fact that his friend has been murdered that triggers his explosion of violence. His antagonist is Enric Turmeda. The two resemble one another physically — both are young, tall, slender — but are opposed in character and class. Enric devotes himself to scheming and jockeying for power. Unbridled self-interest, not altruistic concern for others, drives him. The two men epitomize the conflicts between Catalan industrialists and an embryonic workers' movement.¹⁵

¹⁵ The films *La veritat sobre el caso Savolta* (Drove, 1980) and *La ciutat cremada* (Ribas, 1976), like the television series *La saga de los Rius* (RTVE,

The film dishes up considerable doses of violence and sex. Mercader's shooting of Cordetes and Enric's servant Soler features a close-up of the former's blood-covered face and blood splattering on the wall behind him. Even more graphic is the slitting of Enric's throat — we watch blood well out of the gash — and repeated stabbing of his chest. The relationship between Enric and his housekeeper, Montserrat, is similar in both novel and film but in the latter sight and sound combine to create memorable images. We watch her caress his hat and hear the tone of her "Alguna cosa més, senyor?" and "Venia a veure si volia alguna cosa més," which make clear she is offering more than another cup of coffee.

The sexual relationship is made explicit when Enric, after a heated argument with Julià, falls upon Montserrat and throws her to the floor, where they thrash about. Enric's kinkiness has been intimated in an earlier remark by the prostitute Tineta to the effect that Costa, unlike Enric, does not have any special tastes. Both men and Mercader as well go to the local brothel to celebrate, and all three are captivated by Tineta. Their scenes with her dramatize differences among them. The tenderness displayed between Tineta and Mercader is absent in her encounters with Enric and Costa. In the novel when Enric first visits *Ca la Manyana*, he catches a glimpse of Costa. One of the film's new scenes shows Costa's return to the brothel after he has bested the Rigaus, and it adds a motive for his behavior. Earlier Mercè had labelled him a *nouvingut* without background or social standing. He tells Tineta "Jo no era ningú," but now he is "l'amo, l'amo de tot" — including Tineta, who seems less than pleased at the prospect of being owned by Costa. During her final scene with him, she sits on her bed, naked. He tosses a fistful of money into her lap and then reprimands her for not demonstrating sufficient gratitude. He will, obviously, be a demanding owner.¹⁶

1976-77), have also explored the tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

¹⁶ Tineta wears revealing negligees or nothing at all, and thus her physical contrast with Mercè, always dressed in black and covered from chin to toe, is vivid.

The film emphasizes Costa's villainy and the duplicity of the notary Cases, who did not appear at Francesc's wake in the novel but does in the corresponding film scene, where his position at the center of a group of men hints at his importance to the story. Mercè hires him to protect her interests and at one point reflects how trustworthy he is, but in reality he is in cahoots with Costa, whom he keeps informed of Mercè's plans. Cases effectively blackmails Costa into ceding to him a packet of shares in the Rigau mill and smugly proclaims that the two are now *socis*. The legal profession, it appears, is as corrupt as the military.

One of the advantages of film, as in the scenes between Enric and Montserrat, is its ability to let us *hear* and *see* what is happening. Verdaguer makes good use of the cinema's capacity to make people, objects, and places immediate and tangible for us, to transform mental impressions into striking visual images, and to use music to express mood. As the initial credits roll, the sight and sounds of the Rigau mill fill the screen. The din produced by bobbins, shuttles, cogs, pulleys, belts, wheels, cranks, levers, and gears fills our ears, and the image of hundreds of moving parts is imprinted upon our retinas.¹⁷ Mercader will be caught up in that machinery, ground up, and spat out. The clip-clop of horses' hooves and the creaking of carriage wheels help date the film, as does characters' clothing, which conveys additional information. Workers' caps and kerchiefs worn around the neck contrast with the top hats and (bow)ties of the powerful. Chapter 9 of the novel cut back and forth from conversations in the *Casino dels Amos* and in Xicoi's tavern. In the film the *Casino* is now the site of a ball. The women's gowns and jewels and the men's tails illustrate their socio-economic status. Shots of the interior of the Rigau mansion, complete with elegant furnishings and servants, also provide information and contrast with views of workers' cottages.¹⁸

¹⁷ These opening shots were filmed in a textile mill in Artés. The remainder of the film was shot in Terrassa, Piera, Barcelona, and Matadepera.

¹⁸ As part of the activities commemorating the *Setmana Tràgica*, the *Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona* has presented the exhibition "1909: Fotografia, ciutat i conflicte" which features the urban landscape and its social classes at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Voice-overs take the place of the novel's narrator and allow Enric, Mercè, and Mercader to comment on the action and reveal their thoughts, as when Enric reflects that the nuns want Adela to join them because of her dowry, a reflection that further underscores the theme of the overwhelming importance of economic self-interest. The adaptation foregrounds characters' corruption and greed. Verdaguer denies that *La teranyina* is an historical film and prefers to describe it as "una barreja de dos gèneres, la intriga i el melodrama, encara que emmarcada en un context històric concret" (Roca: 16/10/1990). It is, indeed, fast-moving and filled with action, especially so near its end when machinations proliferate with dazzling speed, and some characters tend toward the (stereo)typical: Mercè is the proverbial old maid, Julià the blustery military man, Costa the parvenu with a chip on his shoulder, Cases the slippery lawyer. The one noble figure is Mercader, and the film focuses attention upon him.

In view of Cabré's tendency to see things in terms of images, his novel's cinematic possibilities made it an excellent candidate for adaptation to the screen. Both versions of *La teranyina* are "retrovisions," reworkings of events, reinterpretations of the past, but their emphases differ. In response to a question during a 1993 interview about "fils conductors i temàtics, d'estil o de maneres," Cabré declared that all his works in one way or another "estan explicant els xocs dels individus contra els estaments, contra els poders" (Villatoro, 1993: 12). Those clashes and the repercussions of the Moroccan war are central to his novel, which gives greater weight to the socio-historical aspect of the story than does the film. The novel's slower pace allows as well for greater attention to nuances and to suggesting, as opposed to showing. More is left to readers' imagination, and they are required to assume a more active role in deciphering a web of special interests and struggles for power. And as Cabré has pointed out, "la novel·la té una cosa que el cinema o la televisió mai no tindran, que és el valor de la paraula, el valor connotatiu de la paraula poètica" (Serrasolses, 1997: 14).¹⁹

¹⁹ Thomas Deveny recounts a wonderful anecdote Alfred Hitchcock was fond of telling about two goats in a garbage dump who were eating a roll of movie film. "One goat suddenly stopped chewing, turned to the other goat and said

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'I liked the book better'" (1999: 1). I confess to the same sentiment even while recognizing that novel and film are different art forms, each with its own language.

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