



REVIEWS

BOU, ENRIC. *Invention of Space: City, Travel and Literature*. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2012. 278 pp.

Enric Bou's latest book is a compelling collection of essays and meditations on what it means to travel and experience both the new and familiar alike. Drawing on contemporary cultural theory for interpretive tools, the author explores "literary contact with [the] city, seen partly as a journey, or an exploration of the everyday" as well as "the various phases of [the] literary journey through the twentieth century, an experience that has become progressively easier and more affordable and has opened the door to contact with the Other" (13). Over eleven chapters, Bou's analysis ranges from the nature of the literary city and concepts of Iberian comparativism, tourism, the experience of exile, and literary engagements with the nonplace. Along the way, specific cities such as Madrid, Paris and Barcelona receive attention—with the Catalan capital capturing the lion's share. *Invention of the City* is without a doubt an ambitious book, but I would argue that its great strength lies precisely in its sheer breadth. It is not often that one picks up a volume with the range of this one, and it is to Bou's credit that it works.

Bou is adept at juggling many different texts as he develops his arguments, and is able to draw very productively on examples from across the spectrum of European literature. Likewise, his use of theory is judicious and appropriate. Themes and topics drive this work, not any fealty to fashionable critics. If anything, Bou goes against the grain by steadfastly "normalizing" Catalan literature. What I mean

by this is that he unapologetically and matter-of-factly integrates literary production from Catalonia—in both Catalan and Spanish—into the overarching arguments that he presents. Of course, the strong presence of Barcelona drives this to a certain extent, but nevertheless, for the Hispanist or Iberian Studies reader it is most refreshing to see.

Chapter 1, “Reading the City,” serves as the book’s introduction, and while Bou invokes such heavyweight critics as Halbwachs, Nora, Augé, and Benjamin, he nevertheless focuses his study through the lens of literature: “Literary texts open up a line of inquiry into the city, which has no comparison in the social science field. Literature allows us to discuss the notion of *urbs* and *civitas*, the transformation of space, the juxtaposition of layers” (23). Intrigued by how literature influences urban image formation, and at the same time cognizant of the ways in which the concept of the city changes literature, the author then briefly points to how these rubrics are at play in the cases of Madrid and Barcelona, thus setting the stage for analyses to come.

Before delving directly into city literature, though, Bou first outlines his approach to comparativism in the Iberian Peninsula. His take is unique and inspired by cultural geography. Here, he considers the social construction of place, landscape, and experience through a reading of mapping processes and literary engagements with rivers. Nicely illustrated by a series of plates, this second chapter sees the author put his nonhierarchical take on peninsular cultures into practice in a distinctive way.

“Borders in the City: Rewriting Walls” is the Madrid-centric third chapter. Informed by work on borders by Predrag Matvejević, Étienne Balibar and Marc Augé, as well as by the spatial theory of Deleuze and Guatarri, Bou uses Madrid for his discussion of urban boundaries. Works discussed here include Cela’s *La colmena*, Martín-Santos’s canonical *Tiempo de silencio*, and Gómez de la Serna’s intriguing and cultural studies-friendly, *El Rastro*. The author’s conclusion that heterotopias “establish borders inside the city, which can be easily crossed but that delimitate strong separations between regular and experimental life, allowing for an expansion of the limits of space” is convincing (97).

For its part, “Decrèpita i teatral? On Literary Explorations of Barcelona” is a strong chapter that concentrates on the Barcelona of Montserrat Roig’s *El temps de les cireres* and Luis Goytisolo’s *Recuento*, while also weaving in Joan Maragall’s foundational writings on the Catalan capital. Bou shows how prophetic the first two were in terms of predicting the complications of the lavishness of Barcelona’s modernization, and also offers a welcome reassessment of Maragall’s appraisal of the growing metropolis in his “Oda Nova a Barcelona.”

Of course, it is hard to speak of cities in the Iberian Peninsula and not also consider the magnet that was Paris, the center that drew the gaze of intellectuals

throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bou's inspired use of Llorenç Villalonga's novel *Bearn o la sala de las nines* in chapter 5—instead of focusing on other, more usual suspects—further his consideration of the mental power of the city in literature and at the same time introduces a lesser-known work to a greater audience.

More famous “Barcelona” novels are the subjects of chapters 6 and 7. First, in “Exile in the City: Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*,” Bou provides a very clear close reading of this masterpiece of Catalan fiction through a spatial and affective lens that focuses on the protagonist's struggles with identity and memory. Then, in “Literary Construction: The Case of Eduardo Mendoza,” the author examines *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta*, *La ciudad de los prodigios*, and *Una comedia ligera* from the perspective of pastiche and parody. He begins his fine analysis with the elegant observation that the writer of city books creates works that are “both texts and buildings, a sort of modification to the mental image of urban space” (150). Also of particular note in this chapter is the hilarious censor's report for *La verdad sobre . . .* that Bou cites on page 147; it is not to be missed.

The last third of *Invention of Space* is dedicated to travel literature and begins with a theory-centric chapter 8 that leads into the fascinating “Back from the USSR: Travelers in the Land of the Soviets.” Here Bou not only looks at Josep Pla's writings from his trip to the Soviet Union with Eugeni Xammar, but also the experience of Walter Benjamin, whom the Catalans ran into while there. Trips to “see the Revolution” were in vogue at the time and Bou does a fine job of considering the phenomenon vis-à-vis the nature of travel itself and the special circumstances posed by the nature of journeys to the USSR.

Having considered travel by choice, in the extremely focused Chapter 10, “Light-weight Luggage: Travel and Exile,” Bou poses the question “What is particular to travelogues in Hispanic literature written by Spanish exiles?” In what is one of the strongest pieces in the book, the author employs the cases of Pedro Salinas and Max Aub to explore the dynamics of exile, and along the way touches on such intriguing themes as the counterexile, the substitution of space, and the role of art in memory. After reading this chapter, one is definitely moved to seek out a copy of Aub's *La gallina ciega*.

Bou concludes his book with an examination of travelogues that relate to Augé's supermodernity and George Perec's concept of the “infraordinary.” Considered here are such varied works as Gregorio Morán's *Nunca llegaré a Santiago*, *Viatge als grans magatzems* by Josep Maria Espinàs and *Los Autonautas de la Cosmopista o Un viaje atemporal París–Marsella* by Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop. An intriguing read, this chapter is a fitting way to end the book.

Invention of Space: City, Travel and Literature is a varied and ambitious work that shows Bou's expertise across a wide range of literary subjects. While there may

be a couple of instances of repetition, the book is clear, engaging, and builds well. It is highly recommended reading.

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LANCOT, BRENDAN. *Beyond Civilization and Barbarism: Culture and Politics in Postrevolutionary Argentina*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2014. iii + 446 pp.

Nineteenth-century Argentina has long been understood in terms of a binary opposition between tradition and modernity, incarnated in the forms of the ruling Federalista party and its opponents. Led by the *caudillo* Juan Manuel de Rosas and having their base in the ranchers and *mestizos* of the countryside and the Afro-Argentine population of Buenos Aires, the Federales defended cultural and economic nationalism. Their opponents, meanwhile, consisted primarily of Buenos Aires's white commercial elite, which sought greater cultural and economic ties between their country and Europe and the United States. The civil conflict that erupted between the two groups in the period between 1829 and 1852 would be immortalized in the pages of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's canonical *Civilización y barbarie* (1845), a work that lends its name to the polemic between modernity and tradition that continues to shape the field of Latin American cultural studies to this day.

As its title suggests, Brendan Lancot's penetrating and original *Beyond Civilization and Barbarism: Culture and Politics in Postrevolutionary Argentina* seeks to loosen the hold of Sarmiento's foundational binary on Southern Cone studies. Inspired by Ricardo Piglia's ("Notas sobre el *Facundo*." *Punto de Vista* 8 [1980]: 8–15), Julio Ramos's (*Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: literatura y política en el siglo XIX*. 1989. Caracas: El Perro y la Rana, 2009), and Diana Sorensen's (*Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1996) poststructuralist readings of Sarmiento's canonical text, Lancot extends these authors' theoretical gaze beyond the work of the *sanjuanino* writer and towards archival sources, paying particular attention to little-studied pro-Rosas writers. Comparing the Rosistas to their opposition among the well-known intellectuals of the Generation of 1837, Lancot problematizes the traditional dichotomy between the groups by mapping the shared discursive sphere in which they debated one another. The critical paradigm that such a reading proposes "suggest[s] that politics in postrevolutionary Argentina consisted not of a clash between a vestigial colonial worldview and an ideology imported wholesale, if belatedly, from the

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