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Busby, G.

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## **Madrid: Literary Fiction and the Imaginary Urban Destination**

**Graham Busby, Maximiliano E. Korstanje  
and Charlie Mansfield**

### **Abstract**

This study selects novels from French and Spanish language traditions, which may not be available to English-speakers, in order to determine if specific aspects throw light on our understanding of Madrid as a destination. Marc Lambron's *L'Impromptu de Madrid* and Antonio Munoz Molina's *Mysteries of Madrid* are taken as proof of the influence the narrative can exert on social daily life and consumption. Narrative foregrounds the fictions which are at stake in imagining the city as destination and also provides a vehicle for presenting the much broader social forces that converge in the author at the time of imagining and writing.

**Keywords:** literary fiction, destination image

### **Introduction**

Madrid lies at the heart of Spain, a capital city with a history of colonisation and liberalising political change; Spain was both coloniser and colonised and incorporates Romans, Iberians, Celts, Goths and the medieval Arabic migrations from North Africa. For Madrid, however, as Boyd (1986:11) observes, the city must 'concede seniority and antiquity to Rome, Paris and London' for it has only been a capital city since 1562. This study argues that historical narratives of the city and its built heritage, which contemporary writers continuously develop in their own literary fictions, provide a reading of cities which ensure continued interest by visitors or tourists. Capital cities, too, as their name suggests, act as magnets attracting capital, labour and power to a centralised urban space (Lodge 2009: *passim*); a process which in turn produces a monumental architecture to display this power and hence further enhances the attractiveness of the image of the city. Through the analysis of literary texts this study will argue that the urban space of Madrid is readable by the city tourist, and that agencies managing Madrid as a destination could look to more contemporary novels to interpret the city for their potential visitors.

In many cases, the monumental architecture and the cultural artefacts housed in the buildings of capital cities are the primary motivation for tourists and excursionists (Beerli & Martín 2004); Madrid, as capital city, offers such buildings – more than one royal palace, three internationally-renowned art galleries and significant ecclesiastical architecture; the importance of key cultural attributes are identified by Korstanje (2010). Nonetheless, given that Madrid is a key gateway city, it is surprising that visitor numbers are not higher, at around six million per year, a point remarked on by (Garín-Muñoz 2004). Visitor attractions are frequently used to market the destination area (Busby 2002) and, when they are of international significance, they become icons for promotion to certain tourist market segments; for example, Niagara Falls and honey-mooners (Urry 1990) or, in the case of Madrid, art lovers and the Museo del Prado.

The fact that cultural heritage is dominant in and around Madrid is illustrated in the table; however, whilst the Prado has been available to the visitor for centuries, the concept of literary tourism, represented by the Cervantes Train, running from Madrid to the author's nearby birthplace city of Alcalá de Henares, with costumed interpreters on board, suggests what Inglis & Holmes (2003) refer to as a *heritagization* process, whereby cultural resources are converted into products for tourist consumption. This use of destination-based cultural capital (Busby & Meethan 2008) evinces post-modern trends and confirms the assertion that what 'turns a tract of land, monument, park, historic house or coastline into a heritage attraction is often the attitude of the public' (Millar 1999: 6). Millar's view is illustrated by the Cervantes Birthplace Museum, for how many visitors realise it was rebuilt in 1955? (Boyd 1986) – Cervantes was born in 1547. Munt (1994) has argued that such simulacra are important but, with the Birthplace Museum, authenticity can be said to be conferred by interpretation (McCrone *et al* 1995).

Prentice (1993) identifies twenty-three types of heritage visitor attraction (HVA); nearly all of his types are to be found in and around the city; Table 1 indicates some of the forms. This paper considers the visitor attractions to be found in and around the city, given that they influence destination image to some extent alongside

representations of Madrid as they appear in literary fiction in the French and Hispanic languages.

**Table1. Principal visitor attractions in and around Madrid**

Visitor attraction	HVA (Prentice 1993)	Paid admission
Museo del Prado	Yes	Yes
Museo Reina Sofia	Yes	Yes
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza	Yes	Yes
Museo de América	Yes	Yes
Royal Palace	Yes	Yes
Descalzas Monastery	Yes	Yes
Plaza Mayor	Yes	No
Retiro Park	Yes	No
El Rastro street market	Yes	No
Cervantes Train (to Alcalá de Henares)	No	Yes
Cervantes Birthplace (Alcalá) – World Heritage Site	Yes	No
El Escorial	Yes	Yes

### **Language, Narrative and Social Engagement**

Linguistics has determined that language encompasses certain symbols which are intended to allow human interaction (Bram, 1961). Language is considered to be a human system for dissociating time from space. Human beings have the capacity of abstraction which allows them to perceive the world across three aspects of time in European languages such as English, French and Spanish: present, past and future (Berger and Luckmann, 1972). For that reason, language is a preliminary process for human socialization and narration, a prerequisite for engagement in a particular cultural group. Nonetheless, under certain circumstances, language plays a pivotal role as a social identifier in the interaction of different social groups. Language not only allows groups to socialise but also gives rise to a form of hegemony where

speakers have no access to a particular language (Veblen, 1974: 403-406).

Language is therefore part of an individual's heritage and history as well as the vehicle through which heritage is expressed and conceived. Since each culture has evolved in different ways, each culture has their own system of expression. Studying other languages has a long history in diplomacy: Roman patricians sent their sons to study in Greece while Indians learnt Persian and Arabic; Russian aristocrats learned French as a second language to gain access to courtly dialogue in western Europe (Bram, 1961). United Nations organisations always include French as one of their working languages; consider, for example, the World Tourism Organisation's web-site. One of the novels in this study is written by a French diplomat and examines the world of French diplomacy in Spain.

Even though scholars like Von Humboldt (1999) and Terwillinger (1968) believe each language can be translated into another, for Chandler, this statement should be reconsidered. He proposes that semiotic structures can only be passed from one to another language by the application of analogy (Chandler, 2002). The result is that there is always a lack when we cannot access a culture directly in its own language. Diplomats strive to cross that linguistic gap to reach understanding; for tourists, this gap has two effects, one, the frustration of bridging the gap of survival (Hall, 1989) and, two, feelings of admiration and curiosity (Keen, 1982) which may be associated with a realisation that they are missing something, that there is more to know and that it remains unknowable and, hence, exotic. Although we are aware of power relationships in tourism between Anglophone consumer and aboriginal speakers (Altman and Finlayson, 2003), the exotic nature of foreign languages may be a further narrative for consumption by the visitor. What the academic research can do, though, in applying, for example, French critical traditions to French writing using English as the communication medium is to provide a view of culture that is not normally accessible to the monoglot Anglophone. This study will also attempt to provide that access.

Language and narration play a crucial role in attracting visitors to a tourist destination (through novels, brochures, word-of-mouth and web-sites) as well as the depiction by these visitors once they return to their own cultural language groups at home.

Kevin Meethan proposes that the narratives of place extend our understanding from the visual to an image that is developed through language (Meethan *et al* 2006), as such, he suggests that through narrative 'a more active engagement with the social world takes place' (Meethan *et al* 2006: 7), and as researchers 'we can arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the production and consumption of tourist spaces' (Meethan *et al* 2006: 7). Tourists see a destination pre-determined by their own language and the narratives available to them in the languages they understand. This study selects novels from French and Spanish language traditions which may not be available to English-speakers in order to determine if specific aspects of that language culture throw light on our understanding of Madrid as a destination. Further, it examines the novels using a French critical tradition which sheds new light on the functions of the imaginary and the novel.

### **Fiction and the Urban Destination**

This analysis draws on research in travel writing (Mansfield 2008) and the relationship between the literary novel and urban space (Hollis 2009). The relationship between the nineteenth century novel of Victor Hugo *Notre-Dame* and development of the cathedral of Notre Dame into an architecturally-themed medieval visitor attraction by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in 1864 has been documented (Hollis 2009: 226). Hollis shows how a fictional work, albeit encouraged by the novelist, had a profound effect on the re-modelling of the cathedral in the city centre of Paris. The novel, its translations and its later films continue to have a significant effect on the imagination of visitors to Paris, stimulating the desire to travel and see this monumental architecture; indeed, the films may have greater effect today than the literature (Busby & Klug 2001).

In this paper, the twentieth century novel of Marc Lambron (1988, 2005) *L'Impromptu de Madrid (roman)*, and the novel of Antonio Munoz Molina (1992) *The Mysteries of Madrid*, are taken as a research corpus to investigate the imaginary of Madrid from distinct language groups. The novel (or *roman*, in French) can be considered as an outcrop of the imaginary of a language group or cultural group. The novel's realism (using the word as a literary term), since its rise in nineteenth century publishing centres of Paris and London, is predicated upon the author making clear in language

sufficient detail to render the setting believable. Novelists regularly draw on the shared experience of their readers for particular cities, using street names and even using the names of affluent or poor districts as cultural and economic markers which act as both a shorthand in their stories and as a device for greater verisimilitude. Marc Augé (1997) has indicated the Romanesque (novelistic and architectural) relationship of the city and the novels of the nineteenth century where the city acts as a frame for the novel itself, and goes a little further when he says (Augé 1997) that the city exists through the imaginary, but unfortunately Augé does not fully resolve his proposition in the cited work.

However, the novel or *roman* is a *romance* in technical terms and, through narrative, it renders its subject matter desirable. Furthermore, Bernstein asserts that Habermasian depth hermeneutics (reading of the self) has narrative at its centre (Bernstein 1995); for this reason, Bernstein says that Habermas' depth hermeneutics has all the characteristics of a normal hermeneutics, *viz.* historical, contextual and productive elements. Bernstein offers, as an illustration, the example of beliefs within people. For beliefs to have the value of true beliefs they must be acquired without indoctrination or censorship; if there is a mark of the origin of the indoctrination in the belief then this is a false belief. The value in western European culture for belief acquisition to take place without the mark of the origin is when the belief is acquired in the field of reason and in an ideal speech situation. Westerners continue to hold the novel as an ideal speech situation, considering it free from indoctrination. The days of product placement in novels have not yet arrived. So much so that, along with self-identification, the realist aspects of the novel are incorporated into the reader's imaginary. This argument was first proposed in relation to film (Mansfield 2001).

Bernstein's theoretical proposal offers some insight into the powerful effect of novels in forming travellers' views about a particular urban space, and hence about the city as a desirable destination. This way of seeing the city spread out before us as a desirable location is further discussed by Henri Lefebvre (1974 & 2000)

'A landscape also has the seductive power of all *pictures*, and this is especially true of an urban landscape ... that can impose itself immediately as a *work*. Whence the archetypal touristic delusion of being a participant in such a work, and of understanding it completely, even though the tourist merely passes through.' (Lefebvre 2000: 189)

Lefebvre expands on this by developing the concept of a mirage for the city viewer's ego; he explains that the mirage of the urban landscape produces the illusion for the ego that a new and more authentic or, as he says, real life exists across the urban space which requires only the smallest of gestures to reach. However, it is an illusion. The seemingly small step to the new, real life from the life of the everyday is always there but always illusory under the conditions in which westerners find themselves. (Lefebvre 2000).

A further element to support our use of a corpus of published fiction describing a city is drawn from Habermasian notions of rational-critical debate. The published work offers us, as a cultural group, a more or less accessible and fixed corpus which we can share whilst evolving our critical responses. It is with these methodological starting points that this work approaches first of all the Marc Lambron (born 1957) text on Madrid, *L'Impromptu de Madrid*, which to date has not been translated into English, but one may translate the title as 'Madrid on the fly', 'off the cuff', or even 'Unexpected Meeting in Madrid'. Although there is an English word *impromptu*, the French title suggests something tactical about the narrator's movements in the city.

What makes *L'Impromptu* valuable for an analysis of how a particular urban space is conceived culturally is Lambron's structure in the novel. Repeatedly, he treats his readers to tableaux of Madrid, mainly set in summer, in which the main character, who is also the I-narrator, embarks on very short crossings of the city without clearly resolving any plot in the story. Indeed the main body of the text is told in flashback by the young French diplomat (the I-narrator) who has returned to Madrid after an absence of three years. The main action, therefore, unfolds in the 1980s. Lambron uses what Monique L'Huillier (1999) calls the literary and historic present tense in French for this part of the story; the use of the present in this way has its



antecedents in academic history books of courtly intrigue. The use of the present to recount past events gives immediacy to the experiences of the young diplomat which recalls the philosophical position of Henri Bergson; Bergson argues that immediate experience leads to an understanding of reality. Bergson makes an appearance in the text (Lambron 77) taking tea at the Ritz in Madrid so it is reasonable to deduce that the readers of the text need to be aware of the interplay between the immediate verb tense and the real-ness of the image being painted of Madrid, the city. This is a linguistic feature that would be lost to an Anglophone audience and, arguably extremely distracting to the reader's pleasure if an attempt were made to translate it or footnote it.

### **Analysing the Tableaux of Lambron's Madrid**

These tableaux in *L'Impromptu* build a picture of Madrid from the point of view of the I-narrator's imaginary. Although this narrator is Parisian, he also endeavours to universalise to a greater western imaginary, for example, by imagining how many vacationing American widows are listening to the same music as the I-narrator, in their beach-side hotels:

‘Sur combien de veuves américaines en villégiature étaient tombés ces musiques, combien d'hôtels de bord de plage [...]’ (Lambron 37)

In fact, it is American-ness that the text at times signals in the architecture of late twentieth-century Madrid: it is 'the largest village in Spain' (p.27) and the Ritz Hotel on the Castellana is 'America dumped in [that] village' (p.25). While in the north of the city, around Orense Street with the Azca skyscraper (gratte-ciel) he sees a fake New York City.

However, the architecture that he traverses most often elicits the history and the political changes Spain has undergone: 'It is a city built a century ago when the upper middle-classes had had the money. And then renewed in the sixties, when Franco took their money to build districts for the poor.' (p.43 translation Mansfield).

Even as he maps the zone around the street where he lived as a diplomat, Moreto Street, he lets the history show through the walls of the monuments. For example an admiral's limousine interrupts his description of the first building on his street, Picasso's *Guernica* stands out on Cason del Buen Retiro, and he sees the events of 1936 and Peron's widow in a tower of black magic and romance in a nearby street. Very much like Flaubert's novel (1869) *L'Education sentimentale*, the streets are being read like a history book of the events that changed European society forever.

Lambron's nine chapters map out significant historical shifts in power as Spain develops. Spain was inextricably linked politically with the French ruling elite from Spain's declaration of war on the first French Republic in 1793 until 1814 when the French Imperial Army was removed.

**Table 2**

CHAPTER	PAGE RANGE	HISTORICAL YEAR IN MADRID
I	11-23	1940
II	25-39	1910
III	41-61	1920s
IV	63-76	1937
V	77-93	1777
VI	95-103	Set in Paris
VII	105-120	
VIII	121-132	1780
IX	133-141	1929, EU entry 1986

List of Lambron's Chapters and the Years in Madrid's History.

***The Mysteries of Madrid* by Antonio Munoz Molina**

Antonio Munoz Molina (born within months of Lambron in 1956, and so a member of the post baby-boomers, often called in French the *génération galère* – i.e. no continuity of employment, no pension) describes in his novel *The Mysteries of Madrid* the adventures of Lorencito Quedasa, using, like Lambron descriptions of the city streets, and reference to the key monuments of the Spanish capital. The novel

lays emphasis on the diversity of social strata and classes that make up this urban society. Briefly, the plot is an investigation by Quesada to explain the disappearance of a relic known as El Santo Cristo de la Greña, originally housed in the small-town of Magina. One of the main characteristics of this novel is an ongoing mistrust of surface appearances. *The Mysteries of Madrid* synthesizes these feelings by showing images to the readers of Madrid's urban landscapes. Using the figure of the literary hero, embodied in the character of Quesada, Munoz ascribes to the geographical monuments of this city the notions of civilisation and of progress. This hero-protagonist embodies exclusion, an exclusion experienced by the people of Madrid at the time Molina is writing.

In one of his adventures, he is dropped from a motor car near a sign which says 'Welcome to Madrid, the European capital of Culture'. Molina writes in one of his chapters ironically the 'site of deeds' to refer to the misery and conditions of the town. The social sensibility of the author concerning questions of exclusion are present throughout the text. The plot hinges on Lorensito Quesada's attempt to escape from the shanty dwelling where he starts his story. In contrast with the misery of Lorensito's shanty, the prosperity of Madrid is palpable once Lorensito (Molina) steps down from the bus in the Gran Via. The author deploys two well-defined symbols: the anxiety felt by someone who is alienated by the social pathologies of sprawling conurbations, and the admiration they feel for the progress the capital city centralises and presents like Lefebvre's Ego image discussed earlier.

The convergence of capital's splendour with the growing pauperism that lurks everywhere in the outskirts of Madrid in the last decade of the twentieth century makes of *The Mysteries of Madrid* an anthropological work. This unequal development in many Spanish cities began with the advent of globalisation. This may be compared to the Argentina of 2001, addressed by Alicia Entel in her book *The City and its fears*. At that time, while the middle-classes discovered the benefits of globalisation, the greater part of the population was excluded and forced into high rates of unemployment. What Lorencito tries to recover is not only the Santo Cristo (a relic over 400 hundred years old) but symbolically the dignity lost at the hands of the free global market. Paradoxically, globalisation has been a double-bind for

emergent societies. For on one hand, globalisation allows a much more fluid material transaction between First and Third World. This means under-industrialised societies are put in a difficult position to compete with other more industrialised nations. As a less industrialised country opens its doors to the west, its population experiences benefits associated with new air routes; it finds it has undiscovered tourist resorts, and exploitation of these brings an increase in purchasing power for those associated with this exploitation. On the other hand, global competition is often too great a challenge for Third World states that lack advanced design and processing capabilities. The peripheral nations enjoy fewer possibilities to prosper. This is exactly the contrast that Munoz-Molina captures in his novel, making it a useful foil to the Madrid seen through the eyes of Lambron's character, a member of the wealthy political elite.

### **Post-modernity in tourism studies**

Returning to Entel's theorisation, she proposes that urban insecurity paves the way for a progressive decline of solidarity between wealth groups in modern societies. The confidence that people have in their political elites and institutions is inherently linked to the efficacy of the administration. This trust is also based on the manner in which nation states process the complaints of their wealth groups. While the political elite are processing the complaints adequately, and communicating that successful processing, society continues to function even when the wealth groups are living very different lives. For example, neo-liberal discourse in the United States during the banking failures of 2008-2011 prevented serious urban conflict even though 20% of Americans found themselves living below the poverty line,

Entel acknowledges that there are two types of fear present in these moments of uncertainty. The first sort is collectively experienced as diffuse and fuzzy in the public's perception. This sentiment often is not possible to determine but seems to play a pivotal role as a prerequisite for the second type of fear which surfaces whenever risks materialise. To use the example of the US again, the diffuse fear of unemployment underlies the much more profound panic associated with being excluded from the material reciprocity circuit. In a society that has been reduced to monetarism for all its social transactions, the sudden lack of money removes the

unemployed worker from social participation. A similar process can be seen in the Madrid of the novels in this study. The capital city had been devastated by long years of civil war (Entel 2007: *passim*) so that during periods of unemployment more profound fears surfaced in the urban population.

The point here is that postmodern thought plays a pervasive role in the process of the development of cities with a turbulent history, as they become tourist destinations. Marc Augé and Dean MacCannell have examined the postmodern urban space. The term non-places (*non-lieux*) was originally coined by Augé. His 1992 book title *Non-lieux. Introduction a une anthropología de la sub-modernité* may be translated into English as *Non-Places, an introduction to the anthropology of postmodernity*. It must be noted that this term is an echo of the Pierre Nora phrase *les lieux de mémoire* which came from a seminar series Nora led between 1978 and 1981 at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris. In his 1984 preface, Nora fears the loss of the nation-state's memory sites, a fear perhaps realised a decade later. Indeed it is the rapidity of this disappearance that prompts him to begin his inventory, as he says here, of the most striking symbols:

'La disparition rapide de notre mémoire nationale m'avait semblé appeler un inventaire des lieux où elle s'est électivement incarné et qui, par la volonté des hommes ou le travail des siècles, en sont restés comme les plus éclatantes symboles: fêtes, emblèmes, monuments et commémorations, mais aussi éloges, dictionnaires et musées' (Nora 1997: 15).

Nora's list of memory-sites could so easily be a list of Prentice's (1993) HVAs for tourism studies. In his project, Augé considers whether a place can be catalogued as a place because it refers to Nora's broader process of heritage, tradition and identity. A place which lacks memory sites can be named a non-place. He discusses these sites of anonymity as places where the condensation of the visual and of mundane contemporary events predominates (Augé, 1996: 83) (Augé, 1998a). His main thesis is that non-places emerge as a result of the advent of the liberalised market as the same moment as the appearance of postmodernity. Postmodernity for him is the decline in social bonds and a loss of trust in others in society, the phenomenon discussed above by Entel. To this milieu, Augé adds a set of other phenomena,

including people's loss of attachment from territory and tradition. Starting from the premise that a place produces identity, Augé suggests that a non-place upends the territoriality of home. Transit and mobilities play a pivotal role in the configuration of these kinds of places. Augé finds examples of non-places everywhere ranging from bus stations and airports to hospitals. Nevertheless, Augé's argument is currently incomplete. From his work to date, it is unclear how to determine the factors which create non-places nor does he provide a specific contextualization of the moment a place passes to be a non-place and vice versa. Ultimately, in tourism fieldwork a range of examples can be studied which undermine Augé's original thesis. Examples abound where even an airport can be considered a site of identity for travel industry workers.

Augé's anxiety as an embedded ethnologist working out in the field of the super-urban space may be explained by Virilio's argument that fear works as a mechanism of self-indoctrination. Large capital-intensive cities associated with a growing population provide a proximity which prevents real encounter. Overcrowding in the urban space in the era of mediated conform converges with a much broader psychological isolation (Virilio, 2007: 17). This jeopardises the way an ethnological researcher in the field constructs otherness. Deregulation of time for the researcher creates an empty space which is often filled by the alarmist discourse of mass media. The voyeurism of disaster, a key component of mass media news, which impinges on the security of citizenship, as mentioned earlier, is written into the findings of the field researcher.

In a later work, *The Impossible Journey: tourism and its images*, Augé addresses the points criticised in his previous works, drawing on topics exclusively related to tourism and hospitality. Augé suggests tourism deploys fictionalised forms of entertainment based on the logic of spectacle, simulacra and visual saturation (Augé, 1998b). From his perspective, tour operators re-map towns to create new time schedules and attractions in sites which are specifically reserved for non-interaction. The impossible journey represents the end of real displacement, the end of new discoveries of indigenous people whose customs differ from the visiting tourist. That way, the consumers themselves become the consumed.

Augé reminds his readers that the accessibility to a tourist destination, for example a beach or a museum is circumscribed by the imbalances in society. In his appraisal of Le Mont-Saint-Michel (a monumental tourist attraction on the border of Normandy and Brittany in France) the French ethnologist re-examines the role played by infrastructure and literary discourses in the conception of certain imaginaries which trigger tourist consumption. He proposes that what a consumer is seeing at the time of purchasing a tour package corresponds with an illusion resulting from the interaction of the imaginary, and previous stereotypes. However, in Augé's development the encounter between hosts and guest will never occur. The bubble of Lefebvre's perfect place, the destination city seen from afar, is burst thanks to the decline of the visitor's trust in others. For Augé the convergence of the imaginary and marketing fiction means the tourist journey can never take place in reality. For this reason, Augé proposes that tourism should be understood as a complex process of fictionalisation of authentic travels.

In agreement with Virilio, Augé argues that towns are experiencing a rise in visual saturation which attracts thousands of visitors but gradually prevents the visitors from enjoying personal contacts. In these urban tourist spots mass-consumption predominates resulting in a non-authentic theatrical spectacle of the world. Similar concerns can be seen in MacCannell who warns of a type of tourism articulated as a form of ideology whose end is postmodern market expansion. The emotional issues of people are being relegated to specific staged places where leisure converges with unreality (MacCannell, 2003: 10). However, this theatricality has been present since the medieval European city staged its mystery plays over periods of several days each year (Gréban 1470).

Even though, in recent years the writing of Augé has gained considerable acceptance in tourism and anthropology fields, researchers must take care not to consign the people whose identity is linked to Augé's non-places as non-persons.

## Conclusion

This study explores literary, fictional works that focus on Madrid as a primary object of sightseeing; the tableaux of Lambron's Madrid and the *Mysteries of Madrid*, are taken as proof of the influence the narrative can exert on social daily life and consumption. To some extent, societies weave their own narratives in order to understand the events of political history. This study encourages for a new methodology of research with the aim of expanding the comprehension of what urban tourism means. To complement the studies using quantitative approaches, this qualitative methodology to examine tourist and local identity is valuable in completing the picture. Narrative not only foregrounds the fictions which are at stake in imagining the city as destination, but also provides a vehicle for presenting the much broader social forces that converge in the author at the time of imagining and writing. Using narrative and the story provides an opportunity to address one of the limitations of positivism over the last two hundred years.

Whilst Augé, like Edgar Morin in his work in Brittany, must be commended for re-invigorating the method of the engaged ethnologist working in the field, this paper shows how it is important to continue the research practice of interrogating the narratives of local people in tourism studies. At the same time it is valuable to tease out the stories of the individuals from political elites and institutions, such as those in Lambron's novel. This study shows that when members of elites publish their individual views they often do not reflect the alarmism of mass media nor do they show the cold indifference of capital but attempt to restore social cohesion through sharing memory.

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#### **Author details**

**Graham Busby**, University of Plymouth, UK

**Maximiliano E. Korstanje**, Palermo University, Argentina

**Charlie Mansfield**, University of Plymouth, UK