

**Mariàngela Vilallonga, Margarida Casacuberta & Anna Perera Roura (ed.):**  
***La Construcció Literària del Territori: Costa Brava i Empordà, Girona, Institut de Llengua i Cultura Catalanes, 2018, 327 p., ISBN: 978-84-9984-436-7.***

The focus of this volume of essays comes from a conference on the theme of literary construction of territory: intersections of place and literary projections, depictions of specific spaces whether real or fictitious or in-between, all within the area of northern Catalonia, especially Girona, but on both sides of the Pyrenees. The authors write on historical treatments of language/space beginning with Romanticism and the re-institution of the *Jocs Florals*, to the most recent novels of current writers. Articles are grouped into four categories: a general theoretical framework, both sides of the border, the popularization and naming of the Costa Brava, and transformations of the countryside during the twentieth century.

The general framework sets the reader up to analyze a series of contrasts and tensions: author against territory, reality as in the eye of the beholder, stratifications and palimpsests, effects of literary descriptions on perceptions of place, imaginary spaces as well as those transformed by literature. Literature offers metaphors to read the world, including such unusual points of view as gastronomy. Specific places become fictitious, such as the Verona of Romeo and Juliette, to which balcony and window are added and become tourist attractions, whereas fictitious places, like Crusoe's island and Borges' «Aleph», are perceived as realistic.

The sociological transformation of the area is divided between inland mountain and coastal scenes. The mountain, with its rural villages and isolation, remains more conservative, whereas the tourism that starts gradually on the Costa Brava, attracting artists, writers, and well-off bourgeoisie, becomes the mass tourism of the Spanish triathlon of eating, drinking, and sex while the coastline becomes obliterated by high-rise, cheap apartments. Border cities like La Jonquera are suddenly trilingual, full of mistakes in all languages but clearly understandable to tourists seeking booze, cigarettes, and brothels.

A constant in the study of specific authors is the very fluidity of genres as well as points of view. For Eugeni d'Ors, the forest comes to represent the idealization of *noucentisme* as well as the standardization of language; Joan-Daniel Bezsonoff explores the tension between the memory of the author and actual reality. Maria dels Àngels Vayreda's novel is brutally realistic in its depiction of the bombings of Figueres at the beginning of the Civil War, but reconstruction of collective memory of experiences silenced in their aftermath requires imaginative interpretations. When it comes to the development of the Costa Brava, the work of Ferran Agulló is primary and journalistic, and connected to tourism only in its very early stages. Josep M. de Sagarra uses prose and poetry in his vision of the destruction of the coast, the inverse of *locus amoenus* where liberty becomes enslavement. Joan Brossa's satire comes through in his vision of Lloret as well as Mallorca, both disfigured by the tourism so encouraged by the dictatorship. Aurora Bertrana concentrates on l'Escala, which she knew well through her friend Caterina Albert, as she points to the hypocritical relaxation of the strict morals of the regime in order to cash in on the spending of foreigners. Vicenç Pagès and Adrià Pujol also discuss L'Empordà, concentrating on a sense of loss and anguish in novels of the twenty-first century but based on the many writers who came before to describe the beauty of the place.

From journalism to tourist guides to the most imaginative fantasy, the various visions of this particular space over a century and a half is enhanced by many points of view, including several British travelers and/or residents of the area. John Langdon-Davies and Nancy Johnstone both resided along the Costa Brava before the Civil War began. Idyllic upon their arrival, the war engulfed them both. Their early books were fundamental in representing the Costa Brava to the English-speaking world whereas their following texts brought the war to the forefront. Decades later, James Graham Ballard uses various settings along the Costa Brava in his novels, at times autobiographical, which flow from surrealism to hyperrealism and into which he places the Wandering Jew and/or the Flying Dutchman in a postmodern space.

The great advantage of this kind of collection is that it brings together various points of view, including from different disciplines. Together, the articles offer a broad vision of the subject/space, with an emphasis on literature but including geography, history, art, journalism and politics. While the volume is enhanced by bilingual abstracts, a heavy-handed editor is needed especially for the English translations.

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