

Branding like a City

Barcelona and its Literature at the Buenos Aires Book Fair

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BRANDING LIKE A CITY: Barcelona and its Literature at the Buenos Aires Book Fair¹

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ABSTRACT

This essay seeks a detailed and intimate understanding of the presence of Barcelona as Guest of Honour at the 45th Buenos Aires Book Fair. In so doing, I focus on the stand of Barcelona at the Buenos Aires Book Fair for arguing that exhibition units create the conditions for telling particular stories about national/local literatures to a broad and foreign audience. Moreover, building bridges between existing lines of research and informed by ongoing debates in the field, this paper aims to highlight the entanglements between politics and tourism, “pure” literature and marketplace imperatives. Everything analysed, however, through cultural products and exhibition spaces.

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article explore en détail et de l'intérieur la présence de Barcelone en tant qu'invité d'honneur de la 45^e Foire du livre de Buenos Aires. Partant du stand de Barcelone à la Foire, je souhaite faire valoir que les éléments constitutifs d'une exposition créent les conditions nécessaires pour raconter certaines histoires à propos de littératures nationales ou locales à un public élargi et étranger. De plus, jetant des ponts entre des questions de recherche actuelles et ancré dans les débats qui animent notre champ d'étude, l'article vise à mettre en évidence les enchevêtrements qui unissent politique et tourisme, littérature « pure » et impératifs du marché, par l'entremise des produits culturels et des espaces d'exposition.

Keywords

Barcelona, Buenos Aires Book Fair, Place Branding, Tourism, Literature

Mots-clés

Barcelone, Foire du livre de Buenos Aires, image de marque d'un lieu, tourisme, littérature

Book events, literary prizes, and book fairs are becoming a significant research trend. Their growing number across the globe and their influence over the production, circulation, and consumption of literary products attest to the importance of these venues and cultural rituals. Likewise, this issue of *Mémoires du livre* and the forthcoming special issue of *Journal of World Literature*² show clearly the current interest in exploring such events. Such attention has not always been paid to book fairs, however. For instance, despite increased examination of the trade fair sector,³ limited attention has been paid to national and international book fairs. Beyond anniversary books,⁴ memoirs,⁵ and historical reviews,⁶ few publications have documented the function of book fairs within the publishing industry. Scholarship in this area has emerged mainly over the last decade; ranging from comparative⁷ to micro analyses focused on particular case studies,⁸ research concerning book fairs currently spans a great variety of topics such as press reception,⁹ audiences engagement,¹⁰ cultural-political framing,¹¹ and national branding.¹² Some studies have even aimed to establish a dialogue between scholars and the publishing industry stakeholders who participate in these events.¹³

The strategic importance of modern book fairs also goes beyond book culture, encouraging new perspectives and interdisciplinary analyses. In this regard, anthropological studies of book fairs offer frameworks for unpacking their performed meaning and functioning. Interactions among social actors within book fairs encourages analysis through a Bourdieusian lens:¹⁴ understood as *field-configuring events*,¹⁵ as *tournaments of value*,¹⁶ or as *institutions of consecration* in the field,¹⁷ book fairs give a visible structure to the publishing field and reinforce its structure, while highlighting the fault-lines between politics and economy, “pure” literature and marketplace imperatives. At the same time, these events make visible the practices, rituals—*Status Group Boundaries* and *Categorical Identities*¹⁸—and resources of those multiple actors that operate within the field.

However, observations of this kind, which focus primarily on interactions among people and institutions, often underassess the role of cultural products.¹⁹ In consideration of this, I shall put these products at the forefront of my inquiry: literature and art, but also mass-media entertainment—TV shows, books, popular music, leisure goods, and so on.

These items have always been considered part of the fabric of contemporary book fairs, but here I will analyze them as active elements shaping Barcelona's Guest of Honour status. In assessing the performative function of these artefacts, this article draws on research on literary exhibition²⁰ and literary tourism,²¹ areas that provide a framework for the particular semiotics of literary trails. This article presents a narrative that weaves together literary references, heritage, and places leading to a determined kind of "story-telling" or plotting about Barcelona shaped by artefacts. A narrative structure supported by the rest of events within the Guest of Honour's program at the Buenos Aires Book Fair. Hence, following existing lines of research²² but adopting a broader, semiotic-oriented approach,²³ I argue that cultural products construct and communicate meaning, helping to shape Barcelona's presence in the collective mind.

To this end, I draw also on current theoretical discussions about city branding, underscoring the importance of urban imageries based on representations: ideas and stereotypes, but also desires and collective memories linked to a specific place. It is, then, the image of the city that is at stake, overlapping cultural meanings and images that are intended to sell the city as a product.²⁴ Framed by this premise and informed by intensive fieldwork at the Buenos Aires Book Fair in 2019,²⁵ this essay deals with the performative nature of cultural products, images, and representations. By presenting a detailed analysis of the presence of Barcelona at the 45th Buenos Aires Book Fair, I intend to show how the team in Barcelona designed a program of events in order to fashion the *Ciutat Comtal* into the *City of Literature*.

Sketching the Book Fair: The Changing Nature of the Meeting Place

In the twenty-first century, book fairs consist of more than their commercial nature and literary appearance. With a cluster of events and networking opportunities, book fairs set the trends for the national and international book industries, while at the same time serving as cultural festivals where countries, regions, or cities compete to present their own music, cinema, gastronomy, and folklore as Guests of Honour. The diversity of existing fairs and their growing number around the world²⁶ suggests that the "book fair" venue remains a meeting place *par excellence*, even in the age of streaming systems and digitization. Indeed, the book fair is perhaps more

important now—in an age of enormous changes within the book industry—than ever.

If the twentieth century was a time of modernization in the European and global publishing industries, the twenty-first century has usually been described as a revolutionary time. Indeed, there is an overwhelming body of work focused on the changing nature of the contemporary publishing industry. Processes such as the conglomeration of publishers,²⁷ the growth of retail chains,²⁸ or the impact marketing has had on literature's production and reception²⁹ revolve around the importance of the shifting market conditions from the 1970s onwards. However, it was also during those years when the metamorphosis of the Frankfurt Book Fair started. Since 1975, this senior and influential book fair has been the hub of the international book trade; as the French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* pointed out in 1998, “107 countries ranging from Albania to Zimbabwe were represented at the Frankfurt Book Fair with a record total of 9,587 exhibitors.”³⁰ Furthermore, the concept of annual themes, which later became the Guest of Honour status, transformed the book fair in terms of content, so that it became a multi-faceted event where culture and economics shared space with politics. On an international scale, book fairs around the world—London Book Fair (1972), Buenos Aires Book Fair (1975), Paris Salon du Livre (1981), Göteborg Book Fair (1985), Guadalajara Book Fair (1987), and so on—have mirrored Frankfurt, changing their role to become useful tools that pave the way to innovative business models in the book and media industry. Nothing would never be the same.³¹

At around the same time, in 1974, Roberto Castiglioni proposed the idea of a book fair in Buenos Aires to the Argentinian Society of Writers (SADE); located at the Municipal Exhibition Centre instead of in the streets, the first edition of the “Exposition-International Fair: *The Book: From the Author to the Reader*,” lasted 17 days and received 140,000 visitors.³² Since then (March 1975), the Buenos Aires Book Fair has become one of the most important book events in the Spanish-speaking world. With 1,180,000 visitors, 477 exhibitors, and 2,405 accredited journalists, over 21 days—with three days devoted to the professional within the publishing field—the fair, supported since 1985 by El Libro Foundation, is the major annual cultural event in Buenos Aires. Based in La Rural since 2000, a convention centre with more than 45,000 square metres and 10 pavilions, the Buenos Aires

Book Fair oversees around 1,500 events per year, including those organized by the Guest of Honour. Guest cities are invited in order to provide the fair with distinctive cultural content, “starting or strengthening business relations between the book industries of the host and guest city.”³³ In 2019, Barcelona was the City of Honour at the 45th Buenos Aires Book Fair.

Barcelona at the Buenos Aires Book Fair: Flipping through the Pages of the Program

“We are not going to present books, we are going to show a city and its literature,”³⁴ argued Izaskun Arretxe, the Director of the Literature and the Humanities Department at the Institut Ramon Llull. Founded in 2002 with the purpose of promoting Catalan language and Catalan cultural productions abroad,³⁵ this publicly funded institution shaped the program and organized the events and activities for Barcelona as City of Honour at the Buenos Aires Book Fair. Together with the City Council of Barcelona, the Institute invested around 500,000 Euros to realize this program.³⁶ Labelled the city of libraries and literary festivals,³⁷ Barcelona arrived at the Buenos Aires Book Fair with the credential of being a major publishing site within Spain and the capital of Catalan literature, which is written both in Spanish and in Catalan. A cosmopolitan and bilingual metropolis, Barcelona programmed 120 activities as Guest of Honour, and also participated with renowned experts in remarkable events within the fair, such as the International Festival of Poetry and the brand new Space of Sexual Diversity and Culture.

With the opening of the Sexual Diversity and Culture Space in the 2018 edition of the Fair, the Book Foundation and the Buenos Aires International Book Fair renewed their willingness to function as a sounding board for different debates and displays, and to collect and promote, without censorship, the plurality and richness produced by our culture.³⁸

The renewed rise of feminism, sometimes dubbed as a fourth wave, inspired this space, to which Barcelona contributed two roundtables—one on the body and literature and one on LGTBI literature for kids and youth—conformed by Gabriela Larralde, Bel Olid, Susy Shock, Muriel Villanueva, Selva Amalda, Eva Baltasar and Fernanda García Lao.³⁹ “Feminism and Catalan accent to face the crisis” was the heading that the writer Gabriela

Mayer selected to summarize the main axes of the 45th Buenos Aires Book Fair.⁴⁰ Certainly, “feminism and democracy”⁴¹ was included as a topic of discussion on Barcelona’s program, highlighting the virtues of this movement and political theory that calls current systems into question.

In a similar vein, “The Virtues of Disobedience” was the title of Rita Segato’s opening speech at the Buenos Aires Book Fair 2019. It received a wide applause from the public. The ovation for this celebrated feminist anthropologist was, however, no more prominent than the protest against the speech of the National Culture Secretary, Pablo Avelluto. Social and political conflicts turned the venue of the book fair into a political arena, a setting for yelling and pounding and for arguments against the economic crisis—which assured that the Argentinian media would cover the event with interest.⁴² Likewise, while Rita Segato defended her roots and language against neo-colonialism,⁴³ Iolanda Batallé—the Director of Institut Ramon Llull—spoke about falling in love with the language at the Buenos Aires Book Fair Opening Ceremony, recalling that in 1941 the first edition of *Els Jocs Florals de la Llengua Catalana a l’exili* was hosted in Buenos Aires. Even then, in those dark days, Catalonia remained alive.

Catalan singularity is a crucial aspect of branding for the Catalan administration performing abroad. However, Catalonia and Barcelona perform differently at the international level. While Catalonia currently portrays itself as a stateless nation aiming to promote its culture internationally and fight for recognition of the status of Catalan language and identity,⁴⁴ the worldwide image of Barcelona seems to be more cosmopolitan and associated with travel and modernity. For instance, based on a corpus of 133 questionnaires intended for the public and conducted by the Europa-Universität Flensburg (EUF) research group at the Buenos Aires Book Fair (2019), people attending the fair connected particular ideas with Barcelona beyond the current political situation in Catalonia. Indeed, most of the attendees pictured the city as a hub of cultural innovation, as represented in particular by Antoni Gaudí and his Sagrada Família church. Other images repeatedly linked to Barcelona were the beach, vacations, the song “Barcelona” (Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballé) featured at the 1992 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, the music of Joan Manuel Serrat, and, of course, the football player Lionel Messi.

A quick glance at Barcelona's City of Honour program confirms the importance of these core ideas: events on topics such as "football and literature," "Barça, culture and sport," and Jordi Puntí's book *Todo Messi*, as well as a concert in which Coro Trilce sang the songs of Joan Manuel Serrat, clearly demonstrate this.⁴⁵ However, beyond these clichés the most anticipated event at the fair was the presentation of *Cuando fuimos peripatéticos: La novela de Merlí*, a book about the famous Catalan TV show that became a fan phenomenon among young audiences in Argentina.⁴⁶ The Catalan organizers were aware of this popular-cultural attraction as a source of soft power: cultural influences and preconceived notions are embodied in popular artifacts circulating abroad.⁴⁷ In order to select the most appropriate as well as the most successful literary figures for the Argentinian book fair, the Catalan curators consulted with notable Argentinian writers, publishers, and literary critics currently living in Barcelona, such as Matías Néspolo, Edgardo Dobry, Nora Catelli, Ana Basualdo, Valeria Bergalli, and Rodrigo Fresán. Later, some of them became part of the official delegation of 77 authors and artists representing Barcelona in Buenos Aires: by giving exposure to writers and their works, the Catalan organizers aimed to provide new marketing opportunities for the Catalan publishing industry abroad.⁴⁸ Maybe because of that, the names of established writers such as Enrique Vila-Matas, Juan Marsé or Quim Monzó were not included⁴⁹ among those authors, most of whom belonged to Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, and the Autonomous Community of Valencia.⁵⁰

Despite all of these assumptions and expectations, however, I found it quite interesting to observe how important the family ties between Argentina, Catalonia, and Spain continue to be. Several events in Barcelona's program underscore this reality: "Barcelona and Buenos Aires," "Argentinians in Barcelona: A new literary identity," and "Legacy and roots, or Barcelona lives in Buenos Aires" are just a few examples. This ongoing closeness was the reason that Silvia Pérez Cruz's concert was featured at the Buenos Aires Book Fair: back in 2007, the marvellous Catalan singer recorded the album *Immigrasons*, inspired by—and dedicated to—those people from Argentina and Catalonia who were forced to become migrants.⁵¹ Indeed, this special relationship, rooted in a long historical process of interdependency between Spain and Latin America, was praised before in Ada Colau's letter of May 12, 2018, when the city of Montevideo—the City of Honour at the Buenos Aires Book Fair 2018—passed on the baton to Barcelona.⁵² In her

letter, the mayor of Barcelona highlighted the movement of migrants in exile, swept back and forth between Barcelona and Buenos Aires. “Argentinians came to Barcelona looking for shelter,” argued Joan Subirats, the Commissioner of Culture for the Barcelona City Council, “and people from Barcelona and Catalonia, during the Spanish Civil War, for instance, they ran for cover towards Argentina looking for a better life.”⁵³



Figure 1: Exhibition “Literatura catalana. Un mirado abierto al mundo” (Catalan Literature. A viewpoint opened to the world). Buenos Aires Book Fair, 2019. ©EUF Research Group.

There are, of course, other examples of making use of these tropes: as Madrid did when the city was Guest of Honour at the Guadalajara International Book Fair in 2017,⁵⁴ Barcelona also employed the theme of exile to engage the audience in Buenos Aires. The organizers presented roundtables such as “Catalan literature in exile” or “Two societies stained by dictatorships,” as well as a couple of exhibitions curated by Julià Guillamon, which were intended to illustrate the entanglement of the publishing industries in Spain, Catalonia, and Argentina, which are rooted in deep historical interdependency.⁵⁵ For instance, the exhibition “Barcelona-Buenos Aires: A bridge of books” (Larreta Museum), which included books, pictures, and correspondence from Librería Catalònia, Editorial Sudamericana and Edhasa, recalled the celebrated Catalan publisher Antonio López Llausàs (Barcelona, 1888–Buenos Aires, 1979), who was also a key figure in the publication of Pompeu Fabra’s *Diccionari General de la Llengua Catalana*.⁵⁶ Likewise, “Catalan Literature: A viewpoint opened to the world” summarized Catalan cultural heritage for attendees at

the fair, highlighting both the trails of the Catalan literary exile and the American diaspora.

Notably, these exhibitions focused more on Catalonia than Barcelona. It is never easy to divorce the capital city from its broader historical context, however, when the Catalan organizers looked for features of special value through which to present Barcelona to the world, they went back to the basics of the city's own cultural heritage. For instance, in the exhibition "Visit Barcelona in 32 illustrations," the Catalan curators Glòria Gorchs and Pep Molist invited visitors to (re)discover some of the treasures of Barcelona, as drawn by book illustrators. Those treasures were historic buildings and urban icons regarded as emblems of Barcelona such as Casa de les Punxes, Casa Milà o La Pedrera, Parque Güell, Palau de la Música Catalana, Gran Teatre del Liceu, or La Rambla. Some of these monuments had already been featured on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. Thus, Barcelona is represented as a monumental city, its image consistent with the one that was already circulating worldwide and that suited the needs of the tourist industry, which demands a pleasant and coherent representation of the city, ready-made for easy consumption.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, elsewhere in the fair, books on endcaps at Barcelona's stand or placed on table displays continued showing the visitor the city's architecture as filtered through the eyes of artists. For instance, books displayed at the stand such as *Barcelona singular* and *Barcelona en sèrie*—both based on the work of the photographer Pepe Navarro—picture the *Ciutat Comtal* with a halo of solemnization, making it desirable for newcomers.



Figure 2: Exhibition "Visite Barcelona en 32 ilustraciones" (*Visit Barcelona in 32 illustrations*). Buenos Aires Book Fair, 2019.

“Heritage and tourism are collaborative industries,” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, “heritage converting locations into destinations and tourism making them economically viable as exhibits of themselves. Locations become museums of themselves within a tourism economy.”⁵⁸ However, it was more than just Catalan architecture and Antoni Gaudí that played an active role in making Barcelona into a desirable “destination.” Mass-media entertainment also provided relevant content: for example, among the books exhibited at Barcelona’s stand, there was one about discovering the city through 20 great movie routes. *Barcelona. Una ciudad de película* pictures the *Ciutat Comtal* as a star location, recalling many of the films that have been set in the city and its surrounding area.⁵⁹

Another kind of book displayed at the fair is the travel guide fashioned into a story, like *Guía de la Barcelona mágica*, which draws upon the mystery, legends, and esotericism of Barcelona. Through tales about the *Eixample* and its characteristic octagonal blocks, the malediction of the Liceo, or the secret meaning behind Gaudí’s architecture, the author, Ernesto Milá, depicts Barcelona as a mysterious city that we are invited to discover.⁶⁰ Likewise, a guidebook by Sergi Doria invites the reader to reconstruct the Barcelona of Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s bestselling books in eight exciting routes across the city.⁶¹ When locations become destinations, they also become profitable; through this process, as we shall see in the following pages, literature can add a kind of market value to the image of the city it describes. This is even more true in the context of an international book fair.

A City and its Literature: Barcelona’s Stand at the Book Fair

The motto selected for presenting Barcelona at the Buenos Aires Book Fair was “Barcelona, City of Literature.” Since 2015, Barcelona has been a part of UNESCO’s City of Literature program within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)—180 international cities that share a common goal of “placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level.”⁶² Covering seven creative fields—crafts and folk arts, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music—the network, launched in 2004, is one of several strategies for combining literature and tourism at an international level.⁶³ Therefore, Barcelona’s City of Literature Office also played an important role in

providing the content that would showcase the best of the city in Buenos Aires.⁶⁴ By looking at the Barcelona's Guest of Honour program we have already seen some of these sources. But I would like to analyze also the very form of Barcelona's stand at the Buenos Aires Book Fair. Exhibition spaces act as mediators, invested with their own agency; building upon this premise, I will show how the stand of Barcelona was framed within a narrative, and how this narrative structure the experience of its visitors.

Indeed, exhibition spaces at book fairs construct and communicate meaning. They are designed to tell particular stories to the audience.⁶⁵ To approach these issues, however, all forms of cultural theory—from critical theory and consumption theory to communication studies—has tended to focus on reception, overlooking the practices of production. Nevertheless, as Raymond Williams points out, “if you ask questions about the work of art seen as object, they may include questions about the components of its production.”⁶⁶ Those components, as well as the composition, should be interpreted according to the particular conventions of a practice and the conditions in which it is undertaken.⁶⁷ Hence, in the next pages, books, objects, and the rest of the “components” within Barcelona's stand will be analyzed in order to demonstrate how the idea of “Barcelona, City of Literature” was built out of artefacts.

“Barcelona ... built a stand of 200 square meters in the yellow pavilion, with its own auditorium and a bookstore, the latter with significant sales.”⁶⁸ Barcelona's stand contained around 700 titles and 10,000 copies, and its very structure was intended to connote symbolic meaning; in other words, it was built within a significant semantic apparatus.⁶⁹ Creating a scenario and selecting a few objects for their iconic value in supporting the story, Barcelona's stand displayed an emotionally engaging map of the city, employing the names of places and celebrated writers as nodes on a street map drawn on its floor. The audience could thus walk around this miniature city, discovering as they went the homes of those well-known authors.⁷⁰ In many ways, the stand aimed to be a scale model of Barcelona. With bookcases instead of buildings, the stand included a couple of other urban artifacts: for example, there were two cylinders, one representing an advertisement cylinder, a second reproducing the original main entrance of a typical house from the *Eixample*, but equipped now with a “literary” building intercom where the visitor could listen to Spanish and Catalan poems.⁷¹

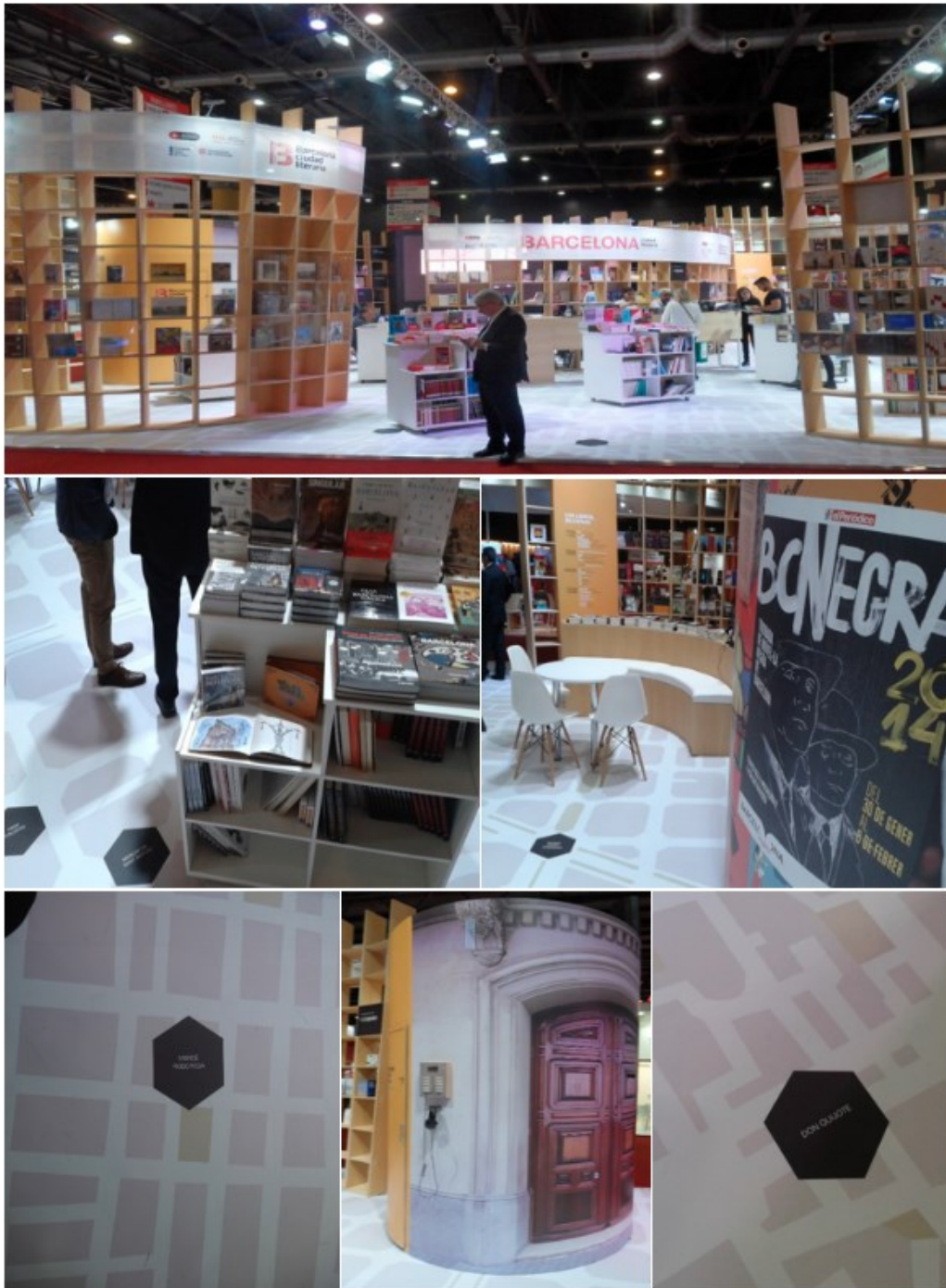


Figure 3: Stand of Barcelona. Buenos Aires Book Fair, 2019. @EUF Research group.



Figure 4: Stand of Barcelona. Buenos Aires Book Fair, 2019. @EUF Research group.

These “buildings” full of books, also featured endcaps that resembled windows, with statements greeting the visitor: there were quotations from Miguel de Cervantes, Gabriel García Márquez, George Orwell, and Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, describing Barcelona as a beautiful and

lively Mediterranean city, beloved by natives and newcomers alike.⁷² They were all canonical writers like “Gabo”, a foundational figure of so-called World Literature,⁷³ who lived in Barcelona in the late sixties, close to the Artós Square where Mario Vargas Llosa also lived, and by major literary figures from the Latin American “boom” in Spain, managed by the “Big Mamma,” the Catalan literary agent Carmen Balcells.⁷⁴ Within this literary map of Barcelona, other relevant Catalan figures such as Carlos Barral, Jaime Gil de Biedma, or Esther Tusquets belong to these “high neighbourhoods” or residential areas—less charming than the *Eixample*, which Montserrat Roig and Carmen Laforet depicted in their novels.⁷⁵ These locations and some of the authors who lived there—or wrote about them in their literary works—are featured in the book *Paseos por la Barcelona Literaria*, edited by Sergi Doria and Segio Vila-Sanjuán.⁷⁶

The Spanish edition of this book—which has also been published in Catalan and English editions—was exhibited at Barcelona’s stand. It offers 16 urban literary routes ranging from “Verdaguer and Barcelona” or “Mercé Rodoreda and the novels of Barcelona,” to “The Poetic Barcelona” or “The revolutionary Barcelona and its European intellectuals: George Orwell (and Simone Weil).” Intended for a general readership, this edited volume illustrates the respect and reverence toward those authors that shaped the literary myth of Barcelona. It is a reminder, too, of Barcelona’s literary canon—the catalogue of approved authors who lived in or visited the city, and who deserve to be remembered.⁷⁷ Even if some authors are regarded as more canonical than others, all of the major names were represented in some way in Buenos Aires, if not at the stand itself, then in events and documentaries such as *Medineando*, *La niña de los cabellos blancos* or *Carlos Barral a fondo*.⁷⁸ As well, in addition to the more interactive elements of Barcelona’s display, there was also a printed literary map available.

A Literary Map of Barcelona

A city without writers is not truly a city.⁷⁹ this was somehow Barcelona’s leitmotif at the 45th Buenos Aires Book Fair. It was also the motto printed at the back of the literary map of Barcelona that visitors could grab while they were walking around the stand. Designed to resemble a city map for

tourists, this cartographic document, full of instructions, was actually a scaled down version of the one displayed on the floor of Barcelona’s stand.

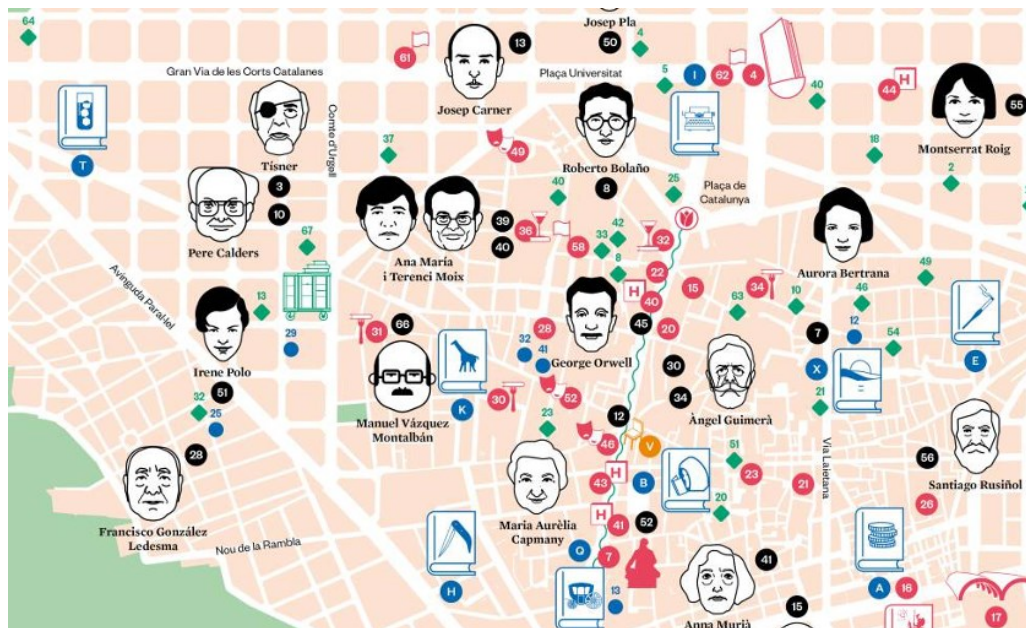


Figure 5: Mapa literario de Barcelona. Instituto de Cultura de Barcelona (ICUB), accessed September 8, 2019, https://elpais.com/ccaa/2019/04/03/catalunya/1554308052_949397.html.

Responding to the literary heritage of Barcelona, the map explores new ways of exhibiting the city’s cultural patrimony to a wide audience. The selection of items and information clearly show that this map was intended to encourage a particular kind of tourism: with content elements ranging from writers’ birthplaces, statues, and tombs, to libraries, bookstores and hidden reading corners in Barcelona, the map provides visitors with everything they need to experience the city in a literary way. The map also has valuable information about restaurants, pubs, and hotels frequented by authors such as Juan Marsé, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Ana María Matute, Federico García Lorca, and Antonio Machado. It represents the city both as it was lived in by these authors, and as they depicted it in their novels. Indeed, Barcelona has been the setting of several remarkable literary works: *Bibliomanía* (Gustave Flaubert), *Nada* (Carmen Laforet), *Últimas tardes con Teresa* (Juan Marsé), *Fortuny* (Pere Gimferrer), *La ciudad de los prodigios* (Eduardo Mendoza), and *La sombra del viento* (Carlos Ruíz Zafón) are just some of the books recalled in the map, highlighted now as recreational locations within the city.

A city full of stars. Just as Edinburgh's City of Literature Office organizes walking tours to the homes of both Faulkner and Hemingway,⁸⁰ Barcelona's City of Literature Office also offers 10 different literary routes across the city, all available on its website.⁸¹ The literary map of Barcelona provides useful information that one can follow while walking the trails that begin in the Besòs neighbourhood and El Maresme, and continue to the Gràcia of the poets, which leads to the House-Archive of the poet Joan Maragall, located in the district of Sant Gervasi, where the visitors can also view the birthplace of Mercè Rodoreda. One of the world's most renowned writers, Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, has his own literary route; the map assures visitors that Barcelona still is "the treasure-house of courtesy, haven of strangers, asylum of the poor, home of the valiant, champion of the wronged, pleasant exchange of firm friendships, and city unrivalled in site and beauty."⁸²

A quick glance at the literary map of Barcelona reveals that most of the featured items are clustered in the *Ciutat Vella*, where the most touristic street of Barcelona, *les Rambles*, is to be found. Pictured by local writers such as Narcís Oller and Jacint Verdaguer, locations such as the Carrer dels Tallers, the Mercat de la Boqueria, or the Continental Hotel are firmly associated with international literary figures such as George Orwell or Roberto Bolaño. "The Rambla is good medicine for any of the seven days of a week," argued Camilo José Cela in his work *Barcelona*,⁸³ illustrated by the Catalan painter Federico Lloveras, Cela's work is itself a kind of travel guide, in which he recalls his visits to the city in the company of his Catalan friends, Joaquim Vellvé and Gustavo Camps.

However, the Galician writer and Nobel Prize winner Cela doesn't appear on the literary map of Barcelona: perhaps his complicated background as a leading literary figure during the Franco Regime⁸⁴ prevented his inclusion, despite his remarkable work as the director of the literary journal *Papeles de Son Armadans* (1956–1979).⁸⁵ His absence serves as a reminder that bias is inherent in every selection on the map. In this regard, former key tropes and approaches such as the emphasis on Catalan over Castilian literature, were not at stake in Buenos Aires, an environment where Spanish was the *lingua franca* and the Catalan organizers addressed a Latin American market. In contrast to the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair when Catalan culture was Guest of Honour and branding aimed primarily to establish Catalan singularity on

an international stage,⁸⁶ this time the strategic focus was on *universality*: Barcelona, City of Literature.

There are many hidden tensions concerning which authors are deemed to have enough history with the city of Barcelona to ensure their canonical status. These tensions are apparent, for instance, in a database created by Barcelona's City of Literature Office and available on its website. The database includes 223 names of authors, ranging from playwrights, novelists poets, and essayists to literary critics, journalists, and comic book writers. Notably, this canon-defining list includes only those who were born in Barcelona, lived there, or, at least, visited the city for a while. That said, 32 of the names in this selection belong to foreign authors (14 percent), and, among the 191 authors who were born in Spain (82 percent) only 11 (6 percent) were born outside of Catalonia—most of them from Aragon, the Balearic Islands, and the Autonomous Community of Valencia. Also noteworthy is the fact that only 41 of the authors listed are women (18 percent); names such as Maria Aurelia Capmany, Anna Ballbona, and Maite Carranza were included within this database thanks to the efforts of the writer, translator, and literary critic Marina Espasa, head of Barcelona's City of Literature Office on Barcelona's City Council.⁸⁷

Beyond the Book Fair: *Literapolisbcn*

Thus, the literary map of Barcelona existed not only in printed form, but was expanded through a digital map published online, which could be used on mobile devices. The digital environment encouraged Barcelona's City of Literature Office to promote Catalan writers to digital-native visitors. Media convergence required them to rethink what it means to consume cultural products,⁸⁸ as, indeed, creative industries must constantly learn how to expand revenue opportunities in the market. A new game called *Literapolisbcn* is an excellent example of how gamification could work for tourism and literary marketing, engaging readers with vivid experiences of the city and highlighting the importance of the user as *prosumer*—that is, as an active consumer who is involved in the creation and dissemination of content. Intended for young people between the ages of 14 and 18, this mobile phone game promoted by Barcelona's City of Literature Office is a classic treasure hunt game, just like most of the existing location-based mobile games for tourism:⁸⁹

It is a “literary gymkhana” in which users have to locate 10 different real geographic points in the city where the action of the book is set. Once they have geolocated each point and solved a quiz question, they are rewarded with new information in order to continue playing.⁹⁰

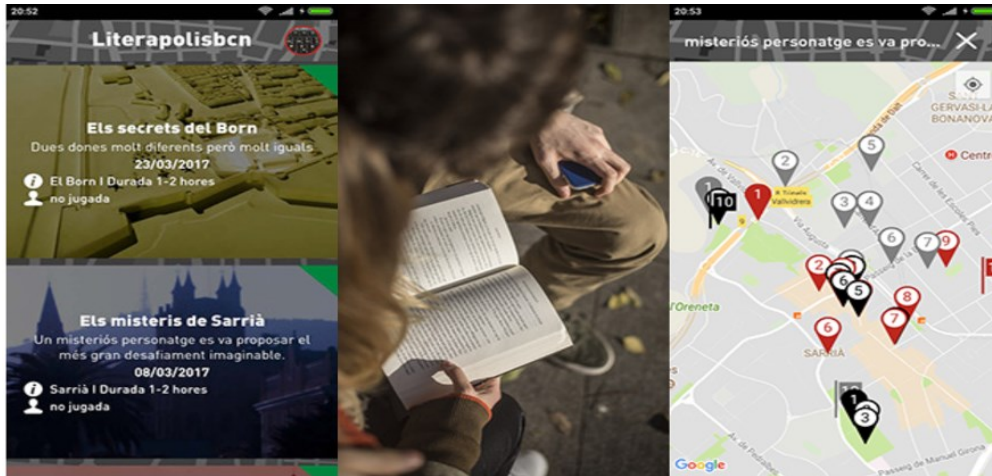


Figure 6: Literapolisbcn App. ©Pep Herrero, accessed September 8, 2019, <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ciutatdelaliteratura/en/literapolisbcn>.

Only available in Catalan and Spanish so far, this app consists of several literary routes stressing the relationship between particular novels and neighbourhoods of Barcelona:

Care Santos, *Hot dogs* / El Putxet; Mercè Rodoreda, *Mirall trencat* / Raval — Gòtic — Sant Gervasi; Dolors Garcia i Cornellà, *Serena* / El Born—Gòtic; Marc Pastor, *L'any de la plaga* / Nou Barris; Eduardo Mendoza, *Sin noticias de Gurb* / Eixample Dret – Gòtic; Andreu Martín, *Wendy i l'enemic invisible* / Les Corts — Sarrià — Eixample Esquerre; Maria Carme Roca, *La merla blava* / El Born; Pau Joan Hernández, *El mussol i la forca* / Eixample, Sants; Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *Marina* / Sarrià; Juan Marsé, *Últimas tardes con Teresa* / El Carmel; Laia Soler, *Els dies que ens separen* / Dreta de l'Eixample; Patricia Martín, *Una de zombis* / El Raval; Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Tatuaje* / El Raval — Les Rambles.⁹¹

This game and other new approaches to literature open novel opportunities for collaboration between the publishing industry, the tourism sector, and the educational sector. Indeed, in the 2018–2019 academic term, 10 schools in Barcelona used this app in their literature lessons: 551 students played

with the app, and a total of 785 players have downloaded it.⁹² The app embodies literature in public spaces; players draw new paths over old trails, creating an ongoing dialogue between the present and the imagined past as pictured by literary authors. These authors and literary works shaped the presentation of “Barcelona, City of Literature” at the 45th Buenos Aires Book Fair. But the premiere of when the online/offline literary map of Barcelona on this international platform underscored a controversial reality: book fairs are now media events—but for which industry?

Conclusions

Wide-ranging changes in media and communications have deeply transformed the ways in which readers interact with literature. Immersed as we are in a multimedia environment, book fairs are gradually orienting themselves towards providing “experiences” and entertainment,⁹³ an objective toward which inviting countries, regions, or cities to present their cultural heritage seems to play a major role. By examining Barcelona’s presence as Guest of Honour at the Buenos Aires International Book Fair in 2019, I have reviewed various features of the city’s contribution toward such a book fair “experience”. I have considered events put on at the fair, historic associations between the host and guest, and the relationship between publishing, heritage, and tourism. More specifically, I argued that the exhibition unit itself creates the conditions for telling particular stories about national/local literatures to a broad and foreign audience.

My methodology has involved analyzing cultural products within the Guest of Honour’s program as active players that call forth a specific urban identity: a constructed identity embodied in cultural products, playing a crucial role in the promotion of Barcelona as a qualified touristic destination. Perhaps because of this, and in accordance with the logic of the tourist industry, contemporary cities are themselves turning into commodities. In this regard, as Mari Paz Balibrea argues, Barcelona has become “a leisure space commodified repeatedly in the purchase of a plane ticket, a book on Gaudí, tickets for the opera at the Liceu or for a concert at the Palau de la Música, the booking of a hotel room or restaurant table.”⁹⁴

Some features discussed above weave a thread through to the present moment. For instance, tourism was already the most pressing concern in

Barcelona in 2017,⁹⁵ and it is still a matter of concern at the time of writing: in July 2019, the Federació d'Associacions de Veïns i Veïnes de Barcelona (FAVB) launched a campaign to decrease tourism, encouraging tourists not to tell anyone that they went to Barcelona on holidays. According to the FAVB, visitors to the city should keep its secrets and hide the “treasure map”: “explain about the gold and silver jewels that you found but don’t reveal where they are.”⁹⁶

Maybe for this reason, when I asked Marina Espasa why the City of Literature Office had chosen a tourist map to present Barcelona’s literary heritage to the world, she answered that, actually, the map was an anti-tourist map.⁹⁷ Even Julià Guillamon, who accompanied Espasa during the presentation of the map at the book fair, admitted that tourism and the urban development of Barcelona have generated significant tensions and debates.⁹⁸ And while these debates were obviously absent from Barcelona’s Guest of Honour program, they were nevertheless already discussed within the covers of works such as Alessandro Scarnato’s *Barcelona supermodelo* or Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *Barcelonas*. These books were exhibited within bookcases or on table displays at Barcelona’s book fair stand, sharing space with other titles such as *Barcelona. 100 souvenirs*, *Dalí i Barcelona*, *Barcelona Pop-Up*, or *Barça. La historia ilustrada del FC Barcelona*. All of the titles, however, were hidden behind the theme of “Barcelona, the City of Literature.” Looking a little closer reveals that these ordinary and popular artifacts can speak to the larger issues: indeed, as Mercè Rodoreda argues, *les coses importants són les que no ho semblen*.⁹⁹

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of *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 41 (2019). ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1412-4659>.

Notes

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² See the upcoming special issue (Spring 2021) of the *Journal of World Literatures*, Marketing World Literature: Book Fairs, Festivals, Prizes; call for papers online at <https://iwl.fas.harvard.edu/news/call-papers-upcoming-special-issues-journal-world-literature>, accessed September 10, 2019.

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³⁵ Silvia González, “Literatura y cultura catalana en las ferias internacionales del libro,” in *Las ferias del libro*, 235–51.

³⁶ Fundación El Libro, *Dimensión Económica de la 45° Feria Internacional del Libro de Buenos Aires*, draft version (Buenos Aires: Instituto Movilizador de Fondos Cooperativos, 2019), 46–50.

³⁷ According to the information available at Barcelona’s stand, the *Ciutat Comtal* has 40 public libraries, 201 publishing houses, 20 literary agencies, and 133 bookstores, with 20 literary festivals accredited per year. See also *Barcelona-Buenos Aires. Barcelona Ciudad Literaria* (Barcelona: IRL, 2019), 9–11.

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³⁹ *Barcelona-Buenos Aires*, 28–29.

⁴⁰ *La Gaceta Literaria*, May 5, 2019

⁴¹ *Barcelona-Buenos Aires*, 30.

⁴² “El evento, en los días previos, durante los 21 días de duración y en días posteriores, se convierte en una usina de contenidos periodísticos, radiales, audiovisuales y otros Entre ellos, particularmente este año se destacó la presentación del libro *Sinceramente*, de la ex presidenta Cristina Fernández, que ha sido un boom editorial y que convocó miles de personas y una cobertura periodística completa, en donde ningún medio quiso estar ausente” (Fundación El Libro, *Dimensión Económica*, 51–52).

⁴³ Even within the feminist movement: “As far as Ni Una Menos is concerned, let’s remember that there is a coloniality within social movements as well. That coloniality is deceptive and disorienting. #MeToo, with its roots in North American pilgrim-Puritan feminism, is directed towards and appeals to the paternity of the State, a third party as an indispensable arbiter of relations, a lawyer in the sheets, possibly as the only tool available in that ultra-individualist world. While #MeToo speaks to the state, Ni Una Menos speaks to all of us, men and women, it speaks to a society.” Full speech available at <https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/40778/the-virtues-of-disobedience/>. Accessed September 11, 2019.

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⁴⁵ *Barcelona-Buenos Aires*, 19–41.

⁴⁶ “Largas colas y delirio juvenil: un actor de Merlí fue rockstar en la Feria del Libro,” *Clarín*, April 30, 2019; “Furor por los protagonistas de Merlí en la Feria del Libro,” *La Arena*, May 1, 2019; “Héctor Lozano y Carlos Cuevas, dos peripatéticos en la Feria,” *La Nación*, April 30, 2019.

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⁵¹ Among the songs of this album, one of them, “L’emigrant,” builds upon Verdaguer’s poem. Juan Manuel Serrat has also done a cover of “Menuda.”

⁵² “44ª de la Feria Internacional del Libro de Buenos Aires. Sala José Hernández. La Rural. Buenos Aires. Argentina,” posted May 12, 2018, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXRg6lj12gA>.

⁵³ “Joan Subirats adelanta detalles de Barcelona Ciudad Invitada de la Feria,” accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHX6-UoTlfU>.

⁵⁴ Fernando García Naharro, “El contenido de la forma. Madrid como ciudad invitada de honor en la FIL Guadalajara 2017,” *Cuadernos de historia contemporánea* 41, (2019): 109–32.

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⁵⁷ Mari Paz Balibrea, “Urbanism, culture and the post-industrial city: challenging the ‘Barcelona Model’” in *Transforming Barcelona*, ed. Tim Marshall (New York, Routledge, 2004), 208.

⁵⁸ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (London: University of California Press, 1998), 151.

⁵⁹ Eugeni Osacar, *Barcelona: una ciudad de película* (Barcelona: Diereis, 2013).

⁶⁰ Ernesto Milá Rodríguez, *Guía de la Barcelona mágica* (Barcelona: Luciérnaga, 2016).

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⁶² See “About us”, Creative cities, UNESCO, accessed September 2, 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/content/about-us>.

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⁶⁴ “Entrevista a Joan Subirats—Feria Internacional del Libro de Buenos Aires,” accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mIbRvjtlDQ>.

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⁶⁶ Raymond Williams, “Critical Theory as Consumption,” in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, ed. John Higgins (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 175.

⁶⁷ Raymond Williams, “Critical Theory as Consumption” and “Objects and Practices,” in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, 175–79.

⁶⁸ “Cities Guest of Honor”, Buenos Aires Book Fair, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.el-libro.org.ar/buenos-aires-book-fair/cities-guest-of-honor/>,

⁶⁹ Umberto Eco, “A theory of expositions,” in *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 291–307.

⁷⁰ “Stand Barcelona Ciudad Invitada de Honor—Feria Internacional del Libro de Buenos Aires,” accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fPHPPDbYFA>.

⁷¹ Literary building intercom: Josep Carner’s *El dia revolt*; J.V. Foix’s *Sol I de dol*; José Agustín Goytisolo’s *Palabras para Julia*; Jaime Gil de Biedma’s *No volveré a ser joven*; Jesús Lizano’s *Mamíferos*; María Mercé Marçal’s *El meu amor sense casa*; Josep Palau i Fabre’s *La sabata*; Joan Peruchó’s *Sota la sang*; Jordi Sarsanedas’s *Cor meu, el mon*; Silenci.

⁷² “Subimos al Tibidabo y por primera vez vi centellear a mis pies, como un gran trozo de cuarzo hecho trizas, una ciudad mediterránea” (Simone de Beauvoir); “Al salir del teatro, la noche era diáfana y tibia y había en el aire una fragancia de rosas de mar, mientras el

resto de Europa naufragaba en la nieve. Me sentí conmovido en aquella ciudad hermosa, lunática descifrable” (Gabriel García Márquez).

⁷³ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2003). For a critical approach to the concept of World Literature, see Otmar Ette, *Weltfraktale. Wege durch die Literaturen der Welt* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017).

⁷⁴ William Marling, “Gabriel García Márquez. Gatekeepers and Prise de Position,” in *Gatekeepers: The Emergence of World Literature and the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 12–43. Both Balcells and the Latin American “Boom” were also programpart of Barcelona’s program: *Barcelona-Buenos Aires*, 19–43.

⁷⁵ Miguel Dalmau, “Barrios altos,” in *Paseos por la Barcelona literaria*, eds. Sergio Vila-Sanjuán and Sergi Doria (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona; Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez; Grup 62, 2005), 184–97.

⁷⁶ Sergio Vila-Sanjuán and Sergi Doria, eds., *Paseos por la Barcelona literaria* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona; Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez; Grup 62, 2005).

⁷⁷ Harold Bloom, “An Elegy for the Canon,” in *The Western Canon* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), 15–42.

⁷⁸ *Barcelona-Buenos Aires*, 19–43.

⁷⁹ María Zambrano, “Una ciudad sin escritores queda vaciada de su esencia de ciudad,” in *Mapa Literario de Barcelona*, Barcelona Ciudad de la Literatura, UNESCO, 2019.

⁸⁰ Beth Driscoll, *The New Literary Middlebrow. Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 39.

⁸¹ “Literary routes”, Ciutat de la Literatura, accessed September 14, 2019 <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ciutatdelaliteratura/en/literary-routes>,

⁸² “Barcelona, archivo de la cortesía, albergue de los extranjeros, hospital de los pobres, patria de los valientes, venganza de los ofendidos, y correspondencia grata de firmes amistades, y en sitio y en belleza, única” (Miguel de Cervantes). Quotation at Barcelona’s City of Honour book stand, Buenos Aires Book Fair, 2019). See also Jordi Galves, “Sólo por ver Barcelona: la ruta de Don Quijote,” in *Paseos por la Barcelona literaria*, 31–45; and Anna-Priscila Magriñà, “Route 6: Don Quixote. Literary Tour,” accessed September 9, 2019, <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ciutatdelaliteratura/en/projects/map-10-literary-map-barcelona/barcelonas-literary-map/route-6-don-quixote>.

⁸³ Camilo José Cela, *Barcelona* (Barcelona: Noguer, 1975), 59.

⁸⁴ Pere Ysàs, *Disidencia y subversiono La lucha del régimen franquista por su supervivencia, 1960–1975* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2004), 50–53.

⁸⁵ Jordi Gracia, *Estado y cultura. El despertar de una conciencia crítica bajo el franquismo. 1940–1962* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2006), 302–307; Camilo José Cela, *Correspondencia con el exilio* (Barcelona: Destino, 2009).

⁸⁶ Woolard, “Branding like a State,” 29–50.

⁸⁷ She is also the editor, with Bel Olid and Laura Hueriga, of *Women Writers in Catalan*.

⁸⁸ Henry Jenkins, “The cultural logic of media convergence,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (2004): 33–43.

⁸⁹ F. Xu et al., “Tourists as Mobile Gamers: Gamification for Tourism Marketing,” *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 33, no. 8 (2015): 1124–42.

⁹⁰ “Literapolisbcn”, Ciutat de la Literatura, accessed September 8, 2019. <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ciutatdelaliteratura/en/literapolisbcn>.

⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁹² Downloads (information provided by Barcelona’s City of Literature Office):

Total	2017	2018	2019
iPhone	787	1,280	1,509
Android	1,217	2,102	2,463
TOTAL	2,004	3,381	3,971

⁹³ Fernando García Naharro, “Actores anejos al campo editorial: el caso de la Feria del Libro de Madrid,” in *Las ferias del libro*, 167–69.

⁹⁴ Balibrea, “Urbanism, culture and the post-industrial city,” 208.

⁹⁵ Rebecca Mead, “The Airbnb Invasion of Barcelona,” *The New Yorker*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/04/29/the-airbnb-invasion-of-barcelona>.

⁹⁶ Fayb Barcelona, “Don’t tell anyone that you have been on holiday in Barcelona,” accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pD2LGwKq0wI>.

⁹⁷ Marian Espasa and Julià Guillamon, “Barcelona: mapa literario,” Stand Barcelona, Buenos Aires Book Fair (15h-16h, 27.04.2019).

⁹⁸ Horacio Capel, *El modelo Barcelona: un examen crítico* (Barcelona: Ediciones del Serbal, 2005); Francesc Muñoz, “La ciudad marca: Barcelona,” in *Urbanización: paisajes comunes, lugares globales* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2010), 150–75; Núria Benach Rovira, “¿Ciudades en el mapa o en la guía turística? Venta de la ciudad y sentido del lugar,” *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals* 113, (2016): 89–105.

⁹⁹ “Las cosas importantes son las que no lo parecen” (Mercè Rodoreda). Postcard 19/23, Serie 1, Barcelona Ciudad Literaria/Ajuntament de Barcelona/Institut Ramon Llull. Stand of Barcelona, Buenos Aires Book Fair.

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