

## BOOK REVIEW

Álvaro Girón, Oliver Hochadel, and Gustavo Vallejo (eds.). *Saberes transatlánticos. Barcelona y Buenos Aires: conexiones, confluencias, comparaciones (1850–1940)*. Aranjuez: Ediciones Doce Calles, 2017. 274 pp.  
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**Antonio Carbone**

German Historical Institute in Rome

carbone@dhi-roma.it

*Saberes transatlánticos* is a relevant contribution to the growing fields of urban history of science and global urban history. The volume investigates the relationship between two cities, Barcelona and Buenos Aires, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, a history which has virtually remained untold until now. The comparability of the two cities and their deep entanglements lie in their shared and complex relationship both to Spanish imperial heritage and Western modernity, among other reasons. Both cities, neither of which represented the center of empire in the preceding centuries, saw themselves as new centers of modernity within the Hispanophone world from the late nineteenth century onwards. The volume also contributes to the wider field of transatlantic history by integrating Daniel Rodgers' narrative in *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Belknap Press, 1998) and counterbalancing its focus on the North Atlantic. The edited collection therefore appeals to a wide group of readers with interests ranging from the social and cultural history of science to the history of modern cities, and more generally to transatlantic history.

Oliver Hochadel opens the volume by providing a contextualization of the book and its overall goal of contributing to the intertwinement of urban and global history through the history of science. He explains that, when considered as a whole, the collected contributions constitute a trans-urban *histoire croisée* that intends to move beyond the idea of a compartmentalized comparison by focusing on the ways in which the two cities mutually influenced each other. The structure of the volume follows the aim of reconstructing this history of entanglements and highlights the circulation of people, knowledge and bodies, and the resulting effects on the history of the two cities. The three contributions that make up the first part of the book concentrate on Catalans in the River Plate Metropolis. The contributions by Hugo E. Biagini, Mariana Brito Olvera, Margarita Pierini, and Saúl Luis Casas in this first part focus on the Catalans' importance in shaping the press, politics, and culture in Buenos Aires. Considered together, these contributions underline the multifaceted influence of Catalans in shaping a variety of political and cultural practices in Buenos Aires. Whereas the first part of the volume focuses on the influence of Barcelona in Buenos Aires, the second and central part of the book proposes actual *historias cruzadas* and revolves around the reciprocal influences between the two cities. The authors of the contributions in this second part, namely Gustavo Vallejo, María José Betancor Gómez, and Álvaro Girón, tell this entangled history by concentrating on individuals who travelled between the two cities and by identifying specific fields of intense cultural and political interlinking, such as the exchange between museums and the circulation of approaches for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. They highlight the mechanisms of circulation and identify the difficulties that some of the actors under analysis faced in their transatlantic career. The third and final part of the volume delves into the specific issue of the changing ideas and geographies of bodies in the two cities. The authors José Pardo-Tomás, Alfons Zarzoso Orellana, Diego Armus, and Marisa Adriana Miranda take anatomic museums, the medical profession, and the *hijos de puta* as starting points to narrate the multifaceted and changing relations of the two cities with bodies.

Taken alone, the single contributions in the book do not always fulfill the goal of providing a strong case for the reciprocal influences of Barcelona and Buenos Aires. However, this should not be considered a weakness of the book. In fact, on the one hand, read in its entirety the volume does provide an entangled narrative of the two cities. On the other hand, it avoids the potential pitfalls of overstressing the idea of entanglement and fetishizing reciprocities and symmetries in contexts in which relations were instead characterized by disparity, as for instance in the case of migration, with an overwhelmingly bigger presence of Barcelonians in Buenos Aires than *porteños* in Barcelona. Furthermore, the volume not only tells an *histoire croisée* but also engages in creating a discussion and an exchange among scholars that overcomes national and regional compartmentalization. This volume is not only about transatlantic knowledge, but also the result of creating transatlantic knowledge. The book contributes to the assembling of a transnational network of scholars, thus setting the groundwork for a global, transnational, and – as the editors call it – trans-urban history that does not ignore the rich complexity of

locally-practiced historical research.

In summary, *Saberes transatlánticos* not only provides an original contribution to the global urban history of science and a shift of attention from the scholarly-overexposed North Atlantic, but also puts together a group of scholars that may be able to continue, deepen, and expand the study of trans-urban histories. One possible direction struck me as plausibly fruitful for further research, which the book only partially followed, namely that of looking into disconnections and divergences rather than its primary focus, connections and entanglements. Greater attention to the ruptures would probably help complicate an otherwise too linear narrative of continuous progress in connections. Furthermore, as a minor critique to this otherwise greatly accomplished work, I wonder if the term “transatlantic” is analytically helpful or, on the contrary, it functions as an obstacle to the visualization of conjunctures and divergences, not between two Atlantic port cities but rather between an Atlantic and a Mediterranean city.