

The Barcelona Reader

Cultural Readings of a City

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Ajuntament
de Barcelona

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY PRESS

First published 2017
Liverpool University Press
4 Cambridge Street
Liverpool, L69 7ZU

in collaboration with Ajuntament de Barcelona
Direcció d'Imatge i Serveis Editorials
Passeig de la Zona Franca, 60
08038 Barcelona
barcelona.cat/barcelonallibres

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A British Library CIP Record is available.

ISBN 978-1-78694-032-2

Typeset by Carnegie Book Production, Lancaster
Printed and bound in Poland by BooksFactory.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION

Barcelona: Cultural readings of a city

Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana

In 1972 an independent filmmaker, Jordi Lladó, collaborated with a few actors from Els Joglars company to shoot *Aullidos*, a short film that tried to stage the beauties of Barcelona. Franco's dictatorship was still very much alive, a greyness (the colour of the uniforms of the repressive police, the air, the mood) filled everything. The result was a hysterical portrait of things to visit in a depressed city, among others scuba diving in Barcelona's sewer system, buying postcards picturing a slump, and picnicking at Montcada's *turó* [hill] near a cement factory. It was 40 years before a Mexican filmmaker made a similar move and portrayed a poignant image of a 'beautiful' city unfriendly to immigrants and poor people alike. It was also 40 years before the city became, much to the dismay of many of its inhabitants, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Europe. The city's 1.6 million residents have seen the number of visitors skyrocket from 1.7 million in 1990 to more than 8.2 million in 2015. Barcelona, 'la Gran Encisera' (the Great Enchantress) as defined by Joan Maragall, one of her greatest poets, has constantly delivered a dual yet contradictory message: *la rosa de foc* [the rose of fire] for the anarchists and *ciudad de ferias y congresos* [city of fairs and conventions] during the dictatorship; pickpocket trap and tourist paradise.

The aim of this book is to provide an in-depth overview of Barcelona through texts written by a selected group of scholars who have devoted much time and energy to studying the city. We have drawn together published and unpublished work that best illuminates a wide-ranging selection of critical perspectives of Barcelona, ways of reading the city from complementary cultural approaches, stressing the negatives, but also the glowing aspects of the city. The book provides scholars, students, journalists, and visitors looking for a more comprehensive approach to Barcelona than tourist guides can deliver with an overview of the central issues about Barcelona. We have included both strictly scholarly and non-scholarly writings, thus enabling a wider range of perspectives.

The seeds of this book were sown a few years ago, when we started a discussion about how to present Barcelona to a foreign audience. For the last 30 years now a number of colleagues have been teaching courses on different aspects of Barcelona. These took place around the time (and particularly after) the Olympic impulse that, for good or for worse, changed everything in the city. The first idea we had was to put together a stylish version of a course pack that some of us had prepared at one point or another, which would include noteworthy scholarly essays on Barcelona. These might coincide with the materials we were using in our current courses. But early in the process this possibility was dismissed: we thought it would be better to address the book to a wider range of readers, including students, the general public, and, particularly, visitors in need of some thorough explanations about the city that is and that has been, thus going beyond the hollow explanations one can read in a commercial tourist guide. At an early stage in our project we considered a map of topics and different kinds of approaches – architecture, history, literature, art, film – and started looking for good texts. *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City* includes scholarly essays that can be of interest both to the student and the general public. We focus on cultural representations of the city: the arts (including literature) provide a complex yet discontinuous patchwork portrait of it. The authors together create a kaleidoscope of views and voices, thus presenting a diverse yet inclusive picture.

Our book owes its greatest debt to the authors whose work we have reprinted and those who have written new material. In addition to these, a number of people and institutions have crucially contributed to

making this volume possible. We would like to thank the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, who have supported the project. We are also grateful to Sara Antoniazzi for her practical support. Thanks are also due to Barcelona's City Hall, for providing financial support and the cover photograph.

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Over the last 20 years there has been a growing international interest in the city of Barcelona. This has been reflected in the academic world through a series of studies, courses, seminars, and publications. *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City* hinges together a selection of the best academic articles, written in English, about the city, and its main elements of identity and interest: art, urban planning, history, and social movements. During this period, interest in Catalan studies has grown exponentially due to the initiative of single individuals and universities, or, in some cases, to contributions from the Institut Ramon Llull. In the UK and Ireland alone Catalan is taught in 23 universities. Moreover, Catalan is also taught in more than 27 universities in the USA, Canada, and Australia. Yet there are currently very few books available in English that can be used as a thorough introduction to Catalan culture. Most of them fill partial gaps, but none of them addresses the specific issues we deal with. Many titles are no longer available or have extremely out-of-date approaches. One could mention, for instance, Joan Triadú's *Anthology of Catalan Lyric Poetry*, edited by Joan Gili (Oxford: Dolphin, 1953), Dominic Keown and Tom Owen's *Joan Salvat-Papasseit: Selected Poems* (Anglo-Catalan Society, 1982), Albert Balcells' *Catalan Nationalism: Past and Present* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), and Josep R. Llobera's *Foundations of National Identity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004). Closer to our aim are books such as Josep Miquel Sobrer's, *Catalonia, A Self-portrait* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), Arthur Terry's, *A Companion to Catalan Literature* (Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2003), Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi's *Spanish Cultural Studies. An Introduction: The Struggle for Modernity* (New York: OUP, 1995), and Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan's *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Arnold and OUP, 2000).

The book that gets closer to what we wanted to achieve is Dominic Keown's *A Companion to Catalan Culture* (Woodbridge, UK, Tamesis Books, 2011), which, in 268 pages, encapsulates a first port of entry for general information about Catalan culture for the English reader. The salient theme uniting the essays is that of identity: each contribution in that volume illuminates some aspect of Catalan identity, linking cultural expression with *catalanitat* [Catalan-ness]. The editor has assembled essays that address contemporary culture, medieval culture, political history from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first, the notion of Barcelona as 'siege city', language, sport, music, cinema, festival and cuisine – manifestations of both 'high' and 'low' culture. Keown claims coherence for these disparate cultural expressions with the observation that their best-known proponents (Gaudí, Dalí, among others) 'did not emerge from a vacuum but are merely distinguished exponents of a cultural choir whose fellow protagonists, through repression, inaccessibility or just plain ignorance – have been denied the opportunity of the reception they so richly deserve'. Other volumes worth mentioning are a special issue of *Catalan Review*, 'Barcelona and Modernity' edited by Brad Epps in 2006, Joan Ramon Resina's *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), and Edgar Illas' *Thinking Barcelona: Ideologies of a Global City* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2012). At the international level, this reader follows the example (with very different goals) of similar publications, most notably *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism (Urban Studies)*, edited by M. Bernt, B. Grell and A. Holm (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2013). As happens with other books of this nature, critics may claim that there are thematic gaps and that the selection of material and authors can be called into question. A comprehensive, complete and balanced presentation of all issues that are to be discussed in relation to Barcelona exceeds the frame of an ordinary reader.

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The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City focuses on one single city, a centre of attention for students and cultivated tourists alike. It presents a plural and in-depth introduction and reflection about the

most relevant aspects of the city of Barcelona. Our selection includes some of the best published approaches to each aspect of the city and its society (in so far as copyrights and permissions have made this possible), and a few articles written for this volume. We hope that a work of this kind will be an invaluable aid for programming new courses on the Catalan capital and on Catalan culture in universities around the world, and it will provide a supplementary guide for sophisticated visitors.

We have two complementary experiences of explaining Barcelona to foreign people. One is that of living abroad and trying to make the city comprehensible to a foreign regard. Another is writing from Barcelona thinking of a foreign audience. Many years ago, when one of us was still living in the USA, he was once asked the inevitable ‘where are you from?’ When he replied ‘from Barcelona’, the questioner stared at him and asked, with a notable look of surprise: ‘So, what are you doing here?’ That must have been back in 1998. It happened in Wellesley, a town outside Boston, MA, not the worst city in the country, just a provincial, snobbish one, as a writer in *The New Yorker* once depicted it, ‘a retiring community for the newly wed’. The question epitomizes the surprise felt by anyone unable to understand how one of the editors could have lived so far away from the marvellous, prodigious, exciting, attractive city of their dreams. A few years before 1992, his questioner might have asked if he was Mexican.

Not far away from Wellesley, in Durham, NC, and around that time, the second editor of this book was also asked ‘Where are you from?’ This well-intentioned question is part of the ritual of small talk. It happens at parties, in the line at the supermarket, in the corridors of the department if you are a visiting scholar: ‘Where are you from?’ But the trivial question, with such an apparently simple answer for many people, contains all the ambiguity and complexity of self-definition relevant to the situation of Catalans. How does one suppose that we should answer the question ‘Where are you from?’ if you come from Barcelona? The official response is obvious: ‘I am Spanish’. That is what our passport and national identification document state. But it is not what many of us feel and these are not the exact words we would use, if we could reply – shall we say – ‘freely’. In the last 100 years of history, with short parentheses, for many Catalans the adjective ‘Spanish’ excludes any reality distinct from centralist, ‘Castilian’ and,

typically, *castizo* or *flamenco*. Most Catalans accept the Spanish flag and national anthem without emotion, if not to say with a certain reticence. Letting us be carried away by sentiment, the second response would be ‘I am a Catalan’. But then, no matter how sincere we feel, grave problems of comprehension arise for a large number of average Americans and Europeans: ‘Catalan? Where is Catalan?’ There is still, however, a third possible option, ‘I am from Barcelona’. It is recognizable that the 1992 Olympic Games and the architecture of Antoni Gaudí have put our city on the map and, therefore, the majority of interlocutors will make a gesture of understanding by nodding their head, even if they do not simply say: ‘Oh, Messi!’. Yes, Messi, or Gaudí: there’s where we live. In many ways this book is a multifaceted response to the question ‘where are you from?’

As we all well know, there was a basic transformation in the perception of Barcelona abroad before and after the 1992 Olympic Games, and its subsequent transformation into an international tourist destination. Ten days of Olympic competitions, with swimmers diving into the Montjuïc pool against the backdrop of the city, beautiful images that captivated TV audiences worldwide, did much to attract international attention towards the city. And the image remains, despite the notoriety the city has earned itself in the tourist rankings as the world capital of pickpockets, though the authorities seem none too concerned about that. Back in 1992, the number of television programmes, books, special magazine issues (on food – on tapas, something that had previously never existed in Barcelona), did a lot to attract interest in a city off the radar of international travellers until then.

Woody Allen’s 2008 infomercial, or publicity documentary, added further reasons for Barcelona’s attraction and promoted the mirage of exoticism for foreigners keen to visit the city. The growing interest in the city turned into courses on Barcelona and modernity, taught by ourselves and our many colleagues, invariably arousing great interest in people, promoting slightly more cultivated tourists and raising the number of enrolled students, which is of the utmost concern to departmental deans and directors in the North American university system, governed as it is by the relentless laws of supply and demand.

All this happened after the Olympics. The situation before 1992 is well known: Barcelona was a grey city that tourists spending a few days in Lloret de Mar or Salou tried to avoid. The Catalan capital did

not have any particular appeal to the modern visitor, except for those looking for the underground, as attested by some old novels picturing aspects of the red light district or ‘Barri Xino’ (Chinatown).¹ No one – apart from Carles Soldevila, the author of an original guide in 1929, *L’art d’ensenyar Barcelona* [The art of showing Barcelona] – could have suspected what would happen a few decades later, in the early twenty-first century. Though Barcelona had received some international attention on the occasion of the world fairs, in 1888 and 1929, they did not have any significant lasting effect in terms of attracting a steady influx of tourism.

The ‘Barcelona Brand’

A good amount of the interest generated today about Barcelona can be linked to the success of the branding of this city. When we talk about a city’s ‘brand’ we are talking about associating that city with an image. About imagining it in the sense of forming a mental image, representing it in our mind. We might say ‘adjectivizing’ the city, or re-baptizing it, or even tuning it, but we are in any case ostensibly dealing with conceptual images (figures: symbols, allegories, metaphors) and are therefore talking about imagination. Through 20 centuries of history Barcelona has been given countless nicknames.

The art historian Salvatore Settis argues that all significant cities aspire to strengthen and to grow their power of attraction: all important cities want to be better than the others, they want to feel unique or special, and they do this by displaying their symbolic capital. The way to distinguish yourself today in a highly competitive world is by emphasizing your uniqueness, and this uniqueness is often associated with a name and/or a nickname, words usually linked to the original name of the city. At a time when the words ‘branding’ and ‘brand’ are on everyone’s lips (as if they were thoroughly modern) and are applied to so many things, including countries and cities, it might

¹ Paul Morand’s *Ouvert la nuit* (1922), Francis Carco’s *Printemps d’Espagne* (1929), Henry de Montherlant’s *La Petite infante de Castille* (1929), Jean Genet’s *Journal d’un voleur* (1949), Peyre de Mandiargues’, *La Marge* (1967) or even George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

be worthwhile recalling that ‘brand’ actually comes from Old English and first surfaced in *Beowulf* circa the year 1000 (as *brond*), literally meaning something burnt, marked by fire. What we mean is that the discussion goes a long way back, and that the kind of brand referred to – although it has been known extensively over time to Barcelona (thanks to people like Al-Mansur (in the year 985); by the Duke of Berwick (in the siege of 1713–1714); by general Espartero, the man who said that for things to go smoothly in Spain you had to bomb Barcelona every 30 or 40 years... and he did so in 1842; and by another general, Francesco Pricolo, from the Italian Air Force, in 1938...) is neither easy nor sweet to relate to a city.

Today, from the old mark engraved through fire and bombs on the streets or the bodies of people, we have moved to the search for a brand that might be easily and pleasantly recorded in the memory of the hundreds of millions of potential visitors scattered around the world, precisely those who are not living in the city we refer to. When we talk about the ‘Barcelona Brand’ we are talking about associating the city (or the place) with an image. We are talking about imagining a place in the sense of the first meaning cited in the dictionary: forming a mental image of it, representing it in our mind.

Through a long history of more than 20 centuries, Barcelona has not only been given different names (Barcino, Barchinona, Barshiluna), and heard them pronounced in different ways, but it has also seen how whatever was tacked on to its core name changed according to the circumstances: the parallel adjectives, nicknames or names associated with the city’s name. Of all the nicknames that in one way or another are still with us, perhaps the oldest is *Cap i Casal*, from the Middle Ages, from the times when the city was the headquarters of the County of Barcelona, and was added to reassert its importance (the same name was used in the Kingdom of Valencia for the city of Valencia). The times when the City Council (Consell de Cent, one of the oldest proto-democratic bodies in Europe) would tell the king, when swearing his oath of allegiance: ‘We, who are as good as you, swear to you, who are no better than us, to accept you as our king and sovereign lord, provided you observe all our liberties and laws – but if not, not’...² One of the most common nicknames still in use for Barcelona also

² Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the editors.

comes from this period (or perhaps from the reference to the period): namely the ‘Ciutat comtal’ [City of the Counts], which through mental sovereignty has the drawback of turning the capital into, so to speak, a mini-capital. Although, we just learned: ‘if not, not’... and it has been like this again and again. And somehow we are still there, struggling. Subsequently, in the early seventeenth century, Miguel de Cervantes set a long episode of the second part of *Don Quixote* in Barcelona, where the city is evoked as an ‘archivo de cortesía’, a ‘repository of gentility’ (‘that repository of gentility, refuge of wayfarers, asylum of the poor, homeland of the brave, avenger of the wronged, and home of harmonious and lasting friendship, a city unique in its setting and beauty’): the formula went down well, with a clear preponderance in the times when Spanish was the official language of those who wished to refer to the city of Agustina de Aragón and Juan Antonio Samaranch – and is, in fact, still used to this day.

Come the nineteenth century and industrialization, Catalonia was sometimes referred to as the ‘factory of Spain’, although many of the leading lights in that economic and cultural recovery preferred for Barcelona the ring of the ‘Paris of the South’ (a stroll through the Eixample district shows that this was not merely an abstract idea). Nevertheless, for a Parisian of the ilk of Prosper Mérimée (the librettist of *Carmen*), at that time Barcelona was little more than ‘a city that masquerades as a capital and is the spitting image of a provincial industrial city’ The truth is that the skyline of Barcelona showed then a forest of chimneys and the Eixample, the plan for the urban expansion designed by Ildefons Cerdà, approved in 1859, was to take years to become a reality, with innumerable empty spaces, unpaved streets, etc. Hence, from this came another name (in this case, a nickname): at the very beginning of the twentieth century the journal *L’Esquella de la Torratxa* published many jokes about ‘*la ciutat del fang*’ [city of mud], and here was born the nickname ‘*can Fanga*’: a not very polite way for Catalans from outside the capital to refer to Barcelona and to those who come from there.

In any event, industrialization did lead workers to get organized, sparking heightening social tension which, at the turn of the century (and well into the twentieth century), turned the city’s streets into the reason why Barcelona, when Sant Jordi’s Day was not yet a holiday, was also called ‘*la Rosa de foc*’, ‘the rose of fire’. Or, if you want a brighter

and more literary version (penned by the poet Joan Maragall in his ‘Oda nova a Barcelona’ [‘New ode to Barcelona’], in the same year as the Tragic Week), ‘the Great Enchantress’, an image chosen by the art critic Robert Hughes as the title of one of his books about the city.

After the Spanish Civil War Barcelona was for decades Franco’s (and Porcioles’) *ciudad de ferias y congresos*. Perhaps even into the merry 1980s, when a poster by an illustrator, Mariscal, and a song by Gato Pérez joined forces to conjure up, in the broken-up ‘Bar Cel Ona’ [Bar Sky Wave], a way of defining a cheery/cheesy seaside summer holiday destination years before the Olympic Games were to open up the city’s waterfront for us to rediscover that the city actually had beaches... reachable, to boot, by underground or bus. These were the years when Eduardo Mendoza retrospectively novelized the era of modernism, talking about ‘la ciudad de los prodigios’ [‘the city of marvels’], the title of his novel of 1986. In that year the City Council launched the ‘Barcelona, posa’t guapa’ [Barcelona, get pretty] rehabilitation campaign, a popular, successful and long-lived initiative (three characteristics that rarely come together in politics, not even at the local level), and a campaign that played with picturing Barcelona as a woman (in Catalan and Spanish, ‘ciutat’ is a female noun). These initiatives coloured the years just before the 1992 Olympic Games bequeathed us Cobi, the Olympic mascot, and the idea of a compelling and attractive city, along with the ‘power’ which, perhaps divested of real arguments (‘Ella tiene poder, ella tiene poder / Barcelona es poderosa, Barcelona tiene poder’ [She has power, she has power / Barcelona is powerful, Barcelona has power]) was attributed to it by Peret and Los Manolos (‘romántica reina, la que nos parió’) [romantic queen who gave birth to us all] as Olympic excitement peaked.

At the turn of the century Barcelona’s municipal government exalted the city as ‘the best shop in the world’, underlining the importance, attractiveness and diversity of its trade, seen as an asset already related to the burgeoning boom of international tourism. Because Barcelona is now officially a huge, beautiful shop. A large number of guidebook writers think so, and repeat it, as well as hundreds of media people and investors, millions of football fans worldwide and many of Barcelona’s citizens, too. Not all of them, however: in recent years the crisis and some of the changes of the so-called tertiarization – the development of a tertiary (i.e. service) sector of an economy – have led to the

quite sporadic birth of new nicknames such as ‘Brandcelona’ (initially ironic, then integrated and turned into something fancy), ‘Farsalona’ (proposed by the anthropologist Manuel Delgado) or ‘Karcelona’. What this last nickname implies is that the city has become (or may become) a jail for its inhabitants.

Barcelona vs *Barcelonas*

Barcelona’s many nicknames have referred to its being a capital (albeit a minor one) of gentility, hard work, enchantment, explosive appeal, sun, and beaches, shops, and a relatively unfounded and self-satisfied power (but nevertheless quite convincing, at least on the inside). When all is said and done, if taken together these attributes might not amount to such a bad general description of the city, although obviously the question about the identity of the target still remains, not to mention the telling detail that all these nicknames have never worked as a sum, but rather as tags like the ones people used to stick on luggage long ago, always over the previous one, replacing it.

Which Barcelona might be imagined from each one of the nicknames the city has had and from each and every one of the different proposals that have recently appeared on the scene? One of the latest, the title of the film that Woody Allen came to shoot among us (*Vicky Cristina Barcelona*), was an original but ultimately laughable attempt at a new moniker crafted from wooliness and many of the clichés of crossover success in globalized times. What metaphor and nickname might we give Barcelona now, post-Cobi, to put the image of a pretty, powerful and sensational shop behind us? What we have now is certainly the triumph of a city (more than a model) without a clear nickname or unambiguous image, but which has undeniably become an international tourist destination.

The names given to Paris, the ‘Ville Lumière’ (actually coined in London almost two centuries ago), New York, the ‘Big Apple’ (through a campaign sponsored by the city in the late seventies), or Rome, the ‘Eternal City’, neither help nor hinder them. These are not random examples: Harold Bloom holds that Barcelona is a ‘city-of-cities’, like the three above, and that it is like them because they are cities of the imagination. The question is whether Barcelona is in the same league

as Paris, New York and Rome – and can therefore hold its own with or without a brand – or whether it desperately needs a revamped brand as a motor or lever and subsequently run the risk of getting stuck with this would-be happy (and inevitably one-dimensional) brand forever, like a piece of chewing gum or a stain (just as Avignon is the ‘City of the Popes’ or Dubrovnik ‘the Pearl of the Adriatic’). In 30 years, Barcelona has gone from living to be shown to living off being shown (with many citizens subsequently feeling as if they were mere extras in some parts of the city, rather than the main characters). This process has needed no brand, only the excellent work of the Barcelona Tourism consortium, created in 1993.

The difficulty of finding a single likeable slogan that would summarize the Barcelona brand stresses the fact that the capital is a multifaceted place. In 1990 Manuel Vázquez Montalbán published *Barcelonas*, a commanding survey of Barcelona over the centuries from a multifaceted perspective including history and politics, art, literature, architecture. This book was summarized in *Publisher’s Weekly* as ‘less a guide than a cultural resource for Barcelona-bound visitors’. Montalbán deplored an Olympic Games-inspired, four-year speculative frenzy of uncoordinated implacable destruction and construction. The city thus changed forever. A change that had been more than a century in the making had finally found its *raison d’être*. Montalbán claimed that his book was not ‘poetic’, or ‘historical’ but a ‘subjective documented chronicle’. He also stressed that he ‘wanted to highlight a few choir soloists so far unheard and contribute to a different memory of a multidimensional city’. This book was published in English in 1992. That was a remarkable year in the diffusion of an idea of Barcelona in the English-speaking world: besides the translation of *Barcelonas*, Robert Hughes published his *Barcelona*, a personal homage to the city that followed a historical chronological approach. Similar to Vázquez Montalbán, the Australian art historian had a personal relationship to the city. Finally, in that same year Thelma Kaplan’s *Red City, Blue Period. Social Movements in Picasso’s Barcelona* focused on episodes of the transformation of a conflictive society that emphasize the input of gender, class, and ritual.

Our selection, in line with Vázquez Montalbán approach, examines Barcelona not as one single city but as a city of cities. Geographical and cultural markers have shifted to accommodate, in each instance,

the ‘refashioning’ and ‘repackaging’ of the city. Thus in *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City* we offer a multifaceted assessment that will enrich the city’s experience of cultivated readers. It also suggests further reading for the culturally inclined. Some of the articles are brand new, commissioned for this volume, others are reprints (most of them updated) from recent publications in journals or volumes. A third group are much older texts. But they are not old: we consider that their vintage quality provides another look at the city that enriches the reader. They are witnesses to a growing interest in the study of Barcelona through the years, and they present from a diachronic perspective not only the transformation of the city but also how the ways of studying it have changed.

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We have divided the volume into five sections. In the first one, ‘City, history, and territory’, we include articles that depict the intimate relationship with space. They deal with the way space has been modified by politics and urbanism. Robert Davidson in ‘Barcelona: The siege city’ rightly points to the fact that Barcelona’s particular difference is based on the fact that modernity (and even postmodernity), with its social practices and strategies of development, have been conditioned intimately by the experience of siege. This explains why the ‘Barcelona brand’ has become so potent today: it is because inherent in Barcelona’s aesthetic and spatial distinction are the tensions of centuries of struggle for cultural survival as the main urban element of what constitutes Catalonia. Ferran Sagarra, in ‘Barcelona as an adaptive ecology’, examines the so-called ‘Barcelona Model’ (of urban regeneration) as a ‘model of urbanism’ deserving the name of ‘adaptive ecology’ because its form and urban system have been able to correspond to the increasingly complex reality, both cultural and social, of contemporary times. Architecture and modern urban design have shaped its urbanism, because designing systems in architecture has to do with ‘territoriality’. Special attention is devoted to the nineteenth-century transformation that has had a deep impact on the contemporary urban fabric of Barcelona and on its layout. Jaume Subirana’s ‘A present past. Barcelona street names, from Víctor

Balaguer to Pasqual Maragall' elaborates on the idea that street names tell a kind of story, a narrative of varying degrees of coherence that is often a 'message' on the part of planners. We can study how successful it has been in its incorporation into the imaginary of the city and its citizens, thus analysing the 'christening' of the streets in the Eixample, in the second half of the nineteenth century, and of the Vila Olímpica at the end of the twentieth century. If the 'living chronicle' of the Eixample tells of what has been (honouring and legitimating the city as a capital and Catalonia as a country), the living chronicle of the Olympic areas in Poblenou and Vall d'Hebron tells of what we would like the country and the city to have been.

Felipe Fernández-Armesto's "'The asylum of modern times": Barcelona and Europe' starts by discussing the notion of a 'European Barcelona' which he considers to be a truism redeemed by a mistake: it relies for its force on a presumed distinction between Barcelona and the rest of Spain – or, at least, the rest of Spain, without Catalonia. He analyses Barcelona's assumption of a European identity through relevant architectural examples from the last two centuries. He concludes 'Yet despite the admirable resilience with which the Barcelonese, for more than a thousand years, have made an adventure of every adversity and wrung an achievement from every disaster, none of the city's historic ambitions has been fulfilled'. Colm Tóibín's 'A fragile country' is a vivid personal account of visits to Barcelona (and Catalonia) that have taken place during the last week of April through the years. The writer reflects on festivities such as Sant Jordi, the meaning of Montserrat mountain and the relationship between Catalonia and the rest of Spain, the art scene, thanks to the opening of a Tàpies show, and the many local implications of football.

In the second section, 'City and society', we include a few symbolic readings of the city and some of its elements. Brad Epps's 'Barcelona and modernity' offers a swirling flood of precise comments on Barcelona's main themes. He provides a glimpse into the promises and problems, achievements and challenges, of modern Barcelona. Going beyond what many have pointed to: the wealth of the city's commercial and cultural offerings, its art and industry, its openness, as a port, to the business of the world, he examines with outstanding subtlety interactions between literature and urban space. Alejandro Quiroga's 'Football and identities in Catalonia' examines the issue of

dual patriotism and the use of football as an instrument to transmit national identities that has remained central in Catalan society since the death of Franco in 1975. In particular, he analyses the role of FC Barcelona as the alternative national team of Catalonia; the recreation of Catalonia's national football team; and the dialectic between Catalan and Spanish national narratives via soccer reporting. Gary McDonogh's 'The family and the city: Power and the creation of cultural imagery' focuses on an institution that embodied an elite 'sociology' of industrial society: the Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona's Opera House). Built in the nineteenth century under the aegis of the emergent elite, it was a dynamic construction whose physical structure and interpretation have been sensitive to shifting power relations. It continues to stand in modern Barcelona as a historical monument to class differentiation and the cohesion of the city's 'Good Families'. Thus, this building is key to past and present world views of the power groups that dominated Catalan industrial society. Elisa Martí-López's 'Memory and the city in Barcelona's cemeteries' explores Barcelona's cemeteries as one of the principal loci, material or immaterial, in which memory had become embodied and which remained their most specific representations and most dazzling symbols. As *lieu de mémoire* Barcelona's cemeteries exemplify wonderfully that 'the community's idea of itself in history cannot be disentangled from the ways it represents death'.

In the third section 'Art, architecture, and the city' we have included articles focusing specifically on some of the best-known artists and architects that have shaped an image of Barcelona. Jordi Falgàs, 'Picasso among his fellows at 4 Gats: Beyond *modernisme*?' studies Picasso's presence at the 4 Gats tavern, a place that served to catapult Picasso to fame. This happened thanks to an intergenerational setting, the fact that this was an interdisciplinary space where painters interacted with sculptors, illustrators, architects, musicians, and, especially, writers of various genres. It was also a place where travellers met on their way to and from Paris, then the capital of Western culture. The article covers Santiago Rusiñol and Ramon Casas, but also other figures whose works visitors can see at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC). Marià Marín's 'Gaudí: Poet of stone, artistic hedgehog' uses new research to confirm that Gaudí was a pioneer, well ahead of his time, creator of innovative work processes in addition to the new architectural forms that we all

now know. His abilities as a creator, inventor and innovator, beyond his identity as an architect, and based on his matchless style, brings us a legacy that can be applied to many current disciplines, from ergonomic design to business management. Jordana Mendelson's 'El Poble Espanyol / El Pueblo Español', analyses a construction built for the 1929 World Exhibition, the Poble Espanyol (Spanish Town), that was both an ideal dreamscape in which rituals of citizenship and nationality were performed, and an obvious construction in which the balance of harmony and fragmentation was constantly in danger of coming undone. She pays attention to the use of photography, which provided the necessary foundation for architects to construct the realistic illusions on which Primo de Rivera's dictatorship depended to build a coherent vision of nationality.

The fourth section, 'The Olympics and the city' deals with two major events that have had a remarkable impact on Barcelona, the 1992 Olympics and the Universal Forum of Cultures. Donald McNeill's 'Barcelona: Urban identity 1992–2002' explores how Barcelona has been catalanized, globalized, informationalized, gentrified, redesigned, and Europeanized. He pays attention to issues of urban identity, and how interventions in the urban landscape are intimately political, particularly the changing nature of the old town, the growing dogma of a technologically modernized city, the impact of deterritorialization on the city's icons, primarily its football club, the 1992 Olympics and the 2004 Forum. In turn Joan Ramon Resina's 'From the Olympic torch to the Universal Forum of Cultures. The after-image of Barcelona's modernity' critically scrutinizes policies and policymakers that have affected recent transformations of the city, starting with Oriol Bohigas' 'Mediterranean' predilection for the street as 'living space' that generated a politics of 'urbanization' of open spaces, the turning over of potential park sites to the architectural establishment; Barcelona's coming of age as a world city in the Olympics and the revitalization of the waterfront with the Forum event committed to a bland, undialectical image of diversity and with little attention paid to memory and the past. It is outspoken against the political forces that have turned Barcelona into the theme park of its past. Resina ends his essay by referring to 'the after-image of a people divested of their history, language, and sensory culture and the repertoire of related concepts – stripped, that is, of their *raison d'être* as people'.

The fifth and last section, ‘Literature, cinema, and the city’, briefly summarizes literary and cinematic versions/visions of the city. Josep Miquel Sobrer’s ‘*La Gran Encisera*: Three odes to Barcelona, and a film’, examines three odes to Barcelona, written by Jacint Verdaguer, Joan Maragall, and ‘Pere Quart’ [Joan Oliver] respectively, that make clear the changing faces of the city. They roughly correspond to three generations and offer a poetic history of the city. The section also addresses Barcelona at the turn of the twentieth century as seen by Pedro Almodóvar in his 1998 Oscar-winning film, *Todo sobre mi madre*. Stewart King’s ‘The deceptive dame: Criminal revelations of the Catalan capital’ studies the ways in which writers use crime fiction set in Barcelona to reveal what one character in Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *El delantero centro fue asesinado al atardecer* (1988) calls the ‘palabras que [cada época] necesita para enmascararse’ [words that each era needs in order to mask itself]. King analyses both Catalan- and Castilian-language crime novels, as well as works written in English. Benjamin Fraser’s ‘A *Beautiful* city: Alejandro González Iñárritu’s filmic critique of the “Barcelona Model”’ launches an urban reading of the 2010 film *Beautiful*. He makes the case that the film functions as a complement to theoretical critiques of urbanism such as that of Lefebvrian theorist Manuel Delgado. The article helps to contextualize the struggles of immigrant and marginalized characters against the widespread, triumphant image of Barcelona as a ‘model’ European destination city in extra-filmic discourse.

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At the beginning of this introduction we stated that the discussion that brought us here started a few years ago. As a matter of fact, it started decades, maybe centuries ago, and could go on forever. Ours is a small contribution to a reflection on Barcelona that follows the steps of many others. Contributors to the volume have helped us to show the richness and the ambitions (sometimes illuminating, sometimes irrational) of the city, and its ways ‘of making leaps of civic and architectural faith against all odds, and winning’ (Robert Hughes’s words at the close of his 1992 guide, *Barcelona*). Hughes refers to Gaudí’s Sagrada Família and, quoting Joan Maragall, calls it ‘boastful and treacherous

and vulgar'. In this book we have tried to refocus both quotations to talk about and discuss not a building but the city, this city of ours, yesterday's rose of fire and today's international attraction: 'Our Barcelona, the Great Enchantress'.