Buenos Aires

Fernando Degiovanni
The Graduate Center, CUNY

Fernando Rosenberg
Brandeis University

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_pubs

Part of the Latin American Languages and Societies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_pubs/514

This Article is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications and Research by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@gc.cuny.edu.
Introduction

One of the most important city ports of the Western Hemisphere, Buenos Aires has a history inextricably connected to the fluctuations of the Atlantic economy as well as to its strategic position as a gateway to vast and fertile flatlands that extend far beyond the city limits. Founded and re-founded in the 16th century as a secondary colonial outpost, Buenos Aires was dramatically transformed by the demands of the European markets at the turn of both the 18th and 19th centuries. In this context, two crucial developments are decisive for understanding the physical, social, and cultural fabric of the city: the emergence of the gauchos and the arrival of millions of European immigrants. The gauchos, although primarily inhabiting the pampas, would nonetheless project their influence on the city's margins and later be elevated to cultural icon; whereas the immigrants would give Buenos Aires the particular imprint for which it is internationally recognized. Crucial periods of the city's history, repeatedly visited by scholars, can only be explained as the result of the interplay between local and international political, economic, and demographic factors. These include the autocratic and populist rule of Juan Manuel de Rosas in the 1830s and 1840s, the influx of Italian, Spanish, and Jewish populations between 1880 and 1930, and the rise of Juan D. Perón as a popular leader in the 1940s (along with the formation of his still influential movement). The experience of living in an urban environment subject to quick transformations, particularly since the end of the 19th century, has had a decisive impact on Argentine literature, music, and visual arts. The creations of poets, novelists, musicians, artists, and filmmakers have proven crucial for constructing a lasting image of Buenos Aires for local and international consumption. Tango, perhaps the city's most singular cultural expression, has played an unparalleled role in this regard. But if a turn-of-the-century burgeoning city has occupied an undisputed place in the artistic and scholarly imagination, there is also the Buenos Aires of economic decline and cultural conflict that gradually emerged in the last century. Despite having being affected by several dictatorial regimes and financial crises on which recent scholarship and cultural production have increasingly focused, contemporary Buenos Aires continues to be a sociocultural and economic center for tourists, students, and new waves of immigrants (mainly from Latin American and East Asian countries).

General Overviews

A limited number of works examine the historical evolution of Buenos Aires in a general fashion. Romero and Romero 2000 and Rapoport and Seoane 2007 provide comprehensive approaches to the city in multivolume collections. Fontanella de Weinberg 1987 and Schávelzon 1999 survey the city's linguistic and archeological evolution since the 16th century. Gutman and Hardoy 2007 focuses on architectural change, while Sigal 2006 discusses the historical uses of Plaza de Mayo, the city's most symbolic political stage. Molina y Vedia 1999 analyzes urban planning over the course of more than four centuries.


Discusses phonological, morphophonological, morphosyntactical, and lexical change and includes sections on linguistic contact and slang. Contains important findings regarding *seseo*, *yeismo*, and *voseo*.


Introduction to the urban ecology of Buenos Aires, with special emphasis on architectural change. Of particular interest is the book’s approach to the city since the return to democracy in 1983: the emergence of gated communities, projects of urban recycling, and configuration of shanty towns. Accompanied by statistical charts and an extensive bibliography. Illustrated.


Discusses patterns of urban planning and growth since early colonial times, to concentrate on documented major 20th-century projects of urban renewal. It contains ample visual material, from maps and architectural designs to artistic sketches and photographs.


A very accessible, comprehensive history of the modern city ranging from 1880 to 2005. It provides a general but systematic overview of major periods divided by years, with each period analyzed along four equally important variables: politics, economics, society, and culture.


Collection of articles by historians and social scientists. Discusses the city’s two foundations, the Colonial City, the Jacobin City, the Creole City, the Patrician City, the Bourgeois City, the City of the Masses, and the City of the Future. Covers a variety of political and cultural topics (from architecture to tango, from trade unions to social life, from traffic to slums).


Discusses the excavations of local institutions (a museum, a hospital, a church, a printing company, a government building), as well as in several residences and a park to highlight the socioeconomic and ethnic profile of Buenos Aires. Pays attention to the material culture of European immigrants, indigenous peoples, and African inhabitants. Focuses on gendered and family objects.


Focusing on the main government square in downtown Buenos Aires as the central stage of Argentinian political life, the study traces the uses of the plaza since the 1810 declaration of independence to the last dictatorship (1976–1983), for both government and anti-government demonstrations.

**History to 1870**
Colonial Buenos Aires, as well as the fifty years following the emancipation from Spain, is covered by Adelman 1999, Johnson 2011, Sábato 1990, and Socolow 1978, which deal with economic structures. González Bernaldo de Quirós 2001, Salvatore 2003, and Szuchman 1988 discuss the Rosas era and its aftermath from social and political points of view, while Sábato 2001 focuses on the emergence of a national political culture.


Studies the formation of the Argentinian state through the development of economic legislation (e.g., private property rights, contracts, monetary policy, etc.) and its interaction with the trans-Atlantic market. Argues that the free market was dependent on the political power that emanated from the capital, its governments, and its merchants.


Studies the associative life in Buenos Aires in the mid-19th century and its relation to the construction of an Argentine nation. Uses private archives, police sources, and press documents to analyze a variety of forms and spaces of sociability, both public and private, such as pulperías, cafes, and African societies, as well as more formal associations like the Freemasons.


Focuses on the fluid economic and living conditions and modes of organization of labor in late-colonial Buenos Aires, including artisan labor, and free and slave labor, as an essential social base for the build-up toward the war of independence and which provided the movement popular support.


Analyzes records of estancieros, British banking houses, and French wool dealers to provide a detailed view of agrarian development in Buenos Aires in the second half of the 19th century. Looks at the growth of the region's export economy by focusing on wool production and export trade; challenges the prevalent thesis about oligarchical patterns of land tenure in the country during that period.


Analyzes the formation of a public sphere in Buenos Aires during the 1860s and 1870s; focuses on clientelistic approaches to political mobilization. Examines the role of mutual aid societies and mass demonstrations in initiating public discussions about political leadership.


Analyzes mobility and agency of peasants under Rosas, challenging the characterization of rosismo as a quasi-feudal regime. Depicts a society driven by market forces with positive attitudes toward liberalism. By showing the limits to unconditional rosismo
among peasants, this book questions the portrayals of gauchos as victims of capitalist modernity.


Studies trade expansion during the final years of the Spanish Empire in the Rio de la Plata. Expanding on previous knowledge about viceregal Buenos Aires, and particularly on the development of its economy, Sokolow analyzes the great social diversity and upward mobility among wholesale merchants, providing information on marriage patterns and religious practices.


Deals with political leadership and its relationship to families and household structure in the first half of the 19th century. Tries to understand the social basis of *caudillismo* by investigating the way in which Rosas improved chances of life of lower-class families (particularly widows and militarized teenagers) by imposing domestic peace after the war of emancipation.

**History after 1870**


Analyzes official policies and people's prejudices toward tuberculosis. Discusses institutional approaches to treatment as well as patients' reactions to the disease and public health campaigns. Special consideration is given to questions of gender, immigration, and family. Examines the impact of tuberculosis in music, theater, poetry, and sports.


Analyzes the emergence of a reformist and conformist neighborhood culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Pays particular attention to the role of the popular press, cheap books, and local libraries in the formation of political and cultural ideals. The authors discuss to what extent this neighborhood culture could have impacted the imagination of the Peronist *descamisados*.


Examines the history of prostitution and bordellos since the second half of the 19th century to Perón's rise to power. Analyzes the discourses of physicians, police officers, municipal officials, social reformers, and writers of tangos, plays, and novels, who explore the topics of commercial sex, women's work, and family life.

These historical vignettes offer a multifaceted account of the life of the city in the said time periods. Combining the informational and the anecdotic, the author recreates particular aspects of everyday life and vividly describes historical changes in the character of the city, with particular attention to population growth.


Explores the way in which high society in Buenos Aires’s set the limits on access to its circle between 1880 and 1920. Analyzes rules of etiquette, leisure spaces, social codes, and consumption practices. Pays attention to the role of Catholic education and morality in the culture of this sector. Underlines the heterogeneous geographical and social origins of the group.


Studies Buenos Aires "modernization" throughout four decades. Discusses urban growth due to massive immigration, housing developments, and transportation networks. Analyzes the emergence of a commercial bureaucratic metropolis by contrasting the prosperous center around the Plaza de Mayo with the working class experience in tenements and distant neighborhoods.


Highlighting the variety of ideologies under the umbrella of anarchism, Suriano analyzes anarchist groups in their political, intellectual, and cultural practices (such as schools and publications) in the contexts of the rapidly modernizing city, immigration politics, and the dismal conditions of existence of the working poor.


Focuses on local politics and city administration. Covers the conflicting relationship between mayor and city council, local elections, and the management of the public services. Discusses architectural history, social life (cafes and theatres), and some aspects of urban development (construction of avenues, transportation systems, planning of parks, and balnearios).

Population


Explains and documents the demographic decline of the Afro-Argentine population after the abolition of slavery (1813), and by the same token, studies forms of life, diverse composition, and social inclusion of black inhabitants in 19th century Buenos Aires. Offers a comparative trans-American perspective that attempts to remediate the absence of blacks in traditional national historiography.

Analysis of how Italian immigrants adjusted differently to the ecologies of both cities; considers their own agency and the challenges they had to confront. Italians in Buenos Aires found bigger job opportunities; Buenos Aires also offered Italians the possibility of a rapid adjustment due to cultural continuities, the fact that Italians were the largest immigrant group, and that the city was at an earlier stage of development.


Anthropological account of recent Bolivian immigration to Buenos Aires with special attention to the communication practices (e.g., alternative media, fiestas, civil organizations, etc.) of the migrants themselves, and their role in negotiating identity with respect to other groups of migrants and more established local populations.


Conference proceedings that compiles contributions by the most relevant scholars working on the African diaspora in the city, from historical, ethnographical, and cultural studies on the colonial period to those on contemporary migratory trends.


Studies Korean immigrants settled in the neighborhoods of Once, Bajo Flores, and Parque Chacabuco. Examines the immigrants’ self-representations vis-a-vis local perceptions of Koreans living in Buenos Aires. Discusses family, education, language, and generational attitudes, as well as sociability issues.


Focuses on the most decisive period for the formation of Jewish Buenos Aires, exploring the role of both the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities. Analyzes questions of religious observance, conflicts within the Jewish community, issues of intermarriage, Jewish education, and the white-slave trade of Jewish girls. Examines in detail the question of anti-Semitism.


The most important study devoted to the history of Spanish immigration to Buenos Aires. Includes micro and macro levels of analysis. Focusing on the analysis of transatlantic social networks, Moya argues that these connections were more decisive than political and economic factors in maintaining migration fluxes throughout eighty years. Also discusses the cultural reception of Spanish immigration in cultural expressions.

Studies Peruvian residents in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area emphasizing the influence of gender issues in the organization of migration flows (premigratory period), as well as the effect of migration over gender constructions in the postmigratory stage. Analyzes schooling, jobs, marriage, and family.

Urban Ethnography

Auyero 2001; Beccaria, et al. 2002; Cravino 2007; DuBois 2005; and Ippolito-O’Donnell 2012 describe contemporary political and civic engagement in suburban Buenos Aires; these studies provide a perspective on political and cultural issues related to impoverished areas. Alarcón 2003 deals with criminality.


A series of urban chronicles about the youth in the slums following the rise and fall of a bandit and the shifting culture of criminality. The book provides an impressionistic but realistic depiction of lives riddled with violence and drugs as a new normality, both integral to the contemporary city and alien to its official culture.


Ethnographic study of urban poverty in contemporary metropolitan Buenos Aires. Analyzes informal problem-solving networks meant to ensure material survival after the 1990s’ neoliberal restructuring. The book discusses the gendered nature of politics (as women are decisive political brokers in the neighborhood), and examines the uses of the figure of Eva Peron as cultural model.


Compilation of articles on processes of social differentiation that occurred as a consequence of the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Discusses new forms of social integration and conflict: gated communities, varied experiences of bartering, connections between work and crime among the poor youth, and informal workers (albaniles, feriantes).


Compilation of articles by political and social scientists on the emergence of new social actors after the Argentine crisis of 2001—especially picketers, neighborhood assemblies, and cartoneros (waste pickers of recyclable materials). Discusses the role of the State, the Catholic Church, and some non-governmental organizations in the negotiation of social conflicts.


Ethnographic study of a working-class housing project in Jose Ingenieros, a district of Greater Buenos Aires. By focusing on the last military dictatorship (1976–1983), the book discusses the way in which popular memory differs from characterizations of the period by scholars and officials. The book challenges the idea of “shared,” coherent, and consensual past by community members.

Studies collective action in the district of Villa Lugano after the return of democracy in Argentina (1983). By focusing on a popular struggle to have the district’s street paved (successful), and to build clinics and hospitals (failed), the book examines political clientelism and social antagonism among low income groups, and their effects in the building of a democratic society.

**Urban Planning**

Buenos Aires has undergone significant urban and architectural changes since the early 19th century. Aliata 2006 and Gorelik 1998 investigate architectural and urban projects in the early 19th century and early 20th century, respectively. Silvestri 2003 analyzes the historical transformations in the landscape of a small, but symbolically charged, corner of the city throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Vapñarsky 2000 surveys the territorial and demographic expansion of Greater Buenos Aires between 1869 and 1970. Welch Guerra 2005 and Cravino 2006 tackle recent urban changes.


Focuses on the Rivadavia administration’s attempt to create a regular city pattern as a response to the revolutionary experience. Analyzes both finished and failed urban projects, including the reorganization of suburbs, promotion of domestic architecture, and creation of public spaces. Gives special consideration to the design of Buenos Aires’ central square, the cathedral portico, and the House of Representatives.


Researches the development of shantytowns in Buenos Aires paying particular attention to questions of land and home ownership. By investigating three shantytowns, Cravino discusses the role and structure of informal real estate markets. Uses extensive surveys and provides detailed charts. Deals with juridical questions.


The city emerges as both producing and constraining modes of political sociability in this cultural and historical study of the city from the late 19th century to the 1930s. Both symbolic and material, ideologies of public space are materialized as the interplay between the grid and the open parks.


A cultural history of the Riachuelo, a section of a tributary of the River Plate. Studies the transformations of the Riachuelo’s physical environment and its symbolic values throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Presented today as one of the typical landscapes of the city, the Riachuelo provides touristic visions of immigration, local art, and tango in La Boca neighborhood.

Vapñarsky, César A. *La aglomeración Gran Buenos Aires: Expansión espacial y crecimiento demográfico entre 1869 y
Historical reconstruction of the territorial and demographic expansion of Greater Buenos Aires between 1869 and 1970 from the point of view of urban geography. Includes extensive cartographic documentation on the growth of the municipalities surrounding the capital city. The annex contains a comprehensive collection of maps and blueprints.

Compilation of papers concerned with changes in urban geography particularly since the 1980s. Includes studies from social policy and urbanism perspectives, on issues such as the privatization of space, shopping malls, changing neighborhood identities, de-centering and rise of new centers, local grass roots organizations, and urban politics, among others.

Cultural Studies  
These books explore the connection between politics, cultural institutions, material artifacts, and symbolic practices. El Jaber 2011 focuses on construction of space in the colonial period. A number of texts center on the 19th and 20th century: Salessi 1995 and Caimari 2012 analyze legal and criminal discourses; Macintyre 2010 examines women’s cultural practices. Benzecry 2011 examines the opera audiences. Solomianski 2006 provides an introduction to black culture in Argentina.

Explores the discursive practices of non-elites in the upper floors of Buenos Aires opera house. Drawing on the music-in-action approach, the book highlights how the non-elites use cultural capital for self-construction and self-transcendence through affective relationships with music.

Looking into the discourses of the law, police documents, chronicles, and periodicals, but also into everyday practices of journalists, criminals, and policemen, the book offers an original account of this period of demographic expansion, technological change, economic crisis, and urban modernization.

Studies Alvar Nuñez’s Comentarios, Schmidl’s Derrotero, and Díaz de Guzmán’s La Argentina, as well as letters, instructions, and probatory documents. Proposes that these documents challenged the triumphalist narrations of the conquest of Mexico and Peru by presenting chronicles of disappointment and suffering. Discusses the role of illustrations in the chronicles.

A close reading of political periodicals, educational texts, and literature from 1820 to 1831, this book offers a glimpse into constructions of female roles that the elite elaborated for the new era of nation-building liberalism. It emphasizes the changing complexity of publishing and readership in the period immediately following independence.
Examines judicial and health discourses, practices, and institutions in a key period of modernization of urban space at the end of the 19th century, and the anxieties regarding the adaptation of subjects considered of dubious decency, which included anarchists, criminals, and a vast variety of the sexually "perverted."

Against the hegemonic discourse of whiteness prevalent in Argentina, the author reconstructs black influence, authors, and themes in popular culture and the arts during the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

**Visual Arts**

The turn of the 19th century was key for the city to define its sense of identity, and Malosetti Costa 2001 gives an illustrated and critical account of the art scene of the period. Complimentarily, Malosetti Costa and Gené 2009 discusses the formation of a cultural industry tied to new patterns of consumption. Moores 1945 compiles early images of the city. The photos in Coppola, et al. 2006 continue to be the canonical pictures of a Buenos Aires that aspired to meet the standards of a major urban center. Simultaneously, as Frank 2006 shows, other artists were creating visual expressions accompanying, both in theme and media, the formation and the struggles of a modern working class. King 2007 analyzes the transformative role played by the Instituto DiTella in the 1960s. Davila-Villa 2011 and Longoni 2008 provide overviews of two of the most important tendencies of the post-dictatorship era: the emergence of a dynamic visual arts scene and the resurgence of artistic engagement with social movements, respectively.

Taken between 1927 and 1936, Coppola’s series of photos attempted to capture an essential Buenos Aires, and they are still iconic. This volume is complemented by a series of more contemporary Buenos Aires photos by De Zuviria and by a prologue by architect and urban historian Gorelik.

Illustrated catalogue with essays and chronology; focuses on the work of the "arte light" group (Feliciano Centurión, Sebastián Gordin, Benito Laren, Jorge Gumier Maier, Marcelo Pombo, Cristina Schiavi, Fabio Kacero, Graciela Hasper, and Omar Schiliro, among others). Emphasizes the role played by Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas (University of Buenos Aires) in fostering artistic experimentation in the 1990s.

Analysis of the work of Social Realist printmakers Adolfo Bellocq, José Arato, Guillermo Facio, and Abraham Vigo, who created empathetic representations of the poor and produced an alternative high culture for proletarian groups. The book discusses how these printmakers understood communitarian anarchism and how they established a contradictory relationship to mass culture, particularly tango, soccer, and commercial theater.

A history of the pioneering privately funded institute that officiated as the platform for vanguard performing and visual arts, as well as for anti-hegemonic social thought. The book can be read as a study of the 1960s counter-cultural climate, as the institute functioned between 1958 and 1971.


This book collects a series of analytical articles, photos, documents, and testimonies concerned with the use of paper silhouette representing the disappeared, in the context of human rights demonstrations that started in Plaza de Mayo, representing a turning point for the construction of historical memory and democratization of urban space.


Explores the way in which crucial works by Sivori, Schiaffino, Della Valle, De la Cárcova, and Guidice operated as mediators in disputes over national art, market demands, cultural expectations and state needs. Examines processes of art institutionalization, formation of an art public, professionalization, and co-optation of the artists by the state.


Examines cultural materials that include words and images in their design, including fashion items, magazines, and newspapers (*Athinae, Plus Ultra, Caras y Caretas, La Ilustración Argentina, Martin Fierro*). Analyzes processes of production and consumption of printed images and looks at the connections between art, technology, and the process of citizen-formation.


A limited edition, historical collection of early images of the city that compiles reproductions of lithographs, etchings, and paintings held at archives, libraries, and museums, or previously published in periodicals. Each image is dated and annotated with reference to style and technique, and detailed historical background of its creation and circulation is included.

**Mass Media and Popular Culture**

Buenos Aires' dynamic nightlife is historicized and colorfully described in Civale 2011. Frydenberg 2011 analyzes soccer, as much as part of cultural identity as economic and social institutions. Peronismo divided the waters of 20th century Argentina; Karush 2012 and Podalsky 2004 tackle, respectively, the relation between mass culture and politics before and after the end of the first Peronista era. Pujol 1989 concentrates on the musical contributions of different waves of immigrants throughout the century, while Semán and Vila 2012 focuses on the richness of contemporary popular musical expressions analyzed at the intersection of diverse consumption patterns and identity definitions.

Compilation of stories, pictures, and documents about nightlife in the city, is divided by decades from the 1960s to the 2000s. It reviews and describes cabarets, concert halls, artistic nightclubs, etc., as sites not limited to entertainment but arenas for cultural expression and life-style experimentations.


An account of the history of soccer in Buenos Aires and the values, identities, and institutions built around the sport. Concentrates on the period from its arrival from Britain at the end of the 19th century to its popularization and professionalization in the first three decades of the 20th century.


Discusses the emergence of national mass media, its imbrication with the construction of class identity and consciousness, and the building up toward the organization of the Peronista movement. Genres long considered minor and overly sentimental, such as melodrama, are proved to be a vehicle for the expression of social tensions.


Based on discussions of elite and popular cultural production, the cultural industry, and urban changes, this book offers a detailed account of the tumultuous political decades that alternated military rule with an unstable democratic order, after the 1955 military coup that banned Peronismo from the political scene.


A study of the contribution of different groups of immigrants into the mainstream artistic life of the city, which dovetails with the commercialization of music and the development of a cultural industry (radio, movies, music halls).


Collection of essays tackling contemporary negotiation of class, religion, ethnicity, and gender among youth through different trends of popular music such as rock, cumbia, cumbia villera, Christian pop, and electronic, in their circulation and reception.

Films

Many films are set in the city, but in some iconic films the city acquires a particular historical significance. Santiago 2008 is a mix of film noir, metaphysical thriller, and political science fiction. Murúa 1975 is a classic of social critique portraying marginalized urban lives, as it will be portrayed again in Caetano 1998, more than twenty years later. A climate of oppression and paranoia during the last military dictatorship is expressed in Arístarain 1987. With very different aesthetic agendas, Agresti, et al. 2005 and Solanas 1988 are paradigmatic of the hopes and frustrations brought about by the return to democracy. Trapero 2000 and Bielinsky 2000, dealing with city life, crime, and the law, from totally divergent angles and styles, are probably the most successful films of what
has been called New Argentinian Cinema.

Dedicated to the victims of the last military dictatorship (1976–1983), the film presents several connected stories through a fragmented view of the city. Focusing on a child of the disappeared, a homeless kid, and an ex-collaborator of the dictatorship, it depicts a shattered city criss-crossed by the ghosts of its dictatorial past and its neoliberal economic present.


The fast-paced story about two small crooks on the city streets is built as a labyrinth, with many layers of deception. It provides an interesting depiction of the social climate of the 1990s, as free-market economic policies led to unethical business practices and the crisis of middle class culture.

Successful commercial film, praised by critics, *Pizza, birra, faso* tells the story of an unprofessional, clumsy, group of thieves involved in small robberies. The violent life of the characters in search of an ever bigger target provides an uncompromising view of Buenos Aires. Mostly filmed outdoors, the movie explores roguery as a survival strategy in a city in crisis.

Key 1975 movie based on a living female historical character, the life of the protagonist is marked by poverty, marginalization and recurrent institutionalizations. It defied gender roles as protagonist cross-dresses and identifies with male roles, such as her fondness for Boca soccer club, a team associated with the popular sectors.

Legendary 1969 film by avant-garde filmmaker is based on a script by literary eminences Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. A political allegory and a work of science fiction, Buenos Aires becomes Aquilea, a city invaded by invisible forces, against which the elder porteño Don Porfirio organizes an underground resistance.

At the end of the dictatorship, the protagonist is released from jail, and he wanders around a ghostly Buenos Aires, revisiting layers of history, personal and collective dreams converging in flashbacks, as a narrative and metaphoric reflection on the disappeared and the transition to democracy.


Part of a neo-realist trend that emerged in the Buenos Aires film schools in the early 1990s, it follows the life of a man from a small town who winds up unexpectedly as a policeman on the provincial Buenos Aires force, living and working in the working-class outskirts of the city.

**Fiction and Poetry**

The stark political division between civilization and barbarism evident in Echeverría 2006 and in Márquez 2001 has solidified for Borges 1996 into a source from which the city draws its emotional and local character. National and city history becomes an intimate part of the character’s emotional life in both Mujica Lainez 1994 and Sábato 2004, while urban reality is the stage for metaphysical quests in Marechal 1997. Lukin 1999 provides an extensive collection of narrative fragments about the city.


First poetry book by Borges, published in 1923. Presents a response to a city being transformed by massive immigration and rapid economic growth. Focuses on the city’s outskirts, the undefined zone where town and country meet; this space allows Borges to articulate a vision for the creole city that is already disappearing. First edition was published in 1923, successive editions incorporate Borges’s corrections and elimination of some poems.


Arguably the first Latin American modern short story, it narrates the sordid life of the city and its slaughterhouse, as an explicit metaphor of the oppression and ignorance imposed by the Juan Manuel de Rosas’s tyrannical rule. The story ends with the torture and murder of a young idealistic patriot. Originally published 1838 or 1840.


This compilation of short texts, many of them extracts from novels and short stories, provides a kaleidoscopic overview of literary authors’ impressions about the city. Encompassing 19th and 20th century and including the main literary figures of every era, these volumes are organized idiosyncratically as a literary statement, rather than a survey.


Both classically inspired and experimental, the novel narrates the travails of the hero, poet Adán, during four epic days on the streets of a working-class Villa Crespo neighborhood, in a quest for the Absolute. This authoritative edition provides substantial
critical commentary. Originally published 1948.


Romantic novel written while its author was in exile in Montevideo. Action takes place during the Rosas era and presents the struggles between two antagonistic political parties (unitarios and federales). From a unitario perspective, Mármol depicts the brutality of the Rosas regime. First published in serial form, 1844–1855.


Collection of two short stories that cover more than three centuries of city history, from Buenos Aires’s first foundation in 1536 to the year 1904. Buenos Aires history is narrated from a domestic, private point of view, sometimes behind closed doors, usually through members of the elite: household stories illuminate, in this way, greater historical events. First published in 1951.


The geography of Buenos Aires is the stage for this existential drama, the battlefield between a decadent but still alluring patrician elite and a new generation that appears lost as it is striving to build its own destiny, as the burden of the country's historical tragedies appears to curse daily life. First published in 1961.

**Essays**

Arlt 1994 and its mix of social realism and literary flâneirie portrays a decadent but vibrant urban life of the interwar years, while Martínez Estrada 1968 explores a rather negative sensibility and judgment toward signs of urban modernization. Presenting social criticism of urban life in the context of a divided Argentina, Sebreli 1964 is a classic that resorts to systematic categories of analysis with mixed results. Borges 1998 is transparent in the fascination with a slower and not-yet modern urban life yet defining the city's essence. The cultural and literary environment of the aesthetic and social vanguards is the object of the Sarlo 1999 analysis, while Sarlo 2009 is an example of the cultural criticism applied to postmodern urban phenomena.


A famous collection of journalistic chronicles by this multifaceted writer; offers an interesting depiction of the changing life of the city in the 1920s and 1930s, with particular attention to the marginal, the working class, and the immigrant poor.


Writing a biographical account of a minor poet who sang of the unencumbered beauties of the city is the excuse for Borges to reconstruct a bygone Buenos Aires while also re-imagining the city's legendary past. Originally published in 1930 and corrected in 1974.


Buenos Aires is portrayed as an enlarged capital for a weak national body, the greatness of the city as the nation's largest handicap. Through observations about local institutions, characters, and customs, the author laments modern materialism as the
source of personal malaise and cultural decadence. Originally published in 1940.

An exploration of the contradictory ways in which writers experienced Buenos Aires and its elaborate cultural responses to the rapid urban transformation of the city in the early 20th century. Analyzes the interplay of local and international discourses and cultural practices in the views of the city presented by Borges, Girondo, Arlt, Lange, Storni, and Ocampo, among others.

Combines text and photography. Sarlo analyzes Buenos Aires as a conflicting space and discusses many versions of the city—that of commercial photography, contemporary design, tourism, journalism, literature. Documents and interprets shopping malls, towers, and recycled train stations, as well as the life of the urban poor, street vendors, and prostitutes.

Both a personal literary essay and a Marxist-inspired attempt at urban sociology of everyday life, the object of this classic work is the social class dynamics that divide the city and the country into a middle class allied with the aristocracy and against the poor.

### Tango

Real and Carlos 1976–2012 provides a comprehensive survey of the major topics, expressions, and historical developments of this cultural expression. Thompson 2005 and Bergero 2008, illuminate this history from angles that haven’t received enough attention, namely the African influence and the intersection of class and gender exploitation at the beginnings of tango history, respectively. Miller 2014 and Dávila 2012 offer different but complementary panoramas of tango’s contemporary resurgence as both a local and a globalized phenomenon. Written by probably the most internationally well-known tango musician, Piazzolla and Ferrer 1968 takes up tango’s lower-class origins to elevate it to a high level of sophistication, in a move that is archetypical of tango legend.

The emergence of tango culture is examined through an interdisciplinary analysis of political, urban, cultural, and social contexts of the city. It studies an array of cultural material from tango lyrics to literature, periodicals, and historical documents, paying attention to the oppressive conditions of labor and the status of women.

Studies the booming tango tourism and the variety of products and services that are marketed for the international consumer, many of them amateur social tango dancers visiting the city. Paying special attention to the relations between locals and foreigners, Dávila studies the impact of the tango market in spaces and identities within the neo-liberal transformation of Buenos Aires.
The most authoritative of the dictionaries of *lunfardo*, the Buenos Aires slang that borrowed and adapted words of different European origins spoken by the first wave of European immigrants previous to WWI, and that is, to a certain extent, still used and evolving.

Studies contemporary artistic manifestations in tango culture as an evolving form expressing contemporary problems. Chapters include discussions on “new tango” music and dance, as well as tango manifestations in visual arts, film, and everyday practices.

A contemporary “little opera” composed by the world famous tango innovator. The opera tells the story of the life, death, and after life of the female protagonist, a woman of humble origins who is attracted by the glitter of Buenos Aires and becomes a prostitute. It mixes archetypical tango mythology with fanciful plot twists and characters. Originally performed at the Sala Planeta in Buenos Aires in 1968, there are several recordings by different interpreters.

Comprehensive overview of tango history as a cultural expression encompassing music, dance, song, and poetry, this work is divided into thematic and conceptual volumes authored by different specialists, going from its origins, to the old guard, to the orchestral golden age, up to the first decade of the 21st century.

Against the tradition of regarding tango as a mix of European and creole music traditions, this book underlines the relevance of the African roots, through the influx of Congo slaves to the River Plate region, in every relevant aspect of tango culture (music, dance, language, as well as in its interpreters, composers, and dancers) from its origins to our days.

Cartoons

Although the nature of comics designed and written for periodicals is episodic and fragmentary, a few series have become classics. Oesterheld and Solano López 2006 creates an intriguing character that encapsulates a spirit of rebellion and resistance to a myriad of ever changing oppressive powers. Quino 1994 elaborates a set of characters, particularly a central character Mafalda, who are simultaneously intellectual and sensitive, political and metaphysical, naive and nihilistic. Trillo and Altuna 2004 invents a character with many of the archetypical attributes and tastes that many porteños revere, perhaps for the (male) readers to identify with during tumultuous political times.

This series of graphic novels narrate the invasion by extraterrestrial forces and destruction of a very realistically depicted city. Its critique of oppressive power is unmistakable, as the invaders stand for military dictatorships and imperialism, or for a more abstract dehumanization of society. Originally published between 1957 and 1975.

The life of a *porteño* middle-class family in the 1960s and 1970s is the subject of this legendary comic strip, popular throughout the Spanish-speaking world and beyond. Infant Mafalda exhibits a charming wisdom and sensitivity to the important issues of the day, such as world peace and the status of women. Originally published between 1964 and 1973.


With some realistic depictions of the city, the story of a young journalist, his friends, and girlfriends, manages to convey a sense of bohemian freedom without ever making explicit references to politics, despite that the comic strip appeared between 1975 and 1987, a period that includes eight years military dictatorship.