Presentation of the monograph. The literary city: identities, urban spaces, and literary fields in the 20th and 21st centuries

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A PALIMPSEST FOR DEBATE

In recent years, the development of intellectual reflection upon the relationship between space and literature has started to stand out for its variety of approaches and its multidisciplinarity. Starting from literary criticism research, whose range of topics includes authors' aesthetic treatment of cities—and from which cities have been studied as the subject par excellence of industrial modernity (Berman, 1988; Matas, 2010; Williams, 1973)—we reach the more informative approaches of literary geography and geocritics (Collot, 2011; Westphal, 2007; Zima, 1985) which are devoted to the revaluation of urban heritage from the accumulation of literary capital (Bourdieu, 1991). When this literary capital is not only measured in literary work, but also occurs in cultural art, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields becomes relevant (Bourdieu, 1995). This is the study of how the literature–city binomial transcends the work itself and reciprocally considers the writer's relationship with the literary domain in which it is set. In most cases this occurs within a cultural capital—hubs which also participate in complementary relationships with each other and which construct the geopolitics of cities through the importance of writing. Literary sociology has adopted the same reasoning in its study of literary work and writers (Griswold, 1993; Heinich, 2000; Lévy, 2004). Thus, the 'literary city' is a complex object for study, which can be approached from a wide range of points of view, precisely because of the interest in it—not only literary interest, but also social and cultural interest in a broader sense. The variety of disciplines that analyse cities, using literary works both as a message and as a means, shows us the centrality of the urban world in contemporary

society. In addition, studying the need for deep reflection about cities through literature complements a dimension of aesthetics and heritage that intangibly enriches the written city itself.

This monograph tries to represent the liveliness of the debate by sampling the scope of possible approaches to studying literary cities and covers a range of academic disciplines and cases of literary cities; their trajectories have all, essentially, been consolidated over the centuries and up to the present, thus making them a valuable literary palimpsest. We wanted to give the readers of *Debats* a set of possibilities from which the relationship between literature and cities can be interweaved. From research into the representation of urban spaces in literary works (starting from our own perspective on literary studies in which reflections emerging from specific spaces turn into complementary analyses of the phenomena of modernity and of the societies that experience them) to the promotion of heritage spaces, following in the footsteps of writers whose depictions of these cities is iconic and whose thought forms part of the basis for local cultural identity. Starting from the analysis of urban representation through literature, some researchers have generated cultural policies that preserve the memory and literary heritage of the cities in which we live and visit and provide some informative strategies for their promotion (Patricio-Mulero and Rius-Ulldemolins, 2017). However, writers do not only inhabit the cities where they create their work, and in the case of cultural capitals, the literary ecosystem comprises a wide range of agents that make the literary field a fertile system which feeds the book industry. Of course, a writer's inspiration is independent of their location, but it does determine the trajectory of literature professionals, including authors, and is not exempt from a series of mutual influences (Bourdieu, 1995). This phenomenon (which receives special treatment by contemporary literary sociology) helps us to understand the power relationships established in certain urban centres and means that, while writers struggle to create work which sits somewhere between being autonomous and market-friendly, symbolic capitals add cultural relevance and imaginary inspiration to the literary field. Cultural policies regarding the publishing industry and literary creation originate in the application of knowledge of literary fields.

With the aim of fulfilling a series of objectives and given the debate around the multiplicity and diversity of literary cities, we selected experts from disparate disciplinary backgrounds who mostly write about València, Barcelona, Lisbon, and Paris. First, we wanted to reflect upon the relevance of spaces in the field of literature and in literary works. Here, we showed that the range of examples makes the unique characteristics of each city and their literary traditions explicit, while the convergence of certain characteristics contributes to a global definition of literary cities. Second, we analyse the literary imaginary constructed by several writers (or only one sufficiently representative one) around the same space. Derived from this objective, we also investigate the impact cities have on the identity of writers. In some articles, we confirm writers' attraction to these cultural capitals when creating their work and highlight how the symbolic capital of the literary imaginary socially reverberates in the urban space.

GEOGRAPHY AND THE VALENCIAN LITERARY IDENTITY

This monograph starts with two different writers' perspectives on the city of València. Drawing parallelisms with the experience of València, Jordi Oviedo analyses the city's presence in the poetry of Vicent Andrés Estellés, an author strongly linked to the imaginary of the post-war period. The way Estellés treats the territory in his poetry is an example of the space's memory and of a literary identity that deeply links this author to the physical and social environment in which he lived and worked. The poet's biographical experience impregnates the spaces with a realism that anchors the work in reality, thus making Estellés an exceptional witness—one who enriched his style by borrowing from cinema and journalism, two disciplines that accurately document reality. To conclude this portrait of the city, Jesús Peris studies Max Aub's València, described through the prism of exile which affected the writer's perceptions and emphasised his memories of the citizens present throughout these changes. The Spanish Civil War—the trauma that defined 20th century Spain—is reflected as one of the most complex and transcendental episodes suffered by literary cities. Through the literary geography of Max Aub and his description of times past, the writing not only attempts to reconstruct the city and its spaces, but also the Republic and its values.

Antoni Martí Monterde shares his pertinent reflections upon the city as a moral memory, by applying the theories of Michel de Certeau, Roland Barthes, Marc Augé, and Pierre Nora to the examples of Vicent Andrés Estellés' València and Josep Pla's Barcelona. Martí's memories soar over València's *Plaza del Ayuntamiento* [the city hall square], combining theoretical thought on urban spaces as moral memories or as areas of permanence and disappearance, in an inspiring mixture of memory, nostalgia, and the building of moral memory over time.

BARCELONA, CITY MEMORY AND LITERARY FIELD HEADQUARTERS

If the article by Antoni Martí Monterde is located somewhere between València and Barcelona, the monograph's journey continues north where three articles cover the geography and the literary field of Barcelona. Exhaustively plotting the most sociological aspects of Barcelona's literary imaginary, Joan Ramon Resina examines some of the work that most clearly shows the city's conflictive side, derived mainly from the economic characteristics of modernity and the consequent class struggle. It begins with *Don Quixote*, a work whose ironic treatment of realism demonstrates the literary transition towards the first novels—an essential perspective on the novel par excellence. The gentleman's visit to the only city mentioned in his long Hispanic journey is a necessary call to realism, understood as a representation of the material and economic life linked to modernity. The social portrait of the city seems to be determined by the presence of the bourgeoisie, which are strongly represented at the beginning of the Catalan novel as a symbol of the class tensions which were characteristic of industrialisation. Another aspect of modernity is the diffusion of urban realism through journalism, or via specific genres such as detective novels, which for Barcelona is illustrated via Pepe Carvalho, the main character in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's referential work about the impact of class conflict on Barcelona's population and in its different neighbourhoods.

The literary imaginary of 20th century Barcelona is strongly linked to its historical and social context and so Roxana Nadim highlights the personification of the city in two iconic characters from the narratives by Mercè Rodoreda—one of the writers whose work has contributed most to the construction of a Barcelonan literary identity. Written while in exile, Colometa in *La Plaça del Diamant* (*The time of the doves*) and Cecília Ce in *El carrer de les Camèlies* (*Camellia Street*) made the story of 'anonymous' characters universal, binding them to specific neighbourhoods—or having them travel through several spaces—and historical moments in this Mediterranean city (a 'little story', according to Nadim). The importance of female writers and characters is also reflected upon in the last article of this Barcelona triptych which, emulating an exercise by Georges Perec (Perec, 1975), tries to analyse the sociological importance of the literary representation of spaces, taking the Plaça Universitat de Barcelona [Barcelona University square] palimpsest as an example of a specific space. The adventures of Andrea, the protagonist of Nada [Nothing], by Carmen Laforet, those of Gabriel and Mireille from Jordi Puntí's *Maletes perdudes* (*Lost luggage*), and Jordi Nopca's stories from *Puja a casa* [*Come home*], rebel against the social-historical evolution of the 'Facultat de Lletres' ['Faculty of Arts', closer to 'Faculty of Social and Human Sciences'] space from the 1940s to the present day.

We also study the urban palimpsest of Lisbon, a literary city universally represented by the poetry of Fernando Pessoa. Bernat Padró uses the poet's experience described in the *Livro do Desassossego* (*The book of disquiet*), to reflect upon the interaction of space in the poetic self, in contrast to the purely urban description given by the same author in his guide *Lisboa: o que o turista deve ver* (*Lisbon: What the tourist should see*). This exercise allows Padró to reflect upon how the conditions of urban life restrict human knowledge and individuals' inner characters because of the indifference and tedium which is typical of homogenising capitalist routines. The individual dissolves into the modern city and, responding to the feeling of suppression and anguish, develops aesthetic discourses to shake up their spirit.

THE TRAJECTORY OF PARISIAN WRITERS AND THE ROLE OF CULTURAL CAPITALS

If Paris is a city that has been represented in literature by a wide range of writers, it seems that a strong relationship with the city could also favour the consecration of a literary career, as was the case recently of Patrick Modiano—or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say with Patrick Modiano's Paris. From a literary sociology perspective, Clara Lévy uses the French author's award of the Nobel Prize for literature as a springboard to investigate how, from the Swedish Academy's verdict to his international academic and literary criticism, the most relevant part of Modiano's extensive work is considered to be his portrayal of the city during a dark period: the Paris of the occupation (1940–1944). The writer's ambiguous biographical link, both with the geographical space that he painstakingly details in his books and with the historical period—in which his Jewish bourgeoisie parents lived—seems to have attracted the interest of literary actors, both of experts and readers.

To close this set of academic articles, we wanted to focus our attention on new ways of approaching the study of cities and the written word. Street art is currently one of the

most popular artistic expressions linked to urban spaces; it intervenes in the revaluation of peripheral spaces, provides new approaches to participatory access to art, and cooperatively interacts in the beautification—and incidentally, in the feeling of belonging—within urban spaces. Thus, Ricardo Klein discusses, from the perspective of the sociology of culture, cases of street art expressions related to literature and its effects on citizens and artists.

In conclusion, the experiences of writers in changing cities, the testing ground for the dynamics of contemporaneity, are an essential testimony when they are reflected in literary works. Because of its diffusion among the reading community, capacity to accumulate, within a series of values, the symbolic cultural capital that characterises space, and especially, its ability to mirror and contemplate reality via fiction, literature in our cities allows us to store both our history and set of imaginary possibilities and so, is defined by its reflection of the societies we have and those that we want to build.

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